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Maternal Peacebuilding

An alternative approach to women's peacebuilding in Northern Ireland

Alicia Claire Gauch
PhD Peace Studies
August 2010
I, Alicia Claire Gauch, hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other University.

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For my family:

JJ, Patter,
Momma and Daddy
Acknowledgments

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Post-conflict peacebuilding offers great opportunities for the development of just and equal societies, but these opportunities are often overlooked, particularly in regards to gender and the needs of women. Though significant progress has been made in terms of recognizing women as citizens and acknowledging the need for increased levels of participation in decision-making, the underlying issues have yet to be addressed.

Though numerous attempts have been made to increase women’s presence in post-conflict decision-making, most particularly through efforts at mainstreaming gender, the environment is still dominated by men. Furthermore, the institutions, issues and resources that are at the center of peacebuilding projects tend to favor masculine aspects of social interaction. Related to this favoring, women’s needs and experiences tend to be overlooked within peacebuilding projects and processes.

This thesis functions from the premise that the primary underlying issue in regards to women in post-conflict societies (indeed within all liberal-democratic societies) is the artificial boundary between the public and private spheres and the devaluing of women’s experiences. In order to address this divide, I have turned to a politics of motherhood in an attempt to revalue the feminine and to blur the boundary.

Feminist poet Adrienne Rich calls for the experience of motherhood to be reclaimed from the restrictive and oppressive institution most mothers experience. Sara Ruddick builds upon this call and has developed the concept of maternal thinking, wherein a mother develops particular ways of approaching situations derived from her experience in protecting, nurturing and training her children. This thesis places Ruddick’s concept within a developed understanding of motherhood and women’s relationship to the experience.

This developed understanding of motherhood is used to establish the theory of maternal peacebuilding. This theory, to be considered alongside a multitude of other gendered approaches to peacebuilding, is intended to
increase women's access to political action as well as expand the understanding of legitimate political discourse. By valuing the role of the mother within peacebuilding, the opportunity arises to address needs of mothers. Moreover, mothers themselves gain control of the symbolic power of their role, thus limiting the ability for authority to manipulate and abuse their position. A maternal peacebuilding offers a way for mothers to engage in the transformation of their society while simultaneously allowing them to transform their society's conception of the mother.

The thesis uses the experience of women in Northern Ireland to explore the feasibility of such an approach. The region has undergone a lengthy conflict resulting in a traumatized society. The political system is highly masculinized and women have limited access to elite power. Within this context, the feminine has been at once idolized as the site of the nation, and criticized as weak and ineffectual within formal power politics. Though women's experiences in the two dominant communities differ significantly, this praise and disparagement are clear within both communities. Ironically, woman-led community politics have been instrumental in the addressing the needs of the region.

A politics of motherhood does appear to offer one path to remedy some of the restrictions of women from political engagement in Northern Ireland. Mothers are very important within Northern Irish society, and several instances have occurred wherein mothers took political action and received a generally effective response. Moreover, mothers often turn to community centers to address particular needs (childcare being significant). The centers have a history of engaging women who avail of their services to further develop themselves, their families and their communities. A politics of motherhood would augment these already-occurring processes, as it would consciously engage mothers as political agents. Mothers could find their citizenship through this traditionally repressive role.
Introduction

I suppose from a very early age I was of a mind that the politicians, the so-called constitutional politicians here were never going to resolve the problems, because no matter how long and hard they talked, the men with the guns weren’t talking and it was the men with the guns that had to sit down and sort out the problems, and we know that that’s eventually what happened, albeit in a more inclusive setting. So I think that still prevails, to a certain extent, that notion that politicians are aloof, and set apart from the rest of society...

—Dawn Purvis, MLA

I know when I sort of got involved in community work and stuff like that to begin with it was to make things better for the community that I lived in and I always said I wanted to make things better for my children. But now I want to make the future better for my grandchildren. And that’s just my passion and, you know, I would not like my children or my grandchildren to live through what we lived, the life that we lived. Nobody should ever have to live that life again because that took the mother—I mean I think that took everybody—almost to the edge of you know, the stress. I had an ideal childhood and like Jeanne it was an ordinary, it was a working class childhood and I tried to give my children—but my children got a childhood against fences, army, barriers, rioting, murder, mayhem, bomb explosions—that was my children’s childhood and I tried fiercely to make their childhood. Tried to give them some things or memories in their childhood that they would remember that were good and tried to actually minimize the conflict that was going on.

—Renée Crawford, Community Activist

The above passages from Northern Irish women outlines important relationships women have with politics, particularly in a post-conflict setting. On the one hand, women are outside of the center of power: the parties which hold the power of violence control the agenda. The politicians are set apart from women’s daily lives. Political power appears to be out of reach of most women. On the other hand, woman’s location as protector of and carer for her family offers the opportunity to passionately engage in the political discourse. Many Northern Irish women, as well as other activist women throughout the world, have found inspiration in grasping their political agency through their identity as mothers. This form of political action, however, has not been deeply explored as it resides far outside of “malestream” discourse,
and presents significant difficulties within a feminist discourse. Nonetheless, it is a phenomenon that does occur, and could likely be nurtured for the benefit of women and peace around the world.

The past two decades have allowed us to consider conflict in a different light and approach new ways of dealing with conflicts and the upheavals and destruction they cause. The most notable new approach has been the development of peacebuilding processes to resolve conflicts and their underlying causes within societies. Unfortunately, the advances in conflict resolution have not advanced the state of women’s participation to the same level. Though degrees of liberal feminism have been largely accepted by the global community, women continue to find themselves in relative disadvantage to men regardless of their geographic or economic location. This disadvantage will continue to persist as long as women’s roles remain outside of the accepted political realm.

In order to challenge this dislocation of women in post-conflict political engagement the boundary between the public and private spheres must be challenged. This can be accomplished both by bringing women into established public sphere (masculine) roles, as well as exploring how traditional private sphere (feminine) roles can provide sites of empowerment for women. Peacebuilding’s processes of transformation offer opportunities for a transformation of the public/private conception. Additionally, peacebuilding’s mission requires that women’s political agency be recognized and activated.

Unfortunately, this mission has largely been overlooked by decision-makers in peacebuilding. The boundary between the public and private has caused the political agency of women to be questioned, or at least seen as not equal to that of men. In terms of peace and conflict, our rhetoric reinforces this assumption, as women are often viewed as victims and objects, rather than agents and subjects. Though much work has been done in recent decades to bring women “to the table.” cultural, social and economic barriers still exist to limit women’s full participation in the public discourse.
Thesis Overview

This thesis develops a theory of maternal peacebuilding, which has the potential to enhance peacebuilding processes, as well as providing an entrée for some women to political (public sphere) engagement. By considering how the private sphere primarily female experience of mothering can provide tools for political interaction, a shift in how we consider the two spheres as separate from one another becomes possible. Understanding how more alternative methods for women’s involvement in the political realm can enhance the more formal methods of women’s participation, we can develop a more comprehensive vision of women’s empowerment.

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first two present issues surrounding gender and peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is defined in Chapter One in terms of both its theory and its practice. Developing throughout the 1990’s, peacebuilding is currently the most relied-upon approach for post-conflict societies. Unfortunately, women are often left outside of peacebuilding mechanisms. Chapter Two seeks to identify the gender-blindness of peacebuilding as it is manifested. It then explores ways in which feminists have attempted to develop peacebuilding to become more relevant for women. Specifically, the concept of gender mainstreaming is outlined and its effectiveness analyzed. On a more general level, the need to address the underlying gender dynamics in a post-conflict society is stressed. Given peacebuilding’s emphasis on the transformative process of moving away from a conflict society towards one of peace, the potential for women’s positioning within society to also transform cannot be overlooked.

In order to develop an approach for such a process, Chapter Three diverts from the discussion of peacebuilding in order to present the theory of maternal politics, or a politics of motherhood. Relying heavily on Sara Ruddick’s theory of maternal thinking, this chapter explores the ambivalent relationship of motherhood to feminism. Central to this discussion is Ruddick’s definition of mother, which relies upon a particular practice as opposed to being an innate and inevitable quality of womanhood. This
practice can lead to a particular way of understanding and interacting with the world. The chapter ultimately develops a conscious practice of mothering into the concept of a feminist politics of motherhood which can tap into the social power of motherhood while opening paths for mothers' political engagement. Such a politics can provide alternative (and concurrent) avenues for some women to participate in their political processes.

Chapter Four synthesizes the preceding three chapters to develop the theory of maternal peacebuilding. This chapter argues that such a theory can increase the opportunities for some women to engage in politics and peacebuilding. The experience of mothering evolving into the practice of a politics of motherhood can provide some mothers with particular and important skills and perspectives which can augment a pursuit towards an effective and sustainable peace. The intent of this theory is not to replace current peace approaches but to augment ones that are already in existence (particularly those aimed at increasing women's presence in the political process). Experiences of maternal political movements around the world are considered in developing an applicable theory of maternal peacebuilding.

The final two chapters present the case study of Northern Ireland and explore the possibility of the theory of maternal peacebuilding being applied within this context. Chapter Five outlines various experiences of women in Northern Ireland, as well as women's relationship to the region's political structures. This chapter also discusses central roles of women within the two dominant traditions, and identifies a variety of understandings of motherhood and mothers in order to establish a context for the application of maternal peacebuilding. This application occurs in Chapter Six. The Northern Irish political system is highly patriarchal, and the potential for women to fully engage in it is limited. However, a vibrant civil society, which is driven by women, has offered the opportunity for many women to embrace their political agency. A maternal peacebuilding can offer a further opportunity for more women to do so, while acknowledging and accepting a role which many women (and men) value and see as significant.
Positioning and Methodology

This work is undoubtedly feminist, but does not fit neatly into any single "school" of feminist thought. Though it attempts to directly address and encourage women’s participation within their social and political institutions, it is decidedly critical of liberal feminism. My rejection of the acceptability of existent political systems and structures suggests a radical tendency, but my willingness to embrace “traditional” roles of women places me at odds with this school of thought, as well. I believe that our experiences encourage us towards certain insights and perspectives, but no single standpoint can apply to any given group. Nor are we completely constructed beings—though we can never prove or disprove any innate individual qualities, we are born, at the very least, with genetic predispositions. Though I find efforts to disentangle the gender dynamic instructive, my focus on the direct experiences and potential for improvement in women’s lives prevents a post-modernist labeling. Rather than narrowly adopting one epistemology, I have utilized aspects of various feminist approaches to political and social thought. Far from being inconsistent, I believe that my varied approach allows for the discussion to focus the most relevant insights onto the question, as well as allow for the strengths of the various approaches to be integrated into a theory that can directly impact women’s lives and political participation.

This willingness to have such a varied approach is most likely due to my own positioning within and understanding of feminist theory. As the daughter of a single mother, I have been in a position to see the possibility of female power, the limiting of that power by society, and its necessity to the family unit. My academic interest has long been focused on international political theory and ideas of injustice, equality and peace. Throughout my early studies of international theory, I was frustrated at the apparent inability of the dominant theories to accurately describe the “world order.” In my postgraduate studies, I became exposed to feminist critiques of power and international relations and began to realize that gender is at the core of all
human interaction. During my doctoral studies, I realized that my mother was not only a strong woman, but a feminist mother, and that she managed to subtly raise my brothers and myself as feminist without ever labeling it as such.

I feel this personal background is important in order to appreciate my understanding of feminist theory as well as my thesis topic. In terms of feminism, I take a pragmatic approach. I believe that all of the various feminist epistemologies have value in developing a deeper understanding of the human condition and our social and political relationships. In the abstract, it is important to have well developed schools of thought in order to provide a space and language for understanding experiences and identifying ways in which lives and society can be enhanced. None of these abstracts, however, can be universally and totally descriptive. I choose to see them as tools, and use them as such.

In terms of the subject matter, I settled on the area of political motherhood within post-conflict settings for two reasons. First is my deep belief in the power of the mother. As the primary carer for children, she lays the groundwork for their approaches to life. Politically speaking, as a group, mothers raise the next generation of citizens. This is, as I discuss in more depth in the third chapter, widely overlooked or abused within political discourse. I believe that the positive potentials of this role within a peacebuilding context are ones which must be explored. The second inspiration for focusing on a political motherhood derives from my general frustration of the lack of inclusion of women and the feminine in political discourse. Gender is an integral part of our daily interactions and in many ways determines power relationships. Periods of conflict intensify and further imbalance these relationships. To compound this absence, I have perceived that many women avoid feminism and gender discourse. Undoubtedly there are many reasons for this avoidance, but I believe one reason is that some women believe that feminist action requires that they reject their traditional roles. By connecting with some of these women through a role which they find important and personal, feminist discourse and empowerment can
perhaps reach women who would otherwise have avoided it. It is important to engage with women through their own experiences. Motherhood is one experience which some women strongly identify with, and thus could be a nexus for engagement and empowerment.

My inspiration above has influenced my approach to the research. As this is a work of feminist political theory, most of the research conducted was textual. Texts regarding theory, analysis and case studies were the central sources of information. I have utilized a vast array of sources for these texts, including some non-academic texts and non-reviewed working and conference papers, but primarily relying on peer-reviewed articles and edited books. I have tried to draw from diverse theoretical backgrounds in order to develop a thorough background and framework. Some primary documents in the cases of particular reports and legal documents were used in order to ground the theoretical discussion in reality. With this intent, the final chapter also relies heavily on personal interviews conducted with Northern Irish women.

The project of sustainable and positive peace which peacebuilding seeks to initiate and support is a perfect environment for the transformation of roles and expectations of women. A society in the midst of a peacebuilding process should consider the multiple ways inequality and marginalization may be perpetuated. As well, women, as members of their society, should consider the ways in which they may support the transformative process. Broadening ways in which we understand political engagement may enhance the political discourse through allowing other ways of knowing and other skills to come into the public sphere, and a society can come one step closer to a peaceful society. Such a process can be a massive force for change and development for women and their societies.
Chapter 1: Peacebuilding in Theory and Practice

Societies that have been immersed in violent conflict have both a need and an opportunity. They have a need to end the immediate conflict. Historical experience has shown that this is difficult to do with the traditional methods of peace making, as well as the relatively more modern method of peace-keeping. These methods have not succeeded in anything resembling a “positive” peace, and have rarely managed to secure a negative peace for any significant length of time. At the same time, these societies in conflict have often experienced a disintegration of their social and political fabric. There exists the possibility, in many situations, for a more balanced and inclusive society to emerge from the conflict. Peacebuilding speaks to both this need and opportunity. It aims to build a whole and healthy society, while simultaneously bring an end to the fighting.

This chapter provides a general outline of peacebuilding in order to later consider its gender dimensions, how a politics of motherhood could enhance a peacebuilding process and finally how a maternal peacebuilding could apply in the specific case of Northern Ireland. Peacebuilding is a rather amorphous concept, and its definition differs based on an individual’s or an organization’s background and agenda. In an attempt to root the concept within the wider field of international peace studies, I have chosen to first present a brief background of peacebuilding’s origins. I then present two approaches to thinking about peacebuilding: as a theory and as a practice. The following discussion should provide enough context in order that we can begin to discuss problems that arise from contemporary manifestations of peacebuilding, specifically in how it interacts with the gender order in peace conflict societies.

Peacebuilding Defined: Purposes and Parameters

Peacebuilding is a very nebulous term, being used by a variety of organizations and theorists to describe a multitude of programs and goals.
The ultimate goal of these conceptions of peacebuilding is the development of a peaceful society. This is in contrast to previous incarnations of peace projects, such as peace-making, which focus exclusively on the elite’s agreements to end hostilities, and peace-keeping, which endeavors to buffer warring factions with third parties, presumably until a settlement can be reached.

The term peacebuilding first appeared in post-conflict discourse in the mid-1990’s, with Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s report *An Agenda for Peace* and Johan Galtung’s *Peace by Peaceful Means*. The use of the term in both these cases was unformed. In the case of Boutros-Ghali, the term referred to an extension of the United Nation’s programs of peacekeeping. He described post conflict peacebuilding as an “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (46). Since these early attempts to define peacebuilding, theorists have grappled with the concept and organizations such as the United Nations have struggled to implement programs which would fit into the broad definitions as well as have measurable results.

In 2000, the Brahimi Report was released by the United Nations. This report endeavored to further develop Boutros-Ghali’s “agenda” into clear UN policy. This report set forth UN policy towards its peace operations, splitting them into the three categories of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding (these are the same categories used by Boutros-Ghali and Galtung). In terms of peacebuilding, the definition is “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” ("Implementation" IIA13). Explicitly, the report outlines reintegrating combatants, monitoring human rights, encouraging institutional development and fighting corruption as being components for peacebuilding operations ("Implementation" IIA13). The report’s recommendations, however, fail to establish any real framework of peacebuilding. Instead, it refers to the need to develop a plan for a strategy ("Brahimi" 2d).
Though the Brahimi Report certainly draws from some of Johann Galtung's ideas on peacebuilding, it fails to address the core of Galtung's vision of peacebuilding. He sees peacebuilding as attempting to overcome "the contradiction at the root of the conflict" (103). In a more specific sense, peacebuilding attempts to actually transform the situation into one that is not only less volatile, but is actually sustainable. How this transformation occurs can vary widely, depending upon the theoretical lens from which an organization or theorist is operating, as well as the immediate goals they wish to achieve.

Thus, we can narrow the scope of peacebuilding to processes which attempt to achieve conflict transformation into a sustainable peace by addressing issues which have either contributed to or been caused by the conflict. These issues, of course, range from such broad and intangible concepts as national identity, to clear and concrete issues like provision of humanitarian assistance. It is this context in which the discussion of the theory and practice of building will continue. In order to delve further into this discussion, however, I must define two important concepts: positive peace and types of violence.

A concept central to peace theory in general and peacebuilding specifically is that of positive peace. Also developed by Galtung, the concept of positive peace has revolutionized how peace can be understood. Whereas the focus of international peace has traditionally been on "negative peace," or cessation of hostilities, Galtung has charged that an environment must be created in which not only is there an absence of violence, but there is also a striving towards the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. With these terms understood, I will present various definitions of peacebuilding which will provide the basis for the rest of this chapter.

Peace is integrally related to violence, and Galtung has identified several types of violence in society. These are: physical (violent), structural (legal, economic) and cultural (racist, sexist) violence. These types of violence exist against a backdrop of power discourses. These discourses (military, political, economic and cultural) cause or contribute to direct acts of violence.
A society that is "peaceful" in the positive sense has minimized or eliminated acts of violence. It has also, importantly, addressed the power discourses to not only prevent acts of violence from occurring, but also to prevent them from contributing to violence. Thus, the power discourses in positive peace become productive, rather than destructive (1 – 7).

The concept of positive peace relies upon an understanding of multiple forms of violence. As Donna Pankhurst notes, positive peace:

"requires not only that all types of violence be minimal or non-existent, but also that the major potential causes of future conflict be removed...Positive peace encompasses an ideal of how society should be, but the details of such a vision often remain implicit" (156).

Obviously, the above is an ideal, and quite possibly unattainable. However, peace theorists see this ideal as being the goal towards which societies should strive.

Within this context, the United Nations has offered its own definition of peacebuilding, in that it should “reassemble the foundations for peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than the absence of war.” It concretely outlines these foundations as reintegration, rule of law, human rights and development ("Implementation" II A13). These two conceptions of peacebuilding—Galtung’s ephemeral theoretical proposal and the United Nation’s explicit, practical approach, demonstrate how the theory and practice of peacebuilding rely upon each other, and yet how they are significantly different. Peacebuilding theory attempts to envisage the most complete methods to ending violence. Peacebuilding practice must determine measureable and attainable goals in ending and preventing violence.

The balance of theory and practice is quite obviously difficult to accomplish. First, it is a highly complex endeavor. There are a number of elements that contribute to a peaceful society, and there are a number of organizations which contribute to peacebuilding efforts. All of the actors—political, economic, academic, and social, etc.—have agendas prioritizing certain elements, and their implementation.
The interaction between theory and practice is important to nurture, however. The theory develops the capacity of understanding for practitioners, and the practice informs the development of theories. This section will present this interaction by examining the theoretical elements of human security, sustainable peace and social transformation, followed by an exploration of peacebuilding practice through demobilization, institutional stabilization, economic and social development, as well as reconciliation. Understanding these elements of peacebuilding will allow for a meaningful discussion of women and peacebuilding—their contributions and limitations, as well as their potential.

Theoretical Aspects

For the purposes of this thesis, I have segmented the theory of peacebuilding into three general parts: an enhancement of human security, the development of a sustainable peace, and the social transformation from one of a culture of conflict to a culture of peace. Though often times an organization or theorist will focus on one of these aspects and use the term “peacebuilding.” I argue that all three are critical components to peacebuilding theory as it has developed in the past decade and a half.

Human security – an agenda for peace

The dissolution of the USSR and the end of the Cold War changed the way the international community perceived and approached conflict. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, conflict resolution was seen as a state issue, with negotiations occurring at the elite levels, between leaders, with an aim to establish and maintain national security. With the demise of a bi-polar world order, the understanding of “security” began to shift and the focus has expanded, in that a new conception of human security has emerged. A growing awareness of varied threats to a state’s security (e.g. environment, economic, social, etc) has extended the remit of security. In particular, individuals have become recognized as being the potential “object of security” (Bryden, et al. 6). This “securitization” of issues once seen as
outside of the security remit has served to challenge the adequacy of traditional security institutions and processes to meet the new demands (2).

At the millennium, the international community began to embrace more completely the concept of human security in order to respond to the demands and challenges it posed. The Commission on Human Security\(^1\), formed in 2001 and releasing its report in 2003, examined the meaning of human security in the context of the United Nations Millennium goals. The report cites the need for a “new paradigm of security” and offers its definition for “the security of the people” (Ogata and Sen 2) as being:

“to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms— freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity” (4).

In this new understanding of security, theorists focus not only on the national, or collective security, but also on individual security. It “takes into account the macro and micro levels, the public and the private, the material and the psycho-emotional” (Moser and Clark 30). Security applies to all levels of society, and all levels bear some responsibility for maintaining it. Human security is, essentially, a recognition that all forms of violence—physical, structural, etc—are in fact a violation of security, and that international actors have a responsibility to address them, even when they appear to affect individuals more than states (Ramsey Marshall 10).

The United Nations itself has had an ambiguous approach to human security. While not rescinding the supremacy of state actors, it has begun to focus on issues beyond (and behind) state relations. The Millennium Declaration outlines some of these issues in terms of development, peace, security and human rights. It has also committed itself to battle such a variety

\(^1\) The Commission was formed through the support of the Japanese government, in response to the United Nations Millennium Goals. The co-chairs were Nobel Prize-winner Amartya Sen, a key human development theorist, and former High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata.
of issues as crime, terrorism, pollution, weapons, disease, human trafficking and issues surrounding displaced persons (T. Väyrynen 134-5). Väyrynen describes this as "expanding the security agenda towards a variety of security objects" (136). This expansion, of course, takes place within the backdrop of state sovereignty.

The discussion surrounding human security and its implementation can be linked to a number of other endeavors. In particular, the concept of sustainable peace is one which is strongly linked to human security. Human security is best achieved in a stable, positive-peace environment. For conflict and post conflict societies, security can only be achieved if a long-term peace is in place. Thus, a second crucial aspect of peacebuilding theory is that of sustainable peace.

**Sustainable peace**

The concept of sustainable peace has also been developed in recent years. In simple terms, a sustainable peace is one which can be perpetuated. Luc Reychler defines this as:

"a situation characterized by the absence of physical violence; the elimination of unacceptable political, economic, and cultural forms of discrimination; a high level of internal and external legitimacy or support; self-sustainability; and a propensity to enhance the constructive transformation of conflicts" (12).

In other words, a sustainable peace is a peace which exists at all levels of society in which not only armed violence is absent, but also changes how all types of violence (physical, cultural, structural, and psychological) are perceived, understood and acted upon (5). John Paul Lederach, a theorist and practitioner who has been a major force in the development of peacebuilding theory, requires that peacebuilding be sustainable. By this he means that the project must "create a proactive process that is capable of regenerating itself over time" (75).

Lederach has thoroughly explored the concept of sustainability, as he sees peacebuilding as a long-term, "multigenerational" project. Generating space for parties "to envision a commonly shared future" (77) is vital to
effective peacebuilding. Peacebuilding, in this sense, is future-oriented. The purpose of the project is not a short-term resolution to a current crisis, but the maintenance of a stable and healthy society over the long-term.

Ho Won Jeong, a theorist who focuses on the holistic aspects of peace and conflict, further bolsters this long-term view. He asserts that peacebuilding requires:

“laying down a foundation for social harmony supported by measures which foster cooperation among adversarial communities. Social, political and economic infrastructures have to be developed to prevent future violence” (5).

Jeong’s focus ranges from the pragmatic elements of peace by referring to the infrastructure requirements, to the more ephemeral element of “social harmony.” His above statement reinforces the concept that peacebuilding occurs on multiple levels and in multiple ways. The structures of a peaceful society are important, but structures themselves will not result in a long-term peace; more is required.

In light of these statements, we can see that a necessary element of peacebuilding is the development of a society’s abilities to maintain a peace far into the future. These theorists all understand that situations and environments may develop which could reignite a latent conflict. A sustainable peace would allow for non-violent, constructive crisis within stable social, political and economic structures. In other words, a new crisis would not devolve the society back into war. These structures, however, are not the only elements of a long-term peace. The critical element of peacebuilding’s goal of sustainable, positive, peace is that of transformation, as well as its integration across society.

**Socially transformative, integrative approach**

The concepts of human security and a sustainable peace are crucial to peacebuilding, but are not entirely unique. They have evolved from earlier manifestations of conflict resolution and intervention. Truly unique to peacebuilding theory, however, is the concept of social transformation. This
is necessary for a peace project to be truly successful, and for a positive peace, which respects human security at all levels and is sustainable, to emerge. Furthermore, the integration of various goals, with various actors, over a varying timeframe allows for the flexibility and reach that is necessary for social transformation.

Lederach places a great deal of emphasis on the multi-faceted elements of conflict and society, and his "integrated framework" is particularly vital in regards to transformation. He believes that peacebuilding, to be successful, must work towards personal, relational, structural and cultural transformation away from violence and towards peace (82-3). The process must occur on all levels, and in all sectors, in order to be complete. He defines this transformation in multiple ways, including a "rebalancing of power in the relationship by which all those involved recognize one another in new ways" (65).

Raimo Väyrynen expands upon Lederach, asserting that there is a strategic element to what Lederach proposes:

"the goal of peace is sought through the redefinition and restructuring of a conflict situation...Transformation draws upon various resources of social power which help to create and expand political spaces for peace" (151).

He readily points out that this can really only occur in an environment where the physical violence has stopped. Social power cannot be engaged in transformation if it is focused on survival. This requirement refers back to the first element of peacebuilding—human security. Again, we are reminded that peacebuilding has many overlapping elements, none of which can be completely severed from the others.

Another important difference between peacebuilding and prior manifestations of conflict intervention is that it is, in John Paul Lederach's words, an "integrative approach." This integration can be two-fold. First, peacebuilding occurs between levels of analysis (i.e. political elite, institutions and grassroots), meaning that communication, consultation and negotiation occur at all levels (Reychler 12 – 14). And second, that the efforts include all sectors of society: social, political and economic. The reader may note that
this corresponds with the definition of positive peace: integration, in part, is
due to the adoption of positive peace as a goal.

Karl Jacobsen and Kai Brand-Jacobsen describe this holistic approach
of peacebuilding as “not about excluding approaches to peacebuilding at the
top level, but about introducing new approaches, new levels, emphasizing
complementarily, and mutually reinforcing processes” (254). They further
argue that peace attempts that are state-centered, or top-down oriented, can
actually provoke conflict, as they do not deal with the underlying issues of the
conflict (254).

Lederach has developed the theory of the integrative approach to the
point that it is widely accepted as a framework for peacebuilding. This
approach has several layers to it, the first being the levels of analysis\(^2\). All
levels (top, middle and grassroots) are necessary to a functioning society, and
all must be engaged in building peace (Chap 4). He places particular emphasis
on the middle range, or the institutional level, where he asserts civil society
can flourish and have a positive impact on peace. At this level, leaders have
more flexibility than those within the political realm, but have wider influence
than those of the grassroots. Thus, they have the ability to bring a portion of
the population along with them in their peace endeavors, while being in a
position to make choices which a political leader would be unable to make.
With this said, Lederach emphasizes that though we may wish to focus on the
middle level, all three levels must be engaged through various mechanisms
(60).

In addition to seeing the importance of a project’s approach being
integrative in terms of whom it targets, Lederach has also developed an
understanding of conflict that also integrates various levels of conflict. This,
which he describes as the nested paradigm of conflict foci, demonstrates the
complex and interactive nature of conflict. Though there is not space to fully
explore his paradigm here, it is important to briefly outline it in order to
understand the use of peacebuilding in its current manifestation.

\(^2\) These levels of analysis are also referred to as “tracks.” Track I applies to elites,
Track II to institutions, and Track III to the grassroots.
The smallest level of conflict he describes is that of the “issue.” or the specific grievance that is being cited. This is placed in the context of the “relationship” between two (or more) groups, which is in turn placed in the context of the “subsystem.” This subsystem is the immediate system within which the conflict is taking place, usually involving governments, but also institutions. He then takes one more step to place the subsystem within the “system.” meaning the world order. Not only does each conflict focus influence the level it is “within.” but it is also influenced by that level. In other words, the system and its conflict set the elements and the parameters for the conflict in the sub-system, (e.g. a government, which in turn influences the world order. It is a reciprocal relationship. This occurs for all of the foci, and demonstrates how every level influences the other, and that a decision about one conflict system will influence all of the foci (Lederach 55-60).

Elisabeth Porter provides a concise definition of peacebuilding in this context. She sees it as a process which:

“is contextual, grounded and shaped by the particular conflict and all the historical, religious, economic, political, cultural, and regional factors that have contributed to hostilities and the need to build peace. Peace-building is multi-layered” (258).

Porter’s sentiments obviously reflect those of other key theorists: peacebuilding is a complex, multifaceted and integrative approach to conflict reduction, resolution and long-term stability.

**Practical Elements**

As peacebuilding affects so many facets of society, a peacebuilding program requires numerous projects which focus on the various needs of the society. Generally, these programs can be broken down roughly into four broad categories: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, institutional development and reform, economic and social development, and reconciliation and tribunal processes. As each conflict is different, and the goals for a given peacebuilding project may differ, the programs that are put into place vary for each project. It is impossible, given the scope of this
chapter, to explore these processes in great depth. I endeavor, however, to provide a sense of what peacebuilding looks like on the ground as practiced by the United Nations, NGO’s and individual states. This will enable us to analyze peacebuilding practice in terms of gender.

**Demobilization/reintegration**

Quite often, intra- and inter-state conflict results in a highly armed society, whether in traditional army structures, or in guerilla/paramilitary structures. In both of these cases, light arms in particular proliferate, and can hinder attempts at peace and stability. Also, conflict rips most of these societies apart, often resulting in segregated communities and/or large populations of displaced persons. Both of these issues must be addressed in an immediate sense, as well as establishing long-term structures to deal with lingering problems that arise.

The solution that has developed by peacebuilders has been disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs. These programs endeavor to reduce the number of small arms and light weapons that exist in a post-conflict society, in addition to providing programs for ex-combatants. These programs generally offer financial incentives for ex-combatants, as well as training programs to encourage employment. The process is formalized through the Stockholm Initiative Report, which attempts to define “appropriate boundaries concerning the aims of DDR programmes, while specifying the points at which they should link with other initiatives that are also part of a successful peace process” (Sverige and Sverige 10 – 11).

Consistent with the general peacebuilding approach, DDR attempts to mitigate the effects of weapons proliferation and high numbers of ex-combatants on a multi-level, integrated approach, and often can overlap with post-conflict development programs (Bryden, *et al.* 3-4). At the very least, a conscious recognition is made in DDR that military and security issues in a post-conflict society are also highly political, economic and humanitarian. The issues affect not just the individual ex-combatant, but the society at large (Bryden, *et al.* 14 – 15 ; Knight 3 - 4). DDR certainly offers the opportunity for
a transformative process, in that the violent undercurrent of a society in conflict can be minimized and reconstructed through effective DDR programs (Knight 7 – 8).

As with other peacebuilding efforts, DDR is a new and developing process. Though there is general acknowledgement that some sort of DDR is desirable, the actual process is more controversial. Particularly, the process of reintegration and its "link" to disarmament and demobilization is challenged³. Though a strong case is made that former fighters' reintegration can reduce the potential for crime and further abuses (Bryden, et al. 14), others argue that reintegration poses a difficulty for a wider peacebuilding process. Particularly, the facts that it often excludes other members of society and that it has a very limited lifespan challenges DDR's possibilities of achieving a cohesive reintegration of former combatants. Indeed, this limitation reinforces the argument that peacebuilding processes must all function in conjunction with one another.

**Institutional development/reform**

A society cannot permanently move out of conflict without a solid infrastructure that can support a peaceful society. The institutions that need to be developed or reformed exist within the political realm in the cases of government institutions, as well as within civil society. It is telling that Boutros-Ghali described the central goal of peacebuilding as the "creation of structures for the institutionalization of peace" (20, par 49). This is a critical area of UN work. This focus also corresponds with Lederach's desire to focus peacebuilding in the middle range of society (i.e. institutions). Lederach includes various sectors of society in his discussion of institutions (social, political, etc). Formal peacebuilding programs tend to overlook social institutions (i.e. churches, schools) and focus primarily on political and

³ For a compelling argument in delinking reintegration from disarmament and demobilization, see: Kathleen M. Jennings. "Unclear Ends, Unclear Means."
economic institutions. The latter tend to function at a national or regional level, while the former primarily focus on the regional and local level.

It is important at this juncture to point out that much of the effort in this category attempts to develop institutions on a liberal-democratic model. This is hardly surprising, as the states that often support peacebuilding are liberal democracies, and many NGO’s that help to establish these institutions also operate with a liberal-democratic ethos. In particular, the building of institutions tends to have a focus on rights, and they anticipate a certain level of interaction between government, civil society and the citizenry. The assumption of the link between democracy and peace is widespread. Raimo Väyrynen explicitly states that peace and security are direct results of democracy and capitalism (136). Some theorists see this as limiting and problematic, but most take the link for granted (or actively promote it).

Charles Call and Susan Cook have explored the link between peacebuilding and “democratization.” and have found some similarities, some of which may be limiting for peacebuilding. Particularly, they cite the liberal presumption in peacebuilding, and “that political and economic individualistic arrangements, rather than ones recognizing social groups, are optimal for ensuring stable and good governance.” as well as the focus on elite actors. They also find a lack of effort to balance peacebuilding goals, e.g. efforts to secure elite interests while promoting reformed governance and extended rights to the population (4 - 5).

Perhaps the most negative assertion Call and Cook make is:

“The shape of the political reconstruction component of this ‘peacebuilding’ intervention is modeled on Western liberal democracies...The question has become not whether, but to what extent, the international community will intervene in the peace process in a given society. Too often intervention is presumed to be uniformly positive, without sufficient attention to its potential negative consequences” (6).

Though they do acknowledge peacebuilding’s efforts to move beyond simplified goals, the tendency for imbalances to occur still exists. The international community often has more control over the framework of a peacebuilding project than will the affected society. The assumption of
peacebuilding's ultimate benefits overlooks other elements or potential paths for society.

As a result of these focuses on a liberal-democratic model, vital institutions may be developed in the absence of a vibrant civil society. Trócaire, an Irish development NGO, has encountered difficulties with such a lack of civil society in post-conflict situations. In the case of Angola, it found that:

"The absence of strong indigenous civil society organizations, however we may define them, means that the roles usually assigned to them, such as limiting authoritarian government, strengthening popular empowerment, fostering citizen participation and civic education, reducing the negative effects of market forces, enforcing political accountability and improving the quality and inclusiveness of governance, are not (or cannot be) pursued with vigour or shaped by the local people" (Shannon 40 -1).

The difficulty Trócaire encountered was twofold. First, it found a general lack of civil society institutions, which made mid-level and grassroots development and peacebuilding difficult. Second, the organizations that were present were often designed and headed by outsiders, limiting the influence that local people had over their society. This is a clear example of a particular model of a "healthy" state being applied without considering the specific issues of the society and without laying out the appropriate groundwork.

Call and Cook do offer a clear resolution to the issues described above. They feel the challenge is "to ensure that governance at the local and national level of war-torn societies can be locally legitimate, supported and effective" (7). They assert that a bottom-up approach, focusing on grassroots needs and desires can develop more applicable and effective programs. They encourage the synthesis of elite and non-elite processes and experiences in theory and practice (9). In particular, they also stress "incorporating local participation into national-level reconstruction processes" (11). Noting that local, traditional methods and attitudes towards governance and participation may well be repressive of women and minorities, as well as being in opposition to liberal understandings of rights, Call and Cook accept that it is not possible to adopt grassroots attitudes outright. Rather, they encourage a "careful, critical exploration of traditional and non-traditional alternatives" to a universal
approach. They charge policymakers to accept the complexities of peacebuilding and develop models that reflect the realities on the ground (12).

