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Strong minds, fit bodies and caring hearts:

Exploring gendered narratives of female peacekeepers from Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study looks at the politics of increasing the number of female peacekeepers in international peace operations. Through in-depth, semi structured interviews with women police officers from Bangladesh who have served as part of the United Nations Police, the study aims to explore their gendered experience in peace operations. Aimed as an exploratory case study, this research builds on previous feminist queries to argue that international peacekeeping is still highly gendered – where militarized masculinity is valued and femininity is instrumentalised as a quick solution to address sexual and gender based violence and exploitation. Gender balancing as a strategy is currently failing to meet the goal of gender equality and rather promotes the integration of women soldiers on essentialist grounds, not only adding to the roles and tasks women have to perform, but further reinforcing gender stereotypes. The study concludes that acknowledging and valuing the multiplicity of men and women's experiences and interests during conflict and after in peacekeeping and peacebuilding can lead to achieving a truer meaning of gender equality and to a more stable and inclusive peace.

Key words

Women, Peace and Security, peacekeeping, peacekeeper, Bangladesh, Police, gender balancing, gender mainstreaming, Formed Police Unit

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To the feminist closer home, this thesis is dedicated to my parents – ma and baba- thanks for your 'missed calls' and bhai, thanks for ensuring that the colours match.

Thank you !

List of Acronyms

CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
DFS	Department of Field Support
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
FPU	Formed Police Unit
IDP	Internally Displaced Population
MINUCI	United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
	(in French) Mission des Nations unies en Côte d'Ivoire
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti
	(in French) Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haiti
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
	(in French) Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and abuse
SGBV	Sexual and Gender -based Violence
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
UN	United Nations
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAMID	The United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur
UNPOL	United Nation Police
UNSCR	United Nation Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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1. Introduction

This year marks fifteen years since the historic United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women and their equal participation and full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacekeeping and in post-conflict reconstruction. It urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations (UN) peace and security efforts.

While the arena of women, peace and security has gained a lot of attention in the last decade, the focus on women's roles as peacekeepers has been very limited (Karim and Beardsley 2013; Sion, 2008). This may be because efforts in gender mainstreaming are relatively recent and there are still very few women in peacekeeping operations – only about 3 per cent in the military and 10 per cent in the police (Simic, 2010; Henry, 2012). Bangladesh is one of the few countries with a long history of deploying peacekeepers and has been a leading contributor of female troops with the majority sourced from the police service. Almost 10,000 men and women from Bangladesh are currently serving in international peacekeeping operations[1], making it one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces (United Nations, 2015a). According to the Bangladesh Police website, there are 190 female officers from Bangladesh working in three UN peacekeeping Operations including Darfur, Haiti and Congo, including two all female Formed Police Units in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Congo (MONUSCO) (Bangladesh Police, 2015). The Bangladesh Police website also recounts that:

> "Bangladesh has gained prominence as being the top contributor of female police officers
> […] Bangladesh female peacekeepers have placed themselves as key driving force to
> reduce gender-based violence, conflict and confrontation, providing sense of security
> especially for women and children, mentoring female police officer in the local area and
> thus empowering women in the host country and promoting social cohesion." (Bangladesh
> Police, 2015)

This study focuses on women peacekeepers deployed by Bangladesh to explore not only why Bangladesh contributes so many officers, but also more significantly how the deployed female troops speak of their experience as peacekeepers.

This study applies a social constructivist approach in order to better discover how women deployed to peacekeeping missions experience norms of gender equality. While the study builds on my own empirical curiosities through interaction with women peacekeepers from Bangladesh, it endeavours

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[1] For the purpose of this study, *peacekeeping operations* are understood broadly as internationally mandated, uniformed

to determine how international norms are operationalized in peace operations. While the bulk of International Relations (IR) scholarship[2] has focused on how gender norms are internalised in national policies and plans – such as a National Action Plan to implement UNSCR1325, this study adopts a different focus. Instead it aims to the address the disjuncture between oratory declaration of resolutions and international peacekeeping mandates that create these norms and the messiness of gender is experienced on the ground. Using interviews with women police officers from Bangladesh that have served in UN missions, the study explores some of these discussions.

