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Sex, Security and Superhero(in)es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond

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Sex, Security and Superhero(in)es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond

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Abstract

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in October 2000 with a view to ensuring that all aspects of conflict management, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding be undertaken with a sensitivity towards gender as an axis of exclusion. In this paper, I do not dwell on the successes and shortcomings of UNSCR 1325 for long, instead using a discussion of the Resolution as a platform for analysis of subsequent Resolutions, including UNSCRs 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009). This last relates specifically to the participation of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and is the most recent pronouncement of the Security Council on the issue of 'women and peace and security'. Through this analysis, I draw attention to the expectations of and pressures on (some) women in the arena of peace and security, which can only be alleviated through discursive and material change in attitudes towards equality and empowerment. I argue that the Council is beginning to recognize – and simultaneously to constitute – (some/most) women as agential subjects and suggest that the fragmented and mutable representations of women in Council resolutions offer a unique opportunity for critical engagement with what 'women' might be, do or want in the field of gender and security.

———————————————————————————————— **Keywords**

1325, peacebuilding, participation, gender, security

INTRODUCTION

> Cuz I have had something to prove as long
> as I know there's something that needs improvement,
> and you know that every time I move
> I make a woman's movement.
> Ani DiFranco, *'Hour Follows Hour'* (1995).

> Are we expecting more from women (super heroines) than we expect of men?
> Cohn et al. (2004: 136)

The engagement of the United Nations with issues of gender and security acquired significant impetus in 2000 with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. This Resolution, often described in relevant literature as 'groundbreaking' or similar (Cohn 2008: 185, see also Charlesworth 2008; Otto 2006/7)[1] was drafted with the aim of ensuring that all efforts towards peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as the conduct of armed conflict itself, would entail sensitivity towards gendered violence and gendered inequalities.

> Resolution 1325 is a watershed political framework that makes women – and a gender perspective – relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies. It makes the pursuit of gender equality relevant to every single Council action, ranging from mine clearance to elections to security sector reform. (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002: 3)

As a Security Council Resolution, UNSCR 1325 is legally binding upon states that are signatories of the UN Charter, and must therefore be taken seriously as a political document worthy of analysis, not least because it is argued that, despite the Resolution's many successes, significant obstacles remain in the translation of the Resolution from policy document to effective advocacy tool and action plan (in addition to the works cited below, see Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Cohn et al. 2004). At the time of writing (June 2011), there were 102 translations of UNSCR 1325 available, in languages from Albanian to Zulu, and 16 national actions plans that commit the respective governments to the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 in their international and domestic activities.[2] These data indicate that national governments are taking seriously the challenge of UNSCR 1325 and thus pursuing policies geared towards full and equal participation of women in all peace and security initiatives, as well as mainstreaming of gender issues in the context of armed conflict, peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. In itself, UNSCR 1325 represents not only successful claims on gender equality and empowerment but also significant moves towards the same.

In this article, I begin to unpack some of these claims and hope to contribute to ongoing debates about the successes and shortcomings of UNSCR 1325, looking both briefly back at the circumstances of its production and forward to trace shifts in policy discourse that are both produced by and productive of the ways in which we think about gender and security. Specifically, in the first section of this paper I sketch a short account of UNSCR 1325 and highlight some of the arguments I have made about the Resolution elsewhere (Shepherd 2008a, 2008b) as a way to frame subsequent discussions about resistance and agency. I go on in the second section to analyse UNSCRs 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009). This last relates specifically to the participation of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict

reconstruction and is the most recent pronouncement of the Security Council on the issue of 'Women and peace and security'. In this analysis, I pick out the concept of participation for closer engagement and draw attention to the expectations of and pressures on (some) women in the arena of peace and security. Specifically, I investigate the ways in which the UNSC currently writes (about) women and argue that activity, in the form of political participation, has become conflated with agency. This elision has profound implications for future debates about empowerment and equality; as I discuss below, the definitive conceptual component of agency is the achievement of change, whereas action presumes no such transformation. I conclude that this is an important historical moment for feminist engagement with peace and security policy, as the Council moves towards writing women as agents, and suggest that productive ways to confront and address power and powerlessness in UN visions of the sexed subject of security could still be found through critical engagement with UNSCR 1325 more than 10 years on.