In sum, numerous issues surround the institutional development of a post-conflict society. The focus has largely been on a liberal-democratic model which, though in many ways beneficial, also has numerous drawbacks which are often over-looked. Adequate institution-building needs a combination of supra-national and local input, which can allow for specific needs to be addressed and unique methods applied. Instead, the actors are often international, who have a particular (and possibly removed) vision of what the institutions should look like, and mid- and elite-level actors, who may have their own agendas that do not reflect the needs of the greater society. These tensions are also apparent in the development of economic and social systems.

Economic and social development

A clear trend by international development organizations has been to focus on post-conflict areas. It is quite clear that conflict results in extreme poverty, and that poverty in turn exacerbates conflict⁴. Many organizations have stepped into the role of peacebuilding via their development programs. Though the elite level is often deeply involved in development, much of this work occurs at the grassroots and mid-range levels.

The report from Trócaire discusses the linkage between development and peacebuilding at length. It asserts that post-conflict societies are in need of “emergency relief, rehabilitation and long-term development assistance” as part of the peace project. It notes, however, that these organizations often lack the resources, experience and frameworks to develop appropriate programs. They also require other peacebuilding endeavors (e.g. disarmament, ceasefire negotiations) to be undertaken outside of

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⁴ For a thorough discussion on the link between poverty and conflict, see: Jonathan Goodhand, "Enduring Disorder and Persistent Poverty."
development in order for the development efforts to be successful (Shannon 48 – 51).

Trócaire’s experience in Angola reflects the importance of the integrative approach in development. All sectors of society must be built during this process. In the case of economic and social development, the “local stakeholders” are given a particular priority to “be given the encouragement and space to contribute to shaping the methodologies, frameworks and interventions that best suit their own view of the world” (Shannon 49 – 50).

Also working from a development paradigm, Isobel Coral Cordero considers the meaning of peacebuilding to the development sector, in that it:

“has to do with constructing alternative local development models that focus not only on deactivating political and social violence and its consequences, but also, and more importantly, on preventing violence by addressing the structural economic, social, political and cultural inequities that favour its development” (161-2).

In other words, development has a strong role in peacebuilding. Practitioners are not simply charged with alleviating the immediate tensions or aftershocks of a conflict, but are actually integral in providing a path for the development of a strong, healthy and equitable society.

The areas of institutional development and economic and social development are quite obviously linked. A stable society requires strong social, economic and political roots. But these roots can only effectively take hold in an environment free of active physical violence, thus the demobilization of armed groups is necessary. Additionally, the reintegration of former combatants and victims of displacement is necessary for the development of a stable foundation for the growth of peace. Peace, however, cannot flourish without a nurturing environment. It is in this sense that peacebuilding also implements reconciliation and justice in its approach.

Reconciliation and Justice

Luc Reychler, again referring to his preconditions for sustainable peace, asserts that an “integrative moral-political climate” must be developed
and that members of society must develop a "political-psychological sense of we-ness" (12 – 14). Boutros-Ghali committed the United Nations to endeavor to promote national reconciliation in *An Agenda for Peace* (9). The field of reconciliation is at least as diverse as that of peacebuilding. At times the establishment of a shared history and an acknowledgment of wrongdoing is enough to satisfy key actors. Other times, the preceding conflict and public sentiment require that perpetrators be condemned for crimes they committed. Both approaches have the potential to help heal a society reeling from a conflict, and should be considered as part of a peacebuilding program.

Reconciliation is widely regarded as being important to any peace project, but can be widely controversial in its form, as can particularly be seen in Northern Ireland. Formats such as truth commissions are a relatively new arrival on the international scene, though their cousins, tribunals, have a much longer history. In general, reconciliation programs seek to "heal" the society through an acknowledgment of abuses accompanied some form of apology or sign of contrition. Hizkias Assefa makes the argument that some level of reconciliation in some form is crucial to a peacebuilding project, as it offers the opportunity for injustices to be addressed, but also transform antagonistic relationships towards more positive ones (340).

Reconciliation can become a divisive issue, largely because of its potential scope and lack of certainty as to its form and ultimate purpose. Trudy Govier explores this complex and intangible process in depth. She notes that reconciliation can take place on several levels, from the personal to the community, and ultimately in the national and international spheres. The intent is to develop a certain level of trust between former adversarial communities. This can be done in a variety of ways, most notably through the acknowledgment of abuses, and the building of relationships (11, 14 - 17). These processes can take places within the context of a truth commission, a

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5 Northern Ireland has yet to institute a region-wide reconciliation program. Though many efforts exist for smaller-scale reconciliation within cross-community programs, or most notably the Healing through Remembering project, a process on the scale of the South African Commission does not currently have popular or political support. There have been several tribunals for various events, including Bloody Sunday.
national or international tribunal, small community or individual level processes, or a combination of all of the above.

By far the most well-known reconciliation process has been the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The purpose of this project was to promote “national unity by establishing a semiofficial narrative of the common past” (Forsberg 73). The South African process, though rather successful in its own environment, remains highly controversial when looked to as a model for other reconciliation processes. Jean Bethke Elshtain suggests that the South African system encourages a politically restorative justice, a process that:

“is neither cheap forgiveness nor the dominant form of retributive or punitive justice... [it] addresses the legitimate concerns of victims and survivors while seeking to reintegrate perpetrators into the community” ("Politics" 59 – 60).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission attempted to balance the needs of the victims of apartheid with the need for a stable society in the short and long term. Instead of meting out punishment, the intent of the commission was to assign moral blame to perpetrators while allowing victimized groups to articulate their experiences. In this sense it was largely successful (Van Der Merwe 117).

South Africa has not been the only post-conflict state to utilize truth commissions. El Salvador, Peru, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Nigeria and the former Yugoslavia are just some of the societies that have also held truth commission proceedings. Most of these are held in an attempt to catalogue human rights abuses committed during the conflict period, and generally are an alternative to criminal trials or tribunals (Minow 93 – 94). Of course, truth commissions are not perfect: many feel that they allow criminals to go free

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6 South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission does have its critics within and outside of South Africa. Both the suitability of a truth commission as well as its execution have been and continue to be debated. The scope of this thesis, however, does not allow a full discussion of this debate; the importance of the Commission within the context of peacebuilding is clear: it was a thorough process which not only did not incite conflict, but appears to have mitigated potential violence. Whether it was the best process to pursue remains the subject of another line of research.
(particularly when reports do not name perpetrators, or those who testify are granted legal immunity). Many feel that creating a shared history of the conflict does not provide a sufficient reason to pursue a truth and reconciliation approach. The alternative is to focus on legal systems to pursue "justice."

A common legal approach is through the establishment of a national or international tribunal. These can function with the intent of restorative justice (the focus being on reintegrating society) or retributive justice (with the intent to punish perpetrators), and often include components of both. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia are two of the largest and most well-known such bodies. The purpose of these tribunals is to identify, prosecute and punish key actors in particular events while chronicling abuses. These procedures offer the possibility to "pave the way for a moral and political renaissance." as well as strengthen the legitimacy of a new (and one would hope fair) judicial system (Huyse 323).

Stef Vandeginste outlines the system of reconciliation and justice in Rwanda. The horrific genocide has resulted in nearly the entire population being either victims or perpetrators (and at times both). The government of Rwanda has supported a primarily judicial approach through the International Criminal Tribunal mentioned above and its own national legal system. The former is a huge bureaucracy, very expensive, and very slow moving. The latter has lacked the infrastructure and resources to quickly pursue prosecutions, and has also suffered from accusations of corruption and bias. These issues highlight some of the most apparent difficulties with a judicial approach. Though a case may certainly be made to prosecute those who actively organized and incited the genocide, it seems to have proved maddeningly difficult to pursue judicial redress for each individual incident (251-86).

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7 A truth commission is certainly not the only method for reconciliation, but it is the most established in terms of peacebuilding programs. Other notable methods include small group workshops, or a national forum. See: Terence McCaughey, "Northern Ireland," 300.
The issue of reconciliation and justice is a highly emotional and controversial one in peacebuilding. Though it is important for the various factions to come together to build trust and relationships, it is also important that those who were the most responsible for the conflict are seen to make some sort of amends. Whether a society relies upon reconciliation through truth commissions and healing projects, or if tribunals and criminal hearings are the focus of post-conflict hearings, a peacebuilding program must account for the past. In order to meet the theoretical goal of transformation, a process must be developed in which the society can acknowledge its past in order to move beyond it.

All four of the above aspects of peacebuilding practice are important. They all, in various ways, can connect back to peacebuilding’s central theoretical components of human security, sustainable peace and social transformation. In many ways, this complex approach offers the best hope for achieving real peace in a number of contexts. There are, however, critical flaws with peacebuilding, some of which I touch upon here.

Challenges of Peacebuilding

It is abundantly clear that peacebuilding is a complex and intricate endeavor. In particular, it has tended to be chaotic and/or too narrow in how it is enacted on the ground. This is most likely due to confusion and disagreement about the goals and processes of peacebuilding, as well as a lack of any over-arching body organizing peacebuilders, and the challenge of procuring and allocating appropriate resources.

Much of the practical difficulty that peacebuilding programs have had to date has been the lack of cohesion in programs and timeframes. All too often, governments, international and regional bodies and NGOs have focused on the one aspect or level of analysis that reflects their organizational goals, without integrating their activities with those of other types of organizations working on different aspects and within different levels. Robert Ricigliano cites the “theories of action” (ways of how an organization interacts in the world) as being inhibitive of integration and an organization’s systemic
view. This is particularly the case when organizations have to integrate their programs with those of organizations operating from other theories of action (449). Integration tends to occur only when it will support the organizations' goals. Ricigliano argues that "for there to be an integrated approach, the perceived need for collaboration with diverse actors...must be integral to, not ancillary to, an organization's theory of action" (450). This is largely due to the methods of funding, which require short-term, measurable results. The effectiveness of integration is not a major consideration by donors. Additionally, the focus of political agreements in peacebuilding limits the potential for other methods to affect social and structural change (453-5).

Coordination to the Chaos?

In 2005, the United Nations attempted to mitigate these issues by consolidating its various peace programs under the umbrella of the Peacebuilding Commission. This move was due to the recognition of difficulties the organization's peacebuilding programs have had, in part because of the lack of organizational structure and understanding. The hope for the Commission is that it will organize the various facets of peacebuilding in an effort to maintain a forward momentum and an effective peacebuilding project ("Endorsement"). This section focuses on the workings of the United Nations for the simple reason that it is by far the largest institution involved in peacebuilding. Keep in mind, however, that innumerable organizations contribute to peacebuilding, some resembling the approaches outlined below and some differing significantly. Later, the thesis will diverge from the United Nation's peacebuilding, but the following discussion will be useful in understanding how peacebuilding theory translates into an institutional approach.

It is far too early to fully analyze the Commission. Though it was formed in 2005, it has not yet expanded to its potential role: of 18 UN peace missions, only four are currently on the Commission's agenda. Two were

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8 The low number is due to the fact that states must be referred to the Commission in order for it to be able to consider it be placed on the Agenda, as well as the
placed on the agenda in 2006, one in 2007 and the fourth in 2008. It would be impossible to assess the impact of the new body given such a small timeframe and such a small sample. We can assess, however, the framework of the Commission, and infer potential pitfalls.

Though integration is certainly desirable, there will be clear difficulties with the Commission. It desires to coordinate “all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations” ("Peacebuilding" 2c), but does not set a clear system for how these actors, which include NGO's and civil society, as well as states within the United Nations, will interact. It leaves the very real potential for organizations and individuals to either follow the UN program, or be left on the sidelines. According to Rob Jenkins, the Commission has established a particularly stringent vetting procedure for NGOs to survive in order to have access to the limited level of participation they are allowed (6). In other words, the Commission is not required to take these actors into consideration. Additionally, given that the Commission will be functioning on a consensus basis, there seems a very real possibility that peacebuilding programs will continue to be disorganized and even counter-productive.

Another glaring deficiency of the Commission is that it is to:

“focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery...and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development” ("Peacebuilding" 2b).

Though these are certainly important to peacebuilding, they do not include all of its aspects, namely reintegration and disarmament as well as reconciliation and legal procedures. Jenkins even goes so far as to describe it as an “aid-coordinating body” (7). To a great extent, he sees the Commission as a forum for donors and recipients of peacebuilding money to negotiate. The Peacebuilding Fund is very much the focus of this body. If this is to be the primary scope of the Commission, a clear opportunity will be lost.

The fact that the actual peacebuilding programs do not appear to be the focus of the Commission’s coordination is particularly alarming. Of the restriction that the body cannot cover a situation that is currently under the jurisdiction of the Security Council.
partner offices within the United Nations, offices that should be central to any peacebuilding project, namely the UN Human Rights Commission and the UN Children’s Fund are notably absent. Such a nuanced and complex approach as peacebuilding would benefit from a body considering the various social, legal, economic and political needs of a post-conflict society⁹. This absence means that it may be difficult for the Commission to organize programs involving these aspects of peacebuilding.

Though the United Nations has attempted to develop an integrative approach to peacebuilding, it has largely limited itself to the formal structures of the process. Though it does endeavor to enhance the economic and social situation in a society, as well as address human rights issues, it has difficulty with breaking out of the institutional model and supporting and developing informal, grassroots projects (Porter 256). Certainly this is due in part to the unwieldy size of the organization, but there is also likely a bias towards a measurable, quantifiable model of peacebuilding. The fact that the United Nations remains an organization of sovereign states further minimizes the potential for grassroots and non-traditional projects from becoming a focus within the body.

There is a danger that such a model of peacebuilding, highlighted by the creation of the Commission (and its focus on “best practice”), will continue to be favored in much of the international community. The development of an “instrumental approach,” as Raimo Väyrynen describes this framework, may result in peacebuilding focusing more and more on the elite levels, and commodified techniques at best. At worst, it will seriously limit the ability for peacebuilding to effect lasting change, in that it would provide what he labels “pseudo-solutions.” Specifically, this emerging approach will only consider finite interests of parties, as opposed to the conflicts of values and identities between and within various parties, and thus

⁹My assumption for the absence of such a goal is that these other issues do fall under the jurisdiction of other UN offices. While it is understandable that the Commission does not want to interfere in the work of these other offices, it seems that their absence from the process defeats the over-arching, integrative purpose of the Commission.
allow “outsiders” to downplay the grievances and disagreements around these conflicts (R. Väyrynen 140-42). These attributes of an institutionalized and commercialized peacebuilding framework would eliminate the creative approaches that have appeared throughout the world.

In spite of these difficulties, peacebuilding offers unique opportunities for not simply the end of violent conflict, but to ultimately provide a path to a healthier society in which violence no longer hovers around the corner. Peacebuilding is far more expansive than previous forms of conflict intervention, as it sees the need for all actors to be involved in the establishment of peace. Peacebuilding theory also expands the process of peace to include various aspects of society, as well as anticipating a very long-term process. Peacebuilding in practice has in many ways embraced the multi-faceted and integrated framework of its theory. A multitude of intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations and governments have developed and participated in peacebuilding initiatives that focus on numerous aspects throughout society. These include the more traditional elements such as security and justice, but have also included newer elements such as reconciliation and education. Additionally, development organizations have recognized their place in peacebuilding, and have also participated in projects that support a society’s path to lasting peace.

Peacebuilding has not, however, achieved all that it has intended. In theory, the peace that is desired is one that is holistic and long-term. The pressures of funding and efficacy that face international organizations severely limit how much they can rely upon these ultimate goals. Instead, the focus is largely on the top- or middle-down development of “proven” liberal democratic institutions, and the prevention of immediate violence. Though the intent is to include actors throughout society with various backgrounds, the reality is that projects do not engage the societies at large, as they could. The focus remains on institutions and political elite, leaving the general population outside of the peace building project. Even within the institutions and the governments, it is the leaders within these sectors that have the most influence over decision-making and implementation.
In particular, women have often been left out of the peace equation. Not only does this have implications for women who are not benefiting from programs, but peacebuilding loses the valuable contribution of women. Though women's needs are often sidelined in favor of "ending hostilities" Pankhurst notes that this is usually counterproductive. She asserts that "if gender were taken into account a far greater degree of success could be achieved" by peacebuilding programs (157). The following chapter will expand upon this statement. I will discuss women's relationship with peacebuilding, how women's participation in international conflict resolution has changed in recent years, what their increased involvement could look like, and what impact that involvement could have. This analysis will provide the context for exploring the alternative approach of a feminist politics of motherhood introduced in the following chapter.
Chapter 2: Building a Gendered Peace

The previous chapter established a general understanding of peacebuilding, as well as some of the challenges it faces. What I have heretofore refrained from discussing, however, is the matter of gender, specifically women's relationship to the project of peacebuilding. Considering the previous chapter's outline of peacebuilding, I begin by outlining ways in which peacebuilding has been blind to gender dynamics, and what impact this has for women and peace. I include in this discussion a general outline of women's relationship with peacebuilding. This includes both how many women contribute to peace, and how they are more often absent from peace processes. In order to place these concepts into context, I will take some time to discuss a recent attempt to remedy this absence. Security Council Resolution 1325 and the more general concept of gender mainstreaming will be explored in order to understand the current positioning of women and gender in peacebuilding. I will also provide examples of other ways women have participated in peacebuilding at the grassroots level. These concrete examples of women's relationship to peace, as well as their inequalities in peacebuilding, will allow a theoretical discussion of gender dynamics in peacebuilding. This discussion will provide a launch-pad for the development of rest of this thesis.

As this chapter unfolds, I ask the reader to remember that different experiences of conflict and peace apply between men and women, and between groups and individual women. Women from different sides of conflicts, as well as those from different social groups of women, will have substantially different experiences of the conflict and needs post-conflict. These differences often lead to a fracturing of women's voices, which thus make it more difficult for them to challenge the status quo as women. Simultaneously, this fracturing can lead to creative ways of dealing with difference (Pankhurst 161 – 3). The absence of a homogenous experience of womanhood must be acknowledged in any specific project, and I will address this issue in terms of a politics of motherhood in later chapters. In this
chapter, I place women in a more homogenous group for purposes of clarity and brevity. It is advisable, however, that the reader remains conscious that “women” is a diverse category, and no single statement can apply uniformly.

**Gender Blind Peacebuilding**

One of the most persistent problems with peacebuilding is the gender-blind nature of the theory and the practice. Few would attempt to argue that women are not stakeholders in peace, or that they lack the ability to contribute to a peace. But all too often, the theory and its programs fail to take into account women’s difference. Strickland and Duvvury note the practice of peacebuilders operating “from a stance of gender neutrality” in favor of immediate outcomes such as an end to hostilities or the opening of a dialogue (23). Their analysis of gender and peacebuilding:

“suggests that peacebuilding, despite being arguably more gender sensitive, gives inadequate attention to the construction of gender norms and the processes by which they can be transformed” (24).

Though peacebuilding offers the possibilities for gender awareness, it fails to fulfill its promise. Instead, gender inequity is often ignored, and even exacerbated, during post-conflict peacebuilding. This section will utilize the previous chapter's subdivision of peacebuilding practice to assess various ways in which women are invisible.

It is too easy to assume that all have similar experiences in war, and that all have similar needs in peace. In reality, women have very different experiences and very different needs from those of men. The oft-reached for tools in the peacebuilding box generally overlook these needs. Azza Karam actually suggests a near reversal of the gender-blindness towards women’s experiences, in that:

“women’s interests need to be prioritized, not because they are gender-specific, but because they are the basis of the articulation of the needs of any society” (14).

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10 Coming from the position that gender is infused into all human interactions, it is impossible to “neutralize” it. Instead, I would maintain that a gender-neutral stance leads to the maintenance of the gender order, as it refuses to challenge it.
Addressing the post-conflict needs of women not only affects women, but their families and communities. Thus, an increase in awareness of the gendered implications of conflict and peace is an absolute necessity for the nurturance of peace throughout the society.

Though each conflict creates specific environments, some experiences seem to be more frequent than not. Susan McKay outlines some of the common experiences of women in conflict. She clearly argues that women’s experiences are different in conflict, and are exacerbated by their difficulty in articulating those experiences and their needs (Women 153). Most notably, she asserts that women suffer disproportionately during and after conflict (Women 154). These include, but are certainly not limited to: the loss of spouses, parents and children to war; disruption and lack of access to education; gender-based and domestic violence; becoming primary caregivers to family, including those injured by war; and the economic and physical hardship that comes with any and all of these. Though it seems perverse to compare levels of suffering between men and women, it is useful to recognize the particular ways in which women experience conflict, and how these provide insights into peace, as well as how it adversely affects them.

In order to highlight some of the ways in which the gender blindness is apparent and limiting to peacebuilding I refer to several elements which I presented in the previous chapter. Focusing on the practice of peacebuilding—particularly economic development, disarmament and institutional development—the limited and even negative impact of peacebuilding on women’s post-conflict experience will become clear. Acknowledging the failure of peacebuilding to effectively integrate gender does not deny the potential for the process to create space for the transformation of women’s experiences and expectations.

**Development**

Unfortunately, the awareness of the diverse needs and experiences of men and women in post-conflict reconstruction rarely occurs. Often,
women's needs are actively rejected by emerging structures and systems. As Pankhurst notes:

"Rather than receiving support at the end of wars, women usually suffer a backlash against any new-found freedoms, and they are forced 'back' into kitchens and fields" (161).

Women not only fail to receive necessary support post-conflict, but they also may actually lose ground. Rights are limited, gender roles made more rigid, job prospects reduced, and social and humanitarian aid diminished. Far from being prioritized post-conflict, women's needs and experiences tend to be minimized.

The issue of employment within a post-conflict setting clearly demonstrates how the minimization of gender unfairly impacts women, and is analyzed by Elaine Zuckerman and Marcia Greenberg. During a conflict women very often enter the workforce at a much higher rate than in the preceding period of peace. The end of the conflict often results in women leaving paid work. A major part of peacebuilding has been developing economic viability, often through job creation. These jobs and employment measures are almost always directed towards men, and ignore the needs and skills of women. Such policies condemn female-headed families (of which there are generally a disproportionate number post-conflict) to poverty (77).

Economic reconstruction, in general, must be conscious of its gender dimensions. Repairing an economy destroyed by conflict and developing its viability is an important element when developing a stable society, and thus an environment conducive to peace. Such restructuring occurs in many ways, from agricultural production and aforementioned employment generation, to the development of a friendly economic environment through outside investment and internal access to credit. As with issues of employment, these efforts are largely focused on traditional, male-centered models. For example, the need to build roads for a healthy economy is given priority, whereas the development of child care facilities is seen as a luxury (Zuckerman and Greenberg 73-8).
In addition to the quantifiable challenges with women in formal employment, women’s informal economic contributions are not officially identified. Regardless of whether they live in a female- or male-headed household, women and girls are overwhelmingly the primary carers of their families. Women in post-conflict situations share this position with other women throughout the world, but the burdens for them are often much higher. These women are often expected to do far more with far less support (Pankhurst 159). Peacebuilders should endeavor to recognize some of these burdens and attempt to alleviate them as much as possible, a priority which is certainly not established (Zuckerman and Greenberg 77).

**Disarmament, reintegration and security**

To exacerbate the above economic issues, the process of reintegrating former combatants further disadvantages women. Many former soldiers return to communities traumatized, disabled, and lacking important skills. Women—as mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers and wives—often fulfill vital roles in the care and rehabilitation of these ex-combatants. When these soldiers return home, it can be a vastly different environment from that which they left (Zuckerman and Greenberg 75). Women often fill roles traditionally reserved for men; the potential exists for the entire community to develop a new relationship between men and women that respects the experiences and contributions of both. A gender-aware DDR would provide a framework for such a relationship to grow. The reintegration of these (mostly) men into their communities should be a priority of a gender-proofed decommissioning program, as it takes the entire society into account, instead of a small portion of it.

Specifically, the decommissioning of armies often has a negative effect on women. Female ex-combatants may have a more difficult time getting compensated, and often do not receive equal compensation. Women whose livelihoods relied upon armies (e.g. cooks, cleaners, sex workers etc) are not

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11 The inclusion of sex workers in the discussion of the impact of demobilization on women is vague but important. Some of these women may have “chosen” this
included in decommissioning schemes. The women and girls who were abducted and forced into service by armies are often overlooked by decommissioning and rehabilitation programs (Heyzer "Gender" 9).

Women's needs in terms of human security are also particular, and are also often overlooked. Most particularly, this can be seen in terms of domestic violence, which women in post-conflict societies are exposed to at extremely high levels. The proliferation of small arms can often result in this violence becoming even more severe as weapons are used against women. Though some research has been undertaken as to the reasons and manifestations for such violence, it is a largely over-looked topic in mainstream peacebuilding projects (Rehn and Sirleaf 14 – 15).

Similar issues surround the prevalence of non-domestic, gender-based violence. Both of these forms of violence continue long after the conflict comes to an end and in the midst of a peace process, and are often not addressed as part of the conflict because they tend only to happen to women (Pankhurst 160, 73). Women cannot be assumed to have security when they can become victims of violence simply due to their biology. Education, awareness, prosecution and support for victims must be an integral part of any security plan in order to be considered “gender-proof.” Sadly, such violence is generally not seen as part of the conflict, and so is not included in the peace settlement.

**Institutional stabilization and development**

Recall in the previous chapter that the fourth process of peacebuilding I outlined focuses on the development and stabilization of political and social structures. This is a major focus of peacebuilding, and women are largely absent from this process. This absence from decision-making structures has
allowed gender blindness in all of the aforementioned peacebuilding processes to continue. Much of this blindness occurs because the issue of gender is understood by decision-makers to be a “secondary issue” which can be addressed once hostilities cease. Though women’s presence at negotiating tables is assumed to have a mitigating influence on this blindness (Moser and Clark 33), it is neither guaranteed nor practical, as will be discussed. Women at negotiations may not be inclined or able to address gender issues, but, most importantly, women rarely make it as far as the table. Other ways of tackling gender inequity must also be sought.

This consciousness of women’s importance to peace is not shared in any depth by those involved in peacebuilding. It is highly unlikely that many policymakers or peace workers, male or female, consciously connects gender to their policy priorities. And therein the problem lies. Peacebuilding, like the fields of international relations and development that it has been born of, is “gender blind.” Gender is assumed to be inconsequential to policies and projects. The beneficiary of a peacebuilding program is the society, and the society includes women. There has been little recognition of the different experiences, needs or limitations between women and men within peacebuilding programs. The theorists and practitioners are generally not misogynistic, but their lack of insight into women’s realities greatly hinders the ability for any peace program to positively affect the whole of society.

**Gender transformation? Dynamics of gender and peace**

Even accepting all of the above failures of its practice, the theory of peacebuilding still offers incredible potential for the nurturance of peace in conflict societies, as well as addressing the needs and desires of women within these societies. Unfortunately, it tends to fail when prioritizing the latter goal. Recall, one of the crucial elements of peacebuilding is its transformative potential. This transformation can and should include our

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12 Certainly this assumption applies to most practitioners, though the repeated instances of UN personnel hiring sex-workers during peacekeeping operations suggest that there is at least some latent misogyny by a minority of practitioners.
perspectives of gender. Though this has largely been absent to date, peacebuilding leaves open a door of opportunity. Furthermore, peacebuilding offers women themselves transformation: through projects, women can realize their own empowerment. This may well prove to be cathartic, not just for women, but for their communities and societies. This catharsis can be particularly applicable to the association of gender, violence and power.

In her article, "Gendered Continuum of Violence and Conflict," Caroline Moser explores the link between gender and violence. She notes that gender is often ignored when analyzing violence, and thus policies cannot be developed to reflect the gendered effects of conflict (33). Moser's continuum, which considers the gender aspects of political, economic and social elements of society, focuses on power. These three categories deal with power and powerlessness, and power tends to be associated with male dominance (36 – 7). By exploring how these aspects of society are gendered, Moser hopes that policy-makers can "view the causes and impacts of violence in a holistic way and so to move from individual reduction interventions towards more integrated strategies" (38).

In a more theoretical sense, Donna Pankhurst agrees with the above, though she lays the blame at the feet of the masculinities dominant in these systems. Key organizations, such as state bureaucracies, security forces, international bodies, etc., rely on masculine systems (i.e. hierarchal structures, individualistic, competitive, and militaristic). These organizations therefore have, according to Pankhurst, "a stake in preserving differences between women's and men's economic roles" (167). The situation becomes worse in conflict situations, which encourage a hyper-masculinization of systems, and thus violence is condoned and women (as manifestations of these feminine systems) are suppressed (167 – 9). A peacebuilding approach which is conscious of this hyper-masculinization can serve to defuse it, and ultimately help create an environment in which peace can occur. Without such a gendered approach, this core imbalance will likely remain unaddressed, and the resulting system would be unlikely to support a stable peace.
Women have been addressing these issues of representation, gender awareness and access in various ways for decades. The United Nation's Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing in 1995, and its parallel NGO Forum, allowed for all of these voices to come together. The unique structure of these conferences allowed for national, official delegates and delegates from NGO have to meet and develop their voices (Snyder 33-4). Besides being an invaluable training ground for many women, it also honed the voice of women around the world. The critical document, *The Beijing Platform for Action*, emerged from this conference, and put into motion the legitimization of women in peacebuilding. The Platform covered a range of issues crucial to women around the world. It also offered a clear, cohesive statement on the need for a gender-specific element to peace and conflict intervention (Nations Chap 4, E2). This statement led to the development and adoption of the pivotal Security Council Resolution 1325.

**Bringing Gender into the Mainstream**

The preceding section has introduced some core issues in the lack of gender awareness in peacebuilding. Much of this lack of awareness can be traced back to a general lack of women's participation in the decision-making structures of peacebuilding. Though women have been systematically left out of decision making, there have been strong attempts to redress this absence. This section will explore the most prominent of these attempts in the form of gender mainstreaming policy. Specifically, the impact and implications of Security Council Resolution 1325 will be considered. In this sense, we will consider how peacebuilding has attempted to address the gender-blindness endemic in political structures. Though it is a laudable and important project, gender mainstreaming has been unable to eliminate the tendency towards blindness.

**Mainstreaming post-conflict: Resolution 1325**

In 2000, the United Nations formally recognized the need for women's involvement in peacebuilding. The Security Council Resolution 1325,
supported by the Secretary-General and accepted by the General Assembly, explicitly and formally connects women to conflict and peacebuilding. During the process of passing 1325, the Security Council, for the first time, devoted an entire session to women in conflict and post-conflict situations (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings 130). This session was the fruition of several years of work within the United Nations system, starting with the first World Women’s Conference in Mexico City in 1975 and the subsequent Decade on Women. Combined with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), this resolution marks the clear support of women’s full and equal participation in society by the world’s largest and arguably most influential institution.

As the Security Council’s remit is primarily for the intervention in conflict and other crises, the focus of 1325 is on conflict situations. The resolution seeks first to recognize women’s marginalization in political decision-making, and how this marginalization adversely affects their lives during conflict. Furthermore, it highlights the important contributions women make within their communities and society during conflict. It also recognizes the necessity of explicit institutional support for women’s participation in political decision-making ("UN Security").

The action clauses of the resolution offer a sense of what the Security Council considers as solutions to some of the issues women face, and how to pull their contributions into the system. In a brief summary, some of the important aspects of the resolution include: the increase of women’s participation at all levels of decision making by institutional leadership and elected offices within governments, institutions and the United Nations itself; the development of a “gendered perspective” in decisions to include gender training, research and funding; that peace processes must include a gendered perspective, particularly in the areas of reintegration, local peace initiatives and institutional development; the recognition of and commitment to reduce conflict-related gender-based violence; recognition of female ex-combatants and their needs; continued development of awareness, particularly through consultation with women’s groups and NGOs; and generally commits the
Security Council and the United Nations to continue to monitor and develop the level and mode of women's participation ("UN Security"). In sum, the Security Council committed itself to the development of an awareness of gender dynamics in conflict and post-conflict situations. The resolution is a clear acknowledgement not just of the impact of conflict on women, but also of the important contributions women make to their society.

In a more general sense, 1325 is the most well-known of the United Nation's recent policy commitments to women's increased participation and visibility. These policies have formalized the process of gender mainstreaming in the international system, particularly in peacebuilding. The hope is that by requiring women to be part of the solution, the United Nations (and other organizations and governments with similar policies) makes it more likely that an integrated and lasting peace can be developed.

According to Tarja Väyrynen, 1325 is part of the United Nation's process to mainstream gender (176). The concept and trend of mainstreaming gender is vitally important in understanding the current location of gender in the international peace discourse. Being widely adopted at the institutional level, gender mainstreaming is the fruition of various efforts to bring gender into the conversation. In this sense, it is understood to be a success for women's political participation. However, it also has major flaws, both in its conception and its execution.

A reliance solely on gender mainstreaming risks the continued marginalization of women and the feminine from decision making and participation in peacebuilding. The following considers the meaning of, importance of, benefits of and difficulties with gender mainstreaming. This discussion will place 1325 into a clearer light, and develop an understanding of the current issues of gender and peacebuilding.

**Mainstreaming Gender**

Gender mainstreaming is perhaps the most pointed result of 1325, though the theory has been around for many years. Tracing its roots in the United Nations system to the mid-1990's in the Economic and Social Council,
numerous organizations have adopted gender mainstreaming in some form. Strickland and Duvvury cite the UN’s “Women’s Peace and Security” report of 2002 as defining mainstreaming as:

“a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated” (17).

They further define gender mainstreaming in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding as depending “upon recognizing and working in response to the different experiences of women and men related to conflict and peacebuilding” (17). In short, the purpose of gender mainstreaming is to identify gender inequities and develop methods to reduce and eliminate those inequities. Specifically, in terms of peacebuilding, the intent is to identify various gender needs in the society, and respond in an effective manner.

Mainstreaming consists of numerous components, most of which are reflected in the text of 1325. These include considering differences between men and women in their activities, responsibilities, experiences, etc., and how these may influence their experiences in different ways; being conscious of the language used, and how it may impact men and women differently; disaggregating data based on sex; developing research projects with a gender balance; soliciting women for their views on decisions; making the “equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities” a priority in problem-solving; and to overall attempt to maintain a gender perspective (Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview 3 - 4, 16). These are only some of the goals of gender mainstreaming policy, and each organization develops their own specific policies, but this list serves to establish the general structure of mainstreaming.

Though it is most widely known in the context of 1325, Joyce Marie Mushaben points out that as a policy, gender mainstreaming was adopted by the European Union in 1996. Initially intended for internal EU politics and its bureaucratic institutions, the policy has become integrated into the EU’s development policies. Furthermore, the nature of the European Union
requires that all new member states adopt the policy. Thus the Western-European policy adopted by fifteen states is now, by default, also accepted by the twelve ascension states. In these ways, Mushaben suggests that the gender policies of the European Union have been “supranationalized” (373). Mainstreaming is now part of European Union interactions. More than that, it is part of development, human rights and peace discourse within and outside of Europe.

With the adoption of the EU and UN policies, gender mainstreaming has become a term used throughout policy and NGO circles. Unfortunately, its use has not been consistent. The definition seems either nebulous in that it can lack clear parameters, or cumbersome in that it can be so specific within an organization that it becomes nearly impossible to practice. In general usage, it is an attempt to develop gender equality in policy making. Noeleen Heyzer\textsuperscript{13} describes the goal in respect to peace as being:

“to avoid making gender an ‘add-on’ by insisting that every aspect of a given activity, such as peace or disarmament negotiations or post-conflict operations, be assessed for its gender implications” (Women 7).

In other words, the intent is to keep women and gender from being on the periphery of peace processes. Instead, gender should be a consideration at all stages of a peace process.

We should also recognize mainstreaming policy and theory do not, and never did, intend to be the only policy in the development of women’s (and gender’s) equal inclusion in government and decision-making. Under the EU paradigm, women-specific programming is not supposed to be supplanted by mainstreaming. In 1996, EU Commissioners adopted the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and women-specific policy at the core of their gender policy. As a result, all levels of EU policy, programming and funding must consider how gender equality will be promoted (Mushaben 374-5). Similarly, the United Nations has explicitly stated that other “targeted interventions” should be implemented alongside mainstreaming measures (Gender

\textsuperscript{13} At the time of this quotation, Heyzer was Executive Director of UNIFEM. She is currently the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
Mainstreaming: An Overview vi). They insist that mainstreaming itself should be a malleable policy—one that is based upon a particular sector and its focus (Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview 2). Keeping this in mind, we can identify a number of benefits that gender mainstreaming offers women and political processes.