1.1 Purpose

There is a dearth of research, which has documented women peacekeepers' experiences before going to mission, while serving in the mission and then their lives after the mission (Sion, 2008; Bleckner, 2013). This study aims to take a step towards filling this gap. Aimed as an exploratory study, it analyses women peacekeepers' lived experiences by using feminist theories to examine the politics of integrating women in peacekeeping operations and the how this impacts their everyday lives.

Examining how women peacekeepers' roles are conceptualized, gives us insights on how female bodies are conceptualized and valued. At a larger level, the study offers insights on ways to think and act on gender that fully capture the diversity in the roles, skills and experiences of women peacekeepers. The research also aims to contribute towards original empirical data on women police peacekeepers from Bangladesh.

 One of the purposes of this study is to contribute to international theory of gender and, in particular, to show the complexity of how gender operates in international institutions, such as peacekeeping operations. By focusing on how gender is constructed through texts, images, narratives and most important for this study, the lived experiences of female peacekeepers, it allows us to disentangle how unequal gender roles are created for men and women peacekeepers and how addressing this inequality is integral to the very functioning of international peace and security.

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[2] IR or International Relations is generally considered a field of Political Science. Feminist scholars have added a lens of gender to the study of international politics. For an analysis of gender in IR , please see J. A. Tickner (1992), Christine Sylvester (1994), Laura Sjoberg (2006, 2007, 2014), most, if not all, of Cynthia Enloe' s publications (1989, 2000, 2004, 2007), M. K. Meyer and Elisabeth Prügl (1999).

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to explore this complexity by looking at the gendered experiences of women peacekeepers from Bangladesh. By studying the experience of gender one is examining how peacekeeping is practiced by gendered bodies on the ground. (Shepherd, 2014: 6). The main research question the study aims to answer is:

How is gender experienced by women serving in international peacekeeping missions?

To answer this question, the study is structured by answering two sub-questions. The study first looks at arguments that the UN and member states use to advocate for increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations. These arguments are based on certain assumption and perceived value that an increased presence of women will bring to a mission. So the study first explores:

What kind of assumptions and connections about men/women, their bodies and gendered identities do dominant discourses of (gender equal) peacekeeping create?

This question, largely answered in section 3, helps to bring out how women are perceived and how gender is constructed in the main discourses and practices in peacekeeping operations. The study's main analysis, then focuses on these how these gender constructs come up in the narratives of the Bangladeshi women peacekeepers on the ground to seek an answer to:

Does an increased number of women challenge gendered discourses and practices in peacekeeping?

A partial answer to how women peacekeepers experience gender emerges by answering the above questions and through an analysis of how gender is made visible and simutaneously invisible through the dominant discourses and their everyday workings (Sultana, 2007).

1.3 Scope

The study concentrates on the perception and lived experiences of the women peacekeepers from Bangladesh. While it would have been interesting to also capture the experience of men who have been deployed from Bangladesh to contrast this with the experience of women peacekeeper to understand how men negotiate gender norms and practices in their deployment, this is beyond the scope of the study, but highly encouraged for future research.

1.4 Outline

The study is divided into six broad sections. After a brief introduction to the aim, purpose and scope of the study, the following section sets out the context in which this research takes place by examining politics of integrating women in peacekeeping operations and Bangladesh's contribution to peacekeeping operations. *Section 3* take the reader through a short exploration of the dominant debates around how gender is understood in peacekeeping and how women are integrated into international peace operations. *Section 4* introduces the analytical framework which pulls together how gender and peacekeeping is seen as a performance, building on poststructuralist feminist insights and *Section 5* explains the design of the research and methods employed to conduct this feminist study. *Section 6* analyses the gendered experience of women peacekeepers from Bangladesh and in *Section 7* concludes with what it mean for future research and practices of peacekeeping on the ground.