UNDERSTANDING UNSCR 1325

When I began working on UNSCR 1325, my hunch was that the ideas and ideals about gender, violence and security that were represented in the Resolution could be tracked back to ideas and ideals held in the institutions involved in the crafting of the document – what I term the 'discursive terrain' of the institutions, constituted through time- and location-specific legal systems, cultural and socio-political traditions, geopolitical positioning and histories and so on. If this was shown to be the case (and ultimately I believe I demonstrated that it was), then the implications for policy-making would be profound: the frequently unreflective and unconscious ideas that people have are being written into policy documents and are functioning to order and organize those documents – and those of whom the documents speak – in very specific ways. In UNSCR 1325, I identify constructions of gender that assume it largely synonymous with biological sex and, further, reproduce logics of identity that characterized women as fragile, passive and in need of protection and constructions of security that locate the responsibility for providing that protection firmly in the hands of elite political actors in the international system, despite the Resolution

> *Reaffirming* the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and *stressing* the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. (UNSC 2000: Preamble, emphasis in original)

UNSCR 1325 offers a coherent and convincing account of actions that both can and should be undertaken by the Member States of the United Nations in

order to ameliorate 'the impact of armed conflict on women and girls' (UNSC 2000: Art. 16). The emphasis placed on 'representation of women at all decision-making levels' (UNSC 2000: Art 1) and on the participation of women in formal political processes (differentiated from representation by the emphasis on 'role and contribution' rather than presence, see UNSC 2000: Art. 4) is particularly interesting. Here, I undertake an exploration of how the Security Council has continued, since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, to delimit an inclusive vision of women as crucial actors in processes of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. In the following section, I trace the shifts in Security Council discourse on the sexed subject of security and examine how women (and, importantly, women's bodies) have become sites of such significant regulatory practices.

MIND THE GAP: FROM UNSCR 1325 TO UNSCR 1889

In June 2008, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to accept Resolution 1820, in which the Council '*Notes* that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide' and, further, '*Demands* the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians with immediate effect' (UNSC 2008: Art. 2–4, emphasis in original). The violation of the human body is central to UNSCR 1820; indeed, the Resolution is premised on a vision of the human body as inherently violable. On closer inspection, 'women and girls' are particularly vulnerable to violation (UNSC 2008: Art 3), particularly embodied in a way that their constitutive others ('civilians') are not. This is a construction that echoes the essentialist logics of gender in UNSCR 1325, logics which draw a clear link between sex and security in suggesting that women are 'metaphor[s] for vulnerable/victim in war' (Charlesworth 2008: 358). The discursive constitution of women as subjects of security does not, at first glance, seem to have changed very much in the eight years elapsed between UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820.

Through the nodal point of participation, however, I suggest that we can begin to identify small discursive shifts. In the Preamble of UNSCR 1325, women are represented as having an 'important role [...] in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding' (UNSC 2000: Preamble), which Otto argues 'provided important new leverage for local women's groups to claim a role in peace negotiations and post-conflict decision-making' (Otto 2004: 1). UNSCR 1820 emphasizes the need to 'tak[e] into account, inter alia, the view expressed by women of affected local communities' (UNSC 2008: Art. 3), to consult 'with women and women-led organizations as appropriate' (UNSC 2008: Art. 10) and to 'ensur[e] effective representation of women's civil society' (UNSC 2008: Art. 11). The Secretary-General and his Special Envoys are *urged* 'to invite women to participate in discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict, the

maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding' (UNSC 2008: Art. 12). In UNSCR 1820, representation is abstracted from the body in a way that differs from UNSCR 1325: in the latter, the 'representation of women' is to be increased (UNSC 2000: Art. 1), while the former speaks of the representation of and consultation with 'women's civil society' (UNSC 2008: Art. 11). Both assume that women are unproblematically identifiable as women, but I propose that participation supplants representation in UNSCR 1820 as the crucial mechanism for empowerment, and that this has important implications for how the Security Council writes (about) women. The activities of women, whether in the sphere of 'civil society', in 'women-led organizations' (UNSC 2008: Art. 10) or as 'peacekeepers or police' (UNSC 2008: Art. 8), are constituted in UNSCR 1820 as expressions of agency and as resistance to both structural and direct violences. I identify this as agency given the emphasis on change. Implicit in UNSCR 1820 is the assumption that participation of women will lead to transformation of political environment. The female subject of security, according to UNSCR 1820, is perhaps in the process of becoming an agent of security.

UNSCR 1888 also reaffirms the Security Council's commitment to increasing the representation and participation of women in formal politics (UNSC 2009a: Art. 16) and its recognition of 'the important role of women in rebuilding society' (UNSC 2009a: Art. 18). Similarly, UNSCR 1888 notes '*with concern* the underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes [...] and the lack of women as Chief or Lead peace mediators' (UNSC 2009a: Preamble, emphasis in original). The rationale for this concern is spelled out quite clearly:

> women and children affected by armed conflict may feel more secure working with and reporting abuse to women in peacekeeping missions, and ... the presence of women peacekeepers may encourage local women to participate in the national armed and security forces, thereby helping to build a security sector that is accessible and responsive to all. (UNSC 2009a: Preamble)

It is clear, therefore, that the participation of women is expected to transform the 'security sector': the women in UNSCR 1888 are recognizable as positive actors and putative agents.

Resolution 1889 continues in this vein, with the Preamble almost wholly devoted to accounts of women's activities in conflict, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The Security Council expresses 'deep concern about the under-representation of women at all stages of peace processes' and '*reiterat*[es] the need for the full, equal and effective participation of women at all stages of peace processes given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding' (UNSC 2009b: Preamble). The first recommendation contained in the Resolution is that 'Member States, international and regional organizations ... take further measures to improve women's participation' (UNSC 2009b: Art. 1). A crucial enabler of participation, according to UNSCR 1889, is active engagement by Member States with civil

society, 'including women's organizations', in order to address the 'needs and priorities' of women and girls (UNSCR 2009b: Art. 10). These needs include:

> inter alia support for greater physical security and better socio-economic conditions, through education, income-generating activities, access to basic services, in particular health services, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and mental health, gender-responsive law enforcement and access to justice as well as enhancing capacity to engage in public decision-making at all levels. (UNSC 2009b: Art. 10)

According to this list, a lack of 'access' and diminished 'capacity' only account for some of a range of impediments to women's participation. In order to ensure 'full, equal and effective participation', the international community would need to find solutions to the plethora of socio-political problems that result in the 'needs and priorities' of 'women and girls' remaining unmet.

There are two aspects of this short passage worthy of further exploration. First, as Naila Kabeer (1999: 443) has noted, 'access' to resources as an indicator of empowerment is both complex and problematic: 'How changes in women's resources will translate into changes in the choices they are able to make will depend, in part, on other aspects of the conditions in which they are making their choices.' The existence of capacity-building programmes and the impact of those programmes on participation in decision-making must be analysed with reference to specific socio-cultural context as 'not all [decisions] have the same consequential significance' (Kabeer 1999: 446) or status. There is also a danger that participation is equated with voice; the presence of women in a decision-making forum can sometimes legitimate the policies put forward by that forum when the women present have been explicitly or implicitly marginalized during discussion and been able to contribute little or nothing to its eventual conclusion.