The positives

Gender mainstreaming, in the first few years it has been functioning, clearly offers several positive contributions to women in politics and peacebuilding. A concrete outline of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations context can be seen in UNIFEM’s work. Their report, Securing Peace, can provide us with a general picture of the United Nations vision of women’s participation in peacebuilding. In many ways, it is very promising. It encourages education: both for women (leaders) in political skills, and for all participants (in negotiations) on gender issues. It promotes women leaders in developing networks with one another, and calls for the presence of gender advisors (Securing). Perhaps most intriguing is the concept that “the world’s largest international security institution has now publicly declared that attention to gender is integral to ‘doing security’ (“Enhancing” 139). This may be stretching the institution’s intent, but the possibilities of such recognition abound. Clearly, the United Nations is aware of many gender issues, and desires to raise gender awareness in those who are participating in their peace negotiations.

Most obviously, the greatest benefit of gender mainstreaming is the fact that it recognizes the important contributions women can make to political systems in general and peace processes in particular. These potential contributions range from the sense of inter-relatedness many women may be attuned to due to their socialization, to different perceptions of power because of their marginalized status (Mushaben 374). Mainstreaming enables women’s particular experiences and social skills to contribute to their political environment.
To expand upon this insight, Strickland and Duvvury also recognize gender mainstreaming as having:

“transformative potential because it requires changes in organizational cultures and ways of thinking and shifts in the goals, structures, and resource allocations of international agencies, governments, and non-governmental organizations” (26).

In other words, mainstreaming gender offers the potential to radically change how gender is perceived in decision-making at all its levels. The very suggestion of this, much less the official acknowledgement of its need and multi-lateral adoption, is monumentally important in the development of gender equality.

Marilee Karl discusses how such measures as gender mainstreaming can be highly effective in transforming structures. Citing Scandinavian nations’ policies of quotas and affirmative action, she notes that women’s participation and representation in formal politics in these states has increased. She also suggests exploring options such as political training for women, the formation of women’s political parties and organizations, or the development of women’s sections within parties. If these efforts are long-term, and funded, Karl argues that they will increase women’s participation in the public sphere (69-78). The increase in representation is important, as it can influence the political culture, if women are present in substantial numbers.\(^{14}\) (63).

These are all important contributions gender mainstreaming can make towards the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. Any efforts to increase women’s participation in politics and encouragement of a gendered perspective by all should be supported by parties involved. However, severe problems exist with mainstreaming. The remainder of this section will consider some of the flaws, both in the policy and in its enactment. These flaws directly reflect women’s (and gender’s) position in peacebuilding.

\(^{14}\) The exact “critical mass” number varies by theorist or policy activist, but generally falls somewhere between 30 -50 per cent. Anne Phillips provides an in-depth discussion of the potential impact of higher levels of women’s participation in formal politics. See: Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*. 

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The problems

Gender mainstreaming has a number of benefits, as described above. The goals of including women in decision making and committing to gender awareness in peacebuilding is immeasurably important. Mainstreaming, however, cannot be relied upon to bring gender equity. It has major challenges both in its implementation and its theory. Mainstreaming should be pursued, but not at the expense of other efforts for gender equity and equality.

Overall, literature on gender mainstreaming tends to be fairly blind to the full impact of mainstreaming policies. Its proponents speak almost uniformly about the benefits women will experience from a more equitable system. Though this analysis likely has truth, it fails to recognize the benefit all of society will experience if mainstreaming policy is adopted wholeheartedly. Indeed, one of the acknowledged gains in increased gender awareness is a “more informed view of policy options and impacts” (Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview 13). A number of feminist theorists hone in on these issues and offer critiques of either the concept of gender mainstreaming, the implementation of it, or a combination of both.

Hillary Charlesworth challenges the entire concept of gender mainstreaming. First, in practice it exclusively links gender with women. Second, this limited use of gender robs it of its potential radical power to address inequality. Attempts, through 1325 and related policies, to institutionalize gender through gender mainstreaming have resulted in an abstract and complex concept being made concrete and thus simplified. Gender, within a gender mainstreaming framework, becomes a variable rather than a tool to analyze and challenge power structures ("Not")

Elizabeth Porter provides a further critique. She notes that the Beijing +5 Review carried out in 2000 undermined the power 1325 could have on government processes, as it considers issues of women and conflict as having an international, rather than local, scope. Thus, governments will likely not feel the necessity to ensure that their procedures are gender-proofed. This
places the responsibility of women’s participation on already-strained women’s organizations. In addition to this structural shrug-off, she notes that there lacks a general political will to ensure that women are part of decision making (248).

To elaborate on this critique, Porter further notes numerous instances in which mainstreaming did not occur at high levels, and women were absent from the negotiating table. In some UN missions, gender advisors had been assigned with some success, but most missions did not have any gender experts (254-5). This attitude appears to have continued, as the most recent report of the Peacebuilding Commission does not mention women, and referred to the development of gender equality only once (Report par 23). In June 2007, the NGO Working Group on Gender Peace and Security and International Alert held a roundtable to discuss the issue of gender within the framework of the Commission. They focused on the need for mainstreaming policies to be clearly outlined and supported on the ground and through the Commission’s funding, that the Commission recognizes the different experiences and needs of women in peacebuilding, as well as the need for programs to address specific issues of stereotypes against women and gender-based violence ("Enhancing"). Even in the midst of the United Nation’s apparent commitment to gender mainstreaming, this new body appears to be solidly gender-blind. The political will for women’s full participation by the higher levels of governance appears to be lackluster, regardless of the policy stipulations of gender mainstreaming.

Even the most avid supporters of gender mainstreaming echo these sentiments. In the “Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview” report by the UN’s Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues, the needs for commitment by the institution, via senior management and a level of accountability is outlined. There exists a clear awareness that gender mainstreaming requires that the leadership be whole-heartedly in support of the policy, and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to allow for grievances to be aired (Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview 27). Though these may exist to some degree in the letter of the law, they are not widely maintained by the
leadership, thus posing a major challenge to the implementation (therefore effectiveness) of gender mainstreaming policies.

In a presentation, the then-director of the UN Division of the Advancement of Women, Carolyn Hannan also addressed some of these same deficiencies. In particular, she cites the fact that gender mainstreaming still is not an integral part of activities\textsuperscript{15}. Furthermore, in light of the aforementioned UN “Gender Mainstreaming” report, the leadership’s commitment often lacks strength, and the sense very much exists of gender being an “add-on” to other policy efforts, rather than a significant issue in and of itself. Relative to this, Hannon discusses the perception of mainstreaming as being a “soft” issue. In this sense, policy makers do not reject mainstreaming, but rather are of the opinion that it is either not essential to achieve their goals or that it lacks priority. She also points out, interestingly, that the misuse of the term has diluted its importance and added even more confusion to an already complex issue. Related to this is the dilemma of a number of organizations attempting to take a “gender-neutral” position, in lieu of gender mainstreaming. This position attempts to address men and women “equally,” often without reference to gender. Feminist researchers have clearly established that gender-neutrality often results in a gender-blindness in favor of power-elite men (Hannan 8-10). The resulting confusion around the term precariously positions gender within official policy in the sense that it can be easily overlooked by decision makers or practitioners, while appearing to be addressed.

Furthermore, mainstreaming tends to overlook critical limiting factors for women. In particular, women as a group require preparation for public participation. Though some women will be able and willing to participate in the public sphere, many women have not had the opportunity to develop crucial skills. As such, women require training and confidence-building in order for them to participate in the “mainstream” (Cordero 162; Securing 5). Of course, this training runs the risk of suppressing different qualities women

\textsuperscript{15} Though Hannan’s presentation was in 2003, I have found no evidence to suggest that the attitudes she cites towards gender mainstreaming have greatly shifted.
may be able to bring into the mainstream, thus limiting the “voice” women bring to the system. Obviously, this is a balance that should be struck with a gender mainstreaming program: women must be offered the resources to participate, but those resources should not act to minimize women’s specific goals and contributions.

It is not only in its implementation that gender mainstreaming falls short. The theory itself is unable to affect the system on a fundamental level. Women’s participation is vital, but cannot in and of itself transform the political environment. Gender mainstreaming hopes only to change what emerges from the political system, not to change politics. In her article, “Women in War and Peace-Building,” Karam directly challenges this focus. She argues that it is not the quantity of women that will make a difference in peace, but the quality, or ideology, of the women who participate. One of the largest failings of gender mainstreaming is that it desires the greater participation of women at “higher” levels of government; it relies primarily on elite women to reach these levels. These women may well be part of the gender-blind system, as opposed to becoming agents of change.

Along this vein, we must acknowledge one crucial issue gender mainstreaming has encountered and is yet to be resolved: it is assumed to only apply to women. Rather, it is intended to address the needs of men, as well as those of women. Moser points out that, “[g]ender cuts across all levels of causality and shapes both women’s and men’s involvement in, and experience of, violence” (40). A truly gender-aware process cannot develop without exploring men’s, as well as women’s, roles and experiences within and around conflict, reconstruction and power. Mainstreaming is not an affirmative action for women, but an attempt to bring a consciousness of gender issues into the decision-making process. Specifically:

“in many cases, ‘gender’ and ‘gender perspectives’ have become shorthand terms for women and women-specific interventions. While gender

16 Some believe that an increase in the number of women in political office will itself transform the political environment. I would suggest that it depends on the women who hold office. If a woman achieves a high office by practicing masculine “hard” politics, I am skeptical that she will have the desire, or even the awareness, to shift her political practice to include more feminine “soft” aspects.
mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-focused policies and programs, these should be seen as adjuncts, not a substitute” (Strickland and Duvvury 17).

Mainstreaming hopes to balance the needs of both sexes, and to find solutions that reflect an equitable gender relationship. By focusing on gender mainstreaming as the path to women’s equality, we fail to notice the ways in which men’s perspectives are not considered. Though 1325, for example, does recognize this in its wording, its implementation and perception tend to have a woman-specific focus.

Other complexities exist within a blind pursuit of mainstreaming policy. Strickland and Duvvury note the difficulties with cultural relativism and gender mainstreaming. When applied to local politics, policy makers often have to marry traditional gender roles together with gender mainstreaming. Often times, the two are in conflict with one another. Some assert that gender inequities must be challenged, and a post-conflict society is the perfect situation, as traditional roles have already been disrupted. Others argue that such a society is inherently unstable, and that redefining gender roles is “an exercise in futility.” This ambivalence by policy makers has, understandably, limited the progress in mainstreaming (17).

Pankhurst supports the former stance, noting that “traditional” methods of political participation, peacebuilding and decision making tend to apply to men, leaving women in the margins or even outside the process altogether (165). The redevelopment of “traditional” methods of politics must maintain a gendered perspective, as does any method of political participation. Certainly, this highlights the complex political environment in which gender mainstreaming is being implemented, and why it cannot be expected to fully resolve gender inequalities.

All of these problems and benefits of gender mainstreaming must be taken in context. Women’s experiences within conflict have largely focused on them as victims. Their needs have not been addressed specifically in peace settlements, even when their local voices were loud. There has been a general assumption that women’s needs and desires would be the same as
men's. The international women's movement has succeeded in challenging this assumption at the highest levels. The acceptance of gender mainstreaming forces political bodies and institutions to recognize the needs of all of society, and how their decisions impact women (and men) differently. Though gender mainstreaming is certainly imperfect, both in its interpretation and implementation, its codification by the United Nations is an important landmark for gender equity.

If anything, these issues surrounding gender mainstreaming only highlight the necessity of women's increased participation in the political sphere. In terms of peacemaking, Radha Kumar emphatically asserts that women's presence is necessary in achieving a breakthrough in settlements. Not only do women's movements and groups require recognition, but leaders from the women's sector must directly participate in the negotiations. She notes many examples, including Northern Ireland, Mary Robinson's leadership of the UNHCR, Asthma Jahangir of Pakistan and Radhika Coomeraswamy of Sri Lanka. She argues that women in peace and women's movements be tapped as resources for peace processes, and be involved in peace negotiations and peacebuilding. This would provide women with greater accessibility and visibility, as well as enhancing the peace process (70-71).

Such a position highlights the argument that women's participation in peace requires far more effort than to simply "add women and stir." As Karam discusses:

"Involving women in peace negotiations...is not only a matter of providing a representative and gender-balanced number of people around the negotiating table. It is also an issue of giving voice to the needs, experiences, demands and hopes of a diverse array of people, in order to form an integral part of an evolving society (10)."

Women's mere presence in the policy making system is insufficient. The various aspects of gender, inequality and power need to be addressed in a settlement process. It is necessary, according to Karam, for women to be "integrated in the entire process of negotiations, such that the outcome of these is fundamentally affected and reflective of this integration on a long-term basis" (11).
Even assuming that women are able to gain access to the higher levels of political hierarchy, women are just as susceptible to negative political practices as men (Karl 63). Having more women involved in the process does not automatically mean that the environment will shift, or that "women's issues" will be more supported. Marilee Karl refers to a Division for the Advancement of Women report, which utilizes the theory of minority behavior, in saying that women:

"absorb the dominant culture to such an extent that they tend to disassociate themselves from other women, to underrate their own successes and to perceive any discrimination they meet as a result of their own shortcomings...That theory may explain why lone women have often appeared not to bring distinctively female values to their office" (64).

Of course, this theory assumes only a small number of women holding office, thus leaving open the critical mass argument. It is rare enough for women to hold more than a significant minority in elected positions or national institutions. To achieve this in a post-conflict situation is almost unheard of.

With all of the difficulties women have regarding participation in peacebuilding through formal channels, many ways exist in which they contribute to variegated environments. Resolution 1325 makes it clear that women need be a part of the peacebuilding process, but the policy of mainstreaming and the Security Council's resolution do not exist in a vacuum. Structural inequities are a symptom of the wider issue of a gender imbalance. Gender dynamics, though expressed in and supported by our decision-making processes, cannot be changed by policy decisions. In order to alter the gender dynamics in post-conflict societies, we must have an understanding of them. The final portion of this chapter will begin to wade into the difficult territory of women, peace and gender dynamics.

In Karl, 64.

18 The notable exception would be Rwanda. Post genocide, women have maintained a 49% representation in the legislature. In 2008, they became the first nation in which women held a majority in the legislature at 56%. Even with this majority representation, women in Rwanda face many problems, including access to education and domestic violence, which are shared by women in other post-conflict societies.
Women, Peace and Gender Dynamics

Women have different experiences in conflict, but the question remains as to how these differences really affect how their participation in peacebuilding processes. Would an increase of women in peacebuilding actually alter the outcome of these processes? There are two parts to this question. The first reflects one of the primary issues gender mainstreaming attempts to address: women’s voices are important for a thorough approach to peace. Though mainstreaming has attempted to address the absence of women, it has not attempted to change the processes which silence many women (and men). A feminist approach to peacebuilding, however, can begin to identify some of these marginalizing processes and provide options for re-approaching peacebuilding. The second issue hidden within the above question is the prevailing assumption that women are more peaceful than men. This is an assumption which must be dispelled, as it actually contributes to the marginalization of women. The remainder of this chapter will utilize feminist theory and some examples of women peacemakers to explore the possibility of a gendered peace which includes and empowers women.

Feminist peacebuilding

In spite of all of difficulties with women’s participation, feminists have been proactive in identifying and attempting to correct gender blindness in peacebuilding. McKay clearly outlines the goal of a feminist peacebuilding as being to:

“call attention to women’s and girl’s oppression, marginalization and threatened security, and to establish a peacebuilding agenda that involves women as key actors” (Women 167).

Kumar seconds McKay’s point, and suggests that women are not simply beneficial to a peace process, but necessary:

“only when you recognize the contributions of the women’s movements and the women’s groups, and include women representatives from those movements and groups in negotiations, that you are going to have a breakthrough” (70).
Certainly, it is difficult to imagine how an adequate peace can develop when half of the population is absent, or barely represented, in the peace processes. More than this, however, is the fact that women's peacebuilding does not simply support more traditional peace processes, but that it really expands the potential for peacebuilding, as well as individual women's own agency.

For a concrete example of such influence and empowerment, Cordero shares her observations of the Peruvian women's movement during and after that nation's conflict in the 1980's and 90's:

"Assuming essentially political functions, the women's movement became the accepted interlocutor of civil society and was able to broaden its presence and impact on the regional public scene. This new situation generated changes in the individual environment and a new identity—of being a rural, indigenous woman—came into being. They were more informed, more independent, more secure; they felt capable of doing many things: they could speak out, express their opinions, and make decisions. They had more self-esteem. How others perceived them also varied substantially, but at least women were now considered important, above all because of the strength that they showed" (158).

This analysis is a clear example of how women's peacebuilding has the potential to allow for a change in how women perceive themselves.

More than their own development, the position of women as being within the private sphere can enable them to bring particular features to their peacebuilding. Susan McKay and Cheryl de la Rey were able to identify some attributes that were common in these women's approaches through their workshop with women peacebuilders in South Africa. Particularly, they noted that the focus of their peacebuilding was psychological, value-oriented and holistic. They saw peacebuilding as "a broad sweep of processes and pragmatic initiatives bringing people together." They emphasized collaboration, advocacy and networking. Additionally, they recognized that their actions were largely marginalized, but that they were distinct from—and as important as—men's peacebuilding (238). This is a clear example of how women may peacebuild differently due to their different positions and roles in society. Rather than detracting from peacebuilding, the "feminine" approaches of these women actually offered a powerful, albeit alternative,
process to peace. It is possible that the methods these women used could transform their society and peacebuilding theory.

Donna Pankhurst develops this idea, in that she explicitly links gender, justice and peace. Inequity and marginalization lead to conflict, and usually violent conflict. Though peacebuilding implicitly desires an equitable society, women peacebuilders are highly conscious of the necessity for social equality. This equality is necessary not only in the national framework, but also in the institutional structures. Women have been marginalized from citizenship, and thus those who are involved in peace work emphasize the development of an inclusive society. In this sense, women's experiences can directly influence the prioritization of peacebuilding goals. This is particularly relevant in the grassroots level.

**Grassroots women demanding peace**

The grassroots level has become the focus of women's activism in many communities, and offers the potential to bridge women's everyday lives to the role as active citizens. UNIFEM describes women's general participation at this level within post-conflict societies as:

"a locally driven, locally owned and inclusive process where women can assert their right to participate in the decisions being taken about their future and which will result in the signing and implementation of a gender-sensitive peace agreement" *(Securing 4)*.

The local, grassroots element of women's participation endeavors to open national and perhaps international space for women to participate. According to UNIFEM's analysis, these macro-level forms of participation will remain linked to the local process, and ideally reflect the everyday needs and desires of ordinary women.

In terms of the background of women's grassroots activity, Karl notes that it has increased in the past several decades, but that it actually has a long history throughout cultures and the world (19). Women's lack of political suffrage resulted in the development of informal, extra-political participation. She further points out that the network aspect of the grassroots level is
important to women’s empowerment, as “it is through the involvement in groups that people most often begin to develop their awareness and the ability to take action and bring about change” (14).

Cynthia Cockburn suggests that activism at this level by women is an act of “double solidarity.” They act not only for their communities and families, but also for women (From 208). In her analysis of women’s motivations for joining Women in Black in the Balkans, Bat Shalom in Israel and community centers in Northern Ireland, she concludes that the fact that women’s needs post-conflict are often ignored (e.g. not reflected in peace accords) or co-opted and exploited (e.g. women’s symbolism used by elites for their own goals) lead many women to feel they must act for themselves. Their grassroots action then becomes not solely about the alleviation of political, economic and social hardships, but also about reclaiming women’s agency.

The politics practiced by these grassroots women presents an alternative process. Women peacebuilders, in contrast to many other political actors, have a history of recognizing the interconnectedness of informal and formal politics. Peace, too many women working at this level, is an establishment of basic needs—it is “a way of being,” not a power-play. In many ways, the peace sought by women at this level could be characterized as positive peace, in that they endeavor to address more than simply the cessation of violence. These women see peace differently than the traditional vision of the political elite or leaders of institutions, which has resulted in them remaining on the outskirts of decision-making (Porter 256-7).

These organizations and networks also look different from the traditional, masculine political organization. They utilize more relational approaches and favor participatory over hierarchical models. Even as these networks move from the grassroots and into the national, regional and international realms, they still maintain their informal techniques (Rabrenovic and Roskos 48). In reference to a Peruvian women’s movement, Isabel Cordero notes that these women, through their networks of and between families and communities, developed the “basic fabric of a new civil society”
Certainly, women's impact at this level has the potential to be exceptionally strong.

Of course, women's grassroots peacebuilding faces numerous obstacles. One of these challenges is the need for participating women to be trained. Frequently, women who enter community activism have limited political education. They are products of their environment, and having often not had investment in their development, often lack confidence to effect the change they see as necessary. As such, the training tends to focus not simply on political activism, but elements such as "confidence building." One such training program, The Women's Leadership Program, offered worldwide by the US-based Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), is discussed by Mary Jo Larson and Xiaoping Tian. They note that the training intends to "strengthen self-confidence, situation analysis, skills development and joint-planning" (57). Essentially, the training not only develops political skills, but also personal skills. As one of the trainers is quoted as saying: "When people discover themselves, they have ownership, and ownership leads to sustainable results" (59). It is a holistic view of training, and it is not unique in women's network training.

These aspects of women's grassroots organization can have an effect beyond the individual participants. McKay has examined the prevalence of women's peacebuilding occurring in the grassroots. Rather than being disadvantaged by not being part of the public sphere, women's grassroots activism has often benefited from its informal approach. Women have been crucial to establishing normalcy in their communities, and have been able to utilize unconventional methods. They have emphasized processes such as reconciliation, as opposed to retributive action, and have focused on the psychosocial, relational and spiritual aspects of peace (McKay Women 167). Though McKay encourages women's participation at the elite level (Women

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19 Access to education in general is often limited for girls and women, particularly in conflict situations. See: Elaine Zuckerman and Marcia Greenberg, "The Gender Dimensions," 76. The lack of education, and the stereotypes and confidence issues that such a lack generates, is one more major hurdle women encounter in entering the political system.
169), she also makes a clear case for women’s informal, grassroots peacebuilding. The flexibility and creativity that is possible at this level allows for powerful and relevant programs. Beyond simply encouraging the recognition of their work at the grassroots, Elizabeth Porter also suggests that this serves as an invaluable training ground for women. She asserts that women’s grassroots peacebuilding develops “transferable skills” which can be utilized at the elite levels, specifically at negotiations (259).

Again, women’s apparent drawbacks may actually be turned into an advantage for these organizations. This seemed to be the case with the Peruvian women’s movements explored by Cordero. She notes that the organizations were seen as “neither useful nor dangerous” (155) to the Shining Path or the Peruvian government. This lack of attention by the elite of both parties to the conflict, coupled with the fact that women had more capacity to act and greater mobility than men during the conflict (again likely due to being seen as useless and harmless) allowed the women to effectively organize. During the conflict, women’s movements expanded awareness of human rights, responded to the country’s economic crisis and moved to preserve family and community life. The networks of women activists were strong and effective throughout the conflict (157). This effectiveness can be directly correlated to their perceived powerlessness by the power elite.

The way women’s grassroots organizations interact with the rest of society may be relatively unique. In an analysis of the differences between men and women in terms of social capital, Vivien Lowndes struggles with the intricacies of women’s participation. She notes that the empirical study she relies upon, a British survey of social interaction, does not signify significant statistical difference between men and women’s development and use of social capital. She does note a couple of categories in which women are more socially connected than men, namely in their community (neighbor contact) and family connections. Given that women and men in Britain appear to be similarly inclined to follow and engage in important social issues, these areas of difference may actually be significant in highlighting the difference in women’s engagement. Women are significantly less represented than men
within the formal British political system, but appear to be more connected on an informal level. Women become involved in local movements because of immediate needs, while men’s motivations tend to center around abstract ideas of duties and causes. Thus, women’s informal participation can be seen as a benefit, in that they are engaged with their communities, or a drawback, in that they do not pursue formal politics to the same extent as men (24 – 25).

Another significant barrier to the effectiveness of women’s grassroots work is the context in which they are operating. I have pointed out some instances in which women’s peace work creates an important political space within a society, but the environment may be such that the creation of such a space is extremely difficult or even dangerous. Maja Korac offers such an example through her analysis of women’s alternative political mobilization within the former Yugoslavia (511). Though the work was vital for participants, these organizations were unable to alter the ethno-political landscape. Korac notes that the women’s movements in opposition to the militarization of and politics of exclusion within the former Yugoslavia, largely because of piecemeal support from small NGO’s and international feminist organization. This support was not enough for them to be able to affect change within the increasingly alarming political atmosphere. They did, however, garner enough attention from the political elites, who actively portrayed women participating in these organizations as traitors (521). Korac describes goals of these organizations as (re)developing relationships of trust, providing space for traumatized women to come to terms with their experiences, and ultimately work towards group reconciliation. The intention was to create “positive and constructive approaches to crises and create[] spaces for mutual understanding and ongoing productive exchange” (515 – 16).

Particularly interesting in Korac’s analysis is the fact that the years of ethnic conflict in the region actually contributed to the formation of grassroots women’s groups. Furthermore, these groups, largely functioning from a feminist consciousness, were made up of women who had not

20 Korac analyses groups in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia.
necessarily previously identified themselves as feminist. Their understanding of gender dynamics and gendered dimensions of violence developed through their work and participation in these groups (551). Unfortunately, the impact of this expansion of feminist understanding within the conflict society was limited, as were the groups' larger peace agendas, as the groups had separated themselves (and were separated) from the wider political processes (Korac 516). Despite being marginalized within the national and regional political discourse, many of these women's groups had clear import for the participants. The example of women's action within the former Yugoslavia clearly demonstrates the positive impact the grassroots can have, but also the difficulties which such action faces within a violent society.

The peacebuilding work that many women practice allows the opportunity for them to effect change for themselves, their families, their communities and their societies. The development of such projects can truly transform individual women's lives. More than this, however, the acknowledgement of the value of women and the feminine can serve to change the way we think about peace and politics and become truly transformative on multiple levels. Peacebuilding from a feminist paradigm can enhance political systems by changing the way we understand politics. Within this paradigm, the feminist vision of "power to" rather than the patriarchal concept of "power over" becomes relevant.

In light of these varied approaches to women's participation in peacebuilding, it is clear that the relationship between women and peace must be investigated. In order to explore women's potential contributions to peace, we must consider women's relationship with it. In particular, I need to address the charges of essentialism that arise when discussing women as peacemakers. Women are often associated with peace, but little effort is usually made to understand the development of this association. The rest of

21 Though Korac clearly acknowledges the minimal impact these women's groups had on the former Yugoslavia, she considers the reason for this to be primarily due to the lack of support and acknowledgment of women as valid actors, and acknowledge that men and women are gendered actors within their societies. See: Maja Korac, "Gender, Conflict and Peace-Building," 518.
this section will explore the gender dynamics of peace, beginning with an exploration into the claims of women's inevitable relationship to peace.

Women and Peace: Beautiful Souls?

Though it is important to stress that women should be involved with peace, it is vitally important that we be careful not to conflate women and peace. This is a trap that many, even feminists and activists, fall into, as it fits comfortably with our already socialized gender stereotypes. Ann Tickner, in her critical essay “Why Women Can’t Run the World.” specifically addresses this conflation in terms of women’s economic wellbeing:

“understanding and working to lessen various insecurities that women face can only be achieved if we acknowledge a need for diminishing socially constructed gender hierarchies that result in the devaluation of women’s lives and their economic and social contributions to society... the fact that the majority of subsistence farmers in Africa are women, while men are more frequently found in the more prosperous cash crop sector, can hardly be explained by biology alone. Culturally assigned roles, which have little to do with biology, diminish women’s socioeconomic position in most societies” (10).

By failing to challenge all of our stereotypes, we fail to challenge the inequities inherent in our gender dynamic. Tickner proceeds to explain that the intent of feminist scholarship in international relations is to expand the discourse around peace and conflict, asking new questions that reflect women’s realities (11). As these realities are explored, so then can the underlying inequities. This would lead to the ability to address gender imbalances, women’s needs, and their desires.

Addressing the assumed peacefulness of women, Charlesworth warns us of its limitations in that it tends towards a “one-dimensional view of their lives” ("Are Women" 357). Resolution 1325, she feels, encourages such a view, and leads to an institutional orthodoxy of women’s peacefulness. Instead, she challenges us (and thus our institutions) to consider the multiple, varied and contradictory relationships between women, war and peace ("Are Women" 359).
With a similar intent, Elshtain’s in-depth analysis of women’s relationship to violence, war and peace in *Women and War* seeks to pry open this discourse of gender dynamics. In this text, she identifies ways in which women, at least in Western liberal-democratic societies, maintain and perpetuate militarism, while at the same time become victims to it. On the one hand, women are society’s “Beautiful Souls”—protectors of virtue and innocence (*Women* 140 – 9). They are “non-combatants”: actual and symbolic innocents. They are not active in the fighting, and do not make the decisions to go to war. In fact, they are the vessels of peace and comfort. But they are “needed to keep the whole thing going” (*Women* 183), caring for the injured, encouraging the fighters. Women may be designated as the peaceful half of the population, but this is only due to the split between the public and private spheres\(^\text{22}\) (*Women* 180 – 93).

Porter seconds this sentiment, by noting that women can be just as divisive and cruel as men can be. Many women actively participate in the hatred, bitterness, anger and fear that is so pervasive in conflict societies. Sometimes, women exhibit these sentiments more strikingly than men, as it is their children and spouses that are hurt or killed in the conflict (261). A desire for peace is not instinctive to women, but a goal that is identified and nurtured by specific women, and men.

Uncritically associating women with peace disadvantages both women and peace. Women are assigned a role that may not reflect their true desires, thus limiting their agency. Peace is thus given a simplistic veneer, making it easier to dismiss. Instead, we should recognize the complex relationship women have with peace, and the complexities of peace as discussed in the previous chapter. Women participate intensely in peace movements not because peace is innate to them, but because of their experiences. The cost of war is high to everyone, but women often suffer the costs for their male

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\(^{22}\) Elshtain is referring here to the cultural role of women as a group. She also explores, in depth, women who take up arms. She presents her “Beautiful Souls” argument not to contribute to the assumption of women as passive objects in war, but portray the artificiality of this association. This artificiality will be explored in more depth in the following chapter. See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War*, 163 – 80.
relatives and their children, as well as themselves. Additionally, women are rarely part of the process of deciding to engage in war. Women's involvement in peace work is largely due to their experiences, not an "essential" association.

With this said, we can make links between women, particularly feminist theory, and peace. McKay develops these connections. Beyond the actual experiences of women noted at the beginning of the chapter, McKay speaks of the importance feminist theory plays in peace theory. She asserts that understanding oppression is central to feminist theory, and that peace, as well as feminism, "are both committed to the elimination of...coercive systems of domination as a basis of interaction between individuals and groups" ("Gendering" 94). This directly corresponds with the sentiment of Cynthia Cockburn, who focuses on the concept of "Othering." She sees three ways of Othering in conflict: sexist/patriarchal, ethnic/political and classist/economic. If we Other in one of these ways, she asserts, we Other in all of these ways ("Keynote"). In this sense, feminist conceptions of peace are not simply insightful to peacebuilding, but actually necessary to the project.

Applying this understanding of gender and power, it becomes even clearer that women—and the feminine—must be active in any peace process. It is vital that we recognize the important and often unique attributes women can bring to peacebuilding. For example, Porter notes the increased empathy women can have towards the perceived enemy, and their ability to come together and utilize a "collective power." She also highlights women's focus on immediate survival issues (e.g. housing, food, etc.), as well as unique approaches women have used to achieve their goals (261).

In terms of how women may contribute to peace, UNIFEM's 2005 report, *Securing the Peace*, outlines numerous ways in which women are linked to peace. They include: a persistent presence by women's organizations; the ability to develop the foundation to, catalyst for and bridge within negotiations; the ability to support and hold accountable peace processes; the provision of important perspectives; and the ability to sustain
peace at various levels (Securing 1-3). These links, however, are not always recognized or utilized.

Far too often, women's experiences of conflict and their potential contributions to peace are not given appropriate weight in post-conflict peacebuilding. Marie Mulholland provides a clear challenge to practitioners and providers of aid in post-conflict societies:

"We must begin by producing the means to allow those furthest out on the margins to become active participants in their own futures, not just targets for whatever whim strikes those in authority or those with a violent predisposition" (176).

Women must become active parts of peace programs. Peacebuilding allows for the flexibility to address women's needs and gender inequities, but they are all too often ignored. The prevalent assumption has been that gender is a "soft" issue, which will be addressed when the pressing, "hard" issues (e.g. arms, economy, and infrastructure) are dealt with (Pankhurst 158).

Unfortunately, the "hard" issues can remain open for years, if they are ever fully resolved, and may themselves include gendered nuances. Additionally, this attitude ignores that gender is inextricably linked to other inequities in our societies.

Strickland and Duvvury offer a damning critique of efforts to engage women in peacebuilding:

"Efforts to introduce gender-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding have met with limited results because they fail to address underlying norms that define gender relations and power dynamics. Peacebuilding, despite recent progress toward being more gender-sensitive, gives inadequate attention to the construction of gender norms and processes by which they can be transformed to ensure more equitable gender relations" (2, emphasis added).

The above clearly summarizes my own sense of gender and peacebuilding. Great progress has certainly been made, but that progress has largely been on the surface of gender interactions. The underlying forces of gender roles and power dynamics have not been deeply considered, challenged or harnessed.
Feminist Peacebuilding?

Women’s experiences of conflict are diverse and important. These experiences have traditionally been ignored in peace work, however. In light of this, an expansive, gender-aware peacebuilding can make it possible for these experiences to come to the fore. As important as what women do in peacebuilding is how they are seen. In particular, we must fight the urge to see women in these conflict and post-conflict situations as victims. Doing so limits how effectively they are able to act as political agents. Though women in these situations face major difficulties and have often suffered enormously, they must be allowed the space and resources to recognize that they have control over their destinies.

The study of peace has been expanded to include women and their experiences through both the deepening understanding of the complexities of peace and the contributions made by feminist scholars. Feminine concepts such as interdependence, relationships and discourse have been added to the peace toolbox, if only by theorists. Furthermore, women have become much more involved in actual peace work. Not only has the seminal passing of 1325 insured that women will always have the right to participate in peacebuilding and its decision-making, but it also validates the necessity to address the needs of society, regardless and inclusive of gender. Women have also demonstrated the capacity and desire to build peace through the powerful and extensive networks developed locally, regionally and even nationally. The face of conflict resolution has certainly changed over the past few decades.

This change is not yet complete. Women continue to be marginalized in decision-making, and their needs post-conflict are often not met. “Women’s issues” are still too often seen as soft issues, and fail to garner an adequate response in peace negotiations. Women are frequently absent from negotiations, and peace work of women tends to remain at the grassroots level, outside of the mainstream political process. Women’s full participation is vital. Not only do women have much to contribute to the process, but their complete inclusion is also necessary in terms of citizenship. A system which
does not engage all of its citizens is an inadequate one. A system which consciously marginalizes an entire group is an unjust one. Peace cannot flourish where inequality exists unchallenged.

For the sake of women's citizenship and the development of positive peace, the work begun in earnest by the developers of the Beijing Platform for Action and accepted by the UN delegations that passed 1325 must continue. Gender mainstreaming endeavors must be developed and funded. Women's presence in political and social institutions should continue to be a focus. Women's work at the grassroots should continue to be developed, and more female local and community leaders should expand their participation to national office and international institutions. Continuing with these efforts will mitigate some of the difficulties women suffer in post-conflict situations. They will likely also help peacebuilding efforts to develop a more just and inclusive society.

An over-reliance on mainstreaming, however, will not address the underlying gender inequities. In particular, the feminine does not garner the respect it deserves within the political system. I believe that this is encouraged by the linking of women to peace. By associating peace with women and the feminine, peace becomes devalued. This devaluation is clear in the way conflict issues are prioritized during peace processes. Masculine, hard, issues, such as policing and disarmament, are given priority over feminine, soft issues like education and health provision. The absence of significant numbers of women in policymaking positions allows for these decisions to be made with little internal critique. The result is that the peace program pursued is imbalanced. The urgent "masculine" issues are tackled without the support of the superfluous "feminine" issues. The gender blindness in peacebuilding is not simply an oversight, but a continuation—even solidification—of an oppressive and harmful gendered political system.

The answer is not, of course, for women and feminism to reject or avoid peace and peacebuilding. Instead, the development of a peaceful society free of the structural violence of sexism should be a priority in their work. Such a goal has the potential to open the door to mitigating other
forms of structural violence. In particular, all actors at all levels (as well as theorists) must be encouraged to develop a gender consciousness. The feminine should not simply become part of the discourse, but also become valued as integral to human interaction. This will only happen if feminist scholars and activists continue to hold individuals and organizations accountable, and continue to identify ways in which gender influences our decisions.

Just as importantly as demanding the political elite are gender aware is the encouragement of every woman to participate in politics. A critical goal of peacebuilders should be to develop the political agency of every person, particularly women\(^\text{23}\). Every woman should have the opportunity to realize that she has power over her own life, that she is capable in effecting change in the world around her, and that she is qualified to do so. It is in this vein that I suggest that the introduction of a politics of motherhood may offer an opportunity for some women to realize their agency.