2. Setting the scene

> "By empowering women within the United Nations we are not just upholding the principles for which we stand. We are making ourselves a better organization. This is particularly true when we increase the participation of women police officers in peacekeeping"
>
> (Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General, UN Global Effort, UNPOL, n.d.)

This section traces the history of participation of women in international peacekeeping operations over the years. In particular it looks at international landmark declarations that are encouraging local action, such as the deployment of all female Formed Police Units (FPU), as one of the new ways of addressing gender inequality in peacekeeping. It then draws our attention to Bangladesh's long engagement with peace operations and recently becoming one of the largest contributor of troops, including deploying the largest number of female peacekeepers (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2015a)

2.1 Changing nature of peacekeeping

With the changing nature of warfare, peace support operations have also evolved over time. Today's missions are more multidimensional and have a wider mandate including restoring peace, promoting human rights, organising elections, providing humanitarian assistance, demobilising and reintegrating

former combatants among other activities (United Nations, 2015c). While there is an increase in number of troops deployed, just over a period between 1999-2008 the number of armed forces deployed to Africa has increased over 400 per cent, the challenges facing peace operations continue to grow (Soder, 2010). A High Level Panel on UN Peace Operations presented its report published this year remarks:

> "There is a clear sense of a widening gap between what is being asked of UN peace operations today and what they are able to deliver. This gap can be – must be – narrowed to ensure that the Organization's peace operations are able to respond effectively and appropriately to the challenges to come."

> "[…] must be an awakening of UN Headquarters to the distinct and important needs of field missions, and a renewed resolve on the part of UN peace operations personnel to engage with, serve and protect the people they have been mandated to assist." (High Level Panel on UN Peace Operations Report, 2015: vii-viii)

Thus as the number of peacekeeping operations grow and get more sophisticated by the day, there is a growing need to respond to the needs and priorities of the civilians and populations. It is argued that one of the way peace operations can respond better is by better integrating gender into the mission (Bridges and Horsfall, 2009; Bertolazzi, 2010; Dharmapuri, 2013). One of the ways UN advocates for promoting a gender approach is through gender balancing or increasing the number of women working in peacekeeping missions and gender mainstreaming into the mandates, policies and practices of peacekeeping missions (Bertolazzi, 2010).

2.2 Taking stock- where are the women?

Cynthia Enloe asks of the most defining questions central to all feminist queries, "where are the women?" making us examine where women are present and absent in international politics (Enloe, 1990). This remains a central question to this study as it seeks to explore where are the women in peacekeeping-in terms of numbers and missions they are deployed to, but more importantly where or what kinds of roles are women undertaking in peacekeeping.

A quick Google image search for the key words "UN peacekeepers" gives us images of uniformed blue berets in various places, action poses; almost all are exclusively male. International peace operation has been male dominated and not surprisingly since the troops are deployed by member states where often there is already a skewed gender ratio in national armies and police force. While the number of female peacekeepers – women from the military and police force – are rising , it was not until the 1990s that UN specifically encouraged Troops Contributing Countries (TCCs) to deploy

female peacekeepers (Simic, 2010; Karim and Beardsley, 2013). While in 1993, women only made up 1% of the uniformed part of the peacekeeping operations, by 2014 this number went upto 10% of women as police personnel and 3% of military (United Nations, 2015b).