The second aspect that strikes me as interesting is the minimal reflexive relationship of the factors listed above to gender identity, with the possible exception of reproductive health, although this itself is contentious; women have frequently and for too long been defined by their assumed capacity to bear children, as if masculine subjects have no reproductive capacity or health needs. I would venture that there are very few people in a post-conflict society who *don't* require 'greater physical security', 'better socio-economic conditions', 'health services [. . .] and access to justice'. These 'needs and priorities' are not specific to women and girls, although the distribution of material resources available to ameliorate scarcity in these realms is of course gendered. The latter is hinted at in the final article of UNSCR 1889, which requests that the UN Secretary-General reports to the Security Council by October 2010 with:

> Recommendations for improving international and national responses to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations, including *the development of effective financial and institutional arrangements* to guarantee women's full and equal participation. (UNSC 2009b: Art. 19d, emphasis added)

In giving this account of Security Council resolutions since 1325, I do not wish to suggest that 'women's full and equal participation' is not a worthy goal. I am not suggesting that women should not be invited 'to participate in discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict' (UNSC 2008: Art. 12), nor that the Council should not be concerned about 'the under-representation of women in formal peace processes [. . .] and the lack of women as Chief or Lead peace mediators' (UNSC 2009a: Preamble). Rather, I propose that we look closely at the 'women' in question and ask how the Council writes (about) women in recent UNSC resolutions.[3] Minimally, as I discuss in the following sections, I suggest that the resolutions analysed here write *some* women as victims, in keeping with my analysis of UNSCR 1325, but also – and perhaps more interestingly – that the Resolutions assume that *most* women speak for *all* women and, further, equate action with agency. Agency – the capacity to engage in formal and informal political discussion and decision-making, capacity to represent the interests of a post-conflict community and capacity to insist upon 'the development of effective financial and institutional arrangements' needed to ensure equality of participation – is circumscribed by the lack of infrastructural support for and recognition of the amount of productive and reproductive labour undertaken by the most marginalized, disenfranchized and under-resourced members of post-conflict society. In sum, while the UN Security Council has written (about) women as putative agents since 2000, this agency is both a rupture in the familiar representation of women-as-victim and an additional burden for (some) women to bear.

'WOMEN HOLD UP HALF THE SKY' (MAO ZEDONG)

They say that 'behind every great man there's a woman';[4] my mother used to have a postcard on her fridge bearing her favoured alternative: 'Behind every famous woman, there's often a rather talented cat.'[5] Based on information currently available, that cat must be not only talented but also rather tired. To put it another way, in contemporary global politics – and there is no reason to suppose that post-conflict society should be a marked exception from these trends – 'women hold up half the sky', support a significant proportion of earthly labours and fulfil the majority of the world's duties of care and reproduction as well (see *inter alia* Bergeron 2003; Bedford 2007, 2008; Peterson 2010). In feminist literature, this has long been a key policy concern when addressing international development institutions: 'childcare, housework, subsistence agriculture, cooking, voluntary work to sustain community organisations, and so on [. . .] dominant models of growth overlook the economic value of these activities' (Bedford 2008: 86). I would argue that feminist scholars of security and post-conflict need to engage closely with these debates, in order to explore fully the ways in which the assumptions made about capacity during conflict, in conflict resolution and in post-conflict reconstruction not only rely on writing women as victims in need of protection but also (and

somewhat schizophrenically, as I discuss further in the concluding section of this article) as superheroines, agents of their own salvation, capable of representing the needs and priorities of others and with the capacity to effect positive transformation in their given environments.

Fifteen years after Beijing, women occupied an average of 18.9 per cent of positions in upper and lower houses of parliament globally (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2010). The United Nations Secretary-General 'boasted' in 2009 'about the increasing number of women he has appointed to senior positions in the world body since he took office in 2007' (Deen 2009) but 'posts that are committed to gender equality work are at lower levels than comparable posts on other issues' (Yasmeen Hassan, Dir. of Programs at *Equality Now* cited in Deen 2009). According to the UN Economic and Social Council, of the 850 million people in the world who remained 'chronically hungry' in 2007, 60 per cent were women and children (UN ECOSOC 2007: 8). Women and children are 14 times more likely to die during natural disasters than men (UNFPA 2009). The global gender disparity in earned income sees women earning 'on average slightly more than 50 per cent of what men earn' (UNDAW 2000); this 'gender pay gap' increased in 2008/9 in both the UK and the USA (ILO 2009: 8). In short, not much has changed since the formulation of the 'informal slogan' of the UN Decade for Women (1976–85): 'Women do two-thirds of the world's work, receive 10 per cent of the world's income and own 1 per cent of the means of production' (Robbins cited in Shah 2010). There have, of course, been some changes. Anup Shah (2010) points to the implementation of microcredit schemes enabling 'greater access to savings and credit mechanisms' and the 'dwindling number of countries that do not allow women to vote' (Shah 2010).