The following chapter will introduce the concept of a feminist politics of motherhood. It will also further develop important relevant aspects of feminist theory, and how motherhood can contribute to feminism and politics. In the fourth chapter, I will return to the concept of peacebuilding by developing a sense of how such a politics of motherhood could interact with peacebuilding. Finally, I will present the case of women and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, and conclude with how a maternal peacebuilding could augment the work that is being done in the region.

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\(^{23}\) Again, my stress on the urgency of women’s participation is not to exclude or marginalize men. Women are so under-represented when compared to men of similar class, ethnicity, etc, that it will be a very long while before women achieve even equal numbers as men in political presence. The urgency on women’s targeted participation is not due to any sort of primacy of women over men, but because of the severe imbalance between the sexes in terms of participation.
Chapter 3: Maternal Thinking and a Feminist Politics of Motherhood

The previous two chapters have established the limits of the current gendered approach to peacebuilding. Though gender mainstreaming has been important in terms of enabling some women to join political processes, such approaches to expanding women’s access to decision-making and political power have largely relied upon attempting to open the doors of political institutions. Mainstreaming therefore has not been able to address a core problem: that the possibilities for many women to enter the public sphere are constrained by the demands within their private lives. A significant barrier to women’s participation in politics continues to be the placement of women’s roles and experiences in a private sphere that is shut off from the public sphere. Thus, even given the concerted efforts made in the last few decades towards women’s equal (or at least greater) participation in the political realm, many women continue to be marginalized from politics generally and the work of peacebuilding in particular. This thesis focuses on the everyday experiences of mothering to argue that for those women who engage in it, mothering can give rise to certain ways of knowing and possible political practices which ought to be given space within processes of peacebuilding.

Motherhood has been concurrently marginalized and sentimentalized throughout the world. Though it is only one experience held by many women, and the details of the experience vary significantly from woman to woman, its images and structures have a powerful impact on women’s lives. This chapter will explore aspects of a feminist re-visioning of motherhood, reflecting on the seminal feminist text Of Woman Born, and the potential for a maternal standpoint as developed by Sara Ruddick. From this basis a feminist politics of motherhood is introduced as a way to challenge the invisibility of motherhood while respecting the complex and nuanced experiences of mothers and accepting their social power. Serious concerns, however, are presented by
feminist critics of theories of motherhood, and these will be discussed at the beginning and conclusion of the chapter. The over-arching intent is to develop the foundation in this chapter for arguing that maternal thinking and practices can inform a process of peacebuilding, as will be developed in Chapter Four.

**Maternal Thinking**

Maternalism – the idea that women’s experiences as mothers give rise to certain ways of being, perceiving and acting – was an early influence in feminism. At the turn of the 19th century a particular strain of the early feminist movement believed women’s traditional roles as mothers should be a basis for their political participation. Ellen Key, an American who became synonymous with the term, insisted that women both had a right to motherhood and the rights of motherhood; by being mothers, women had a moral perspective that the political system needed (Pierson 270-2). In fact, Key went so far as to insist that women should become more “motherly” in order to justify their participation in the political sphere (274-5). This aspect of feminist thinking was sidelined by the gaining of universal suffrage in the United States and other Western societies and by the fact that many later feminist thinkers saw the essentialism underpinning such claims about mothers as problematic, as was the possibility of seeing an emancipatory potential in motherhood.

Maternalism, in this context, seemed to rest largely on essentialist foundations. It relied on the idea summarized by the Oxford English Dictionary definition that maternalism consists of “the attitudes and instincts characteristic of a mother; the natural behaviour of a mother towards her child” ("Maternalism, N"). Reliant on the idea that there are natural “attitudes and instincts,” which all mothers possess and experience, such a definition assumes that a woman’s biological ability to reproduce determines her behavior and thinking. This conception of the link between motherhood and womanhood ties mothers’ and women’s destinies to their biology and
assumes that there are inevitable natural and instinctual behaviors (such as nurturing and caring) which arise from bodily experiences.

Such a conception of a maternalist influence on women’s political agency has also historically resulted in the limitation of appropriate concepts of motherhood and womanhood, and consequently excluded many women from accessing this source of moral and political power. As Joan Tronto explains in terms of women in the American political system:

"the morality of women was tied to motherhood, and it was tied to combating the influence of immigrant, Black, and working-class men. As a result, the image of "moral women" often excluded women of color, immigrant women, poor women, lesbians, and women who were not "fit" mothers" (2).

Tronto continues by noting that this image resulted in some women’s realities being excluded for the benefit of some other women’s inclusion in the public sphere.

Such narrow views of womanhood have been successfully challenged throughout the second wave of feminism. As later feminism began to dispute the idea that biology is destiny and argue instead that gender is socially constructed, mothering came to be understood as less a natural consequence of biological propensities and more a consequence of social, political and cultural constructions of mothering underpinned by the gendered division of power in societies. For example, feminist psychologist Nancy Chodorow linked the development of gender differences directly to (female) mothers being the primary child-carers. These gender differences are then perpetuated in the next generation, as girl-children grow up to be nurturing and empathetic future mothers, and boy-children develop as more independent, and thus less likely to nurture a child himself. These gender differentiations are far from inevitable, and Chodorow argues that effective co-parenting by men and women would eliminate (or at least severely minimize) these differences (218-9).

During the second wave of feminism, feminist theorists began to attempt to understand the idea and process of motherhood in ways that rejected its sentimentalization and mystification. In 1976, the poet Adrienne
Rich published a text on motherhood which has proven to be important for a feminist understanding of motherhood. In this work, she considers motherhood, as practiced, a patriarchal institution. She draws from her own experiences as a mother, as well as academic research and popular culture, to identify the repressive elements of motherhood. According to Rich, many women have become trapped in the role of motherhood, preventing them from fully developing as women, and preventing their children from escaping the oppression of patriarchy. According to Rich’s thinking, motherhood is actually an “essential relationship” between mother and child, one which holds great power, and has its origins in a primordial human system (127). Yet, because this is a power which men do not have access to, a patriarchal structure of misogyny has been developed to “lash women to their bodies” (13), which also serves to exonerate men from an engaged fatherhood and causes a schism between the public and private spheres. Though this structure can offer power to women, it more often degrades them (46 -52). The patriarchal institution of motherhood, in order to establish a connection with men’s offspring, equalizes maternal power (64). It is in fact the need to equalize maternal power that has spurred the development of patriarchy. This system, in turn, has led to the institution of motherhood, which is imposed upon women, rather than being the “natural” process of mothering.

Rich opens her text with a discussion of the particular needs of the human child: it is utterly helpless for several years, and takes even longer to reach a level of maturity in order to care for itself. The need for a child’s care for many years is undeniable. The fact that the responsibility for this care has seemed to fall almost exclusively on women is due, Rich asserts, to a social construction. This construction is self-perpetuating, as mothers “imprint” their children with the patriarchal values under which they live (61). It is in

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24 It should be noted that Rich makes a distinction between what she terms the essential relationship and the “magical” powers of motherhood which patriarchy attributes to women (see Rich Of Woman Born 13). Thus, contemporary readers should differentiate her use of the word “essence” to describe a specific aspect of the biological relationship between a mother and infant/child as opposed to a metaphysical essential element of womanhood.

25 This equalization stems from the “ownership” of women and children by men.
this way that the institution of motherhood (through the patriarchal family) corrupts the relationship between the mother and child (127). Under this paradigm, the institution of motherhood results in a silent but powerful repression of mothers. As we all have had mothers, and daily interact with mothers, this repression affects all of society.

While Rich traces the emergence of the ‘patriarchal institution of motherhood’ to the power struggle between maternal and patriarchal power, other feminists have traced the conception of the patriarchal family prevalent in the West to the very origins of liberal democracy. This conception of the family involves a nuclear family based on a heterosexual relationship. Within this structure, men/fathers participate in the public world of political citizenship and economic production. Women/mothers attend to the domestic affairs of the family, providing care for the children and comfort for their husband. As Moira Gatens outlines:

“It is assumed in liberal political theory that the citizen is an individual who is also a husband/potential father; that is, who has at his disposal the services of a domestic worker in order that he be free to compete efficiently in the labour market” (37).

A domestic realm is foundational to liberal democracy. Gatens further notes Rousseau’s use of the dichotomy of the feminine and masculine as part of this foundation. The political realm was masculine, engaged in culture and formed by reason. The domestic sphere was feminine, connected with the natural and ruled by passion and emotions. Society was thus (naturally) divided sexually. As women “naturally” associated with childrearing and domesticity; their socialization and education were to reflect this (17–8). This public-private dichotomy is so ingrained within Western culture (and many non-Western cultures) that it seems intractable and has resulted in the political disempowerment of women who mother, as well as women in general.

From another feminist angle, the manner in which myths of motherhood work in societies to create unattainable ideals and images of mothers place impossible burdens on those women who mother. Halldis Leira and Madelien Krips explore maternal mythologies in an attempt to reveal mothering’s reality. They see the myth of motherhood as having a huge
emotional weight, and therefore becoming difficult to reveal (85). By analyzing two cultural myths, the Greek Demeter and Clytemnestra as well as the modern “Yiddish Mama,” they consider myths as placing mothers as either subordinate to patriarchal power or omnipotent. The danger is not that these myths exist, in fact Leira and Krips see them as necessary. We need ideals to provide a framework for our roles. The great danger, however, is that we tend to forget the myth’s fantasy aspects. The struggle, according to Leira and Krips, is to avoid projecting the myth onto reality (88).

Betsy Wearing’s study of mothers similarly embraces the concept of the ideal mother while keeping it at a distance. Wearing produced a thorough study of suburban mothers in Sydney, Australia during a period of social transition. She interviewed many mothers from several different social groups to identify how the mothers see themselves, and how they feel about their mothering. She notes that each milieu develops an “ideal” mother. Though she considers ideals important in conducting analysis, she cautions against an over-reliance on these ideals. Focusing too heavily on the ideals places an extreme burden on the mothers, as well as threatening to eclipse the needs and intentions of the mothers that fall outside of the ideal (Wearing). Related to Wearing’s analysis, Rozsica Parker explains the possible reason for the strong influence of the group in developing these ideal images is the need for “mirrors.” Mothers converse with each other, and compare themselves against other mothers in attempts to establish that they are acting within the norm. Though they may often appear judgmental against mothers that do not fit the norm, they are in fact searching for a level of sameness and assurance that they are “getting it right” (1). This process, of course, establishes and reinforces what is “right,” placing pressure on mothers to live up to their own—and their group’s—expectations.

From these analyses it appears that motherhood reinforces patriarchy, consigns women who mother to the private sphere and catches mothers in the hopeless situation of chasing ideals that cannot be reached (Woertman 58). Yet for those who offer such an analysis, ambivalence remains. Rich in particular found herself immersed in this ambivalence. She saw motherhood
as a natural state, but believed that the patriarchal institution of motherhood prevented women from accepting, much less embracing, this state of being (277 – 80). This inconsistency of the realities of motherhood leads to misconceptions of mothers by society, as well as themselves. Motherhood is either vilified or sentimentalized by society (Rich Chapter 5)\(^\text{26}\). We have a clear image of what a “good” mother should be, and simultaneously turn on mothers for every perceived failure of their children (Thurer 247). From her ambivalence, Rich moves to make an argument for the reimagining and restructuring of motherhood, advocating the abolishing of the patriarchal institution in order “to release the creation and sustenance of life into the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination and conscious intelligence, as any other difficult but freely chosen work” (280).

Clearly, Rich sees the possibility of motherhood as becoming restructured (or more accurately de-structured), away from the damaging patriarchal institution and towards a more individual and natural relationship\(^\text{27}\). Rich concludes her text with a call for the abolition of the institution of motherhood, but does not provide a framework in which to imagine the possibilities of such an abolition. Other feminist researchers have studied particular aspects of mothering, but a re-visioning of mothering can most clearly be seen through the work of Sara Ruddick. Ruddick embraced Rich’s challenge to dismantle the institution of motherhood and attempted to deeply understand the experience of motherhood and its potential for impacting society. Her work, *Maternal Thinking*, will provide us with the necessary framework for developing a feminist politics of motherhood.

\(^{26}\) Though Rich has a valid point—that ambivalence due to oppressive structures is damaging—there also seem to be positive elements regarding these conflicting sentiments. Parker specifically sees the ambivalence as being the fuel for the preservative love Ruddick speaks of, as it allows for a passionate state of being. See: Rozsika Parker, *Torn in Two*.

\(^{27}\) Rich also spends a great deal of time in her concluding remarks in discussing women’s need to be in control of their bodies. She clearly feels that such control is instrumental in disrupting the patriarchal regime. Though I do not wholly disagree with her assertion, I feel that this focus is very much due to the controversies of the time, namely those of abortion and oral contraception. I would argue that the issue is less of women being in control of their bodies, but rather being in control of their lives, of which their bodies are an important part.
Mothering as Knowledge: Sara Ruddick

Sara Ruddick's work starts from the premise that ever since the Enlightenment, rational, individual thinking has been prized and such thinking is associated with the public world of men. Ruddick's fundamental riposte is that there are other ways of reasoning and that for many women one way of reasoning arises from the work of motherhood. Ruddick's work is based upon a systematic and rational consideration of mothering, not a sentimentalized or inevitable idea of woman being mothers. Through this analysis, Ruddick identifies a mother as one who commits to the protection, nurturance and training of a child as a primary work; this work then leads towards a particular skill set and thus a particular way of thinking developed by those who mother.

It is important to highlight Ruddick's open definition of mother. Though Ruddick acknowledges that it is overwhelmingly women who mother, she refuses to make a biological link. Mothers are those who commit to the long-term endeavor of child-raising, making a conscious and constant commitment to the welfare of a vulnerable human (Maternal 49 – 51). As such, she does not limit a mother to a birth-mother, with the recognition that adoptive mothers also make such commitments and engage in the practices she considers vital to the practice of motherhood. Thus while she does not reject the idea of natality as insignificant, she sees the process of birthing as transformative in that it is a process of creation riddled with emotion, physicality and symbolism—the heart of Ruddick's definition of mother rests on social practice rather than biological experience.

Because Ruddick's understanding of mothering is centered on practice and commitment, it would of course be possible for men to 'mother,' too. Yet Ruddick recognizes that the gendered division of labor makes this a very rare occurrence. In general she contrasts mothers from fathers, clearly seeing the latter as having a more distant (though perhaps still loving) relationship with
the child, focusing largely on the representing the expectations of "the world" (Maternal 42 – 3).28

The practice of motherhood for Ruddick is composed of placing the nurturing, protection and training of children as a primary work.29 Children demand "protection, nurturance and training; [mothers] attempt to respond to children's demands with care and respect, rather than indifference or assault" (Maternal xi). Based on this work, and through a reflective process, a mother gains certain insights into the human condition, and approaches her life and interaction with others using these insights. This reflective approach to mothering and the experiences it garners is what Ruddick defines as "maternal thinking" (Maternal 23).

Ultimately, Ruddick envisions a feminist peace politics deriving from the experience of motherhood. This aspect of her work will be touched upon briefly at the end of this chapter and in more depth in the following chapter. At this point, it is paramount to identify the aspects of mothering that will form the basis for a feminist politics of motherhood. This section will introduce Ruddick's three core aspects of mothering—protection, nurturance and training—and consider other key elements of her conception of motherhood, namely its scope and potential as a standpoint for action.

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28 Ruddick considers "Fathers" to be an integral part of a patriarchal system, whereas mothers can exist outside of patriarchy. This is perhaps naïve, as it ignores demands a child may have outside of what a mother is able to address. It also ignores needs that a mother herself may have both in terms of her relationships with the world and her child. I am not convinced that the father serves a solely patriarchal purpose, nor that the only valid intimate relationship with a child's development can be through mothering. This topic, however, is the subject of another line of research altogether. It should be noted, however, that Ruddick does not preclude men from mothering, and I would not preclude fathers from a way of thinking and a politics of their own.

29 Ruddick has acknowledged that many mothers have informed her that their experiences as new mothers were much more innate than Ruddick outlines above (see: Patrice DiQuinzio, The Impossibility of Motherhood, 116). As a result, she has also explored issues of natality (see: Ruddick, "Appreciation."). More bodily than maternal thinking, this work may prove to have more resonance at the individual level. For the value it provides to understanding the possibility of motherhood on the social level, Ruddick's theory of maternal thinking remains exceptionally relevant.
Raising vulnerable humans: preservation, growth and training

Ruddick begins from the premise that all children need care to survive and develop appropriately:

"Maternal practice begins in a response to the reality of a biological child in a particular social world. To be a "mother" is to take upon oneself the responsibility of child care, making its work a regular and substantial part of one's working life" (Maternal 17).

She notes that both the child and the mother's social milieu place demands upon the mother that she must address (though not necessarily meet). She further notes that mothering is "complicated and inseparable from social interpretations" (Maternal 18). She intends, by focusing on the work of mothers, that the emphasis remain "on what mothers attempt to do, not on what they feel" (Maternal xi).

Protection of a child relies on the process of "preservative love." This process requires the recognition of a child's demand for protection, and the desire to respond to his complex needs and demands. She stresses that this is not a sentimental love, in that no invested emotion is required, simply "to see vulnerability and to respond to [the child] with care rather than abuse, indifference or flight" (Maternal 19). Though Ruddick is not explicit, it appears as though she intends this commitment to be long-term. She places the preservation of a child's life as the "central constitutive, invariant aim of maternal practice" (Maternal 19). Preservative love is a complex and dynamic process stemming from the desire to protect and nurture a vulnerable human—not an instinctual (or indeed institutional) response to a birth-child.

It must be noted that though Ruddick sees the human child's need for protection as universal, she does not assume that the way this protection is provided is, or should be, universal. The two other aspects of motherhood she identifies as core requirements—nurturing and training—can vary radically in their aims based upon the mother’s social positioning. The aim of preservative love (i.e. protection), however, is simply to create safety for a child. Though that may be achieved in various ways, it is the core element to motherhood. I should also note that Ruddick does not require mothers
achieve safety for their children—simply that it is a central aim of their practice.

A second commitment a mother makes is to nurture her child. The particulars of this aim are largely culturally situated, in that it requires the belief that children have complicated lives that need attending. Ruddick obviously believes that all children, as well as being needy, are also complex humans. Though various cultures perceive and understand these complexities in various ways, Ruddick believes that all are nonetheless in need of some sort of nurturing to “foster their growth” (*Maternal* 19 -20). Though nurturing is important to a child’s growth, it is not as fundamental as protection.

Finally, Ruddick cites the need to “train” children. She bases this need not on the immediate demands of a child, but on those of the mother’s (and thus child’s) social milieu:

> “social groups require that mothers shape their children’s growth in ‘acceptable’ ways. What counts as acceptable varies enormously within and among groups and cultures. The demand for acceptability, however, does not vary, nor does there seem to be much dissent from the belief that children cannot ‘naturally’ develop in socially correct ways but must be ‘trained’” (*Maternal* 21)

Mothers may train their children to conform to their group’s expectations, or to challenge them. This observation of Ruddick’s clearly reflects those of Wearing, Leira and Krips, as highlighted earlier.

Though the commitment to train is less “necessary” in a vital sense to a child’s development, it can be an extremely challenging commitment for mothers to reconcile. Mothers, Ruddick notes, are often young women. They are often less powerful than men within their group (*Maternal* 21 – 2). We can extrapolate that many mothers feel pressured to raise their children to an “acceptable” standard, while feeling they have little or no capacity to alter their group’s expectations. This resonates with Rich’s thesis of the institution of motherhood determining the appropriate ways for a mother to raise her child. Ruddick’s sense is that mothers tend to feel ambivalent toward or alienated from their group’s expectations. This sentiment is particularly apparent when the requirements of their milieu contradict their child’s needs.
for growth or even survival, placing a mother in a "painful and self-fragmenting conflict" (Ruddick Maternal 22).

**Thinking and acting from a standpoint**

The commitment to these maternal aims constitutes the work of motherhood. This work, in accordance with Ruddick's practicalist view, leads women who mother to insights and ways of thinking about and understanding their work and the world. It is this mode of thought and understanding that Ruddick has labeled "maternal thinking." Mothers must daily negotiate and respond to the various demands placed upon her by her child, her community and herself. This negotiation results in an inevitable thinking process that informs her outlook.

It should also be noted that Ruddick insists the daily demands of mothering ground a mother's thinking in the concrete. This contrasts directly with the emphasis on abstract thinking of other disciplines. As a philosopher, Ruddick noticed the divorce between the abstract concepts of her professional discipline and her everyday demands as a young mother (Maternal 6-9). She cites Carol Gilligan's thesis in *A Different Voice*, noting that women are seen to have a different cognitive style, and ultimately a different method of moral reasoning. Ruddick believes this difference is largely due to women's experience as and socialization to become mothers.

Ruddick attempts to break down ways in which this mode of thinking informs a mother's standpoint. To do so, she identifies the "virtues" of maternal thinking. She attempts to de-sentimentalize and de-essentialize the

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30 Gilligan's work has been greatly examined within feminism, and has certainly been challenged on a number of points. Ruddick, writing prior to some of the strongest criticisms and with substantial input from the *Women's Ways of Knowing* collective, does not consider the limitations of Gilligan's work. However, it is important to note that Ruddick's sense of the "concrete" thinking of women is due not to an innate quality of woman (which can be construed by Gilligan), but directly through the role of mothering. Feminist ethic of care theorist Joan Tronto thoroughly considers Gilligan's work from a contemporary perspective. See: Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*. Ethic of care theories differ from Ruddick's work in that the latter focuses on a particular experience of care work, whereas the former calls for the recognition and adoption of a care ethic throughout society. Ethic of care literature is instructive, however, in terms of understanding the relevance of Gilligan's work in a contemporary perspective.
daily realities of mother’s lives. She acknowledges, particularly in terms of “nurturing,” that a certain level of cultural relativism exists (Maternal xvii). She actively embraces the particularity of maternal thinking, in that:

“Any mother speaking in or about a maternal voice is a particular person of a particular temperament, social location and politics. A mother may get some grasp of the particularities of her experience by traveling, reading, and listening. But however widely she looks about to extend her experiences, she will be one person looking, from a particular vantage that is hers” (Maternal 52).

She further notes her own particularity and its influence on her text, as:

“I might take some distance from my experience when I set out conceptual frameworks or engage in political debates about my project. But once I begin to write, I must feel and remember mothering as clearly as possible. The closer I come to what I have known, the more confidently I speak, and simultaneously, the more limited is my vision” (Maternal 52).

Her call for mothers to share their stories, thoughts and insights is one of the most powerful calls in her work. Even as this sharing may appear to have a myopic effect when a single mother (or group of mothers) practices it, the collection of ideas and experiences expands the understanding of motherhood for all who listen.

For Ruddick this recognition of the knowledge and work of women who mother could become the basis for an engagement in politics and (and specifically a politics of peace which she begins to develop in the second half of Maternal Thinking) in which mothers consciously draw from their reflection and identity as mothers to pursue social and/or political change. The following chapter will pursue Ruddick’s hope for a maternal peace politics by synthesizing the concept of a feminist politics of motherhood developed in this chapter with the knowledge of women and peacebuilding established in the previous two chapters.

The Critics of Maternal Thinking

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, many feminists have been skeptical of maternalism because of what they perceive as its essentialist underpinnings. The strength of Ruddick’s work in respect to this allegation is
that she is not basing her claims on ideas about women’s biological or instinctual propensities but on the idea that it is the action and work of mothering which give rise to ways of understanding which could inform a politics of motherhood. However, those who criticize Ruddick continue to see problems in her making universal claims about mothers or her reliance on a particular cultural expression of motherhood (i.e. white, middle class, American motherhood).

Feminism has often been accused of being a white, middle-class, Western philosophy. In the 1980s and 90s Black and global feminists effectively challenged the presumed universality of the experiences of women in relative privilege. The rise in diversity feminism and identity politics, as well as the general acceptance of the lack of a universal woman are due to the work of those who challenged the prevailing ideas during the second wave of feminism. The discussion of motherhood is no exception. Written in the 1970s from her own experiences and clearly directed towards an educated, American readership, Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* clearly lacks an in-depth understanding of the non-White, non-American and/or poor mother’s experience. Ruddick attempts to speak more globally and provide more space for flexibility, but her 1989 *Maternal Thinking* also leans towards an affluent White understanding of motherhood, particularly in Ruddick’s descriptions of the nurturing and training work of mothers. Without unpacking the ideas in either of these texts, a cursory reading could easily construe them to be applicable only to a small proportion of mothers, or present the possibility of an oppressive and limiting concept of mothering to become the norm. Such a fate could surely follow any conception of motherhood that does not allow for flexibility of experience. By way of example, two very different experiences of American motherhood and potentially challenging to Ruddick’s conceptualization are found in the writings of Iris Marion Young and Patricia Hill Collins.

Iris Marion Young relates her own mother’s story as an example of a woman—and family—broken by the inability to meet her group’s standard of mothering. A highly-educated and eccentric woman, Young’s mother was
committed to her children, though a “weird” mother. Widowed shortly after moving to the suburbs, Young’s mother was left to her private grief. She drank and did not do housework; the children were taken into foster care. When they were reunited, Young’s mother rallied, underwent treatment and found a job, but still failed to clean house. An accidental house fire brought the authorities back into their “messy” house, and Young and her siblings were placed again into foster care, this time for several years. Young ruminates:

“A woman alone with her children in this development of perfectly new squeaky clean suburban houses. She is traumatized by grief, and the neighbors look from behind their shutters, people talk about the disheveled way she arrives at church, her eyes red from crying. Do they help this family, needy not for food or clothes, but for support in a very hard time? A woman alone with her children is no longer a whole family, deserving like others of respectful distance. From my mother’s point of view there was no difference between child-welfare agents and police. A woman alone with her children is liable to punishment, including the worst of all for her: having her children taken from her” (Justice 145 – 6).

Blaming, in large part, her family’s difficulties with the anomaly of being that of a single mother in a very particular location (middle-class suburb), Young notes that upon their reunification, her family moved back to the anonymity and “the safe indifference of New York City” (Justice 144 – 7). The reality of Young’s mother was so out of sync with the expectations of her community that they were unable to accept her as an appropriate mother. She was deviant, firstly for her inability to meet the standards of the ideal suburban mother, and secondly for the fact that she was a lone parent. Her community refused to recognize her needs as valid. The state held the same attitude, and broke the family apart.31

Young’s depiction of her mother’s situation presents an important challenge to Ruddick’s discussion and reflects Rich’s overarching concerns of the institution of motherhood disrupting the practice of mothering. Recall Wearing’s conclusion that each milieu defines its appropriate mothering, and

31 Martha Fineman explores the “deviancy” of single mothers from the perspective of the American legal system. She has a particular focus on poor single mother’s treatment by society through the state legal system. For more, see: Martha Fineman, The Neutered Mother. 101 – 44.
mothers internalize and reflect these standards. These standards and expectations are not necessarily wrong: they provide guidance for mothers as to methods and goals of their mothering, as well as reflecting the values of the community. In the case of Young’s mother, these expectations made her at first unhappy and ultimately led to the break-up of her family. Social expectations that do not reflect the reality of mothers’ circumstances and are not malleable to a mother’s best discretion can only reinforce motherhood as an institution. Within Ruddick’s conception of motherhood, society’s expectations hold importance, as mothers are charged with the “training” of their children. On the surface, it would appear that Ruddick’s understanding and Rich’s vision of mothering contradict.

Ruddick does understand this contradiction, however, and uses the concept of ambivalence to describe the dilemma and its meaning to maternal thinking. They are required to (and usually do) successfully navigate their own emotions regarding their child and the relationship therein (Maternal 69). More problematically, mothers constantly experience multiple and often contradictory pressures from their children, their society and themselves. Maternal thinking, Ruddick suggests, allows mothers to navigate these pressures consciously. Every mother, however, experiences what Ruddick labels “inauthenticity,” wherein she places abstract demands (specifically those of an authority) above those of her children. This inauthenticity reinforces the limiting power dynamics of the mother’s society on her children—and herself. By returning to the power intrinsic in mothering (and identified through maternal thinking), a mother can disrupt these limiting pressures on herself and her children (Maternal 112 – 16).

Other theorists have also explored the ambivalence experienced by mothers due to social pressures. These pressures can be considered abstract concepts derived from mothers’ expectations, as opposed to their realities. The conflict between the abstract and concrete often manifests as maternal ambivalence: mothers at once have passionately negative and overwhelming positive feelings towards their children. Liesbeth Woertman considers this ambivalence to be due to a contrast between the realities of a mother’s
experience versus the ideal that she cannot reach (58). Rich in particular finds herself immersed in the ambivalence of motherhood. She sees it as a natural state of motherhood, but believes that the patriarchal institution of motherhood has prevented women from accepting, much less embracing, this state of being (277 – 80). The experiences of Young and her mother demonstrate both how social expectations can impact negatively on a mother’s ability to care for her children, as well as how a mother can move to end the “inauthenticity” placed upon her by recognizing the ways and environment in which she is able to mother effectively.

As important as recognizing the disempowering aspects of social expectations of mothers, we should also keep in mind the relativism of these expectations. In “Mammies, Matriarch and Other Controlling Images,” Patricia Hill Collins describes maternal experiences in an African American context that differ strikingly again from those of Ruddick and Rich. She outlines the images of Black women nurturing and caring for White families as “Mammies.” the “matriarch” as a Black woman often maligned as contributing to poverty and emasculating Black men, and the sexually prolific Black “Jezebel.” These images, Hill Collins suggests, are based on exaggerations of Black women’s historical and contemporary experiences. They serve to limit individual women and blame Black women collectively for the struggles difficulties of the Black population in American society.

Of particular interest to this thesis is Hill Collin’s central discussion regarding Mammies and Matriarchs, as well as her brief discussion on welfare mothers. She describes the portrayal of the Mammy as an “obedient servant.” She essentially raises affluent White children, only to (apparently) lack the capacity to nurture her own (120). Though this imagery is often internalized by Black women, it has, according to Hill Collins, been unable to “control” Black women. The image of Matriarch has also been problematic. Though central to the structure of many African American families, the Matriarch is often used to symbolize “bad” mothering. She fails to fulfill her duties, is not at home enough, and contributes to failures of schools. She is emasculating, aggressive, and drives away men (122 – 3). Related to this
image of an overbearing woman, the idea of "welfare mother" embodies the complete ineffectiveness of a mother to fulfill her duties. She is the opposite of the matriarch in that she is not aggressive enough. She is content to hang around the house, avoiding work and her parenting responsibilities. She is the cause of her own poverty, as well as that of her community (123 - 4). These three images are untenable, and to a great extent they result in Black women not being able to become the "good enough" mother, as she will either be emasculating or lazy, either nurturing of other children or neglectful of her own.

The images of motherhood within the African American community demonstrate a radical difference from the tranquil ideal images of the White American mothers. Whereas Rich discusses the pressures within patriarchal society for mothers to fit an impossible ideal, Hill Collins shows that African American women have been presented with conflicting, restraining and even malicious maternal roles. Such a contrast between Rich’s and Hill Collin’s discussion of motherhood demonstrates how diverse the concept of mother can be due to context, and how the ideals held by any given group (or placed upon a group) can offer different challenges.

Hill Collin’s discussion, particularly of Mammies, presents problems with Ruddick’s definition, too. The women Hill Collins describes as caring for more affluent children would, in many respects, meet Ruddick’s definition of protecting, nurturing and training children. Particularly in previous generations, many of these women would have spent most of their lives with one family. They would have been invested in the development and success of their charges. And yet they would not quite be their mothers. The women would return home to their own families, and work to raise their own children. The White children would often fiercely love their Mammy, but would remain separate from them. At the very least, Hill Collins presents a situation wherein Ruddick’s definition finds difficulties: the definition is so broad as to suggest the Mammy is a “mother” in two ways, both for her children and her charges, or it only defines one particular mode of mothering. Ruddick does explicitly exclude child carers from her formulation of
motherhood, but this itself presents problems. Though it is understandable to exclude people who work with children in the context of a profession, where they may work with many children at a single time and for a relatively short period of time (i.e. teachers, child-care workers), Mammies are a different entity, in that they would provide substantial emotional support and social training for children over a long period of time. It should also be noted that these women have also been rendered doubly invisible—as much within the families in which they work as within their society. Her relationship with the children she works to raise and her employers, when combined with her personal life and her own family’s needs, results in a far more complex concept of mother than Ruddick presents.

The idea of the Matriarch is also problematic when considered alongside Rich’s thesis of the institution of motherhood being oppressive. Though outsiders may malign the image of the strong woman, many Black women have embraced this image. Rather than seeing it as a negative influence to their families and communities, many women have embraced the role of matriarch as a source of strength. This is apparent particularly in Black feminist literature (Collins 122-23). Though she may work outside the home, be a single mother, and/or live in poverty, her role as the center of the family provides her with a clear sense of purpose and her family with a solid foundation. Far from a limiting and disempowering role as per Rich’s discussion, the Matriarch can often see herself as a positive and dynamic force in her children’s lives and her community’s well-being.

Although Ruddick can be criticized for writing from a particular cultural milieu, her basic intention is to establish the act of mothering as a valid experience for the acquirement of knowledge. She writes from her experience as a mother and an observer within her own social milieu, but does explicitly allow for difference in how mothers actually mother (Maternal xvii). If a woman perceives herself to be mothering, she is developing her experience as a mother. Thus, though developed from the position of relative privilege, Ruddick’s conception of motherhood is so broad and malleable as to allow for its application in a variety of circumstances.
As mentioned, many Black feminists have embraced the idea of the Matriarch as empowering. Such a woman is strong and committed to her family’s welfare. The images of Mammies and welfare mothers can similarly be reclaimed. The former demonstrates a hardworking and empathetic woman, and the latter a woman determined to keep her family surviving despite extreme hardship. Such an image can be highly attractive to women, even seen as a source of inspiration. They could be, and quite possibly have been, relied upon for inspiration to action. By adopting this image consciously, the Black feminist “matriarchs” have both found a source of power and made steps towards altering the damaging elements of this image.

The purpose of a politics of motherhood is to identify the power and potential in a generally overshadowed and minimized role. Though the manifestation of mothering is not universal, such a goal can certainly be sought in a variety of locations.

In terms of Rich’s conception of the institution of motherhood, the task of peeling away cultural and social circumstances is more challenging. Rather than focusing, however, on how Rich’s description of motherhood contradicts many mothers’ experiences, I feel it is more helpful to consider the overarching intent of Rich’s work. Rich consciously writes from her own experiences of mothering, but draws from her immediate experiences and historic and popular material in an attempt to uncover the more prevalent trend of oppression of women through their maternal roles. Her call to end the institution of motherhood can be expanded beyond the middle-class, White American institution to include any conception of motherhood which serves to limit mothers and minimize their potential. In this sense, as with a flexible understanding of Ruddick’s definition, Rich’s call to focus on the experience of motherhood can be accessed by mothers from any social position.

I use Hill Collins’ discussion of Mammies and Matriarchs and Young’s personal story to highlight potential feminist reactions to the “maternalist” concept of women’s political agency. At the beginning of this chapter, I also offered Tronto’s observation of earlier politicizations of motherhood as an
example of how motherhood, in the past, has been used to exclude, limit or otherwise restrict women and mothers from political discourse. Such a conception of motherhood is limiting and anti-feminist. The ideals, imagery, myths and experiences of mothering can and do vary depending upon culture, class, ethnicity, geography, etc. No singular idea of motherhood can apply to all mothers. The myth of women’s (white mother’s) morality Tronto refers to developed concurrently with the African-American maternal stereotypes of subservience and deviance (and power). The symbols and imagery of a universalized maternity can and have minimized the potential for other ways of mothering. I believe that a juxtaposition of Hill Collins’ observations with Rich’s and Ruddick’s texts demonstrates that a feminist discourse on motherhood can recognize mothers’ particular experiences within a unifying discourse.

Maternal Politics in Public Space

Even if we accept that experiences of motherhood in different contexts can lead mothers to develop particular ways of knowing which might translate into political projects, it is hard to imagine such projects transgressing the existing public-private divide. The primary obstacle to many mother's political participation is the lack of space in which to exercise their citizenship. As discussed in the previous chapter, many mothers have very real barriers to participation, ranging from the lack of resources, material support, education, experience or confidence. A feminist politics of motherhood requires that we re-imagine political participation, and consider different ways mothers do and can engage.

One intriguing re-imagination is that of MotherSpace, developed by Marsha Marotta. This post-modern analysis of political agency stems from Henri Lefebvre’s linkage of space and conduct. She uses the Western middle-class kitchen—the symbolic and real "space" of such mothers—to illustrate her point. Mothers are confined in a physical sense by the kitchen, thus it can be considered their material space. The particular use of this material space creates the discursive space of the “good mother.” establishing a system of
confinement and creating and reinforcing power relations which reflect the “good mother.” Men and children, in contrast, use the kitchen in an entirely different way, and thus their discursive space is entirely different. As the discursive space is vital in the development of one’s identity, the material space is equally vital (20-22).