A big push came through in the year 2000, as a result of years of combined lobbying and advocacy efforts from women's rights movements and feminist academics. The Windhoek Declaration, followed by the UNSCR1325 gathered global commitment to include women in all aspects of promoting peace and security. The Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action, called on the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) to take specific measures to advance gender equality in every possible way in peacekeeping missions, including improved gender balancing (United Nations, 2000). The plan was the first global call to integrate gender perspectives in the UN's peacekeeping missions and set a target of equal representation of men and women serving in peacekeeping. The Plan of Action highlighted the importance of encouraging effective participation of women through out the peace processes, listing out steps for the UN and Member States to mainstream gender, advocating for training on gender before deployment and recruitment of larger number of female officer, particularly in senior, decision making posts (ibid).

The UN Security Council passed the resolution 1325, build on these guidelines and further called to attention the impact of armed conflict on women and recognizing the importance of women's contribution to achieving durable peace (United Nations Security Council, 2000). In 2009, nine years later UNSCR 1888 specifically calls on TCCs to deploy more female troops from both military and police to UN peacekeeping operations and for the first time, explicitly argued that including women as military and police personnel is another step aimed at

"*recognizing* that women and children affected by armed conflict may feel more secure working with and reporting abuse to women in peacekeeping missions, and that 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, especially women"

(United Nations Security Council, 2009; emphasis in original).

Despite high expectations, there has been limited action that these resolutions aimed to encourage. In 2010, the UN published a Ten-year Impact Study on Implementation of UNSCR1325, highlighting the challenges in implementing the recommendations including limited increase in number of women peacekeepers, the lack of accountability to comply with provisions listed in UNSCR 1325 and a general lack of understanding and support for gender equality (DPKO/DFS, 2011:10). Despite these limitations, there has been some success, especially in the number of women police officers serving

as part of the United Nations Police (UNPOL) and in the deployment of the first of its kind all female Formed Police Units (FPU).

2.3 Recent successes- the global South to the rescue?

Launched by the UN in 2009, the "Global Effort" is a campaign aimed at member states to increase the number of female police in the UN to 20% by 2014 (UNPOL, 2015). In particular by revising recruitment policies and providing incentives for officer who want to join peacekeeping operations. The campaign promotes the increase in number of female police as to "increase the effectiveness of UN police components and help build trust with populations and inspire more women to become police officers in the countries where they serve" (UNPOL, 2015). One of the ways in which member states have responded to this call has been by contributing all-female FPUs. The FPUs are deployed as one unit from the TCC and consist of a minimum of 120 police personnel and are accompanied by 30-40 support staff to provide support to the UN's peace operations by public order management, safety and security of UN personnel and facilities and supporting operations that may require a formed response and may involve higher risk (DPKO /DFS, 2009).

The first female FPU was sent in 2007, from India to Liberia and was lauded for its performance in increasing the efficiency of the mission, positive interaction with local civilians and security sector actors and also for raising the profile of female peacekeepers globally (Dharmapuri, 2013; Henry 2012; Pruitt, 2013). This was followed by two FPUs of female troops sent by Bangladesh to Haiti and to the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2010 and 2013 respectively (Bangladesh Police, 2015; United Nations Peacekeeping, 2015a).

The factors that motivate TCCs to deploy troops are varied, but for a lot of the top troop contributing countries, which happen to be from the global South, this has the dual purpose of income generation and improving international creditability (Amar, 2012). Main mobilising factors for Bangladesh are analysed below.

2.4 Bangladesh's contribution to UN Peacekeeping missions

Bangladesh has been a top troop contributing country for many years. Rashed uz Zaman and Niloy Biswas (2014) are among the handful of authors in an attempt to trace the history of Bangladesh's participation in UN peacekeeping mission, have listed three main reasons as to why Bangladesh contributes troops to UN peacekeeping missions: 1) financial incentives that accrue from UN

compensation; 2) promoting a positive image of the country in the international sphere; and 3) the nature of development of Bangladeshi armed forces and their close connection with domestic politics, where the political elite has kept uniformed troops away from Bangladesh to avoid military coups (2014:330; Haque, 2012).