In a typically elegant turn of phrase, Kabeer describes statistics as 'simple windows on complex realities' (1999: 447). The point of recounting these dismal statistics (and the temporary suspension of suspicion about not only the validity of statistical evidence but also the assumptions that inform many of these statements; for example, to be outraged at the lack of women in positions of formal political leadership requires the implicit acceptance of the conflation of descriptive and substantive representation and, relatedly, the concept of critical mass. See, for example, Childs and Krook (2006, 2008)) is neither to simplify the 'complex realities' they attempt to capture, nor to depress any reader so thoroughly that it effectively precludes any kind of critical political action, although this would be an understandable reaction. The point is to demonstrate the existence of serious, (infra-) structural inhibitors that may well impede the (superheroic) activities of the women in post-conflict societies on whom the UN Security Council relies in its efforts to achieve empowerment and gender equality in those same societies. If a woman – even a superwoman – has to spend upwards of six hours per day sourcing and gathering water and wood (UNDP 2004: 28) her capacity for engaging in formal political activity or even informal community-based organization is likely to be severely limited. In short, just because the UN Security Council recognizes, albeit belatedly, that women are actors, this

does not automatically ensure that those same women necessarily have agency – the capacity to act.

'Actors [...] are much more than, and much less than, agents' (Alexander cited in Campbell 2009: 408). As Andrea Cornwall explains, whereas actors are engaged in a consultative mode of participation, agents are better conceived of as transformative (2003: 1327) of both direct (immediate) and structural (removed) concerns. If it is indeed the case that UN Security Council discourse on gender and security is beginning to constitute gendered subjects as actors rather than agents, this nonetheless represents a potentially enabling move away from its representation of those same subjects as objects or instruments of security policy (these categories are explained in Cornwall 2003). It still behoves us, however, to explore the regulatory mechanisms (both tangible and discursive) that prevent the transition from actor to agent. Sam Cook, for example, investigates 'in very practical terms' some inhibitors to the expression of agency, arguing that '[t]his is where [...] flashlights, raincoats and rooms with doors come into play' (2009: 131):

> One [...] anecdote concerns a UN peacekeeping mission in a country with a high prevalence of sexual violence. A visiting researcher questioned the police about a pattern of attacks at night and in inclement weather. The police admitted that patrols in such conditions were limited, and thus the risk of violence was indeed higher. The reason for the limited patrols? The police were unwilling to patrol at night and in bad weather because they did not have flashlights and raincoats; there was no money provided for those in their budget. (Cook 2009: 132)

Furthermore, Kabeer (1999) identifies a range of 'pre-conditions', the presence of which facilitates the exercise of agency, including physical proximity to resources, control over life choices, mobility, decision-making opportunity and status. Agency, the ability to exercise choice and to achieve change, is multi-dimensionally constituted, and Kabeer illustrates persuasively how difficult it is to operationalize measures of the pre-conditions she investigates.