The material space for mothers is full of restrictions and limitations. Marotta specifically asserts that:

“[e]stablishing boundaries around mothers and claiming the power to define their space stabilizes the meaning of motherhood and reduces the potential threat even as the world changes dramatically around this MotherSpace (27).”

Mothers do not shape their own material space; they are objects whose bodies and thoughts are acted upon (25), thus shaping their behavior and, ultimately, their discursive space. As long as the material space of mothers continues to be so bounded and disempowering, mothers will continue to be objects.

However, if mothers begin to reclaim and redefine the MotherSpace, they can begin to rescue it from “passivity and depoliticization.” Marotta notes women acting like subjects and redefining the MotherSpace by such acts as breastfeeding in public or “othermothering” (i.e. intimately shared childcare) (26). However, the ways in which mothers (and indeed, women) redefine their material space is not as important as the fact that they act as subjects and redefine it themselves. It is crucial, Marotta believes, that MotherSpace be redefined in order to challenge the larger social systems. And it is important that mothers redefine the space in order to ensure their subjectivity (21).

MotherSpace offers a way of understanding the potential positive impact of a discourse by mothers. It also, however, provides insight into the potential of a maternal politics to transcend the artificial boundary between the public and private spheres. Werbner cites Seyla Benhabib’s argument against a spacial limitation of the public sphere, in that “any site, however
unlikely, can become the site of discourse, and hence the public sphere” (Werbner 228).

Obviously, Marotta’s conception of MotherSpace is very culturally specific, as she chose a middle-class, Western use of the kitchen as the focal point for her discussion. Though her discussion is culturally specific, the concept can be translated to various cultures and milieux. The physical space is not as important as the fact that it is a space to which mothers are bound, and in which they are forced to act passively. If, in Marotta’s kitchen, the important household decisions were made, the family budget was decided upon, family and social issues were debated and conflicts were resolved, community issues discussed with other mothers (and non-mothers), the discursive space for mothers may look quite different. The mothers using such a kitchen would be actively participating in the system within which they function. They may still find themselves physically in the same space, but its role and reach would have shifted and expanded. They would no longer be passive objects, but active subjects in their family and communities. They would be acting as citizens within their role as mothers, instead of needing to separate the two.

MotherSpace offers one conception of how a feminist politics of motherhood may manifest. Other models, such as that offered by Pnina Werbner derived from the “motherist” movements in Latin America, which will be briefly discussed in the following chapter, demonstrate ways in which mothers can deploy the symbolism of motherhood to challenge political elites.

**Maternal Peace Politics?**

Ruddick pursued the development of her philosophy of maternal thinking in order to establish a different kind of peace politics. This peace

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32 Benhabib’s discussion centers on a postmodern critique of the traditional liberal understandings of the public sphere. In this context, she advocates a discursive model. Synthesizing this model with Marotta’s MotherSpace could offer a radical reimagining of the political. For Benhabib’s discussion on the discursive model of the public sphere, see Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self*. 104 – 14.
politics, based upon skills developed through mothering and informed by the knowledge derived from a reflective work, would offer an alternative path to non-violent political action. Despite her best intentions, however, Ruddick fails to fully develop a politics of peace through the experience of motherhood. Her objective and rigorous discussion on the components of mothering through the first parts of her text fall away to her assumed natural progression of these components to a peace politics.

It is my hope that Ruddick’s foundation of maternal thinking can be built upon to develop a truly alternative and effective peace politics. By introducing a concept of a feminist politics of motherhood as a reflective, conscious movement of mothers engaging in political discourse and action from their identity as mothers, an approach to peace can be pursued in connection with peacebuilding efforts. As mothers in post-conflict societies are particularly marginalized and particularly vulnerable, we should feel a sense of urgency in developing methods for them to claim some power in their lives. The first two chapters introduced the theory and practice of peacebuilding, and women’s relationships to both. Though peacebuilding offers a far greater potential for women’s increased participation in their political systems, it has still been unable to offer solutions to some very real and powerful barriers women face. This chapter has considered the role of motherhood both as a historical source of subjugation of women and a potential locus for effective political and social action. The following chapter will combine these ideas to develop a maternal peace politics, based upon both the goals of peacebuilding, and the idea of a reflective, conscious and politically engaged mother movement.
Thus far, this thesis has outlined various aspects of peacebuilding theory and practice, as well as highlighting women's marginalization from conventional peacebuilding efforts. The previous chapter introduced the concept of a feminist politics of motherhood, a maternalist politics informed by Sara Ruddick’s philosophy of maternal thinking and feminist considerations of motherhood. This politics would derive its strength from the conscious use of a mother’s social power and skills developed from her experience in order for her to act from the position and identity of a mother. This chapter progresses the concept of the feminist politics of motherhood to develop a concept of maternal peacebuilding as an addition to the peacebuilding toolbox which can aid the political participation of some women in post-conflict societies. This chapter seeks to outline and explore ways in which mothers can participate in an alternative, complementary peacebuilding process from their roles as mothers. Though elements of this concept will be outlined in detail forthwith, I would at this point suggest that a maternal peacebuilding consists of mothers engaging in particular peacebuilding work from their identities as mothers, acknowledging the social significance and accepting the dynamism of this identity, and with the intention of assuring the present and future needs of their children are addressed through the establishment of a more peaceful society.

The chapter will first return to Ruddick in order to outline her vision of a peace politics based upon her philosophy of maternal thinking. Though well-intentioned, her vision is flawed in that it assumes that mothers will organically develop a peace politics. The sources of Ruddick’s flawed vision will be outlined and addressed, and the resulting concept of a peace politics by mothers will be placed within the framework of contemporary peacebuilding, thus developing the concept of maternal peacebuilding. As the concept of maternal peacebuilding has heretofore not been developed, it is impossible to find clear instances of its practice. However, by identifying instances of mothers practicing peace, I intend to highlight some of the
motivations, practices and outcomes of these mothers’ actions that could potentially form a maternal peacebuilding. Finally, I will return to considering maternal peacebuilding as a concrete process and outline particular elements of the approach. This thorough outline of maternal peacebuilding will then be tested for viability within the case study of Northern Ireland presented in the final chapters.

It is important to keep in mind the discussion from Chapter Two regarding women’s complex relationship with peace. Mothers, too, have multiple experiences in conflict and thus with peace. It is tempting to assume that mothers automatically embrace and support peace. This temptation must be resisted, and this chapter, while supporting the potentially important contributions mothers can have towards a peacebuilding project, will identify numerous instances of mothers-as-mothers turning away from peace. Mothers, as with other women and men, can and do have varied positions towards peace in their societies, and the position of any given person can change based upon her changing circumstances, her understanding of the conflict and her position within it. A maternal peacebuilding is not a “natural progression” of the mothering role, nor should it be considered to be superior to other peacebuilding tools. This chapter will, rather, outline how this particular approach can include women who could otherwise find themselves on the margins of the peace process, as well as highlight the particular attributes mothers can bring into a peace process.

Sara Ruddick: Toward a Politics of Peace

The previous chapter considered Sara Ruddick’s concept of “maternal thinking” and her larger discussion on motherhood from a feminist perspective. Without a doubt, Ruddick’s work is one of the most extensive feminist attempts to define and explore the mothering experience and power of mothering. Ruddick pursued this work in order to establish an idea of a particular type of feminist peace politics grounded on the experience and thinking of motherhood. Though the groundwork she lays in terms of
maternal thinking is robust and valuable, she is unable to fully translate this work into an effective framework for peace politics.

Ruddick launches into her examination of a maternal peace politics by stating that “when maternal thinking takes upon itself the critical perspective of a feminist standpoint, it reveals a contradiction between mothering and war” (Maternal 148). She continues by explaining that:

“everyday maternal thinking contrasts as a whole with military thinking...Maternal attentive love, restrained and clear-sighted, is ill adapted to intrusive, let alone murderous, judgments of others’ lives” (Maternal 150).

Mothers and motherhood have been used to support wars and their associated politics that are in direct opposition to the goals of mothering. She further claims that:

“mothers have been preparing themselves for patient and conscientious nonviolence, not for the obedience and excessive trust in authority on which military adventures thrive” (Maternal 150).

Mothering, as defined by Ruddick, lies in direct contrast with war and militarism. A maternal thinking combined with a feminist standpoint offers, in Ruddick’s view, the potential for a new peace politics to emerge (Maternal 242).

Ruddick’s argument is premised on the belief that mothering (though not mothers) is inherently peaceful, and that maternal practice can become a “natural resource” for peacemakers (Maternal 157). By valuing vulnerable humans, and placing care as a primary motivation for social interaction, peacemakers would be able to combat militarism. Aspects of maternal thinking, such as preservative love and the acceptance of ambivalence, as well as specific skills, such as conflict resolution and the ability to allow change within daily life, can be useful to any political engagement, but particularly to a non-violent political movement (Maternal 220).

Though she supplies some examples of maternal peace politics (the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo is a primary choice), Ruddick falls short of developing a framework for a maternal peace politics. She spends much of the final half of Maternal Thinking writing about maternal peace politics
without clearly stating what maternal peace politics actually is. Though part of this shortfall is surely due to her reluctance to prescribe a process and her recognition that different mothers will engage in peace politics in different ways, her failure to outline a maternal peace politics is striking. The latter portion of her work clearly lacks the rigorous logic she applied to the development of her concept of maternal thinking. By drawing on research into motherhood and peace work, as well as the general theory of peacebuilding, I hope to ground Ruddick’s hope into a more functional concept.

To first understand Ruddick’s limitations, we must consider the period of time in which she was writing when considering the weaknesses of her work. *Maternal Thinking* was first published in 1989 after nearly a decade of preparation. The year of publication is important first because it precedes the formalization of the concept of peacebuilding. Ruddick could hardly have considered the expansive and nuanced approach to developing peace that has been established over the past two decades. As a result, her sense of a peace politics is limited largely to protests and the demanding of accountability from public officials. The idea that individuals and communities can take direct action to create and contribute to a peaceful society does not feature in Ruddick’s text, except in a general call for the adoption of non-violence as a lifestyle.

Also significant to the period of history in which *Maternal Thinking* developed is the geopolitical environment in which Ruddick was situated. The 1980’s American political and peace discourse was dominated by the Cold War and issues surrounding the world’s nuclear arsenal. This focus is reflected in Ruddick’s work, as she places the call for disarmament as a primary focus of her maternal peace politics. Though she makes attempts to consider other foci for peace politics, most notably in the case of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, she clearly has an image of peace politics that is more removed from direct conflict than that encountered by today’s peacebuilding efforts.
Given these effectively unavoidable limitations to Ruddick’s vision, she still has fundamental flaws in the development of a peace politics informed by maternal thinking. She clearly sees a natural progression to peace politics when the conscious mothering derived from maternal thinking meets a feminist standpoint. It appears as though she sees this progression as organic and nearly unavoidable. In her words:

“Mothers who acquire a feminist consciousness and engage in feminist politics are likely to become more effectively nonviolent and antimilitarist. By increasing mothers’ powers to know, care, and act, feminism actualizes the peacefulness latent in maternal practice” (Maternal 242).

Ruddick’s writings make it quite clear that the three elements of motherhood, feminism and peace politics have been inseparable within her own personal experience. Moreover, Ruddick cannot envisage a feminist mother who is ambivalent towards or even supportive of war. Such an assumption seems to place an immense burden on mothers who identify themselves as feminists (or feminists who identify themselves as mothers). These women may feel that they, and their maternity, become the vessels for peace politics. They may also feel restricted in being able to engage politically in ways other than as a feminist mother. Furthermore, Ruddick’s stance here implies an inability (or at least substantial difficulty) for mothers not embracing a feminist standpoint or consciousness to act in a robust peace politics from their position as mothers.

As an example of the fallacy of Ruddick’s assumptions, Nancy Scheper-Hughes directly critiques one of Ruddick’s assumptions of maternal thinking leading to peace politics. Through her research with women living in poverty in Brazil, Scheper-Hughes discovered an aspect of their maternal experience that may actually support a militarized state and the mothers’ capacities to accept the deaths of their children in service of that state. In contrast to Ruddick’s maternal virtue of “holding,” Scheper-Hughes posits that a common virtue amongst the Brazilian women she interviewed was that of “letting go.” For these women, high infant and child mortality results in the development of a philosophy of “an acceptable death.” These mothers, Scheper-Hughes notes, often find themselves “letting go” when they feel that “an infant or a
child ‘wants’ or needs to die...to die quickly, peacefully and well” (229). The idea of acquiescing one’s child to an “acceptable death” is not unique to these shantytown women: the mother of Amy Biehl, an American student killed during a national strike in South Africa in 1993 framed her daughter’s death as that of a martyr, and even paralleled her moment of death with the moment of successfully crossing the finish line of a race. This attitude of a woman whose child was a victim of a conflict mimics those whose children died in political action as having “died purposefully and well” (232). The varied examples of this attitude by mothers suggest it is a common way of coping with a child’s violent death.

Scheper-Hughes does differentiate this “pro-militarist” manifestation of maternal thinking as “accomodationist.” The women who “abdicate their fury and grieving over the death of their children” do contribute to a society at war, in that they do not become indignant at the death of their children (231). We must equally recognize, however, that their willingness to accommodate is also a “coping” mechanism, born of the trauma of conflict. The important lesson to be learned from these Brazilian mothers in terms of mothering in war is that, even at its most compassionate, maternal thinking is not necessarily supportive of peace work.

The above case of Brazilian mothers acquiescing to conflict through their conscious maternal identity is not unique. Surachi Thapar Björkert considers the phenomenon of Dalit and “upper-caste” women participating and supporting violent conflict against each other’s communities in the Northern Indian states she considers. The Dalit women, she argues, extend their “maternal” duties to care for their families by providing for their physical security. On several instances, Dalit women have extended their maternal roles and taken up arms. Additionally, she notes that the identity of mother has not been used as a resource between the conflicting factions to foster a sense of empathy or shared identity/experience (9).

Beyond her primary analysis of women’s willingness to participate in violence, Thapar Björkert demonstrates the circumstantiality of mothers’ relationships to peace. Motherhood does not lead directly to an attitude of
peace, nor does it necessarily encourage an expansion of maternal concerns to an "Other." Mothers, as with most people, are motivated by their everyday demands, and act accordingly. At times, this motivation can result in a mother adopting a path of violence. It is possible, however, that a mother can find herself motivated towards peace. To assume that conscious motherhood leads inevitably to peace overlooks complexities within mother’s lives.

Certainly, Ruddick does attempt to acknowledge that neither maternity nor maternal thinking leads to an adoption of peace politics. "Maternal peace politics begins in a myth," Ruddick writes as the first words to her concluding chapter:

"War is men’s business; mothers are outsiders or victims; their business is life. The myth is shattered by history. Everywhere that men fight, mothers support them. Where powerful men have not discouraged them, women, and sometimes mothers, have fought as fiercely as their brothers. As feminists insist that women and men share fairly the burdens and pleasures of battle, many young women expect their lives to include, without contradiction, both fighting and mothering" (Maternal 219).

Ruddick clearly understands that mothers can and do support and contribute to violence within and between societies. However, she never fully reconciles this reality of motherhood with her vision of mothering as a source for peace politics.

This thesis attempts to remedy this failure through placing the concept of a feminist political motherhood within the framework of peacebuilding. Keeping in mind the real experiences of mothers in conflict and post-conflict societies, as well as referencing the insights of feminist critiques of peacebuilding, a robust theory of maternal peacebuilding can be developed. The next section of the chapter will present instances of maternal peacebuilding in practice and reflection on these practices will allow a theory of maternal peacebuilding which will address many of the shortcomings of Ruddick’s concept to be developed, while maintaining her vision of a method of engagement in peace politics informed by motherhood.
Maternal Peace in Practice

Thus far, this thesis has provided a background to core issues in relation to women and peacebuilding, has provided a framework of a feminist politics of motherhood and has outlined ways in which the Ruddick’s conception of a maternal peace politics is lacking. This section endeavors to rectify the weaknesses in Ruddick’s thought by considering several examples of ways in which mothers have engaged with peacemaking and building. This exercise will also provide the foundation for envisioning a maternal peacebuilding.

One clear instance of maternal peace action can be seen by Peruvian women who embraced their identity as mothers as part of their mobilization movement. Rosa Maria Alfaro describes the development of the women’s movement in the 1980’s:

"Being a mother was the principal motor driving the formation of the women’s movement. These women could not resign themselves to see their children suffering from hunger and malnutrition without reacting, and they soon understood that these problems were shared by many...Being a mother meant situating and concentrating their gender identity in that role" (265).

The women found value for themselves and from their society as mothers and utilized the power and confidence this valuing, permitting them to participate within the public sphere. Far from being limited by their maternal roles, their identities as mothers provided motivation for them to stand against a dictatorship.

Many mothers who have established a positive identity as mother have acted from that identity. Various instances of mothers taking political action exist throughout the world. Sometimes, such as in the case of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, such actions reverberate around the globe. More often, however, their actions remain local, and receive little attention from the international community. This is in part due to the small-scale and impromptu nature of many of these activities. As with many forms of women’s action, maternal politics tend to occur at the grassroots level. The different reactions towards maternal politics is, I believe, reflective of the
difficulties we have with analyzing motherhood—it is apolitical in the traditional sense, yet socially powerful.

Cynthia Cockburn, though not referring to maternal politics per se, notes that motherhood “reflects an important aspect of most women’s lived experience, it can unify women, can be a source of authority and a powerful tool for resistance” (From 210). Cockburn, writing on women’s peace movements, recognizes that though certainly not the only way women can and do engage in political action, a maternal identity can be a powerful and cohesive mechanism for some women’s action.

Vivien Lowndes noted that some British women in the tenant’s rights movement she analyzed saw their political action as an extension of their roles as mothers (58). In fact, the 2000/01 British General Household Survey suggested that women with dependent children in their household had higher levels of social engagement than women without dependent children. It should be noted, however, the former group of women also had lower levels of participation in formal council politics. This supports the hypothesis that much of women’s political participation stems from situations that they feel need immediate redress. It also supports the belief that dependent children form a barrier to women’s participation in formal politics. These instances also suggest that caring for children does not necessarily prevent women’s participation in informal politics, and that childrearing can actually be a resource for participation. A number of women’s movements throughout the world reflect this situation.

Latin America provides numerous instances of clear political maternal action. Alfaro, defining these actions as “social maternity movements.” or “motherist” movements, finds that they developed suddenly and urgently, and often in reaction to a specific event. The participants they attracted were strong and passionate women of all ages and backgrounds who gave a huge emotional commitment to the organization and its goals. The life cycle of these movements varies, but they were extremely important, at least in the short term, in engaging women in political action (267).
In the case of post-conflict Guatemala, Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwain provide an example of “community mothers.” In the particular community they studied, they found that conflicts around tenant agreements and water reduced trust between neighbors. These issues tended to be negotiated by women, and were exacerbated by gossip and arguments over men and children. This negative communal environment made community participation undesirable (186-7).

Within this context, women’s and childcare groups were the most trusted by communities, when compared to military, police and judiciary (Moser and McIlwain 191). It was this trust that allowed the aforementioned community schism to be addressed. Some women in the community served as the community mothers. Eight or nine women in the community took children into their homes and garnered a great deal of trust from their neighbors. Though the researchers do not note any political action or conflict minimization on the part of these women, they do note that these women were seen as a very positive force in their community. They clearly had the potential to impact their neighborhood, and alleviate some of the pervasive mistrust (193).

In analyzing Latin American maternal movements more generally, Donna Ramsey Marshall considers implication of women using their gender roles strategically against the state. She cites these movements as making a strategic decision to exploit the Catholic emphasis on the mother. The women acting in these movements “subverted, politicized, and turned against the repressive state” the image of the “good mother” (22-3). Furthermore:

“protesting as mothers defending their families opened a political ‘space’ for women to extend their traditional, private sphere roles into the political realm and initially offered them a measure of protection from state repression. In this way, the women utilized the cultural respect for mothers as a form of defiance and their non-political identity as a sort of camouflage for their activities” (23).

The mothers recognized and capitalized on the power this role carried. Ramsey Marshall suggests that this politicization of motherhood by women activists was made possible by the politicization of the family and the private
sphere by the repressive regimes in Latin America at this time. Rather than reacting to the deaths and disappearances of their loved ones or coping with poverty and inequality with the “culturally appropriate” meekness and passivity the political elite expected, these women embraced the power of their private role as mothers as they claimed a public space (22-3).

The effects of the motherist movements were strong, according to Ramsey Marshall. The participants recognized their agency, and aided in enhancing their democracies and bringing human rights into the discourse. The juxtaposition of the women’s peaceful movements and the states’ repressive reaction highlighted the brutality of the regimes on a global scale, thus eroding their power base.

A further example of mothers impacting their societies can be seen in Chile. In 1973, Chilean mothers and wives were among the first to protest the Pinochet government for information on the disappeared (Karl 86). The acts of these women enabled a break-through the fear and silence that permeated Chile’s civil society. Not only have women maintained their presence in civil society, but they make up the majority of participants, growing in strength and scope of agenda since the first waves of protest (4-5).

Maternally motivated activities have occurred outside of Latin America, as well. In Lebanon, Abir Ward analyses the purpose and success of the Women’s Edification Assembly (WEA) in the 1980’s, whose aim was to:

“provide a sense of security and stability of their families in spite of the unstable and combustive political situation of their country...Their purpose was to serve their community and to help create a stable environment for their families so that their children could grow up in a safe and prosperous atmosphere, and to pull together as women to help one another cope with their ordeal” (388).

Formed in 1980 in the midst of the country’s civil war, the WEA focused on creating space for families, particularly children, to experience normalcy. The

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33 This transformation should not be overstated: Ramsey Marshall notes that the democratization of Latin America for which these women struggled has not resulted in the elimination of repressive traditional gender roles.
34 The WEA was centered in Beirut and had chapters throughout Lebanon. Ward’s study focuses on a rural chapter in a remote mountain village named Baakleen.
founders felt that children were growing up in a “diseased atmosphere” of war, and that underprivileged women were lacking important support (389).

The organization of the WEA was largely decentralized, with chapters able to determine their own activities. In the case of the Baakleen chapter studied by Ward, events tended to focus on bridging political and social divides through shared activities. Additionally, the chapter desired to subtly challenge the tendency for women to identify themselves in relation to men (as wives, mothers, daughters, etc), though it wanted this redefinition to be still socially acceptable (391). The war had highlighted women’s maternal roles within society, and in many ways this appeared to empower some women to participate in social projects (392).

Besides community service-oriented events, the WEA organized popular poetry readings for women and other participants to express their sentiments of the war and its impact on their lives. A space was created, the House of the Child, for children’s and youth’s activities—nearly all village children between the ages of 5 and 18 attended an activity at the House; women and men from the village also participated in events through the House (A. Ward 393). This project seemed to be central to the WEA chapter of Baakleen, as the role of motherhood was seen as very important by those within the organization. The women of Baakleen were expected to maintain their traditional gender boundaries as mothers and wives, but were also challenged (and challenging themselves) to be leaders within their communities and create an environment in which their families could thrive within war (393). Though the WEA did not impact the broader Lebanese society, and did not “act” for peace on a national scale, it appeared to be a central part of maintaining a stable community within the village during the war.

Beyond its social power, the embracing of a maternal identity can also be a source of strength at an individual level. Feminist theorist Cynthia Enloe and anti-war activist Eli Paintedcrow explored the complexities of this identity in anti-war activism during a panel discussion in which they discussed Paintedcrow’s experience as a soldier/mother/grandmother/Native American
leader as well as the activities of Cindy Sheehan, an anti-war activist whose headline-grabbing protest at President George W. Bush’s ranch in Texas centered upon her demand for an apology from the President for the death of her son in the Iraq war. Enloe, though recognizing the symbolic power of acting from the position of mother, and understanding that a maternal identity may provide internal strength to some mothers, expressed concern over an anti-militarist message being “lost” within the maternal rhetoric. Also, she worried that a woman claiming power from her identity as a mother would find her identity minimized through an “act of shrinkage” to be only a mother, rather than a “thinking citizen” (Shigematsu 3 - 4). Her concerns are highlighted by the case of Sheehan. Though Enloe acknowledges that Sheehan’s maternal voice in the political discourse at the time was particularly salient, she felt that Sheehan was being seen as a “mother-of-a-lost-soldier-son, but not as a citizen-critic-of-capitalism” (Shigematsu 4).

Continuing the discussion, Paintedcrow countered that the limiting of a definition of mother is in fact reducing our greater potential. In terms of her own experience, Paintedcrow embraced her identity as a mother to provide comfort to her fellow soldiers, as a subversion to the war machine of which she was a part, and as a platform to lead her people (Shigematsu 5, 15). In response to Enloe’s concern over the “box” in which Sheehan was placed, Paintedcrow suggested that perhaps Sheehan was acting strategically by “working with that box” (Shigematsu 4). Even the reduction of a woman to a solitary role of mother can be, if exercised, an opportunity for empowerment.

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Sheehan’s son was killed in action in 2004; in 2005, she began her protest outside of President Bush’s ranch. Her protest gathered national attention, and launched her into the national anti-war movement. In 2007, she briefly left the movement on May 31, 2007 (Memorial Day and two days after her deceased son’s birthday) citing frustration and a desire to continue raising her surviving children. She shortly returned to politics, running against Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi in the 2008 elections, and currently hosts a political talk-show and blog. For more information, see: Cindy Sheehan, Cindy Sheehan’s Diary, 2007, Available: cindysheehan.dailykos.com, and: Cindy Sheehan, Cindy Sheehan’s Soapbox, 2010, Available: www.cindysheehanssoapbox.com.

Paintedcrow challenges us to expand our definition mother beyond those who have children, and to consider it an integral part of our “wholeness” of being human. Though she uses a much wider definition of mother than the one we are working with, her thoughts are still instructive as to the potential power of mothering.
Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Sana Ksheiboun provide another example of the fortifying strength of a maternal identity in their exploration of the significance of “home” to Palestinian women. They note the determination of one mother after her house has been destroyed by Israeli forces:

“They demolished the house....yes, they have the power to demolish it...but do you think they have the power to demolish me, my daughters, my inner energy to protect my family? That power they cannot demolish” (361).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ksheiboun highlight this attitude as being part of the “ability to love, care and belong” and consider these abilities and the commitment to preserve a legacy as “important sources of empowerment when confronting militarism, sexism, racism, and classism (361). In this case, and many others, mothers have tapped into their maternal identity for strength, resolve and purpose.

These are all cases of mothers acting from within their identity and roles as mothers to effect change within their societies. These peace movements relied on the symbolic, emotional, material and social power of the mother and family in order to gain a voice. The women participants used the skills they knew from their domestic role to demand political change. The penultimate example of such a maternal peace movement is that of the Madres in Argentina, to whom we now turn.

**Claiming the maternal to claim a voice**

Without any doubt, the most well known instance of maternal peace politics began in 1977 when a group of Argentinean women, mostly mothers and grandmothers, began silently marching in the Plaza de Mayo. These

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37 Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ksheiboun do not analyze mothering directly in their research. They are primarily concerned with the meaning of “home,” and the significance of demolition of the houses of women in the Occupied Territories. It is reasonable, however, to assume some overlap between some women’s homes and their identities as mothers, particularly when considering the concept of MotherSpace. Certainly, the respondent quoted here clearly sees her home as connected to her role as mother. Thus, Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ksheiboun’s work can at least tangentially be considered within the context of a politics of motherhood.
women demanded to know what happened to their “disappeared” relatives. The Argentinean military dictatorship was never able to halt these weekly marches, which continue to this day. In 1983, a democratically elected government took control of the government, undoubtedly impacted by the presence of the Madres. These women, largely (though not exclusively) found their voice through their maternal role. They not only embraced this role, but used the power of this role to amplify their voices.

The development of the Madres was not spontaneous. The initial group of women had met while searching for information about their children. They began to share their experiences and hopes, and developed a level of solidarity. The women were not elite; most had very little education, did not work and were housewives. They were not a group of women who would normally have begun a campaign which would stymie the brutal regime (Abreu Hernandez 397 – 8). They were, however, mothers who passionately desired to learn of the fate of their children.

The women politically engaged their maternity in multiple ways. The selected time of their weekly march, 3:30 PM, was to afford the women the opportunity to complete their household duties, while ensuring that they would be at the center of the city during business hours (Abreu Hernandez 397). More overtly, they embraced various images of maternity as the symbols of their movement. Besides pinning the names and photographs of their missing children on their clothes, they began to wear pañuelos of white diaper cloths as a symbol of their lost “infants.” They adopted the image of the pregnant woman, which held multiple meanings. As one interviewee stated “[her son’s] absence has left me permanently pregnant. If they are no longer, I have had to be them, to shout for them, to return them.” The image also offered the symbol of the interrupted maternity by the state (402).

Viviana Abreu Hernandez suggests that the Madres renegotiated their gender roles as they fought against the machismo in their society, often through domestic battles with their husbands. This renegotiation was largely

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38 Reference is made to grandmothers and wives also participating in the marches. It is unclear as to how many marchers fell into these other categories, but the message of the movement was decidedly and explicitly maternal.
possible due to the fact that the men could not protest—the very *machismo* that placed barriers to the women’s political protest also protected them from retaliation by the government\(^\text{39}\) (403). Debra Bergoffen suggests that they actually turned the dysfunctional patriarchal system of the military *junta* against itself. The idealization of the mother would allow some small level of protection. For this reason:

“*They did not enter the plaza as citizens. From 1976 to 1983 Argentine citizens, men or women, who protested were disappeared...These Argentine women knew this*” (164).

By clearly maintaining their private role as mothers, they were protected, to a point, from the brutality of the public sphere because of the patriarchal system in which they lived.

This reliance on their private roles is described by Bergoffen as a “transvaluation” of their traditional role of mother. Their traditional role required that they grieve in private, that they express their emotion in acceptable, non-political forums. But through the loss of their children, they realized their private home was not safe, and they had to react. That reaction needed to be for the body politic (164). They marched for their children, but they also marched for Argentina. In many ways, the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo demonstrate a maternal peace politics. The women reacted and networked based on their identities and roles as mothers. This reaction brought a level of agency which had not previously been accessed by the women. Furthermore, the power of the concept of mother empowered the message of the women. By embracing their identities as mothers and acting from within that identity and role, they managed to create a political statement which could not be silenced by the state.

**Limitations of Maternal peacebuilding**

The case of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo is positive and hopeful. The women were able to achieve the impossible: a sustained and visible non-

\(^{39}\) Sadly, this protection was not absolute; thirteen Madres were disappeared during the first two years of the protest.
violent protest in the face of a violent regime. This achievement was due, in large part, to the women's roles as mothers. However, not every case of a maternal peace politics has been so successful. In the previous chapter, I outlined some dangers presented by a politics relying on the role of motherhood. Here, I return to that discussion in the context of peace politics. First, I briefly present a case of maternal peacebuilding in Nicaragua which did not achieve the desired goals, as well as an exploration of the context of a politics and motherhood in the former Yugoslavia. I will consider what lessons can be learned from this case in terms of a maternal peacebuilding. These cases will allow for a wider discussion of such a peace politics actually reinforcing destructive patriarchal structures by embracing the role of motherhood. These charges levied against maternal peace politics are important to keep in mind throughout the overall discussion of mothers, women, peacebuilding and political engagement.

**Failed maternalist peace?**

A clear instance of women engaging in peace politics through their identity as mothers and not achieving positive results can be seen in Nicaragua. Julie Cupples spoke with women in Waslala, a very rural town in Nicaragua, in order to study their attempt at a reconciliation process. Cupples notes that their reconciliation process, entirely developed and supported by local women, was founded primarily on the premise that the women's identities and desires as mothers would bridge the differences caused by the long and brutal war between the Sandinistas and Contras. A Mother's Committee was formed to help deal with the many issues surrounding the post-conflict situation. Particularly, the Committee endeavored to encourage reconciliation between women of both groups, while simultaneously working towards women-specific economic development. Despite these visionary goals, Cupples relates the failure of the organization to achieve a cross-community agenda.

One main premise for the bridge between the women of the Mother's Committee was the desire for the next generation to be free from the hatred
and dangers of war. Though Cupples does not explore this process in depth, it does appear that it was, to some extent, effective. The women who adopted this approach were forced to acknowledge their own negative prejudices towards one another in efforts to prevent passing these prejudices onto their children. Specifically, she cites the goal as:

“wishing to prevent their [children] growing up feeling the same resentment towards others that their mothers had felt. By focusing on the next generation, discourses of reconciliation became powerful and persuasive” (13).

Unfortunately, these prejudices were held so strongly, and so much resentment existed, that the reconciliation process could not be maintained. In order to establish the reconciliation process on a daily basis, the Committee founded a “community” for mothers to live jointly. Through international funding, they were able to build 52 homes, which were split between the two groups. Twenty-six women and their families from each Sandinista and Contra communities moved into the new, mixed community of “El Progresso.” They further developed, built and then purchased a “community center” which was intended to provide training and support for the women in the community (Cupples 12 – 13). However, as the reconciliation process broke down, the dedication to the shared community faltered.

The joint Committee, which maintained the center and made decisions regarding the community and its development projects, eventually was led almost entirely by Sandinista-associated women. The Contra-associated women felt outside of the decision making process, as well as resenting their perceived exclusion from the Committee’s projects. In the end, the experience left many women even more embittered from both communities. Both groups of women retrenched themselves in their political identities, despite still living in the shared community and being forced to interact with each other daily (Cupples 14).

Cupples suggests that the conflict so conflated the identity of mother with the society’s violent politics, that the women were unable to fully reclaim this identity for peace. Furthermore, she suggests the culturally-ingrained
machismo of Nicaragua made it even more difficult for the women to band together and alter their gender roles and expectations. In any case, this attempt at a maternal peace politics failed. Reconciliation was certainly not achieved, and tensions, in some ways, may have increased (14 – 15).

Cupples, while acknowledging the potential benefits of motherhood as a launch point for reconciliation, feels it is far too tenuous a concept to rely upon. Motherhood, she asserts, is socially constructed and is constantly being renegotiated (16). This conclusion certainly reflects the feminist scholarship on motherhood expressed in the previous chapter: motherhood is a social and cultural institution. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, mothers have the capacity to challenge aspects of this institution and potentially transform it. If women consciously confront and engage their role as mother, they may find they can renegotiate this role to a positive and active one, as the Madres have appeared to have done. It is plausible that this transformation can be done while simultaneously embracing their traditional roles. The intent of a maternal peacebuilding is to encourage and support mothers in becoming conscious of their mothering, how it impacts them, their children and society. For some mothers, this consciousness will lead to a rejection of their traditional roles, whereas other mothers may well feel that they can achieve their desired goals while maintaining these same roles.

The failure of the Waslala project cannot be seen as entirely due to the reliance of the role of motherhood as a bridge between the two groups. The most obvious issue is that these women received essentially no support for their project. Though some support was received from international sources, it appears to have been primarily limited to financial support (i.e. the building of the homes). The international support for women's grassroots development highlighted in Chapter Two did not seem to take hold for the Waslala women. For example, Cupples account of the situation does not suggest that any training programs or workshops took place to help the women develop a successful reconciliation process, or to mediate conflicts when they arose. The women were expected to succeed at resolving a sharp divide simply through living in close proximity, sharing some space, and
sharing the identity of mothers. They were not offered access to the necessary tools to develop their vision.

Related to the lack of international support, the project seemed to be completely detached from local and national government. Cupples cites the lack of funding from local government, highlighted by the absence of roads in the community\(^{40}\) (12 – 13). This detachment could be seen as two-fold, as the women, though they were clearly attempting to alter their political interactions on the micro-level, appear to have had no engagement with the wider national political system. Pushing forward a reconciliation process under the most supportive circumstances is very difficult, but may be near to impossible when occurring in a political, social and/or economic vacuum.

Finally, it appears as though the women relied almost entirely on their shared identity as mothers in bridging their differences. Lorraine Bayard de Volo provides an in-depth analysis of the development of the maternal-political identities in Sandinista Nicaragua during the war years. The Sandinista war machine recognized the symbolic power of the mother and actively “educated” women as to their appropriate roles. Women were encouraged to see all Nicaraguans as their children, and thus be called to protect them against Contra attacks. Mothers who joined militias were deemed exemplary mothers, and mothers of combatants were enlisted to support the rhetoric of the struggle. Mothers were not only denied space to disagree with Sandinista views, but they were actually expected to wholeheartedly support the conflict, even when it killed their children. A mothers-of-the-fallen organization was formed not simply to offer support to women who lost children in the war, but to intervene at the moment these mothers were informed of the death to ensure that they accepted the death as just and right. Sandinista mothers were expected to be Spartan Mothers, and this was clearly a role many embraced (de Volo 246 – 51). Contra mothers likely received similar social and political messages, and felt equally that their maternity and political identities were inextricably linked. According to

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\(^{40}\) This lack of infrastructure resulted in the community turning into a mud-bath during rainy periods.
Cuppes's description, the women in Waslala did not appear to directly address the powerful link between their roles as mothers and their political identity. Neither did they appear to develop a concept of a shared future. Thus, when conflict arose over the power dynamic of the community, the women easily fell back into their divisive political identities.