Troop contribution to UN peacekeeping mission is seen as a matter of national pride, a foreign policy priority as can be seen in the national level celebrations of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers in Bangladesh. PM Sheikh Hasina at this year's celebration expressed her "happiness" towards the fact that Bangladesh has increasing number of female peacekeepers deployed and marked it as an indicative step towards gender mainstreaming, saying "This is also UN's one of the major concerns nowadays. Bangladesh is not lagging in that aspect" (Prothom Alo, 2015).

It clear that women peacekeepers stand at the crossroads between UN's efforts aimed at gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality and the challenges of practical deployment on the ground. The next section summarises the main arguments that advocate for integrating women in peacekeeping operations that are found in UN documents in the form of Security Council resolutions, guidelines issued by DPKO and published research in the field of international peacekeeping and security. It then examines the feminist scholarship that challenges some of these dominant discourses.

3. Literature review: what has been written so far?

> "CC: [---] So, once we get feminist analyses of international institutional political cultures, what do we have?
> CE: A lot more realistic notion of how the world operates. That translates into a far more accurate causal explanation for patriarchy's global malleability" (Cohn and Enloe, 2003: 1190)

3.1 What has gender got to do with peacekeeping?

War and conflict affects men and women differently. Women's experiences and voices offer insight into building sustainable peace, conflict mitigation, post conflict reconstruction and transforming the masculine realm of international peace and security (Enloe 1993; Enloe 2000, 2010; Sjoberg and Via, 2010; Tickner 1992; Kronsell, 2012). The DPKO/DFS Gender Strategy (2014-2018) sees gender equality as crucial for attaining sustainable peace and inclusive security, and possible only " if *all* members of society are equal in terms of opportunities, protection, access to resources and services, participation in decision making, and other basic rights" (DPKO/DFS, 2014:1, emphasis added). The strategy stresses that without integrating a gender perspective through a process of exposing gender based differences in power and status and how these differences shape men and women's needs and

interests, it is impossible to achieve gender equality (2014:22). Gender mainstreaming is one of these strategies to integrate men and women's perspectives, concerns and experiences into integral design, implementation and monitoring; and assessing the implications of such a policy, legislation and plan for both women and men (ECOSOC, 1997). Over the years the main principles of UNSCR 1325 and Namibia Plan of Action has filtered through in peacekeeping operations, with mandates and mission guidelines explicitly asking for gender mainstreaming in operations and gender balancing in troops deployed from TCCs[3].

One of the ways that the UN called for integration of gender perspective was through gender balancing (Bertolazzi, 2010). Gender balancing refers to men and women being equally represented and having the full ability and space to participate in all activities of peacekeeping (Karim and Beardsley, 2013:465). In peacekeeping missions this would imply that men and women are equal in number and that they have access to the same roles and adding more women will automatically translate to women's needs, priorities and voices to come to the forefront (Mazurana et al, 2005). In light of recent outbreaks of misconduct by peacekeepers – sexual exploitation an abuse (SEA), trafficking, prostitution, sex for food/goods the UN, human rights organisations and scholars have started to look at the UN's peace operations with more scrutiny, including the training, task and composition of the troops that are deployed (Valenius, 2007: 510; Simic, 2010: 191-2).

3.2 Women in peacekeeping –what do they bring to the mission?

It is argued that women broaden the set of skills and styles that are available in a peacekeeping mission (Bertolazzi, 2010:6). Women as security providers have a comparative advantage in operationally addressing sexual and gender based violence, as they are in proximity to the groups at risk (UNIFEM/DPKO, 2010: 17). Women are seen as more sympathetic and easier to talk to by victims; presence of women is also attributed to a better disciplined force by "making men behave better" and since women are less likely to be perpetrators, there is an overall decrease in Sexual and Gender based Violence (SGBV)[4] and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) (Simic, 2010; Pruitt, 2013; Dharmapuri, 2013; Karim and Beardsley, 2013). Women peacekeepers are claimed to be less