Women may 'hold up half the sky', but they do so in the face of 'inadequate budgeting for the gender components of projects, insufficient development of analytical skills, poor supervision of the implementation of gender components, and a general lack of political commitment both within the [UN] and at the country level' (Charlesworth 2005: 11). As a former Senior Gender Advisor for the UN surmised succinctly in an end of mission report, there is 'a *lack of political will* to take gender seriously' (Puechguirbal 2010: 183, emphasis in original). At the outset of this article, however, I suggested a cautious feminist optimism at the current historical moment. This optimism is not unrelated to the above explorations of what it means to be an actor or an agent in UN discourse on sex and security, explorations that are underpinned by an understanding of agency not simply as 'power to' or 'power over' but as 'the fourth face of power' (Digeser 1992: 980), where subject, agency and structure are inextricably intertwined. In the section below, I move to a brief

discussion of how poststructural theories of identity constitution can facilitate a different kind of understanding of the UNSC policy on peace and security, with potentially transformative effects.

'TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!' (BUZZ LIGHTYEAR)

There is a complex relationship between academic International Relations (IR), the discipline from which I write, and the formulation of international policy. While in the areas of social policy, planning studies and public administration, academic engagement with policy analysis is frequently nuanced and theoretically informed, IR appears to have a somewhat ambivalent relationship with theories of policy and theory in policy.[6] Christopher Hill (1994) refers to the 'siren song of policy relevance', in a particularly interesting metaphor: readers will recall that, according to Greek mythology, sailors were lured to their deaths by the enchanting voices of the sirens. From Hill's representation, we might infer that scholars are the hapless mariners and the ultimately unattainable goal of policy relevance entrances us to the extent that we risk (career?) death to achieve it.

Recent years have certainly seen a proliferation of essays on the subject of policy relevance in the social sciences more broadly (see, for example, Duvall and Varadarajan 2003; Walt 2005; Youngs 2008). This literature, in general, seeks to suggest ways in which we as academics might find ways to facilitate productive dialogue between ourselves and practitioners. Eriksson and Sundelius, for example, suggest three distinct modes of engagement between scholars and practitioners, concluding that both communities can benefit from combining 'two sets of knowledge for the purpose of better practice and improved theory' (2005: 67). They emphasize, however, that 'public officials and civil society practitioners should make room for [...] the unorthodox, the imaginative and the politically incorrect' (Eriksson and Sundelius 2005: 67) and this is in tension with much other writing on the subject. The conventional wisdom, within IR literature at least, tends to be that policy relevant work should be 'theory-lite'. Indeed, Alexander George cautions against using the word 'theory' when talking with policy-makers lest their eyes 'glaze over' (1994: 171 – 2). If academics do wish to produce work that is explicitly informed by theoretical musings, Stephen Walt (2005: 26 – 7) provides a handy overview of the characteristics of 'good theory', which include logical consistency, empirical validity, clarity about causal mechanisms and explanatory power.

This article, then, somewhat goes against the grain, as I propose that the above reflections on international policy in the area of gender, peacebuilding and security are usefully understood through the lens of poststructural theory. Poststructuralism and postcolonialism 'alert . . . us to the epistemic violence of Eurocentric discourses of the non-West' (Mohan 2006) that are particularly relevant to discussions of postconflict reconstruction and peace(state)building (see Darby 2009) and encourage us to investigate the discursive practices and

regulatory mechanisms through which the reality we take for granted, which includes disparities of power and multiple forms of (sometimes violent) oppression, comes to be accepted as such. Even those with only a rudimentary knowledge of poststructural theory will recognize that it tends not to speak of explanations or causal mechanisms. However, this does not mean that its policy relevance is null. Power is understood by Michel Foucault as 'a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than [...] a negative instance whose function is repression' (1977: 119), productive of practices of knowledge (including UNSC Resolutions), conditions of meaning (of those same Resolutions), and identity (as marked and made in the Resolutions, and elsewhere). Ideas about agency (the efficacy of the subject), structural inhibitors of that agency and the construction of the subject itself all emerge in a particular discursive context and are both produced by and productive of practices of power.