In an entirely different region, the struggle of mothers within the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990's reflects other instances of the ineffectiveness of maternal peace work. Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović notes that the development of nationalism and militarism within the former Yugoslavia, "the glorification of women as biological reproducers of the nation began" (253). In many ways, this was catastrophic for women as a whole, as their maternity (or potential for maternity) became a target for ethnic war, resulting in mass rapes. For many of the women victimized in this way during the Balkan wars of the 1990's, suffering was not simply experienced through the attacks on their bodies, but also through the ostracization by their families and communities (236 – 7). Though many women embraced the mother-of-the-nation role in support of their nationalist identity, mothers who opposed the rise of militarization were unable to use their powerful symbolism to protest the war (238). Indeed, Nikolić-Ristanović suggests that the use of maternal imagery by women protesting the developing militaristic environment actually opened the door for that imagery to be used by others to support nationalism and militarism (234).

Though the women’s organizations were important within the former Yugoslavia during the region’s turmoil, the identity of mother was problematic. The nationalist rhetoric had so co-opted the image of mother that it was used as a weapon within the various conflicts. Early “motherist” protesters could not maintain control of their maternal images in the face of a spiraling militaristic society. The women’s groups, small scale and focusing on addressing the trauma inflicted by the war did not mobilize against the rhetoric. There was never a concerted attempt to reclaim maternal symbolism for peace.
The above cases establish important caveats to a maternal peacebuilding. First, such a process cannot be practiced without regard to other demands on women’s identities and desires. It must encourage reflection by participants not simply of their mothering, but also how that mothering impacts on and is impacted by their political environment. Secondly, it cannot be practiced alone; it can augment a peace process, but should not be expected to carry one. Women’s identities are complex, and their relationships with the prevailing political and social systems are equally complex. Peacebuilding mothers must also be aware of the wider gender discourse, particularly in terms of motherhood. Any process must be conscious of the use of motherhood symbolism by all actors, and strategies should be developed to counter destructive concepts of motherhood. A maternalist peacebuilding must be approached consciously, with the awareness of the various intersections of women’s lives, identities, needs and desires, and commitments from other institutions and networks to support the development of a process. These elements, as well as several others touched upon in this chapter, must be considered when planning a maternal peacebuilding project.

**Maternal Peacebuilding**

The analysis of maternal peacebuilding in theory and practice which this chapter has presented acknowledges both possibilities and limits. That the experience and skills acquired through mothering should lead those women who mother into a politics of peace and engagement with peacebuilding has been shown to be neither inevitable nor easy to practice. However, the numerous examples cited from around the world in conflict situations show that there are times when mothers engage in peace work on the basis of their maternal thinking and experiences. Arguably, analysis of these examples reveals that the motivation and visions behind maternal engagement in peacebuilding very much echo the contemporary discourse of peacebuilding as outlined in chapter one. Modern peacebuilding goes beyond ensuring the cessation of violence to trying to establish the contexts required
for sustainable peace and security. Looking at the examples of successful maternal peacebuilding cited above, we can see that these aspirations are reflected in the cases discussed.

In all the cases above, maternal peace work was motivated by the desire to establish the future security of children—involving not just an end to violence but endeavors ranging from broad desire of ending violence to ‘malnutrition and hunger’ in the Peruvian case or community cohesiveness through childcare in Guatemala. Almost all of the cases discussed involved some level of economic and social development. The mothers recognized their communities needed an investment of human resources if they were to protect the future. This understanding of the protection of children aligns both with the idea of human security as well as the more general goal of “positive peace.” Also reflecting a hope for positive peace, the building of stable communities for families and children was central in the Lebanese case. Goals of reconciliation were also apparent in Lebanon, as well as being central to the failed endeavor in Nicaragua. The Argentinean mothers demanded institutional change and reform through their pleas for information on their children. All of these cases desired some level of social, political or economic transformation in order to establish a level of peace in the mothers’ lives.

The central peacebuilding tenets of human security, sustainable societies, reconciliation and transformation are very much echoed in these cases and provide a starting point for the development of a maternal peacebuilding. Such a process can complement the more conventional processes of peacebuilding and offer alternative ways for some women to engage in their emerging new society.

The exact manifestation of a maternal peacebuilding process will differ with each specific case. Not only does each conflict present its own challenges and resources for mothers, but the direction of such a process will also need to remain in the hands of the mothers partaking in it. For example, mothers in a post-conflict society focusing on DDR, such as Liberia, will have a substantially different focus than mothers who find their society’s focus on reconciliation, such as in South Africa (though clearly overlap exists). How
mothers in, for example, the Occupied Territories engage in peacebuilding will likely differ substantially from those in Northern Ireland, or indeed their Israeli counterparts. All of these mothers will have different understandings of their roles as mothers, their relationships with men and the state, and their culture’s understanding of motherhood, as well as living in particular social and political contexts. The mothers in the conflicts will identify their goals and acceptable processes, though they will require regional, national and international support for their endeavors, as does any peace work undertaken by women.

Accepting the variability of a maternal peacebuilding, I would offer that MotherSpace is perhaps the most promising and constructive tool to be considered as part of a maternal peacebuilding, and can be translated and adapted to a variety of circumstances. Recall the process of developing a MotherSpace as using a material space in which mothers operate and altering and expanding it so that it changes its discursive meaning. Many of the movements discussed earlier in this chapter demonstrated the beginnings of MotherSpace, such as shared childcare facilities or the adoption of a public space as maternal. A maternal peacebuilding program that develops MotherSpaces on a group level and assists mothers developing individual MotherSpaces could truly alter how these mothers interact with and impact their families, communities and societies.

Finally, it is important to see maternal peacebuilding as an additional tool to peacebuilding and women’s increased participation in political processes. Maternal peacebuilding has limitations: it primarily functions on a grassroots level, only some women have access to its fullest incarnation, and many women (including mothers) will want to participate politically outside of a maternal identity. Moreover, a hyper-focus on maternal peacebuilding could serve to further conflate mothers and peace, or deeply politicize motherhood. Thus, maternal peacebuilding should be seen as one of many approaches to include women in a robust and potentially successful peacebuilding process.
These elements are important to keep in mind as we embark upon the final two chapters of this thesis. The case study of Northern Ireland will be used to assess the viability of a maternal peacebuilding approach. Northern Ireland, having experienced decades of conflict, is a useful site for a case study for several reasons. Its peace process has developed alongside the development of peacebuilding as the central approach to peace development. Because of this, it has numerous peacebuilding projects, and it has been substantially analyzed. In particular, the gender dimensions of the peace process are highlighted within peace and feminist literature. As with many post-conflict societies, women have not been highly visible as key decision-makers (with some significant exceptions), despite robust equality measures. Though the peace process has been making heartening progress over the last decade and a half, significant progress is yet to be achieved in terms of women’s participation and representation. The following chapter will outline the peace process and the gender dynamics and status of women within the political processes of Northern Ireland.

Maternal peacebuilding, as outlined in this chapter, has the potential to alter gender inequity in the political system in Northern Ireland. Through engaging some women in a different and relevant process, women who may otherwise not have participated in the political discourse could have access to an informal politics and potentially provide a gateway to more formal participation. The final chapter of this thesis will test the viability of a maternal peacebuilding within Northern Ireland. The attitudes towards women-as-mothers and the access of mothers to political sites will be assessed. Also, projects and movements that tangentially tap into the same ethos or elements of maternal peacebuilding will be considered. Finally, I will imagine what a maternal peacebuilding in Northern Ireland could entail. Such an exercise should allow the reader to consider the potential for a maternal peacebuilding in Northern Ireland or other post-conflict society.
Chapter 5: Women at the margins of peace politics in Northern Ireland

Up to this point, this thesis has largely been focused on theoretical aspects of peacebuilding, women and motherhood. In the last chapter, I outlined a theory of maternal peacebuilding. This thesis intends to apply that theory to the case of Northern Ireland in an effort to consider whether maternal peacebuilding has occurred in Northern Ireland and whether and how its place in future peacebuilding can be augmented.

In order to develop this case study, the present chapter will start by providing some background to the conflict before demonstrating and explaining aspects of the marginalization of women from politics in Northern Ireland generally and from the formal peace process more particularly. As with most conflict societies, women have largely been excluded from the decisions made throughout the Troubles and have simultaneously suffered significantly from the effects of the conflict. Northern Irish society is highly patriarchal, and women are conspicuously absent from elite political positions. Thus the Northern Ireland experience concretely and specifically reflects the trends identified in Chapter Two of this thesis which noted the global absence of women from the politics of peace. Again mirroring Chapter Two, this chapter will also reveal that despite their marginalization, many women have been involved at the grassroots of peace work and that this work has been of great importance in the development of a wider peace project. For all of the limitations placed upon them, the information provided in this chapter demonstrates that many women have found ways to take a proactive role in their community and society. The final chapter will return to the concept of maternal peacebuilding previously developed. Drawing from the information developed in this chapter, Chapter Six will consider whether women in Northern Ireland have or would self-consciously engaged in maternal thinking have been part of these grassroots movements, whether and how 'MotherSpace' should be further developed in the contemporary
peace process will be explored, as well as consider the general viability and usefulness of a maternal peacebuilding in the Northern Irish context.

**Notes on the case study's methodology**

As stated, the purpose of this chapter is to develop the context of the case study of Northern Ireland. Though the intent to apply the concept of maternal peacebuilding to a specific situation in order to ground a heavily theoretical topic in reality has been part of the research project from its inception, the research on Northern Ireland began in earnest in the fall of 2007. In developing this case study there has been heavy reliance on the current academic literature about women, politics and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. To augment this literature, however, I have included insights garnered from semi-structured interviews conducted with women involved in politics in Northern Ireland. This chapter and the following utilize the interviews I held with fourteen Northern Irish women involved in some sort of political activity. These women have various backgrounds, and consented to open-ended interviews regarding their experiences as women in the Northern Irish social and political systems. Details of the fourteen respondents as well as the guide questions are included as appendices. All interviewees were informed of their right to at any point remain anonymous, and had access to full transcripts their interview and the opportunity to review the text attributed to them to insure that their intent was accurately reflected and their privacy upheld. All respondents agreed to be named within the text. Though several of the women were sympathetic to and even supportive of the general concept I presented, the presence of their words within the coming pages does not infer their support of either my thesis or my analysis of Northern Ireland.

The interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2008 after substantial background research had been undertaken. I attempted to speak with women from various levels of political engagement and from various political backgrounds. I did not attempt to categorize the women based upon their social, economic or political backgrounds. Several women
informed me of various aspects of their identities, but I did not request this information. As such, an analysis of my encounters based on political, ethnic, economic, etc, background is not possible, nor was it intended at this stage of exploration. The purpose of the interviews was to get a pulse on women’s lived experiences.

Seven women were in elected positions at the time of the interview; one additional woman had been involved in party politics but is primarily an academic. Two other women are academics, one of whom had been heavily involved in civil society. The five remaining women were active in civil society. With the exception of the politicians, I did not target women for their political/religious identity, nor did I explicitly ask them to identify their backgrounds or affiliations. Four of the non-politicians clearly identified themselves as being associated with the Catholic community, two clearly identified themselves as being from the Protestant community, and the remaining two were not explicit in their background identity. Of the politicians, I attempted to interview at least one woman from each of the six main parties. I succeeded in interviewing one woman from each of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI). I had interviews with two women from the Social Democrat and Labour Party (SDLP), but was unable to secure an interview with anyone from Sinn Fein.

These interviews were conducted with the intent of assessing the sense of accuracy of the available literature in the eyes of women living within the Northern Irish system, as well as to receive feedback as to the viability of maternal peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. In terms of the value of the interviews in the context of this chapter, the politicians are particularly relevant. Though I spoke about her party’s policies with each of these respondents, the focus of the interview was the individual woman’s experience within the political system. Most of the women made it explicitly clear that they were speaking of their own experiences and not for their party except in specific instances when they were describing and clarifying party policy. Even given this, it is important to keep in mind that the women
actively involved in party politics would be unlikely to oppose or publicly criticize their party’s policies. It was not within the parameters of the interviews to parse the points at which these women departed from or disagreed with their parties, nor is that the purpose of this chapter. Furthermore, the lack of a representative from Sinn Fein makes it impossible for these interviews to be seen as a comprehensive overview of women’s views across the political spectrum. Rather, the interviews should be seen as a “snapshot” of some women’s experiences in the political system and an opportunity for some involved women to express their opinion and insights on a work of theoretical research.

Additionally, it may be noted that the maternal status of the interviewees was not a central part of the interview. This again reflects the intent of the interviews as being to assess the relevance of the literature on Northern Irish women in politics, as well as to allow an opportunity for women who have experienced various forms of political involvement to express their thoughts regarding the concept of maternal peacebuilding. Though maternal peacebuilding would primarily impact those mothers who directly participate in it, women who have worked in and around politics, as well as those who have worked with mothers, would be in a position to offer insights as to the applicability, effectiveness and pitfalls of the concept. Far from attempting to be a study into the level of acceptance of a maternal peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland, the following two chapters should be seen as establishing a foundation for the development of maternal peacebuilding processes in Northern Ireland and similar environments as well as laying the groundwork for more targeted studies into the acceptance, viability and structure of such processes.

These women shared their insights and experiences with me in order to place the theory of maternal peacebuilding within a context. In particular, they provided details as to the relationship of women to formal politics, their participation in informal politics, the traditional roles of women and insights into the idea of motherhood within their society. Their input was invaluable to my understanding of women’s experiences in Northern Ireland, and the
potential for a conscious maternal peacebuilding to be an effective approach within this society. These interviews underscore the fact that the environment in which Northern Irish women must navigate is highly complex and often challenging. The interviews, alongside the literature reviewed forthwith, provide the foundation for imagining the potential for maternal peacebuilding.

**Historical and Political Background to Conflict and Peace in Northern Ireland**

The very history of Northern Ireland is contested, in that different factions within the society hold different narratives of pivotal events and trace the beginnings of the current conflicts to different points in history. Northern Ireland, as with the rest of the island, has a long history of ethnic, political and cultural conflict. This overview of the Troubles and the resulting peace process is necessarily brief. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus my attention on the current ethno-political conflict, centering on what is termed in the region “the constitutional question.” This question refers to the political status of Northern Ireland in relation to the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and can be traced directly to the Partition of 1921.

This political status, and its associated history, has resulted in the development of two factions: the Catholic/republican/nationalist faction has supported both independence from the United Kingdom and sought unification with the Republic of Ireland. The Protestant/unionist/loyalist faction has desired to remain part of the United Kingdom and rejected a relationship with the Republic. The sectarian discourse has developed over

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41 This is a vast over-simplification of very complex positions, but does provide the core political dispute within Northern Ireland. There is great variety within these factions; for the purposes of this thesis, I will be self-consciously relying on generalizations in an effort to maintain a focus of discussion on women within the society. The uses of the terms associated with each identity are also complex. The terms nationalist and loyalist, to some, suggests a strong link to paramilitary action, while unionist is seen by some working-class communities as elitist. See: Rachel Ward, *Women, Unionism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland*. 55 – 62. I have elected to use the term unionist for consistency, and republican in an effort to avoid confusion with the political concept of nationalism. I refer to
multiple decades (some would argue centuries), and includes ethnic stereotypes. Additionally, the vehemence with which any individual may support or oppose either faction relies on numerous factors. Particular neighborhoods and areas have had a far more extreme sectarian position than some others. Socio-economic positioning has played a significant part, as the conflict tended to be felt most intensely in lower-income neighborhoods. As I explore the implications of these ethno-political identities in terms of gender, I will consider the interplay of some of these influences. For the purposes of a historical background, however, a rough distinction between the two "sides" of the conflict allows for an overview of events leading to the current political situation.

Parties on the Irish island had long been attempting to achieve Free State or independent status from the United Kingdom, and in 1916 a new wave of political violence actually pushed the British government to compromise. Partition occurred in 1921 as part of this compromise and created two jurisdictions on the island: Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. The following year, the Anglo-Irish Treaty gave the entire island Free State status, however the Parliament of Northern Ireland (colloquially known as Stormont) elected to remain part of the United Kingdom. As the 26 counties making up the southern portion of the island developed into an independent state, the six counties comprising of Northern Ireland maintained their ties to the United Kingdom. Complicating matters, the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland, enacted in 1937, declared the intent for the whole of the island to be unified.

This political situation combined with fears by the Protestant political elite in the North (Protestants were the majority group within Northern Ireland, but were a clear minority when considering the whole island) resulted in numerous decisions being made that minimized the potential for Catholic Protestantism and Catholicism when speaking directly about faith backgrounds and institutions.

42 For a thorough study of how the conflict has quantitatively and qualitatively affected various segments of the Northern Irish population, see: Marie-Therese Fay, The Cost of the Troubles Studies.
residents to thrive within the North, and even institutionalized anti-Catholic discrimination. Gerrymandering of the local and regional elections was widespread, as was employment discrimination. Social housing allocations were highly discriminatory, and many Catholic families lived in squalor. The situation became untenable, and in the 1960's, civil rights protests began in Northern Ireland.

These protests unintentionally fed into sectarian attitudes, and the two factions began to violently conflict, with the regional police force of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) becoming implicated in sectarian, anti-Catholic acts. The clashes between these groups became more extreme, and in 1969 the British Army was deployed to oversee the security of the region. This did not have the desired effect of calming the situation. Republican paramilitaries (primarily the Provisional IRA) gained a level of support from many within Catholic communities, and numerous unionist paramilitaries (notably the Ulster Defense Association and the Ulster Volunteer Forces) developed as counter-balances. The region became increasingly unstable, and in 1972 the United Kingdom dissolved Stormont and the region came under the Direct Rule of Parliament at Westminster.

The Troubles continued for nearly thirty years. Paramilitary and state action lead to waves of violence within and between communities, and the Provisional IRA engaged in acts of terrorism outside of Northern Ireland. More than 3500 people were killed directly due to the violence, tens of thousands injured (Fay 160 – 61), and the vast majority of the population affected by the threat of violence and the imprisonment/internment programs. In 1997, after several failed peace attempts and several years of negotiating terms for peace talks, the formal process which would lead to a peace settlement began. In 1998, the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement was produced and voted upon by residents of Northern Ireland. The Agreement laid the groundwork for the development of an effective regional government

43 The Republic of Ireland also passed a referendum accepting the Agreement, which required the Irish state to relinquish its absolute goal for a united island nation.
based upon equality and justice. Northern Ireland would remain within the United Kingdom, allowing for the possibility of Northern Ireland separating from the United Kingdom only upon a majority vote within the region. The Agreement committed all stakeholders to pursue a program for governance focused on equality and committed to peaceful resolution of conflict. It set up a power-sharing Assembly that would address regional legislation and end the Direct Rule from Westminster; the British Army would no longer be in control of security, and an equality-focused police force (PSNI) was established. Paramilitaries would commit to a complete disarmament and a cessation of violence ("Good Friday" Sec 6 - 11). Scores of projects and NGO's have developed to assist the society in its transition from being entrenched in a continual cycle of violence into entering a period of peace.

As of the writing of this thesis, many of the requirements of the Agreement have either been met or are in the process of earnestly being addressed, and the environment of Northern Ireland has greatly changed. In many ways, Northern Ireland remains a divided society, as the political rhetoric can be divisive, and some pockets of sectarian rancor continue to exist. Violence has not been entirely eliminated; some splinter factions of the paramilitaries continue to pursue their agenda through violence and the threat thereof. These incidences, however, have been rejected by residents of Northern Ireland and have failed to gain popular support. Northern Ireland is still in a fragile state, but has made substantial progress in establishing a lasting peace. It is, undoubtedly, undergoing a process of peacebuilding.

**Women and the Politics of Conflict and Peace**

During the years of the Troubles and the peace process and peacebuilding sketched above, women have been virtually (although not entirely) absent from the field of formal political life and elite peacemaking. As will be shown below, formal politics in Northern Ireland has historically been male-dominated for reasons relating to the existence of "armed patriarchy" through the gendered division of political power and the existence
of gendered conceptions of political agency across both unionism and republicanism (Rooney 168).

**Armed patriarchy**

Rosemary Sales embraces and develops the theory that over the decades of the Troubles, Northern Ireland has developed into an “armed patriarchy.” The militaristic culture, relying on secretive (male) politics and the making of community identity paramount has made the concept of the Other very rigid. Those who do not conform to the “rules” are not tolerated, and the threat or use of violence is more easily sanctioned (70 -1). The conflict has entrenched many women’s attachment to their communities, making it difficult for many to act outside of them. The patriarchal control of women has also been further entrenched by the conflict (9). In some instances, women’s roles have changed to fill in the gaps men left during the conflict. This is most clearly seen in the instances of women whose husbands were imprisoned during the Troubles, and the subsequent “reestablishment” of domestic roles. Sales suggests that such instances can lead men to detrimentally counter-react, though has also opened the door to some level of fluidity in gender roles (70 -1).

Signs of state violence such as soldiers bearing arms, watchtowers and roadblocks were ubiquitous during the Troubles. Paramilitaries in both communities used violence to maintain power within their communities. Though these overt expressions of force and violence have diminished during the peace process, their legacy remains strong. The violence which permeates the society has turned inward to target women, leading to high levels of domestic violence (Cockburn *Space* 57). Certainly not every milieu has been equally affected by these attributes of the armed patriarchy, but we can wonder as to whether all segments of society feel some of the effects of such a militaristic culture.

Margaret Ward discusses the implications of the armed patriarchy:

“there can be no sustainable future until there is a strong social and political movement against the culture of violent masculinity. This culture
embraces the youngster who proudly pronounces that he is a 'hard man,' through the aggressive behaviour of male politicians, to the physical force tradition within the two communities" ("Gender" 279).

These are the realities that show a glimpse of the dominant discourse in Northern Ireland: patriarchal, militaristic and rigid. Women, though many make substantial efforts to be fully involved in formal politics, remain outside of this discourse, and thus outside of the decision-making processes. This chapter will consider ways in which women from both dominant political identities have interacted with politics in elite and grassroots politics, and, in the case of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, combined the two modes of engagement.

**The gendered division of political power**

The period of Direct Rule, which lasted more than 30 years, can certainly be seen as having developed the political culture in Northern Ireland today. Not only did this period calcify the positions of political parties in relation to the Troubles, but the very system of decision making during this period has effected how Northern Irish politics functions. Yvonne Galligan and Rick Wilford suggest that this system has contributed to the persistent “democratic deficit” of women in formal politics (138 - 40).

Of particular interest to women has been the reliance on local councils for the administration of public services. With no regional body, and Westminster being so far removed geographically, culturally and politically, the only bodies left to deal with local and “bread and butter issues” were the local councils. This was where Northern Irish politics was practiced throughout this period. And women were clearly absent. Few women stood for election and those who did faced difficulties in getting elected. Eilish Rooney and Margaret Woods identified three general reactions to women councilors by male politicians. Some held the women in admiration, though sometimes leaning towards condescension. They saw these “special ladies” as balancing two roles: domestic responsibility and political representation. These women were not expected to sacrifice their domestic responsibilities or
their family welfare. Others were highly suspicious of the women representatives: they may have been more likely to collaborate with the “other side.” Still others saw women as having tactical value: they attract votes. This matches the general sentiment of the women politicians themselves (20). According to Sales, most women felt excluded. Often, they saw themselves as confined to “women’s issues.” This often brought them into collaboration with women from the “other side,” which in turn contributed to suspicions of their propensity to collaborate (179).

Entering into the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement, women remained in the margins of the political system. Though the Northern Ireland Secretary (the highest-ranking British official at the time) was a woman, Mo Mowlam, and two women were present at the negotiating table as part of the Northern Irish Woman’s Coalition, the environment was decidedly masculine, even macho (Racioppi and O’Sullivan See 100). The members of the NWC recall having to push for their presence at the table to be recognized (Sales 179) and facing ridicule when they questioned the prevailing culture:

“all the other politicians were used to this way of doing it, and the media was used to it, and saying to us, ‘There, there, there little girls, you don’t understand politics’ and we were saying, ‘We understand politics very well, very well, this behavior is not acceptable politics in any other society apart from conflict societies like this’... and in fact we were right and in fact the Chairman [Senator George Mitchell] came out and said, ‘No, we’re surprised’” (Hinds "Interview").

Though the women were vindicated by observers, the dismissive and insulting behavior was not entirely eliminated, and the hyper-masculine (and misogynistic) environment remained the norm.

Today, the involvement of women in the formal political system remains precarious. Though there are more women elected to Stormont than ever before, at 16.7%, it remains the lowest rate of women’s representation in the UK\textsuperscript{44} and lower than most legislatures throughout the EU and the

\textsuperscript{44}Overall, the UK Parliament at Westminster currently consists of 22% women, the Scottish Parliament at 34.1%, and the Welsh Assembly holds 46.7% women. See:
world. Only three of the twelve ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive are women, two from Sinn Fein and one from the DUP. There is currently no regional policy or requirement by the United Kingdom to address the low levels of women's representation, and parties have generally not developed robust programs of their own. While several parties have improved the numbers of elected women in their ranks (particularly Sinn Fein, the SDLP and the smaller unionist parties) in general, the perception of women's traditional roles has resulted in parties, particularly unionist ones, to place women's equal representation as much lower priority than the pursuit of ethno-nationalist politics (Galligan 213).

All of the women interviewed did acknowledge various dilemmas that women politicians continue to face. The long, open-ended meetings and lack of childcare provisions were the most-cited barriers to women's participation. Despite the fact that several interviewees insisted that their experiences as politicians were positive, there seemed to be a subtle and pervasive patriarchal undertone in the women's experiences in general. A number of interviewees referred to instances of what can only be described as bullying. Talking and even laughing through speeches by some MLA's seemed to be fairly common. One of the respondents spoke of a situation in which she was to speak at a large event. A close (male) friend of hers was upset by the idea, reminding her that "she was a woman." Apparently, she would have been overstepping her bounds to take part in this activity, merely because of her sex. Bronagh Hinds suggests that many women compensate for these attitudes by rejecting solidarity and electing instead to "perform a very male model of politics in terms of being mainstream and acceptable" ("Interview").

The PUP, a predominantly working-class unionist party, have been fortunate to have some strong women come forward (two of their three MLA's are women), though they have a weak official gender policy and remains a rather male-centered party (Racioppi and O'Sullivan See 101 - 04).
Dawn Purvis of the PUP noted in our interview that her community would hold very strong traditional roles, and she has broken them:

“people find that very difficult to deal with. Not just in terms of breaking the stereotypical role, but of being able to work in this environment, and being able to translate what goes on for people. And then, you know, when you do meet them you disarm them completely. Because at first they’re looking to reinforce their own perception of you, and you don’t...That’s to me, what meeting people’s about. And the more they can be challenged about diversity and equality and all those issues, then they can see that politics really is about them. And how it affects them.”

Purvis clearly sees that her political success has occurred in spite of the fact that she is a woman. Significantly, she also feels that her success as a politician is important to her community in that it can now see that politics is wider than they have assumed. Nonetheless, she clearly continues to feel an undercurrent of sexism.

The electoral system and its formal political infrastructure have not been friendly to women in Northern Ireland. Though women have participated in the political system, they have largely been invisible in elected politics. This has begun to shift, but Northern Ireland still lags behind other European jurisdictions in levels of participation and efforts to increase women politicians.

Gendered conceptions of political agency

Thus far, the contexts of armed patriarchy and entrenched male political dominance have been discussed in order to explain women’s exclusion from political life and the peace process. Another level of analysis can also be added here which focuses on gender politics and identity formation within unionism and republicanism, again helping us to understand the invisibility of women in political life. This section attempts to offer an overview of impacts on the gendered experiences and expectations of women within each political identity. The reader should particularly note the position of motherhood within both traditions, as it pertains directly to the subject of this thesis, and will be useful in the concluding discussion of the next chapter.
Linda Racioppi and Katherine O’Sullivan See identify the unionist political system as an “ethno-gender” regime, meaning that the power relations in unionist politics mutually reinforce ethno-national (unionist) and gender identities (94)\(^{45}\). The political structure during the first Stormont years encouraged the Unionist party to foster solidarity in its interactions, regardless of class, religion or gender. The party resisted women’s involvement at elite levels of government, and committed itself to a conservative ideology. Over the years, such conservatism has been entrenched by unionism’s sense of being in a precarious position. Though unionism and Protestantism have been the predominant political grouping in Northern Ireland since Partition, their leaders have been quite conscious of being a vast minority on the entire island. Additionally, the effect of the Troubles on the world and particularly British opinion towards the status of unionism in Northern Ireland has pushed unionist leadership and its rhetoric further on the defensive. As a result, any anti-establishment movement has tended to be seen as a threat to the \textit{status quo} and thus to unionism. Though this has forced several movements to the fringe of social action (notably those for workers-rights), it has resulted in a total lack of support for women’s rights and feminism within unionism. To compound the difficulties of feminism holding a critical view towards power structures, the fact that it has had so much more relative success within republicanism has resulted in it becoming a

\(^{45}\) Though the power elite within unionism would like, and often manage, to portray a united and uniform front, unionism is far more complicated than a first glance would suggest. One such complication is the general existence and role of women within and around unionism. Ward explores the “shades” of unionism and the closely linked Protestantism practiced in Ulster. Without lingering too long on this subject, it is worth noting that unionism varies based upon location, economic status and educational resources. There are varying degrees of connections with various denominations (Church of Ireland, Presbyterian churches, etc), social class (elite vs. working class), and the extent of their identification with Britain. There are also differences in the meaning of unionism—many in the working class preferred to identify as loyalist. These are two terms which appear to be interchangeable to the outsider, but have significant difference to some. It may also be important to point out that although many unionists consider themselves Protestant, they are not necessarily religious \textit{per se}. Protestantism is a part of the identity of a unionist, regardless of how closely she follows a faith. Categorically, however, unionism means that an individual is \textit{not} Catholic. For further discussion, see: Rachel Ward, \textit{Women, Unionism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland}. Chap 3.
complete pariah within the unionist community. Not only is feminism and women’s rights often seen as being anti-unionist, but it has also often been seen as pro-republican (Racioppi and O’Sullivan See 97). The association of many within unionism with conservative and patriarchal institutions such as the Orange Order and evangelical Protestantism reinforce the gender order (100).

Simona Sharoni, within this context, explores the limitations of unionist women’s potential for moving for social change. As members of the “settler-colonial” nationalist group, they have very limited space to articulate their desire to be equal partners in the political project. This results in unionist women being “threatened on two levels: as members of the power group who run the risk of losing their power and privilege and as liberal women who believed that women’s universal experiences of oppression transcended any differences, including national boundaries” (7). Unionist women are at once privileged and marginalized. As such, it is difficult for them to effectively embrace either their ideological group or their gender group; one seems to prevent participation with the other.

Given these insights, it is easy to understand the paradox of unionist women’s power. Rachel Ward points out that unionist women, having been in the dominant group, should have had access to the benefits (economic, social, political, etc) of being in the majority group. Almost categorically, however, they have not. Since Partition, the public consideration of women’s issues in Northern Ireland has lagged far behind those in the wider United Kingdom, and, in the past two decades, the Republic of Ireland. Because of the gendered nationalism dominant in unionism, Ward argues, unionist women have been constrained by the conservative nature of nationalism. Though they appear to have power within the private sphere, women have been unable to influence power structures to their benefit (47 - 8).

46 Nationalist is a term used to describe Republicanism. Ward, however, demonstrates that unionism is indeed a form of nationalism, that nationalism is by definition conservative in that it intends to maintain a nostalgic status quo, and that this conservatism is limiting to women. For a definition of nationalism in relation to Northern Irish identities, see: Rachel Ward, Women, Unionism and Loyalism. 24 – 8.
Unionist women have had particularly difficult barriers to their visible participation. Being the dominant group, the unionist community has tended towards a conservatism that readily rejects any movement that threatens to disrupt the status quo. As such, there has been little space for women to challenge the patriarchal structures and mindset of unionism. Women have begun to push the boundaries, but they still remain largely in the private sphere. This is a very different story from that of republican women. As a community that has been seeking liberation and focusing on social rights, republican women have had more space to explore their agency. Given this, however, they still have great restrictions to participation in the public sphere.

The republican nationalist relationship with women differs significantly from that of unionist nationalism, but is equally gendered. Whereas the unionist concept of womanhood requires a woman who is supportive, even subordinate, the republican concept is that of a pure woman, most likely a mother, who is to be protected, but seems to be perpetually suffering. Republican culture has historically used images and references to this idea of woman: Mother Ireland, sons/daughters/children of Ireland, the raping of Ireland. The island and the people of Ireland have been invaded and abused by the British; Ireland/woman is noble, vulnerable and in need of protection against the vulgar, oppressive and abusive Britain/man (R. Ward 38 – 9, 44). The gendered imagery of republican nationalism is obvious. How that translates into gender relations within republicanism and the wider society is more delicate. The role of mother is a particularly strong and powerful image within the republican identity.

Helen Brocklehurst notes the centrality of family to Catholic women. She cites Eithne McLoughlin as describing the Northern Irish society as "matrifocal." particularly in terms of mother's sacrifice. And this focus is particularly strong within the Catholic tradition. Like their Protestant counterparts, Catholic women have not had female authority modeled within the Catholic Church. McLoughlin further notes that though valued,

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67 Though women can have influential roles within the Catholic community—for example, the important role female religious orders have played in education—
mothering remains explicitly subordinate to men’s roles in the family and society. Mothering in the republican tradition is highly political, in that

“women have been accepted as guardians of the family, transmitters of cultural values to the next generation and the eternal sufferers for Mother Ireland. In particular it is assumed that mothers will rear sons who will devote themselves to the cause. Mothers can be actively involved in transmitting and preserving nationalist aims and may also resort to violence themselves” (105).

Though their role is highly politicized, mothers are seen as “non-political and non-threatening.” They have not been identified as agents within the republican movement (McLoughlin 15). Mirroring unionist/Protestant women, the tradition of sacrifice is strong, as is the expectation of women’s location in the home. In her study of a group of republican Northern Irish women, Alice McIntyre found that the women saw themselves as fulfilling multiple roles. One of her participants wrote that the women are “all things to all people: mother, sister, friend, worker, entertainer, lover, soldier, and shoulder to cry on.” Women fulfill a variety of roles—whatever is required of them. Within this is the underlying belief, again referencing a participant, that the woman “is the backbone of the family...the one that keeps the family together” (McIntyre 395).

Until recently, authority in the republican movement in the political sphere has also been the purview of men (and largely remains so). However, republican women differ starkly from unionist women in that there is also a tradition of radical political action. In particular, Clar na mBan, the republican women’s feminist organization, synthesizes the revolutionary and anti-state elements of republicanism and radical feminism, and desires to challenge dominant power structures (Sales 69). In this way, republican women who found difficulty with the established order had the opportunity to interact and react with others who felt the same. Republican women have

the Church itself remains a male-dominated hierarchical (and patriarchal) institution. Leadership within the Church can only be attained by men.

48 Clar na mBan also committed itself early to the peace process, holding the “Women’s Agenda for Peace” conference in 1994. During the process, they remained staunchly Republican, even when being critical of decisions made by Sinn Fein. See: Rosemary Sales, Women Divided. 197 – 202.
also had more involvement in employment or becoming "accidental activists" in which "women who previously did not see themselves as in any way political became advocates and agents for social change" in light of a direct experience of social injustice (21).

The accidental activism led to many republican women learning about political action in a crucible. They became involved because of the direct and focused need of their family or direct community. But this focused involvement also exposed them to political action that taught them the fundamentals of organizing and campaigning. These skills were developed and honed throughout the Troubles, and republican women became more involved in community organizations and politics. Unfortunately, this was not always welcomed by the republican community as a whole.

Recall the perception of feminism within the unionist community, in that it was associated intrinsically with the republican community. Ironically (though perhaps not so surprisingly), feminism had difficulty being accepted within the republican community. This had an impact on the republican woman, particularly in terms of the relationships between republicans in the North and South. In 1980, women from the Republic’s wing of Sinn Fein initiated a debate through the development of the Department of Women’s Affairs within the party. According to Aretxaga, this prompted many active republican women in the North to legitimate their political position in feminist terms in order to participate in the debate (156). Ultimately, Sinn Fein realized that:

"women's political voice was a relevant part of the image and agenda of nationalist politics...the republican movement could not deny women's critical role in holding nationalist working-class communities together throughout the conflict" (Galligan 214).