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[3] See Gender and Peacekeeping : http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/

[4] SGBV is understood as more than rape. It also includes sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization; or any other form of sexual and gender based violence of comparable gravity. See UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict , http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/addressing-conflict-related-sexual-violence-an-analytical-inventory-of-peacekeeping-practice

intimidating and provocative, thus having better contact with the civilians. Building on this trust, troops can mitigate potentially violent situations and even gather more information that will be crucial to the mission's success (Bleckner, 2013: 347; Mazurana, 2005: 65). By breaking stereotypes, seeing more women peacekeepers on the grounds inspires local women and girls to join their national security sector (Pruit, 2013). There are tactical advantages for an increased presence of female troops, such as body searches at check points, contact with women's groups to build early warning systems and other situations where the cultural context makes it more acceptable for women peacekeepers to interact with local women and girls (UNIFEM/DPKO, 2010: 43).

3.3 Limitations of the 'just adding women' argument

Women embody feminine qualities

The arguments explored above highlight that in fact it is not what women do, but rather who women are that seems to make this difference. Thus is not the tasks or roles that women perform differently than their male counterparts, but how the category of female is constructed. It is the qualities that female peacekeepers are assumed to embody due to their biological sex that are valued.

Feminist authors have argued that the arguments backing increase of women in peace operations are build on essentialist notions of womanhood in particular women as "sympathetic", "caring", "less threatening" and fail to take into account varieties of women's social, political and economic interests, roles and perspectives (de Groot, 2007; Simic, 2010; Puechguirbal, 2010). Bleckner argues that there is greater need to pay attention to the roles that female peacekeepers play in the mission and move beyond the idea that by just increasing the number of women troops SGBV issues can be addressed (2013: 349). Studies report that when Norwegian women peacekeepers were interviewed, they reported that people responded "not to their sex", but rather to them as soldiers in uniforms (Valenius, 2007). Karim and Beardsley (2013) also show that women peacekeepers are sent not where there is the most "gender needs", as understood by UN to prevent SGBV, but in fact to missions that are less thus less "dangerous", based on the stereotype that women are not as tough as men.

Olivera Simic (2010) asks a very poignant question, "Does the presence of women really matter?" In her study she elaborates that while women are being encouraged to join peacekeeping operations as "sexual violence solving forces", "to civilize men" and act as "saviours of women and the image of the UN" (Simic, 2010: 196), she argues that at the same time as we are encouraging women to join

peacekeeping operations, we are also imposing a "double burden" (ibid). Not only are they required prevent and address issues of sexual violence, they have to mediate violent disputes, prevent SEA and also act as role models to inspire young girls in duty areas. Marsha Henry's study (2012) adds another "burden" of global sisterhood to women peacekeeper's roles. In her study of women peacekeepers as part of the all female FPU from India to Liberia, she has looked at the expectations from the roles that women were supposed to play. A shared global sisterhood among the women from the south is taken for granted and used as basis for the mission's success (2012:25). Importantly, Simic argues that by placing all these roles and responsibility on women, the UN and member states have come up with an easy "fix" to the problem instead of pushing TCCs to enforce laws and remove impunity, as well as improving accountability at all levels (2010:197).

Replacing gender with women – the easy fix?

Karen Barnes (2006) states:

> "rhetorical commitment to gender mainstreaming often disguises the reality due to lack of political will , organisational accountability , competing or contradictory discourses, rather then being mainstreamed gender issues become lost long the way and what results is tokenistic gestures that contradict the essence of what mainstreaming seeks to achieve" (cited in Puechguirbal, 2010:183)