Whereas other approaches can analyse capability of the agent and/or determinism of the structure, a discourse-theoretical approach can conceive of power as productive and therefore implicated in the production of meaning. That is to say, the ways in which discursive practices construct an intelligible reality that then itself acts as a referent for the construction of meaning are intrinsically related to power. Crucially, a distinctively poststructural form of policy analysis highlights the ambiguities and tensions inherent in any policy document; 'alternative visions provide a promise of empowerment, through ambiguity rather than certainty; through struggles to create new spaces where they[/we] can think "other-wise"; where there is a proliferation of many voices rather than a few and where we continue to create knowledge as we resist by avoiding "paradigmatic conceit"' (Ashley and Walker cited in Rai 2008: 180). There is, of course, no guarantee that the transformation of knowledge will be regarded as positive – but that there will be transformation is itself cause for optimism.

I use the quotation from Buzz Lightyear, a character in Disney's popular animated film *Toy Story*, to head this section for two reasons: first, to admit to the intertextual reference in my own choice of title for this article; and second, to emphasize that feminist engagement with international policy must continue 'to infinity and beyond'.[7] My wariness of gender mainstreaming discourse is rooted in its teleological formation; the transformation of the concept into a verb implies to me that gender can be (successfully or otherwise) *mainstreamed* and the project thus concluded. Feminist scholars, practitioners and policy-makers know, of course, that this is not the case (see True 2003, 2010), but it can be hard to resist such attempts at closure when key figures (such as the UN Secretary-General, for example) are publicly trumpeting the increase (in this case, of 40 per cent) of women in positions of institutional power (cited in Deen 2009). I conclude this discussion by suggesting that resistance, far from being futile, is crucial, and especially at this juncture. As discussed above, the discursive constitution of female subjectivity in the UNSC policy discourse is currently somewhat fragmented. This represents, to me, a unique historical moment, and a significantly enhanced possibility of change.

In the course of this article, I have traced shifts in the UNSC policy discourse, drawing attention to the ways in which the various Resolutions that speak to 'women and peace and security' write the subject of women and constitute the concepts of peace and security. UNSCR 1325, as I have argued elsewhere, assumes 'that gender is synonymous with women and, moreover, that gender signifies need/want/lack' (Shepherd 2008b: 171–2). In UNSCR 1820 and beyond, I have identified ruptures and shifts in the organizational logics of these discourses. While in UNSCR 1325 'women-as-informal-organisers and women-as-formal-actors are still, primarily, essentially women-in-need-of-protection' (Shepherd 2008b: 120), UNSCR 1820 represents the policy beginnings of contestation over this discursive construction.[8] UNSCR 1888 continues this dual trajectory, on the one hand still inscribing 'sexual violence in situations of armed conflict' on the bodies of 'women and children, notably [. . .] girls' (UNSC 2009a: Preamble) but on the other insisting upon recognizing that:

> sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target *civilians* or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against *civilian populations*, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security. (UNSC 2009a: Art. 1, emphasis added)

The articulation of this recognition, in the first substantive article of the Resolution, and in terms of the impact of sexual violence on *civilians* rather than 'women and children' (Enloe 1990) perhaps signifies a move towards the ascription of agency to female subjects that is further consolidated in UNSCR 1889.[9] This latter explicitly challenges the fact that 'women in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations continue to be often considered as victims and not as actors' (UNSC 2009b: Preamble), suggesting that the Council is beginning to recognize – and simultaneously to constitute – (some/most) women at least as actors, if not fully agential subjects.

So here we are, more than 10 years after the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 1325, perhaps wondering how and why it took so long for the UN Security Council to write women as actors, but also curious about where we go from here. Some scholars have written 'essays in despair' (Rai 2008) regarding the transformative potential of UNSCR 1325 given that 'it has been used as a means of coopting gender dynamics in order to preserve the existing gender status quo' (Puechguirbal 2010: 184) and that 'the war system [has been left] essentially undisturbed' (Cohn 2008: 203). I fully understand the frustration evidenced in these arguments, but suggest that perhaps the fragmented and mutable representations of women in Council resolutions at the current time offer a unique opportunity for critical engagement. Alan Swingewood suggests that partiality and fluidity are characteristic of discursive fields: a discourse 'does not constitute a totality since it lacks a unifying centre but con-

sists of fragments, perspectives, discontinuity' (2000: 198). However, in order to be intelligible, discourses, which are always multiple and competing, must temporary 'fix' meaning. 'Any discourse is [...] an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 112).