Sinn Fein thus incorporated various aspects of the women's movement into its own platform. An argument can be made, however, that this incorporation was more a co-option of rhetoric, rather than an embracing of the feminist agenda. Republicanism was certainly not embraced by the wider feminist movement. Aretxaga clearly outlines the criticism by feminists in the Republic
and wider United Kingdom of the republican movement, its organizations and agenda (156 – 63).

The narrative of republican women has largely been one of activism and sacrifice. They have been active in the struggle for civil rights and against the forces they saw as victimizing their communities, but they have also been expected to suffer heroically for their family and ideology. In this sense, the space the republican ideology may provide for the development of women’s rights and political participation also traps them in an incredibly difficult and painful role.

Both republican and unionist identities in Northern Ireland rely on patriarchal systems. The generation of violence has only strengthened the gender dichotomies that were evident within each tradition. Though the specific ways women are limited differs within each community, the fact remains that the society as a whole has prevented women from participating in formal politics as independent political agents. Ironically, this same oppressive system opened a space at the community level in which women could engage politically. As the formal political system was frozen in the constitutional question, the daily needs of the Northern Irish could generally only be addressed at the local level and through less formal institutions. This has led to the emergence of what Grainne McCoy calls a “parallel universe,” or community politics within which women’s community organizations, cross-community networks and grassroots peace movements have flourished. This space has been important to women’s political participation and to the peace process itself, as this final section will demonstrate.

**Grassroots Politics**

As a response to the “democratic deficit,” and women’s lack of representation in Northern Ireland, many women have focused on the community and voluntary sector, choosing “to become the effective agents of change in their work with women at the more grass-roots level” (McWilliams 30). Several organizations have developed, many of them umbrella organizations of smaller groups, which focus on bringing their concerns into
the public sphere. McWilliams points out that "there was no such thing as one women’s movement, but a whole range of movements in which women had participated" (17). However, the multiple movements, founded on different principles such as peace, equality, prisoner’s rights, or political demands, share many traits. Importantly, unlike many women’s movements around the world, much of the activism built up in working-class communities (30). Women tended to become involved through “accidental activism,” reacting to events that directly affected them. This tended to occur within communities, and particularly within the republican community. There has, however, been cross-community activism throughout the last 40 years. There have been critical moments in which the women of both communities have been able to come together as “women,” usually in terms of securing women’s equal rights in Northern Ireland, but also in terms of woman-specific social needs.

Cera Murtagh intimates that the democratic deficit led to the development of the informal political arena. Women, being the most disadvantaged by the deficit grasped community politics as a way to effect change, rather than remaining passive. The location of women in the informal sphere has been so great, in fact, that the distinction between informal and formal politics has become highly gendered. Formal politics has been increasingly “masculinized,” while informal politics has become “feminized” (22 - 24). This gendering may quite possibly have led to developing a deeper deficit, with women feeling increasingly comfortable with “little ‘p’ politics.” and thus remaining outside of formal “big ‘P’ politics”.

The women’s groups can offer significant insight into a different way of doing politics. These groups have tended to function very differently from other activist groups. They tend to avoid hierarchical structures and focus on developing the potential of their members. The structures tend to be flexible, allowing women with varying backgrounds to participate. As many women

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49 Rooney suggests that the determination of the women’s sector to remain outside of the sectarian political discourse during the Troubles has placed it in a precarious position in the post-conflict period, as the public (and funding bodies) see women’s centers and organizations as being outside politics and thus public funding. See: Eilish Rooney, "Community Development in Times of Trouble").
have limited experience in activism, the groups also focus on training and developing their skills, as well as providing invaluable experience (Roulston and Whittock 57 - 63).

Clearly, however, the development of women's activism has served two purposes. First, it has pushed for the recognition of women's rights. Crucially, it has demanded the Northern Irish society consider women's needs both socially and politically. It has also aided the development of community politics as a powerful force in the region. Largely dominated by women's centers and women-focused groups, community activism has had a major impact on the political climate of the region, and achieved a great deal in filling the vacuum created by the democratic deficit.

**Community politics**

The development of women's centers stem directly from the growing women's activism. Grainne McCoy cites the formation in 1975 of the Northern Irish Women's Rights Movement (NIWRM) as a central force for women as political actors. It was through this early effort that the first attempt at a women's center was established in Belfast in 1980. Through the following decades other networks developed, such as the Women's Support Network and the Women's Information Network. Through the utilization of these networks women's and community centers were opened and resourced, providing an invaluable resource to women in specific communities (13 - 17).

The Opsahl Report, commissioned in 1992 to examine the elements needed for peace, specifically refers to the particular role many women have played in community activism and "the kind of informal politics they can represent" (Pollak and Opsahl 82). The report cites the importance of groups formed by women and their potential to effect a positive outcome in a settlement.

During our interview, Bronagh Hinds noted that the Opsahl Commission gave women an official forum in which to be heard. The report's process allowed people, often for the first time, to become engaged in a
political process, and women in particular learned how vital they were to informal politics. In this forum, they spoke about what mattered to them. They knew that the political system at the time did not facilitate their involvement, and that many women were not inclined to challenge the system. Politics was seen as lacking in debate and every-day policy issues. There was no “point of access” with the political process for many women. The women who participated in Opsahl often spoke of concern for the future, and for their children. They expressed their desire to be involved, and demonstrated that they had visions for their society ("Women" 112 -13). The process introduced many women to their potential to engage in the political process, and called on political parties to facilitate women’s involvement (Kenney 12).

Opsahl brought official attention to the well-developed and years-old phenomenon of women’s organization. There have been a number of different styles developed by various women’s and community groups, with “transversal politics” being perhaps the most deeply studied and developed. Developed alongside coalition and alliance politics, it responded to the number of interactions between women of various backgrounds and ideologies. Many of these intersections occurred due to specific needs. This approach, analyzed in depth by Nira Yuval-Davis, focuses on dialogue and empathy. The participants are assumed to be “rooted” in their traditions, while accepting the possibility to “shift” aspects of their political position through the process of empathetic dialogue. This process respects difference while minimizing the chance for political paralysis (125 – 31). Murtagh sees the development of this approach as stemming from the necessity of trans-community activism by women (25).

Cynthia Cockburn considers the Woman’s Support Network (WSN) as an organization engaging in transversal politics. Formed by three Belfast women’s centers, the WSN’s purpose was initially to maintain funding streams for the centers. The Network quickly expanded to become an entity in itself, allying not just the three original centers, but also various women’s groups and city-wide projects, eventually developing into a ‘collective feminist
voice' of working-class women (Space 77). It became a touchstone for lobbying, researching, organizing, and training, and focused its attentions on the structures of Northern Irish and European political and bureaucratic systems. It practices transversal politics, as it "actively affirm[s] and value[s] difference" (Space 83). As it accepts and encourages membership and engagement from all aspects of and communities within Northern Ireland, it must constantly negotiate with the members and their organizations, between and within the communities, and within the individual participants (Space 92).

Community groups are, however, critical to women's political participation. Women's centers are at the forefront of research, advice and education for women. Importantly, McCoy notes that many of these groups see themselves as providing services in their communities, and view themselves as non-political. They also tend to focus on "women's issues" (the same issues many women councilors concern themselves with). These groups tend have a broader range of women involved with them than explicitly feminist organizations, suggesting that the community focus may be more appealing or acceptable than a woman's focus. Overall, these groups have developed over the years to be quite successful and integral to women in certain communities. In terms of formal politics, even though the organizations see themselves as non-political, community politics have brought "women's issues" into the political sphere (17 - 21).

The participation at the local level has also enabled women to interact with an otherwise hostile political system. Women have had to petition, lobby, mobilize and protest for their organizations (Racioppi and O'Sullivan See 105). This has provided them with valuable experience and developed political skills they otherwise may not have known they had. In this very real sense, informal politics may open the doors for many women to enter into formal politics.

This activism has certainly not been a panacea. Eilish Rooney is wary of the development of the "women's sector" and its future, suggesting that
the avoidance of the divisive elements of the political situation has led to the entrenching of the idea of women as being separate from politics:

“to construct women as occupying an ‘innocent,’ woman-only space, is counterproductive and misrepresents women’s material, affective and familial relationships within their communities”("Community" 42 – 3).

This construction, coupled with the “crisis in resources” may lead to the women’s sector competing for funding with interest groups that are seen as more politically relevant. The feat of the women’s sector creating a shared (if sometimes only parallel) space throughout the conflict may in fact result in its being set aside in favor of more overtly politically embroiled sectors. However, Rooney does note that community activism has been transformative through particular events for particular women at particular times. Furthermore, activism has not necessarily been unifying. Women have participated in cross-community campaigns, but often within their community and not completely jointly. It remains difficult to unite women on common interests—their differences still play a prominent role ("Women" 172). The divisions between the communities have led to divisions between women’s groups. The environment is such that women’s and community groups have difficulty with each other as organizations, as well as one another as groups (Mahon and Morgan 69 - 71).

Yvonne Galligan notes that the invisibility of women in the political system stems largely from the armed patriarchy spoken of above, as public spaces in which women are able to interact have been limited, or eliminated (205). Cross community work, for many years, was dangerous. As Galligan states, “both ideologies confined women’s community and political activism within their respective territorial, political and cultural boundaries” (206). The women who began to challenge these boundaries through cross-community and joint community work needed to create a space in which they could do so. The development of such a space was slow, but in 1996, members of the Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform (NIWEP) were able to form a party to stand for the pivotal elections for peace talk delegates. The creation of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) transformed the capacity
for women to participate in the public sphere. It brought the work that women had been doing for years on the grassroots level into the elite level of political engagement. The final portion of this chapter will explore how the importance of the NIWC in terms of community and formal politics, as well as its significance for women's engagement in the Northern Irish peace process.

**Coalescing women**

One of the most fascinating developments of women's community participation was the creation of the NIWC. Initially a group of women activists and academics interested in ensuring women's needs were addressed in the peace settlement; the group found itself almost accidentally becoming a political party and standing for election. In March of 1996, immediately following the announcement of the talks, the NIWEP initially sent papers to the British and Irish governments outlining how the talks could include women's needs and desires. The response to the papers was mediocre; no apparent structures were put in place to ensure a gender-aware process (Fearon 5 - 8). The structure of the talks did, however, allow for the possibility of small parties to participate, and the Women's Coalition of Northern Ireland became one of them.

Kate Fearon supplies a thorough history of the rise of the Coalition. The first meeting of activists and other concerned women was called with the intent to develop lobbying efforts for women's inclusion. From this meeting, the NIWC was formed. A determination was made by participants to be a coalition of women's organizations and activists, as opposed to a traditional political party. This allowed for a great deal more flexibility in approach and positions. As members of the NIWC came from all sectors of society, they chose not to take a position on the "constitutional question." Instead, they focused on three "Core Principles" of inclusion, equality and human rights. The Coalition committed to push for the adoption of these principles

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50 The elections leading to the talks utilized a system (d'Haunt) that would allow minor parties to gain access to the negotiating table. This was at least in part an effort to include groups that were associated with paramilitary organizations in the talks.
throughout the process and ensure their presence in the final settlement (8 - 15).

One challenge they faced during their campaign was the idea that they were pulling attention away from mainstream women politicians—women who had been involved in party politics long before the Coalition was formed. Instead, the Coalition felt that it forced parties to highlight their women members, and to discuss issues surrounding women in politics. Furthermore, they felt that the Coalition provided a forum for women’s groups to come together on political issues, and were able to reach out to women who may otherwise have felt alienated by the political process. Fearon noted that there was great excitement from many women that the campaigners spoke with—there was a sense of their voices finally being heard. The result of the campaign was that the NIWC came in ninth at the polls, which allowed them two seats in the Forum and a seat at the negotiation table (34 - 37).

The shift from campaigning to governance was a sharp one. Fearon notes that it was “a practical exercise in political education and participation” (39). Pearl Sager and Monica McWilliams, the NIWC representatives at the Forum, had an uphill battle to maintain legitimacy and respect. The Forum was boycotted by Sinn Fein, and the SDLP pulled out. The atmosphere was reportedly intimidating and difficult. McWilliams and Sager were rarely able to speak without interruption, and were often directly insulted, most notably by being “mooed” at by other members. The Coalition considered pulling out, but elected to remain for the principle of inclusion, and to play the role of a watchdog to highlight inappropriate behavior. As negative of an experience the Forum must have been at times, the result was largely positive for the Coalition. The media and public sentiment shared the Coalition’s dismay at their treatment, and McWilliams and Sager garnered wide respect for their participation (Fearon Chap 3).

The negotiations were also a challenge, but far less demoralizing. The intent of the negotiations was to consider the “totality of relationships

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51 The forum was seen by many as being a platform for unionists, thus the boycott by Sinn Fein and the eventual withdrawal of the SDLP.
involving Ireland, North and South, and Britain" (Fearon 71-2). Far more than simply seeking an agreement from the power-brokers to stop fighting, the intent of the talks was to address the interlocking sets of relationships both within Northern Ireland and the whole of the island, as well as between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. As such, they included the governments of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, main parties, small parties, and George Mitchell’s team from the United States as an independent facilitator (37).

This inclusion proved instrumental to the course of the negotiations. A “Group of Four” developed between the four smallest parties—the PUP, UDP, the Labour Coalition and the NIWC. This provided an opportunity for these parties to understand each other’s positions, foster accommodation and increase each party’s voice within the talks. In particular, the NIWC developed a positive relationship with the PUP and the UDP (Fearon 76 - 78). According to Galligan:

“the Women’s Coalition experience of understanding, respecting and accommodating difference, developed through women’s activism across the community divide, was thus brought to bear on the settlement talks” (209).

The lessons learned by community activists through the women-created spaces in the grassroots provided a vision and skills that allowed the Women’s Coalition to make a unique impact on the talks.

Throughout the process, the NIWC committed itself to maintain contact with its grassroots base. It continued to have general meetings once a month, rotating the location to ensure accessibility. It encouraged ideas to be floated at the meetings, and encouraged differences between members to be aired and discussed. The Coalition also took the opportunity for political education, both for the participants and the public. None of the participants had previous political experience, and some had few professional or personal experiences to prepare them for the political system. Pearl Sager, according to Fearon, had had no higher education and was initially overwhelmed by the reports and meetings. Bronagh Hinds, an academic, reportedly helped her in
the first weeks to gain confidence in her skills. Other participants learned important aspects of practicing politics (Fearon 74 - 75).

The significance of the NIWC is widespread. It certainly had an influence within the negotiations and on the actual settlement, but its influence may actually be more widespread than that. Carmel Roulston utilizes Iris Marion Young's postmodernist understanding of groups in political participation. Unlike the "old" understanding of group identity, Young considers a group politics which leaves room for difference. She establishes that the modern concept of citizenship is a construct—and tends to be exclusive and suppressing. However, oppressed groups in the postmodern world can begin to define their needs, interests and relationships within fluid, overlapping and shifting groups. These postmodern coalitions, which Roulston suggests the NIWC models, can have respect for differences within their membership and yet move toward common goals (Roulston 34 - 41).

Coalition politics, Roulston argues, is integral to pluralist politics. We can accept fairly easily that there is no uniform subject; there are a multitude of identities, relationships and goals. Coalitions offer the opportunity for these different, and at times opposing, elements to come under a common banner which allows discourse within and lends strength to a marginalized group (40 – 42). In the case of the NIWC, goals which its members felt were vitally important, namely a process and settlement which respected equality, human rights, and inclusion, were the banner under which the members gathered. Yet they allowed "women" and "their needs" to remain undefined. The Coalition had no guarantees of solidarity, only a set of principles on which they initially agreed. The practical applications of these principles had to be continuously discussed and debated within the Coalition. This was clearly successful for the Coalition during the Agreement, though it did not help to maintain its electoral support after the Agreement was passed; the NIWC lost its final seat in 2005, and officially disbanded in 2006. The brief life of the Coalition, however, should not overshadow its importance in the peace

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52 For more on Young's conception of coalition politics instead of "group" politics, see: Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices* Chapter 1.
negotiations, the changing political landscape, or the concept of coalition and community politics affecting the formal political system.

**The Road Ahead: Women and Political Agency**

The Troubles in Northern Ireland have served to entrench political identities, entrench gender identities, and limit women's access to elite politics. The armed patriarchy that developed over forty years of conflict has been softened but not eradicated by the peace process. The 1990's saw a massive shift in women's organization and political influence. The entirety of the peace process from the Downing Street Declaration in 1993, which began the process, to the “Yes” vote on the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 clearly involves women and women’s groups. And this period also led to the development of women as political actors. Women's groups gained political legitimacy, as is particularly evident in the Opsahl report, and individual women developed their political skills. Whether they began organizing for the needs of their local community, or stood for elections, women’s participation has increased and become more acceptable.

Efforts by women and women's groups to mainstream women in politics, though perhaps influencing the discourse on women's representation, have not been able to fully address the gender disparity in formal politics. According to Margaret Ward, the gap between the grassroots, community peace politics, in which women are prevalent, and the formal peace process dominated by men, is huge. This is in stark contrast to the process leading to the Good Friday Agreement, in which the NIWC was a strong player. Even though the numbers of women in representative politics has increased, Ward argues that the number of women in decision-making positions has not \((263 - 4)\)\(^5\). She also asserts that these processes, particularly 1325, do not “emphasize their role as agents of social change but

\(^5\) Ward includes the Irish and UK Governments in this charge; she suggests that the rhetoric is very pro-woman, but that none of the political leaders involved have substantively engaged women in decision processes.
merely reiterates the importance of their participation for the maintenance of peace and security” (273).

The trend of women’s increasing participation has not been strong or sustaining. The NIWC has disbanded. Funding streams have shifted or shut down, forcing many women’s centers to cut back and look for other ways of funding their programs. Sectarian violence has largely ended, but the society has not fully embraced peace. “Peace lines.” or walls between communities, have increased in number. Numerous recent incidents of violence prove that sectarian sentiments and activities continue. Violence has been halted, and political progress has been made, but the region has clearly not yet established a positive peace.

Cera Murtagh, within her discussion of transversal politics, offers the following sobering analysis:

“Despite conventionally occupying the informal sphere of grassroots, community and local politics, the transversal women’s movement has evidenced its capacity to transcend these boundaries and emerge upon the formal political arena. With the onset of devolution the movement exhibited vital agency and seized the opportunity to assume their position within the new political institutions of Northern Ireland. Though a momentous achievement however, this transition was not sustained” (22).

In Murtagh’s view, the changes in the way politics was to be conducted did not last beyond the push for a settlement.

This sentiment is reinforced by Alan Bairner’s suggestion that “the public sphere remains heavily dominated by men and hegemonic masculinity is constantly being reproduced in various domains” (23). Particularly apparent in working-class Protestant communities, but evident throughout the region, the focus on “real men” as the power-brokers remains the status quo (23). The recent decommissioning of the IRA and reductions in sectarian violence is certainly a positive move, but the threat of violence still permeates certain segments of Northern Irish society. The political circumstances may have changed, but the social landscape has not necessarily had a major shift. The formal political sphere remains highly femininized: women who participate within it must learn the rules, rather than expect to change them. The final chapter of this thesis will explore the possibility for a maternal peacebuilding
process to open some political space within this conservative and restricted environment.
Chapter 6: Maternal Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland

The previous chapter has provided a background to women in Northern Ireland, presenting the gendered dimensions of the two political identities as a framework within which to understand women’s political exclusion as well as their contributions to the peace process. This chapter intends to apply the concepts developed in the earlier chapters on maternal peacebuilding to the case of Northern Ireland. This chapter will identify ways in which many women are already practicing a maternal peace politics to a certain degree, and ways in which the effects of such a politics could be expanded and enhanced by a more conscious, connected and supported maternal peacebuilding. In many ways, both symbolic and material, it may seem that the constraints associated with motherhood form barriers to maternal peace work in Northern Ireland. Despite these barriers, in this chapter I will demonstrate ways in which some women have utilized their roles as mothers to enter the public sphere, and the potential for more mothers to engage in the political discourse.

As with the previous chapter, I will refer to interviews made with several women in Northern Ireland. Though they were all asked their opinions on maternal peacebuilding, none of the women were interviewed as mothers. Rather, they were approached as women who have been involved in politics or peace work. Several women made it clear in their interviews that they were mothers, while others stated they were not; a few of the women explicitly outlined ways in which their maternal status influenced their entry into political and peace work. All of the women felt it was important to reiterate that they do not speak for all women in Northern Ireland, their parties, or their communities. I have attempted to respect this awareness of their own particularity by using the interviewee’s statements as reactions to or specific examples of mothers engaging in politics. They are not offered as representative statements and should not be interpreted as such. Even within this limitation, however, the voices of the women interviewed are a valuable addition to the literature on women and gender in Northern Ireland.
Motherhood in Northern Ireland

From the analysis presented in Chapter Five, it might seem that the potential for political life inspired by maternal thinking is limited in the Northern context. While the symbolism of motherhood has been powerfully deployed in the conflict, particularly by republicans, the imagery of the 'suffering mother' has not been empowering. In similar vein, during our interview, Jean Brown and Renée Crawford discussed the sacrificial element of motherhood. Mothers in their generation, as well as younger women they now work with, have similar experiences of being "last." Whether they are speaking of their family's health or their own education, mothers tend to focus first on their families and then on their own needs. This has a particular impact in Northern Ireland, where issues of poverty and mental health place a massive demand on families, and thus, on women.

As is also mentioned in the previous chapter, the traditional roles of women led to expectations around women's entrapment in the private sphere. As Yvonne Naylor and Dawn Purvis described for their unionist communities; women would marry very young (late teens) and immediately start their families. Usually, they would leave school at about 16 and enter into factory work until they married. They would then not work, except maybe part-time after their children were older. Their lives were "mapped out...everything centered around family and home," and many women would still be living that lifestyle post-conflict (Purvis). The expectations were not quite as severe for the women from Catholic communities, if only in the sense that it did not appear to be as universal an experience to marry and have children at a very young age. In terms of the Catholic community, respondent Kirsty McManus pointed out that the roles of women had to change radically during the 1970s. The high level of internment within many Catholic communities effectively created a large number of single-parent, female-led households. In order to survive, mothers had to return to

54 Smyth suggests one of the reasons for this difference would be the very high-quality schools run by the religious orders in working-class Catholic neighborhoods. Education has been highly stressed in these communities by leaders and families, and so the trend has been that more children left school with qualifications than in the Protestant working-class communities, where young people could begin working without completing their secondary school education. According to recent statistics from the Department of Northern Ireland, secondary school performance rates are roughly equivalent between Catholic and non-Catholic schools, however those from Catholic secondary schools do have a slightly higher rate of entry into higher education. See: Statistical Press Release).
employment, and many became politically engaged. The structural impact of internment has meant that Catholic women have had an additional generation to challenge their traditional roles and expectations. However, Bernie Kelly spoke of the same phenomenon in some Protestant communities, and felt that it impacted both communities in working-class neighborhoods. She focused on the difficulty that many men had in returning home after prison; many women’s roles had expanded to include traditionally male roles. Kelly feels that the difficulty in adjusting to these new dynamics led to many marriage breakdowns. Rather than being an entirely positive occurrence, the drastic change in gender roles with little support (particularly for men) has led to a situation that has limited many women, rather than empowering them.

The phenomenon of single mothers has not ended with internment; in disadvantaged communities of either community, the rates of single mothers can be extremely high. The social impact of this trend is the heavy reliance on social benefits, which McManus calls the “benefit trap.” Many women in these situations can’t earn enough to cover childcare costs, and so remain on benefits for long periods of time, thus resulting in a perpetual poverty.

A 2003 study of poverty in Northern Ireland, identified households of separated or divorced persons to have high rates of poverty (54% and 46% respectively), and collectively comprise of 23% of all poor households (with a further 11% widowed). The study did not break down these numbers by gender, but did note that 29% of women in their sample lived in poverty. Further, the study noted that though only 19% of the households identified as poor were caring for children, 32% of the households with children were considered poor (Hillyard, et al. 50 – 2). A more recent 2009 report presents similar numbers: 56% of poor children live in single-parent households, and a further 18% live in households in transition between single

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55 Smyth points out that some former prisoners from both communities actually revel in the domestic sphere—having been separated from their family’s lives, they have been open to some renegotiation of domestic responsibilities.

56 McManus stated that about 92% of lone parents were women. Gingerbread, a support group and resource center for lone parents in Northern Ireland, estimates between 20 – 25% of families in Northern Ireland are lone-parent households. See: Fact File, 2009, Available: http://www.gingerbreadni.org/Factfile.htm.

57 The distinction of economic class is very important. McManus noted that disadvantaged communities are “hot” in terms of the conflict. This reflects conclusions drawn in the 1999 “The Cost of the Troubles Survey,” in that lower socio-economic areas tended to have a more intense experience of the Troubles. See: Marie-Therese Fay, The Cost of the Troubles Study.
and dual-parent. This study acknowledges childcare as being expensive and often limited (notably not an item considered in the Hillyard, et al, index of “consensual poverty”), and results in “mini” and part-time jobs as being the employment preference for mothers (Horgan and Monteith 6 – 8). Though these numbers can only be extrapolated to address the incidences and rates of poverty for mothers and single mothers, they collectively appear to support McManus’s suggestion that poverty for mothers is a significant social issue, and likely has a significant impact on children, mothers and the wider society.

All of the interviewees did feel that the roles and expectations of women in the post-conflict society had changed drastically since the onset of the Troubles. Economic pressures obligate many women to work today, for example. Naylor noticed that women seem to be much more able to “mix” today, in that they are involved in politics, business, communities and the family. These changes, according to Hinds, mean that there is “a different kind of relationship that mothers need to negotiate in terms of the empowerment and the oppression” (“Interview”).

Yet, although mothers have adapted their role to include public participation, the public sphere still appears to fail to recognize mothers’ experiences as important and useful. In particular, it appears that women returning to work after taking time to raise children (whether for several months or several years), face particularly strong discrimination (McManus). Whether it is due to a perception of a “lack of focus,” or a sense of a lack of experience, mothers do not have the skills developed as mothers recognized as either transferable or applicable. Despite the symbolic and material barriers to maternal politics noted here, there are instances which can be mapped showing the potential for women engaged in maternal thinking to engage in the politics of peace.

**Maternalism and the Politics of Peace during the Troubles**

As the last chapter indicated, despite the barriers they experience, many women did find their way into peace activism at a grassroots level through the years of the Troubles. Some did find their inspiration in the maternal thinking which comes, as Ruddick suggests, on the back of the experiences of the work of motherhood. The previous chapter offered examples of the idea of mother being utilized in the perpetuation of violent conflict (either actively or passively) by both sides of the
conflict. This politicization of the mother in order to support conflict resonates with experiences in other conflicts, as considered in Chapter Four. Rather than being problematic for the development of a maternal peacebuilding, however, I would suggest that such use of mothering calls as much for the reclamation of mothering as Rich’s patriarchal institution of motherhood does. This section offers examples of how some mothers already reclaimed their mothering from the conflict in order to consider ways in which more mothers can be actively supported in doing so.

The first example of mothers acting for peace comes from a movement that was neither mother-oriented nor women-exclusive. Though the organization of the Peace People attempted to clearly extend their membership to all people of Northern Ireland, it is often considered a woman’s organization (and was briefly named Peace Women), and was offered to me on several occasions as an example of maternal-oriented politics. The organization was formed organically by a Catholic and a Protestant woman in 1976. On August 10th of that year, Anne Corrigan Maguire was walking down a residential road with her four children, aged six weeks to eight years. A car driven by an IRA sniper, Danny Lennon, who had been shot dead by a British soldier, crashed into the family. Two of the children were killed instantly, one died hours later. Their mother, though surviving the incident, never fully recovered and died by suicide three years later. A Protestant woman who witnessed the tragedy, Betty Williams, and the sister of Anne Maguire, Mairead Corrigan, formed the Peace People.

In his memoir a former chairman of the organization and co-founder alongside Corrigan and Williams, Ciaran McKeown, describes the days between the incident and the beginning of the movement thus:

“A volcano working up from the depths of the communal soul was looking for an outlet. While men stood about speechless and impotent, women marched here and there in small groups” (139).

The entire situation was senseless—three children dead and no real culprit to blame. Both communities were equally responsible and blameless for their deaths; both communities were equally horrified. Betty Williams began a petition for peace and organized a rally the day after the children’s funerals. Mairead Corrigan made an emotional statement to the effect that the children were brought up to love their neighbors, and that there was no purpose in retribution. Corrigan and Williams
teamed with McKeown the following week to formally develop the Peace People. Together, they drafted the “Declaration.” which read:

“We want to live and love and build a just and peaceful society. We want for our children, as we want for ourselves, our lives at home, at work and at play, to be lives of joy and peace...We dedicate ourselves to working with our neighbours, near and far, day in and day out, to building that peaceful society in which the tragedies we have known are a bad memory and a continuing warning” (McKeown 146).

Though the concept certainly did not yet exist, this passage reflects the goals of peacebuilding. The organization even extended its remit beyond simply non-violent protest to include “non-violent community development” (192).

As it was clearly formed as a reaction to the deaths of children, the Peace People inevitably drew strength from a desire to protect children. Many women likely participated in the movement from their positions as mothers, but many likely did not. As clear as the use of “maternal” language within the Peace People rhetoric is, there is also language on human rights, dignity and peace that is not centered on mothering. The Peace People should not be seen as a “maternal” movement, but rather demonstrate how a major peace movement could develop from a shared sense of urgency and that women (identifying as mothers or not) could work together towards a shared goal in spite of varied motivations.

The Peace People was not explicitly a women’s movement, as membership was open to all. Women seemed particularly drawn to the organization, however, perhaps because:

“many [hurt women] sought self-respect and comfort among the Peace People...For many women in [Northern Irish] society, the ability to put on a hat and coat on a Saturday, every Saturday, and announce that they were ‘going to the Peace,’ was the height of liberation” (193).

The movement gave voice to many women. The political and (para)military tensions did not reflect the desires of these women. Until the Peace People movement began, there was no clear outlet or platform for many people to express their desires for a different kind of society^58.

The movement’s height spanned approximately two years and included the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Peace to Corrigan and Williams. For various internal

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^58 McKeown does refer to the Alliance Party as seeing itself as a party of reconciliation. Though this may indeed be true, it still remained a political party within an extremely divisive system.
and external reasons, the movement began to lose momentum in 1977. The organization still exists today, but never recaptured the potency of those first few months. The legacy of the movement remains powerful, however. In many ways, this movement laid the groundwork for other peace groups to develop, and created a legitimate space for such action within communities. Most strikingly, a number of interviewees referred to their personal sense of inspiration from the Peace People—the idea that normal women could spark such a phenomenon remains powerful. In terms of maternal peacebuilding, the Peace People movement is significant in that it offered many women an example of a potentially powerful social movement, and one which could provide guidance for Northern Irish mothers undertaking a peace politics.

Other examples of women’s utilization of traditional roles in their political action abound. Begona Aretxaga discusses the Falls Road Curfew in 1970, in which a group of women approached an Army barricade holding bread, milk and other staples, in a successful effort to end a curfew they felt was particularly damaging to the women of Falls Road and their ability to care for their families. She likens the march to the ethos of Antigone, wherein the “law of moral obligation to family is superior to that of political law that commands obedience to a superior power” (59).

Besides serving to end a violent and destabilizing altercation, the march served as a symbolic acknowledgement of the women’s power as caregivers. In this sense, Aretxaga suggests that the milk they carried, along with other staple goods:

“conveys the qualities of nurturance and care for which women are held responsible. Milk is thus but a metonymic representation of food and a symbol of emotional nurture. The inability of women to provide milk during the curfew encapsulated the enforced impossibility of well-being of family members exposed to the soldier’s mistreatment” (57).

The women’s action of breaking the line and providing milk and other forms of sustenance served to re-establish the importance and ability to provide nurturance. The “weapons” they used were those of the mother, and the Army could neither bar nor attack the mission of these women.

Prior to the formation of the Peace People, the Derry Peace Women (DPW) was formed in a working-class Catholic Community in 1972. Marie Hammond Callaghan suggests that the formation of this group stemmed from “communal responses towards the immediate material conditions of militarisation” (Callaghan 34). The
group was an explicitly women-only group, and relied upon their traditional gender roles to inform the group’s ethos (34).

The pressures that women in working-class neighborhoods in Derry were forced to cope with in this period were great. 1972 saw a major increase in the militarization of Northern Ireland, and Derry City could be seen as an epicenter, as it experienced the highest number of conflict-related deaths during the year. Callaghan asserts that Catholic women from republican working-class communities bore the brunt of the increase in violence by state and paramilitary forces. Their neighborhoods became warzones, fighting took place outside their doors, and British Army forces vastly increased the number of home searches conducted at this time (37).

The results of the fighting—internment, injury and death of men—resulted in many women from these neighborhoods becoming politicized. For many women, this politicization took the form of a militarization through acting in support of paramilitary forces: running weapons and generally becoming belligerents in the eyes of the British defense forces. Not all women accepted this militarization of their lives and actions, and the DPW shows how some women stood as mothers against the devolving of their society into violence.

In May 1972, two young Catholic men were killed: one shot by a British Army sniper, the other, a British Ranger (though a local Catholic) was shot by the Official IRA. A group of five women spontaneously began a campaign in reaction to these deaths. They positioned themselves as wives and mothers (who had 33 children between them) and, in some ways, distanced themselves from their community. They made it clear that they opposed the offensive strategy of the IRA, and rejected the idea that the killing of the local British Army Ranger could be done in their names. These women had not known each other prior to their campaign, and cited their bond as being that of mothers making a stand. They stressed that they were women-only, and that they had no hierarchy, no leader. Their campaign, which gained support from Catholic clergy, Protestant women, republican politicians, “British establishment” and

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59 This politicization of women (and their traditional roles) resonates with experiences in other conflicts, particularly with the example of the Nicaraguan case of the linkage of political and maternal identities discussed in Chapter Four. Far from discrediting the concept of maternal peacebuilding, the example of DPW offers proof that a politicized maternity can still lead to a path of peace work if directed and supported.
Irish authorities resulted, at least in part, in a ceasefire by the Official IRA (Callaghan 39 – 40).

In addition to her listing of the successes of the DPW, Callaghan also outlines their disillusionment. Though the women felt as though they had made a positive impact on their communities, they have also noted, in hindsight, that they had allowed themselves to be “used” by the British government and the media. The media used them by sensationalizing their stories in order to “sell papers,” and the British government used them in relying upon the women’s access within their community as “ordinary housewives” to achieve the government’s agenda of socially isolating armed republicans. Though one of the women notes that they were “prepared to be used,” the machine of which they became a part continued to objectify them. The government and media saw them as tools for an agenda, rather than actors for a political position (43). The women may have been part of the achievement of a ceasefire, an important goal of their activism, but the restrictions due to their position in society and lack of resources and outside support limited their ability to fully control their political action.

Eventually, this led to the demise of the movement. Seen by some republicans as collaborators with the British government, the women and their families were threatened with, and even victimized by, violence. One woman regrets having “neglected [her] home and [her] husband and [her] youngsters for other people, to try and bring peace and have a better community in [her] town, and got nothing but abuse for it” (Callaghan 43). She not only felt she failed in mothering within her community, but also felt she failed to mother in her home. Instead of feeling pride in having acted, they felt ineffective within the wider system, used by the elite and neglectful of their own families and duties (45). Though initially able to utilize their traditional roles as wives and mothers to engage in the political discourse, the political elite ultimately used the group’s symbolism to further its own ends. The women were unable to completely maintain control of their political voice.

A fourth example of a maternal politics can be seen in the development of the Relative’s Action Committee (RAC), also in Derry as well as in Belfast, in 1976. Again stemming within the Catholic community, this group was formed by a group of women whose male relatives, mostly sons, were imprisoned for alleged paramilitary activity. Their campaign, which spread throughout the region and culminated in a “blanket
protest" of women standing outside of the Archbishop's residence wrapped only in blankets, managed to capture the attention of the wider community, and of mainland Great Britain (Aretxaga 106 – 8).

Echoing the discussion regarding the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the actions of these women:

"constituted a powerful symbol of maternal suffering that brought to the surface the depth of pain defining the Catholic experience in Northern Ireland. Maternal suffering refracted a broader collective pain, stirring a mixture of personal and social guilt" (Aretxaga 107 – 08).

The mothers used the social understanding of mothering to symbolize their own suffering as well as the suffering of their community. Rather than simply using the symbolism of themselves as the grieving mother as a political statement, however, the RAC women used the symbolism to motivate for political action. They wanted to make visible their sons' sufferings as well as their own and their community’s in order to end the political processes that led to the suffering. Their struggle for their own sons soon became a struggle for all prisoners, and eventually extended to a broader conception of social justice (116 – 17).

Also significant in the story of the RAC is how its creation and development affected the women involved. Most of the participants had previously been housewives, never having left their own local community. Through the course of the campaign, they travelled throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. They organized, spoke, published and lobbied throughout the campaign (Aretxaga 106 – 07). Aretxaga notes that it was a personally transformative process for many of the women. They “became more political, more aware of the social reality in which they were immersed and more cognizant of their human potential beyond the roles of wife and mother” (117).

These movements, though unable to maintain their momentum throughout the Troubles, demonstrate that some Northern Irish women have historically embraced their private sphere role of mother in order to participant in and challenge the public sphere discourse. Amongst the interviewees, the idea that maternal thinking and experience was crucial in their motivation to engage in community or peace work was sometimes, though not universally, evident.
Maternal imagery and identity were most apparent in the words of Brown and Crawford as they expounded on their motivation from mothering to engage in politics:

“Brown: I think if you’re a mother you need to fight to the death to protect your children...

Crawford: The nest, yes.

Brown: ...you will do whatever is necessary to protect your children and to defend them, do you know. So in some ways it is, it’s bit like transferring that to the wider community. You will take risks and you will do...

Crawford: A bit like a lioness.

Brown: yes, you will fight to defend something that you believe in and that you care about, you know.

Crawford: It does transfer, as you say, you have that passion for your children, for your family and then you have that passion for your community and for what’s needed, you know, and what can make it better, what can regenerate it, where the areas and social problems are and what is needed to address those and, you know, you go for it at blast. You’re lobbying, you’re out, you’re meeting and, you know, this is what is needed.”

These two women related their sense of an instinctual need to protect their children and their families as naturally expanding into engaging in the political system. They later discussed their desire to create a better society for their children and grandchildren, so that their descendants’ lives will be better than their own had been. Their sense of being the central agent in the welfare of their families required them to become politically active. Brown clearly felt, however, that she had no other choice; the only way to ensure her children had a better future was to alter her traditional responsibilities and to engage in politics. In speaking of her achievements in community politics she says:

“at the end of the day if it hasn’t actually created a better life for my children and my grandchildren then sure what was the purpose in it all?”

She felt her work and sacrifices would be meaningless only if it did not lead to a more stable society for her descendents. The long-term future, not the immediate political reality, will determine Brown’s success in her own eyes.

From another perspective, Naylor specifically spoke of her early mothering years as particularly formative in her political engagement. She feels that the work she did at that time on puppets for teaching social awareness is still viable today; she
still uses some of the same scripts she developed during that period. At that time, she
used her puppets to challenge institutions, structures, sectarianism and racism.
During that time she honed her voice, and referred to it as a very empowering period
in her life. She also noted that for many other women their political/community
engagement came through tapping into the powerful role of mother. Naylor notes that:

"we have seen women coming into politics through issues arising in the
community...just threatening their whole way of life, threatening their family,
destroying their lives and destroying their families and they are not prepared to sit
back and watch it and they are not prepared to wait for the men to do something
about it, you know, so it may have been what the Troubles did, you know, bring a lot
of people out to stand up."

In a different example of political engagement of women from traditional roles,
Dawn Purvis spoke of her own experiences in meeting with women in her
constituency. When women tell her that they do not vote because they have no
interest in politics her response is:

"I just, I really want to stand and scream, but I don’t. I say, ‘oh, so you don’t care
about the type of house you live in. And you don’t care if it’s falling down around you
or if there’s rats running through it. You don’t care about your child’s education. You
don’t care. That’s what you tell me. You don’t care. You don’t care about if you have
a job, you don’t care about your environment, you don’t care about the conflict and
the interface.’ And they go, ‘we do care, but we do care!’ And I say, ‘but that’s what
politics is about, so why do you not vote? So that’s how I engage them, that’s how I
get them in...And you can see that they engage then, straight away when you accuse
them of not caring about their life, and about the effect on their children’s lives. They
engage straight away."

Purvis is able to shift the understanding of politics for these constituents. She
challenges the assumption that politics is a distant, abstract process practiced by a
few. Instead, she challenges the women she encounters to see politics as directly
reflecting and impacting their experiences.

Speaking of the NIWC in interview, Smyth more explicitly linked women’s
effective political action to mothering. She claimed that many participants in the
NIWC:

"were motivated by a kind of politics that was rooted in an understanding of the
political that was not shorn off from the concerns of the home, of motherhood and
children, and a deep desire to see violence ended.”
Again, this is not to suggest that members of the NIWC were necessarily acting as mothers. Bronagh Hinds clearly avoids such a linkage in her interview. However, Smyth's observations suggest that motivations for this different kind of politics practiced by the NIWC were connected for some to the domestic sphere role of mothering.

All the above are examples of how some mothers in Northern Ireland have already engaged in maternal thinking as the basis for their peace activism. The rest of this chapter will discuss the clear potential for further developing maternal peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

**Engendering Peacebuilding and the Need for 'MotherSpace'**

The general acknowledgement of the need to engage women in politics and peacebuilding has led to a number of formal procedures, particularly the gender mainstreaming process codified in the Northern Ireland Act and policed by the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland. This statutory commitment to gender equality is generally seen as an important step towards women's enhanced participation in the formal political decision-making.

Institutionally, gender mainstreaming is enshrined in the Northern Irish government under Section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998\[60\], colloquially referred to simply as Section 75. This is, of course, in addition to the gender mainstreaming requirements in effect due to Security Council Resolution 1325 and the numerous gender mainstreaming and equality guidelines within the EU and UK systems. Section 75 requires that equal opportunity provisions be pursued in terms of gender, disability and status of dependents. The Section explicitly attempts to recognize the need to consider equality beyond the terms of religious identity. Tahnya Barnett Donaghy also points out that it was included, partially, to solidify support of the grassroots community networks (6). The Equality Commission was formed in 1999 to implement, oversee and facilitate the various aspects of Section 75.

The Equality Commission has little impact on the gender policies of political parties, but has a remit to address inequality within the government's bureaucratic offices. Within this structure, it apparently has had a positive impact, as:

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\[60\] The Northern Ireland Act 1998, passed by the Parliament in Westminster, outlines the mechanisms of a devolved Northern Irish government system.
“the Northern Ireland bureaucracy has undergone a significant shift in the consideration it gives to equity in policy making: their interpretation of ‘equality’ has been broadened; policy outcomes in Northern Ireland are now intended to be designed and developed in a manner in which equality of opportunity is at every stage possible encouraged, instead of overlooked” (Donaghy 8).

The Commission undertakes its work through consultation with various actors, including non-governmental bodies and groups.

Hinds optimistically considers the potential of the success of the Equality Commission. The Commission, she feels, is intent on addressing issues of inequality, and is open to consultation from outside groups. This, coupled with the fact that as a new institution it does not have historical baggage to carry, bodes well for the future of mainstreaming. However, Hinds notes that the success of the Commission will rely heavily on the good will of the political leadership, and the Commission requires continued funding for its training and work. Both of these are areas in which gender mainstreaming has lacked support in other jurisdictions ("Mainstreaming").

Hinds’ optimism stands in contrast to Rooney’s caution of the potential effectiveness of the Equality Commission. Rooney’s concern rests on the lack of addressing the context of women’s experiences (political identities and socio-economic position) when the Commission consults the “women’s sector.” Women’s organizations remain concerned of their vulnerability and wish to maintain “unity” when interacting with government agencies ("Women’s" 366). The Commission itself is structured in a way that “disappears” women when it addresses religious or political inequalities. Rooney cites the Commission’s failure to include any discussion on women’s political or religious inequality in its CEDAW submission of 2005 ("Women’s" 368). Though the Commission and Section 75 attempt to offer a commitment to women’s equality, the practice falls short of the ideals of gender mainstreaming.

An additional limitation to the effectiveness of the Commission and mainstreaming lies in its relative lack of resources. Though it is important that the government body readily seeks input from various sources, a large burden has been placed upon voluntary-sector organizations to monitor and consult on mainstreaming programs (Donaghy 10). In particular, financial resources, both for the Commission and consulting groups, are limited. In many ways, the Northern Irish approach to gender mainstreaming is revolutionary and has attempted to incorporate the best
practices in mainstreaming policy. Even it, however, continues to fall short and is unable to fully and effectively shed light on women's realities.

The second chapter discussed in depth the inability for gender mainstreaming to fully address the issues facing women's participation in politics. In terms of Northern Ireland, the generalizations made in that discussion seem to hold true: elite women and women already associated with the political system have a far greater advantage; women who are involved often gravitate towards “women’s issues”; women tend not to hold leadership positions, etc. Northern Ireland is rather unique, in that the society generally recognizes the importance of the informal community sector, which is dominated by women. Even given this recognition, most women are alienated from decision-making processes. A politics of motherhood offers a potential to cast a wider net, both in terms of what politics consists of and who can engage in it. As developed across Chapters Three and Four, using the work of Sara Ruddick, maternal peacebuilding begins from the experiences of mothering. Through this work, many women recognize the central importance of protecting, nurturing and training young lives. These values can be translated into a wider politics of peace, as such a politics would commit its participants to creating sustainable and peaceable societies focus on human security and encourage civic and political engagement. In order to develop this maternal approach to peacebuilding, I would suggest that some of the existing community resources of Northern Ireland can become the “MotherSpaces” in which maternal peacebuilding occurs.

**Women’s centers/MotherSpace**

Perhaps one of the greatest untapped potential sources of maternal peacebuilding could come from the development of “MotherSpace” in Northern Ireland. Recall that in introducing the concept of MotherSpace, Marotta relies upon the home as a center for mother’s interaction. For many Northern Irish women, the kitchen table may indeed be a site for political engagement. I suggest, however, the possibility of another MotherSpace: childcare. Women’s and community centers have been crucial during the history of the Troubles in providing crucial services for families such as advice centers, education services, support groups, mental health services. As Isobel Loughran of Women into Politics noted in her interview, at most of these centers, “childcare is at the heart.” Many residents engage these services (i.e. crèche,
parent and toddler groups, youth clubs, adult classes, etc.) without the intent of engaging in community politics. In particular, the centers’ crèches and after-school clubs seem to be very well used by mothers. Women may use this service for a variety of reasons: so they can work, take classes, have some time away from the children, or for the development of their children. The reason mothers enroll their children in the crèches attached to the centers is generally not so that they can become involved in politics (Loughran).

Interestingly, however, a number of women do become involved. During a tour in June 2008, Gillian Gibson of the Footprint's Women’s Centre pointed out that many women, after enrolling their children in the crèche, will then enroll themselves in adult learning classes. This was the personal experience of Loughran. Women often begin developing relationships with other women in the center and with other mothers whose children are enrolled. These women can become more and more involved with the center, sometimes becoming employed by or participating in the development and delivery of center programs. Far from tying these women to their homes, the process of caring for their children has actually provided a path to civic engagement.

The crèche services are often provided by the centers with the intentions of relieving a burden on women from disadvantaged communities and providing young children with important skills. The greater participation in the community by the mothers of small children is an unintended positive consequence. Understanding this phenomenon as a MotherSpace, and its implications, can offer a focus for the further development of such programs and resources by the centers of women’s organizations. For example, parent and toddler groups could incorporate civic education to their programs; organizations such as Women into Politics could work with crèches throughout the region to offer the education, information and training programs to mothers from various communities already delivered in many community centers. Not only would such an expansion result in mothers having access to vital information, skills and increased confidence, but it would allow them the opportunity to interact with other mothers in a political context. This would serve both to allow the women to develop their political agency in a familiar and comfortable climate while expanding society’s political space.
It must be said that the issue of childcare is one which has wider implications within the women's sector. Roulston and Whittock relate a debate surrounding childcare within the Chrysalis Women's Centre in Craigavon. Some participants in the center saw childcare as being important in and of itself in terms of a child's development. Others saw the provision of childcare from the position of the mother—a space of time for a mother to be child-free, or to allow her to work outside the home (63 - 65). In reality, childcare offers benefits both to children and to mothers and society. Due to this dual benefit, it is a prime site for the development of MotherSpace. Women's utilization of the service directly benefits their children, offers benefits to themselves, and may ultimately lead to community-wide benefits due to the women's increased public participation.

Naylor spoke about her particular experience with a cross community woman's group she participated in when her children were young:

"it was an informative time, our children are still friends with one another...it was during that time I felt very creative, I mean that was when I started making puppets and writing scripts and it has probably been the most political time of my life, really, global politics mostly but also local, you know we kind of had a saying at the time: think globally, act locally."

It appears that Naylor was already at least politically interested, if not active, by the time she joined this group, but she clearly felt that her membership in the group provided an important space for her development as an active citizen.

Kirsty McManus spoke of parenting classes offered by many of the Woman's Support Network's affiliate centers in a similar way. Several interviewees discussed the need for parenting skills to be supported. Though this is a particularly delicate issue, given the discussion in Chapter Three regarding the potential for institutionalizing and encouraging oppressive concepts of mothering, McManus saw the classes as desired by participants and needed within communities. This is a disrupted society. Families—particularly extended family networks—have been hugely disrupted in some communities. Not only have many mothers lost the support that familial networks offer (recall Wearing's analysis of Australian suburban mothers discussed in Chapter Three), but many have had the opportunities to learn mothering skills disrupted. McManus explicitly states that:
“The conflict has directly impacted their lives which has ultimately impacted on people’s ability to be a mother and father, so I think to a certain extent the mothering skills were lost in translation.”

McManus also points out that many women in these affected areas want to be “good” mothers, and actively seek the help offered by community centers. Many centers have developed parenting classes, some of which can be very detailed and specific.

In terms of MotherSpace, McManus describes her observations of the effects of the programs for mothers as incredibly empowering. She notes that the programs offer the opportunity for many women to build their confidence and their involvement in their community. Often, she notes, women taking the courses become “change agents” within their community. Enrolling in one class often excites the women’s interests, and they become more involved and take more training and confidence-building courses. The parenting classes, in some ways, can be an entrée into personal and intellectual development. These classes can be a way for mothers to understand their own value and potential, as well as the issues surrounding their everyday lives.

Loughran pointed out that women do not enter a woman’s center in order to support her life as it is; she wants her life and often her children’s lives to change. The above discussions demonstrate that these centers have allowed for some of this change to be supported. A maternal peacebuilding could continue to support this change. A conscious focus and development of an empowered maternal identity for mothers would further encourage these transformations in women’s lives, and aid them in transforming their children’s futures and their society.

**Women in command of their lives**

A maternal peace politics which utilizes the organizations and structures in place to engage and develop women will have a positive impact on the wider society. Additionally, such a politics will have a massive effect on a mother’s everyday life. As noted in Chapter Four, mothers in post-conflict societies have significant demands on them and few resources. I have already outlined some of the specific difficulties of mothers in Northern Ireland. Modeling for mothers has been disturbed, extended family networks have been disrupted, poverty and the “benefits trap” is widespread, women must juggle work and high expectations for family care and women experience high levels of depression. These and other various hurdles and limiting factors that
women and mothers may experience results in a vulnerable population without the resource to redress this vulnerability.

A politics of motherhood would come a long way to bring some power back to mothers. A specific example of this was brought up by Loughran. One complaint mentioned by several interviewees was the lack of resources for the high incidences of depression in women: the perception many women, when informing their physicians of their symptoms are simply written prescriptions for antidepressants. When discussing the impact of WiP training, Loughran noted that:

“If a woman is going to women’s centres and attends classes in rights and assertiveness, she’s going to go to her doctor’s and go say, ‘well, no, I’m sorry you’re saying that to me, I don’t want another packet of pills, I know there’s something else you can do.’”

Loughran goes on to explain her hope that as doctors have increasing numbers of patients demand a more expansive range of treatment, they in turn will have to approach local councils and the Assembly in order to develop the programs that are being demanded. This outlines the purpose of any feminist politics: empowering women in their everyday encounters, and through that empowerment challenging the structures which have limited them.

The value of a maternal politics is that this empowerment targets a particular group of women who have particular social, personal and political constraints. Additionally, a mother who develops her own power empowers not only herself, but her children. Thus, the needs of a mother and her family will be vocalized, and she will contribute to the development of an active citizenry. This empowerment can have a massive impact on the gender, political and social dynamics of a women’s society.

**Transforming society**

Of particular interest when discussing peacebuilding is the potential for any approach to contribute to social and political transformation. Maternal peacebuilding has this as a particular strength. It not only addresses transformation in terms of its immediate goals, but it has the additional multigenerational impact given that mothers highly influence their children’s experiences. This appears not only within the context of the interviews, but in research undertaken on Northern Irish parent/child programming.
As we discussed the relationship to mothering skills and values to the project of peacebuilding, Higgins identified the potential for a significant change in Northern Irish society:

"if respect, if caring for the Other, if being inclusive, and all the rest of it, if those were the core values that we operated out of, I think we could have a society where there was respect, where there was a genuine sharing, and relating and so on. And that would be for me, that would be what peace is. So I think the value of what good mothering is are the values that we want to enable and encourage."

The qualities of the ideal of a positive peace are the qualities of the ideals of positive mothering. In this sense, the two are matched. A peaceful society would value and encourage a positive mothering. A maternal politics would foster a positive peace.

In particular, Higgins spoke of a class she ran for a cross-border women’s program. In this, she focused on the concept of women promoting life and enabling life. The class identified the life-giving qualities of the physical feminine, but looked deeper into the social and political as to how this physical predisposition could be utilized in their daily lives and social interactions. The attempt was to reverse the concept of “dying for Ireland” and instead encourages the “living for Ireland.” The women participating in the class spoke a great deal about the nurturing and promoting of their own children in an environment that is full of destruction and limitation.

This discourse relates directly to the multi-generational timeframe of peacebuilding. The participants in the peace process of Northern Ireland, regardless of the level of their action, agree with the need for a long-term outlook. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider how children are impacted by the conflict and its aftermath. In 2002, a project entitled “Parenting in a Divided Society” was launched to attempt to cope with the effects of the Troubles on children and families. A cornerstone to the program was the idea that parents offer a “capacity to protect and exert positive influence on children and young people” which has been “seen by communities as having been eroded in the face of multiple debilitating factors” (Burrows and Keenan 110). The conflict has not only affected children directly, but also impacts them indirectly as their development occurs within the context of a conflict society. In other words, parents’ abilities to protect and nurture their children have been negatively impacted by the Troubles. This program attempted, through the supporting of parents, to “deepen their understanding of their experiences of conflict initially, and
consequently that of their children, families and community, in order to become more aware of the support that they and their children might need” (110).

Specifically, the project’s intent has been to provide resources and training to parents in order to enhance the capacity for the home environment to support a child’s positive development within a conflict society. The organizers of the program also hoped to place parents in better positions to seek necessary support and resources for themselves. They focused on the concept of “intergenerational trauma,” recognizing that a carer’s own trauma is also felt by the child, as the developmental attachment of the child to her parents and her experiences within her home environment and her community can contribute to the “passing on” of negative experiences (Burrows and Keenan 111-12).

This program, however, was not exclusively child-focused. The purpose was not to address the child’s needs in isolation, but to address the parent’s needs and experiences in order to create a better environment and often better resources for a young child. As such, the adult participants took part in group work which focused on developing the parent’s sense of safety, understand their own trauma and learning techniques for talking with and creating a safe space for their children, engaging in their community, regaining a sense of hope in their and their society’s future and helping young people come to terms with events (Burrows and Keenan 114 – 5).

Two years into the project, the authors suggest that the goals of the project were being fulfilled. Parents were positive about their experiences, and found the process helpful. The final report considers two groups, one (Group B) which completed its sessions and seemed to have the most positive experience, while the other (Group A) only completed half of the scheduled sessions due to continued violence within the community. Group A was formed within a working-class Protestant community and Group B from within a working-class Catholic community. Participants in both groups appeared to have a positive experience, though this is more apparent in Group B, as it was able to complete the program (O’Hara 23 – 7). The program continued past this pilot phase, and is now supported by Barnardos under the title of the “Self Empowerment Project”61. Barnardos approach could

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61 The purpose of the program is one of healing of trauma, but this current title offers a glimpse of its potential ramifications.
clearly be seen as a space for reconciliation of the traumas of the Troubles, a process which is very necessary in the region.

**Site for reconciliation**

In many ways, the peace process has been incredibly successful. The United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland have openly supported the right for the people of Northern Ireland to determine the political status and governance systems of the region. The two opposing communities are sitting in a legislature and engaging in a non-violent political process. Former institutions that were at the heart of complaints during the Troubles (the police, judicial, housing, etc) have undergone reform and have monitoring bodies in place to reduce potential for abuse. Paramilitary organizations have disarmed. Rhetoric by community leaders, though at times heated, has explicitly condemned violence.

All of these important successes, however, should not overshadow the fact that the rifts caused by forty years of conflict still exist. In recent months, British soldiers and Northern Irish police have been attacked. Several bombs have been disarmed, and tensions continue to rise every year during parade season. Recently, Romanian migrants have been threatened and attacked, attesting to a little-acknowledged undercurrent of racism. Certainly, the situation is far better today than even during the peace settlement talks over a decade ago. But hate still exists. Prejudice still occurs. Northern Ireland may be making great strides towards a functioning society, but it is a fair distance yet to a truly peaceful society.

Given this, efforts need to continue to be made towards reconciliation. While political parties and community groups have been focusing on addressing the constitutional question or the bread and butter issues, the work of creating a common understanding of the various experiences of people within Northern Ireland has been largely ignored.

During her interview, Loughran spoke at length on the subject of the unfulfilled possibilities of a reconciliation process. She notes that real hate still exists in some communities, that children today often hold the same prejudices as those during the Troubles. Some key contributing factors to the violence of the Troubles may be in the process of being addressed, but strains still exist, particularly in disadvantaged areas. A maternal peacebuilding could offer various ways of addressing ways for the
communities to begin to reconcile. Specifically, the opportunities offered by transversal politics and integrated education could be encouraged through this approach.

**Transversal politics through mothers' groups**

One of the mothering qualities that was mentioned quite often during the interviews was the ability to negotiate. Certainly, in their daily lives, mothers must constantly negotiate and resolve conflict with and between children. This is a skill base which can be further developed through training programs as discussed, but could also be brought into action in specific efforts of reconciliation.

Reconciliation can rarely be executed through the elite level. Though it has important impacts on society, it is very much an individual process. The state and mid-level institutions can only create and support space that encourages and allows reconciliation programs to take place, but individuals must elect to pursue these processes. Again, the community-level organizations, particularly women's organizations are vital to this process.

The previous chapter spoke of Yuval-Davis's concept of transversal politics. When I have had the opportunity to speak with community workers about the concept, they have not generally been aware of it. Once I provide a description of the approach of entering into a discourse of identity, wherein a person is firmly rooted in her identity and heritage, but acknowledges, through the discursive process, that her identity, or at least her perception of it relative to others, may shift, the community workers agree that they do attempt such a process within their cross-community programs.

Community groups have been fundamentally important in the development of such processes of acknowledging and understanding the Other. A maternal politics could further augment these processes. In the first place, mothers who are engaging in community programs are already investing themselves in a positive future for themselves and their children. They are invested in the "multi-generational" outcome, and thus may be particularly open to a reconciliation process. Additionally, mothers from different communities do have common experiences: childcare, education, safety, their children's health, etc. The opportunity to engage women from different communities with a common dedicated desire should not be overlooked.
Project organizers should consider ways in which they can engage mothers from across communities in joint or mixed programs. Obviously, such programs may not be appropriate all the time. The above Barnardos project, for example, required a significant sense of security within the group. Such a sense of safety may be difficult to achieve in a mixed group, particularly within communities that have experienced a high level of violence. With this said, other programs may find that a mixed group would actually be beneficial, either in the long-run or the short term. Training programs in political processes (whether in assertiveness or elections) could provide an opportunity to learn and interact together, making the women more prepared to engage outside of their community, as well as allowing the opportunity to understand shared and opposing agendas.

Integration through education

Though it is important for women to develop within their communities, a shared future of Northern Ireland will emerge as political and social spaces become shared. Keeping in mind the above discussion of the MotherSpace associated with crèches, the support and development of integrated schools and crèches should be a priority in any maternal politics. Not only do such environments encourage youths to interact and “grow up” together, thus minimizing the sense of Otherness, they also allow opportunities for mothers to address their own othering processes and open the door for the creation of more MotherSpaces. Education in and of itself is vitally important to the transformation of Northern Irish society. As Purvis stated, education can “offer a bit of hope, and a bit of incentive; something to want something better.” Education needs to be a part of any program for transformation. The fact that mothers are intimately involved in the training of their children creates a perfect landscape for maternal politics within the educational system.

Purvis discussed a program which had been introduced to her, “Parents as Coeducators.” This program worked with parents, many of whom had limited literacy and numeracy skills themselves, to learn alongside their children. The result, according to Purvis, was that the parents and the children developed an appreciation for education while increasing their own skills and abilities. The benefits of such a program within a community are obvious. If the program could be expanded to include a cross-community element, the potential for significant social transformation
could be immense. Children from different communities would have the opportunity to learn alongside one another, and parents would have the opportunity to see that the lives and values of people from the “other” community were not so different from their own.

Despite clear long-term benefits, the process of developing integrated schools is difficult. The bureaucratic process itself can be major barrier. More troubling, however, is the difficulty in convincing parents to send their children to such a school. Higgins speaks of this frustration directly, in that parents, though generally wanting their children to mix with a variety of children and support the concept of integrated schools, often opt to send their children to an established, non-integrated school. The focus on the potential test scores and university placements outweigh the desire for a more inclusive educational experience. Higgins feels these decisions are made without fully recognizing the potential downside of relying on non-integrated schools, or the potential benefits of an integrated education. The mothers are still considering the long-term future of their children, but have not placed that future into the context of the society. Space needs to be made, Higgins argues, where “people can actually begin to think about the future they want, think about what that will entail to get there, and how that impacts on them.”

Mothers Making Space

Margaret Ward states that the post war rebuilding processes in Northern Ireland must include a change in attitude towards traditional gender roles (266). She makes a compelling point in regards to the translation of politics developed within a “women-only space,” in that the politics still have to be translated into the male political arena. She argues that the “ability to develop social capital remains constrained by the nature of the relationship between the women’s sector and the wider community” (271 – 2). Rooney also notes that women (and presumably the women’s sector) are ill-served by being separated from politics, and adds financial capital to the constraints of the women’s sector due to the political space they have developed to occupy (Rooney "Community" 39 – 43). Certainly, a maternal politics that remains removed from society will fail to have any significant impact. Ward’s insistence that pressure remain applied to the development of a gender-equitable political system is certainly well founded. This pressure, however, will not in itself
result in the development of a gender-balanced political system, or an adjustment to patriarchal gender dynamic of Northern Ireland. Though Rooney does not offer a resolution to the funding crisis due to the women’s sector being seen as largely outside of civil society, she also does not insist that the women abandon the work done within this sector. Indeed, she stresses the varied experiences of women and complex relationships between women should be respected in any analysis of women’s participation in politics (Rooney "Community" 42 – 4).

Maternal politics is only one possibility among the varied and complex relationships which women can have with politics. Yet, given importance of traditional roles in Northern Ireland, a maternal peacebuilding may be a method in which some women can claim control over their gender roles and positively influence their society. Indeed, many Northern Irish Women have been acting as mothers. They have lacked the institutional and social support for the development of this form of engagement. The engagement with the public through a traditionally private role can serve to challenge the gender dynamic. Far from becoming trapped in an oppressive system, the reclaiming of motherhood as a path to political agency could actually create a space that redefines mothering away from its limiting, traditional versions, while opening the political system new ways of understanding and approaching issues and building peace.
Conclusion

The experiences of women in Northern Ireland offer a prime case study of the potential for a politics of motherhood becoming integrated into a wide peacebuilding agenda. The hyper-masculinized environment which developed during the Troubles has contributed to the continued exclusion of women from the public sphere. Though women have made great strides in increasing their presence within formal political institutions, and utilizing informal, grassroots associations, organizations and networks to address immediate concerns, the system remains bifurcated. And women remain largely excluded.

Activists within Northern Ireland have largely relied on official policies like Section 75 and Resolution 1325 to bolster their position that women must be more representative in Northern Irish politics. These gender mainstreaming efforts are laudable, and have contributed to some of the aforementioned gains. These measures, however, have failed to address the underlying gender imbalance which runs rampant within this post-conflict society. The issue focused on in this thesis has not been simply whether women are present within the political system, but how expansive and relevant that presence is.

In many ways, “feminine” aspects of human interaction appear to have been, and even continue to be maligned. The political scene in Northern Ireland is a harsh one—the schism between political identities that once led to violence now are often expressed within the political arena. Bullying is not unheard of, strength is often valued above compassion, and political maneuverings are the status quo. As such, many women (and likely men) do not feel as though the political space is a welcoming one, or even a productive one. Though many women engage in grassroots politics, this participation does not always lead to high-level decision making. Thus women, as a group, remain on the periphery of the public realm and decision-making.

This thesis has explored how a gender-aware peacebuilding can realign some of the gender imbalances that exist within such a post-conflict society.
Current manifestations of peacebuilding, of which the process in Northern Ireland is a preeminent example, tend to overlook gender issues and devalue women’s experiences. Such a process will inevitably leave fundamental inequities and fail to address central elements to a positive peace. Though it has thus far failed to incorporate gender as a central element in the process, peacebuilding offers the potential for a society to realign its gender dynamic.

This realignment could occur on multiple levels and through multiple vehicles. This thesis has considered one potential vehicle through the development of a theory of maternal peacebuilding. Maternal peacebuilding relies on an understanding of motherhood which is inclusive and flexible. Many women could not only have access to such a political engagement, but could actually define the parameters of their engagement. Developing from their own experiences and expectations as mothers, a maternal peacebuilding would endeavor to support these women to consciously engage with their traditional role as mother and their political role as citizens. The opportunity exists to create space for more women’s political engagement while also developing avenues for mothers to reclaim their important role. A politics of motherhood within peacebuilding societies could truly transform the political and social expectations and limitations of women.

This approach is not entirely unproblematic. History has proven that motherhood as an institution can be manipulated for a political agenda, and become a limiting experience for women. Moreover, motherhood as an idea has been essentialized and mythologized by states, religions, philosophers, artists and even feminists. These exaltations of mothers often appear to acknowledge the power of mothering, but actually serve to entrap women in an ideal which often does not reflect reality. The fact that the role of motherhood has been abused cannot result in the complete dismissal of its importance. As Jeanne Bethke Elshtain states:

“'It is the isolation and debasement of women under terms of male-dominated ideology and social structures that must be fought, not the activity, the humanizing imperative, of mothering, or of being a parent, itself'” (Public 333).
This humanizing imperative has the potential to truly transform the political discourse.

Discourse within a post-conflict society is likely to be hyper-masculinized. Peacebuilding processes create a space for this discourse to be transformed, but the gender dynamics of politics or even the wider society are rarely addressed. The reclamation of motherhood through a conscious engagement of some mothers within a peacebuilding context offers the opportunity for motherhood to retain its value by mothers and non-mothers in society. Within a maternal peacebuilding, mothers need not reject their role in order to demand inclusion in the political processes occurring around them. These mothers have the opportunity to become empowered as engaged citizens with valuable experience. Such a circumstance allows for the continued development of a truly equitable and peaceful society.
Appendix A: Respondent Biographies

Jean Brown has been a community worker in her native neighborhood of Suffolk in West Belfast for over three decades. She was a founder and the former Chair of the Suffolk Forum. She, along with Renée Crawford, worked toward building the Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Centre, and continues working with the Centre and its development.

Renée Crawford is a community worker in the Lenadoon neighborhood to which she moved in the 1970’s. She was a founder of the Lenadoon Community Forum, and currently serves as the Strategic Development Coordinator. She was part of the community group that worked to develop the Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Centre, and continues to represent the Lenadoon Community Forum within the Centre. She also sits on numerous boards, including that of the Women’s Support Network.

Sharon Haughey is a member of the SDLP and councilor for Armagh. She has been involved in Northern Irish politics since 1994 when she wrote a letter to US President Bill Clinton on her vision of a better Northern Ireland. She was asked to introduce President Clinton when he visited Armagh in 1998. She was the youngest candidate in the Newry and Armagh Constituency in 2007 when she won her seat.

Cathy Higgins is Lecturer for Education for Reconciliation at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin in Belfast. She holds a Doctorate from the San Francisco Theology Seminary. She has published extensively in her research in areas ranging from reconciliation to feminist theology. At the time of the interview, she was coordinating and teaching the third and final year of a women in peacebuilding program for women in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

Bronagh Hinds is a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Governance, Queen’s University Belfast. She was a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition. Her research and activism is focused on women’s access to politics, and has been involved at the local and European level to address inequities. She has held numerous posts within the voluntary sector.

Bernie Kelly is an SDLP Belfast City Councilor for the Balmoral Ward. She was elected in 2005. She was elected Deputy Lord Mayor of...
Belfast in 2007. Her professional background is in social work, and is currently social work manager for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

**Naomi Long** is an APNI Assemblywoman for East Belfast since 2003. She was elected as Belfast’s Lord Mayor in 2009. She is also the Deputy Leader of the Alliance Party. She holds a Masters in Engineering from Queen’s University Belfast and was a structural engineer before entering politics full time.

**Isobel Loughran** is a women’s community activist and Training & Education Coordinator with Women into Politics. She has been involved with Women into Politics for over a decade, delivering a variety of political skills training. Currently, she is implementing Women into Politics “Political Skills” strand of its Women in Leadership project, which is funded through Peace III. At the heart of the project is the belief that the equal representation of women at decision-making level is essential to the development of a peaceful, fair and equitable society.

**Yvonne Naylor** uses puppets to teach and discuss social issues. A former teacher, she has been involved in interfaith dialogue and social activism since the early 1970’s. She has worked for the Corrymeela Community and the Irish School of Ecumenics and is currently working freelance. She has developed resources for all ages to explore various social issues. She holds a Masters in Reconciliation Studies from the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin.

**Michelle McIlveen** is a member of the DUP and is the Assemblywoman-for Strangford. She holds a Bachelor’s from Methodist College Belfast and received a Masters in Irish Politics and Certificate in Teaching at Queen’s University Belfast. After teaching for a short time, she became a business manager at her family’s business. She is the DUP Spokesperson for Children and Young People.

**Kirsty McManus** holds a B.S.S.c Honours in Information Management & minor Sociology from Queens University Belfast and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Ulster. At the time of the interview, Kirsty was serving as Outreach & Development Officer for the Women’s Support Network, where she implemented a number of community outreach initiatives. She has been working as Project Coordinator for the LEAP program since April 2009, when she joined North Belfast Partnership. Kirsty has also worked as a project manager within the IT and marketing industry in the United States.
Sandra Overend is a member of the UUP and was elected as the party's Women's Development Officer in 2007. She has been involved with the UUP for many years, as she has been the office manager for her father, MLA Billy Armstrong. Sandra and her husband run their farm in rural Northern Ireland.

Dawn Purvis is the MLA for East Belfast and leader of the PUP. She participated as a PUP talks coordinator during the talks leading to the Good-Friday Agreement. She has held multiple party positions, including Chairperson and Chair of the Women's Commission. She also held an independent position on the Policing Board. She holds a degree from Queen's University Belfast.

Geraldine Smyth is a Senior Lecturer at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, and teaches at both the Dublin and Belfast campuses. She is a Dominican theologian. Her original background is in education, though is also trained in psychotherapy. She has held innumerable positions in organizations addressing interfaith and cross-community dialogue. Most notably, she was the Coordinator for the Opsahl Commission, and is currently a board member of the Healing through Remembering Initiative.
Appendix B: Interview Guide Questions

The interviews utilized an open conversation format. The questions listed below were used as guide questions should the need arise. The focus of each interview shifted with each respondent, i.e. the politicians tended to have a more politically- focused discussion, the community workers talked more about women in non-traditional politics, etc. As such, no two respondents had the same interview, no one was asked every question, and questions were asked that are not listed here.

I attempted to structure each interview into three rough parts. The first involved the respondent describing her own experiences and motivations for public engagement in her own words. The second part involved a general discussion on women’s experiences in Northern Ireland, women’s traditional roles, and the possibility of those roles changing. In the final section, I introduced the respondent to the theory of maternal politics, using Ruddick’s definition of motherhood and maternal thinking, and asked for her response. When possible, I tried to not divulge the focus of the thesis on motherhood, as I did not want the discussion of motherhood to overshadow the first two segments.

Political Aspect

- Could you briefly discuss the key elements of your participation in the peace process, and how being a woman has or has not affected your involvement?

- How would you describe the relationship of women to the peace process?

- What appear to be women’s motivations for participation?

- What have the reactions been to women’s increased public participation?
Traditional Roles

- Have women's social roles changed and/or become more apparent in the political realm?
- Do these roles tend to support or restrict women's activism?
- Do you see these roles as maintaining themselves in the long-term, or do you see them as transitory? Have they changed within the changing contexts of the Troubles and the peace process?

Motherhood

- Do you feel that motherhood has been a factor for women's activism?
- How would you describe motherhood? What are the key attributes?
- Do the communities see mothering differently? Does mothering change by location and economic class?
- Were mothers important actors during the Troubles? In the peace process? Currently?
- Do you see motherhood as empowering or oppressive?
- Do you see ways in which aspects of mothering can be applied to the political realm?
- In your opinion, is the role of motherhood a significant element in women's group identity?