I have identified here three possible emergent 'centres' in discourses of gender, peace and security issuing from the United Nations Security Council: women as victims; women as superheroines; women as representative of (some/most/all) other women. Of course, all of these – and none of them – are 'true';

> identities are always contingent and depend on specific forms of identification. Rather than presupposing some kind of homogenous identity, then, looking at the ways in which people identify themselves with others or with particular issues can provide a more effective basis for advocacy and for action. (Cornwall 2003: 1338)

As W.B. Yeats suggested (an early unrecognized discourse theorist?), 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold' (Yeats [1921] 2003: 19). This recognition is cause for great feminist optimism at the present moment. The practices of the UN Security Council regarding 'women, peace and security' (as the agenda is termed in the UNSC) have already had profound effects: NGO activists and practitioners use UNSCR 1325 'in multiple strategic ways' to enhance equality, empowerment and accountability in conflict and post-conflict zones (Cohn 2008: 189–91). 'Whether by reconfiguring the rules of interactions in public spaces, enabling once silenced participants to exercise voice, or reaching out beyond the "usual suspects"' in decision-making' (Cornwall 2003: 1338), it is likely that this grassroots engagement will continue in productive ways. What is interesting is how feminist engagement with these policy discourses might enable the construction of a 'centre' that pays attention to diversity, supports capacity-building without conforming to the imperial logic of 'a "trickle-down" theory of expertise' (Shepherd 2008b: 97), embraces a translocal, multiperspectival politics and refuses to effect arbitrary and ultimately regressive closure on what 'women' might be, do or want in the field of gender and security.

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Notes

1 I am grateful to the reviewer who noted that there is a distinctive difference between *claiming* the Resolution as groundbreaking and the Resolution *being* groundbreaking. As this introductory section is meant only to provide a descriptive account of the analysis that follows, I engage more fully with this debate in the second substantive section of the article.

2 At the time of writing, 24 states have implemented national action plans (Peace-Women n.d.).

3 It is of course also interesting to ask *why* the Council writes (about) women in the ways that it does. '[I]s it because women are good at peace; or because women have equal rights to participate in peace operations?' (Charlesworth 2008: 351). This discussion is, however, beyond the scope of this paper, as I seek to explore the possibilities that are created or foreclosed by *how* the Council writes.

4 The origins of this phrase are unclear. The first printed citation of it was apparently in 1946 in a Texan newspaper, when the athlete commented, upon receiving an award, 'said "They say behind every great man there's a woman. While I'm not a great man, there's a great woman behind me"' (The Phrase Finder, n.d.).

5 I have been unable to trace its author or production company.

6 Richardson (1996: 289) makes this distinction in his discussion of policy-making and planning theory, drawing on the Foucauldian concept of a power/knowledge nexus to suggest that while the dualism is 'convenient', it perpetuates the obfuscation of practices of power in the policy-making process, thus 'enhanc[ing] the possibility of imposition of normative values, confusion and manipulation'. While I do not entirely agree with Richardson's attribution of intentionality, it is nonetheless refreshing to see discourse-theoretical analysis being taken seriously in debates about policy and planning.

7 This is a prosaic echo of Ani DiFranco's (1995) lyric cited at the outset: 'I have had something to prove as long as I know there's something that needs improvement.'

8 Of course, in a wider academic and practitioner literature, these contestations have been actively explored and expanded upon for many decades (see, for example, Moser and Clark 2001; El Jack 2003; Afshar and Eade 2004; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Mazurana et al. 2005; Sweetman 2005).

9 Another reading of this discursive move is in keeping with feminist literature on the constitution of the subject of 'civilian', which elucidates the frequency with which gendered assumptions 'stow away' (Carpenter 2006: 31) within the norm of civilian immunity (see also Sjoberg 2006), rendering civilians effectively feminised.

Acknowledgements

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