Conceived at the Beijing Conference in 1995[5], gender mainstreaming asks not only for the physical increase in number of women but also to "institutionalize gendered approaches in design and implementation of policy" (Jennings, 2011:2). Jennings argues that even though the landmark UNSCR 1325 placed women's experience and priorities in the middle of the peace and security agenda, its focus remained on "women" and "participation" and not "gender" and "representation" (ibid). Nadine Puechguirbal, scrutinizes the text around UNSCR 1325 including ten reports of the Secretary General of peacekeeping missions to argue that peacekeeping is a representation of "agency in a masculinist form" and when this gets translated into operational procedure, it perpetuates gender roles that are unequal, further preventing gender mainstreaming (2010:173). Gender is being used as a safe idea because of how it is understood as a "problem-solving tool", making gender mainstreaming a quick solution rather than a political activity (Puechguirbal, 2010:183). Jennings argues that the real goal of gender equality is seen to be achieved by a 'softer'

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[5] The Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing in 1995, endorsed gender mainstreaming as a critical and strategic approach for achieving gender equality commitments. The resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action mandates all stakeholders in development policies and programmes, including UN organizations, Member States and civil society actors, to take action in this regard. See http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming

goal of adding women to make institutions perform better, "without threatening the latter's core functions or identity" which is built on masculine privilege. (2011:4).

Cynthia Enloe argues that there are two incentives for conflating 'women' with 'gender'. By using woman as a "sociological, diffuse notion of gender", it might be the only way women to be taken seriously, and the second incentive might be for people who don't want masculinity to be addressed (2004:12). The second incentive, along with a lack of commitment and political will within the UN to "share power" and change the persistent masculine attitude, leads to gender being replaced by women and masculine being the norm (Puechguirbal, 2010:182). While men's life experience are treated as the general experiences, rather than a gendered experience, women's experiences are seen as 'women's concerns' or a special issue. By constructing women as vulnerable/to be protected is a way of not recognizing women's lived experiences and skills and thus resisting redefinition tasks and responsibilities that can be undertaken by men and women (Puechguirbal, 2010:182). An independent report on UN Peacekeeping Operations published in 2008, highlights the patriarchal attitude of male dominated peacekeeping industry and their biases against appointing women to "serious" missions, as women are still not seen as possessing "political skills and diplomatic gravitas to head large scale missions" (ibid).

In a context like post conflict and humanitarian setting, gender tends to get addressed later. This "later" thus becomes a patriarchal time zone, where gender and power relations will be acknowledged and dealt with (Enloe, 2004:215). Feminist scholarship thus argues that by just adding women does not change the gendered structure and the power relation between what is deemed masculine and feminine in peace operations (Valenius, 2007:513). Feminist research argues that women tend to internalize the masculine military culture and share the "boys will be boys attitude with their male colleagues" (Sion, 2008). Thus increasing the number of female does not automatically make peacekeeping operations more gender sensitive or conducive to promoting women's interest and voices (Simic, 2010:194).

The arguments above suggest that there is a need to rethink the roles of women peacekeepers and take a step back to see if we are asking too much from the women peacekeepers. The following section looks at some of the theoretical concepts and introduces the analytical framework that this study employs to guide the analysis of the finding.

4. Theoretical framework

" […]theory is a verb rather than a tool to be applied, and is something that informs our everyday lives. If we think of gender as something we are 'theorising' daily, we can perhaps begin to see why gender matters."
(Laura Shepherd, 2014:4)

The aim of this study is to analyse the narratives of women peacekeepers to explore how they experience gender. The concepts of "performativity" and "embodiment" form the legend that guides this exploration, so we know what to look out for when we examine the stories shared by women peacekeepers. To move ahead in this exploration, the analytical framework is presented at the end of the section.

4.1 Gender as a performance

Using Judith Butler's concept of "performativity" , this research approaches gender as produced through a performance or doing (1990:25). Gender is "a continuously (re) constructed category", where such reconstruction takes place "in the continuous processes and activities of daily life" (Kronsell, 2012:8). Gender is constructed or performed through everything we do – the way we dress, refer to ourselves, shoot guns, identify with a movie character and is "done, lived, performed in daily practice" (ibid). "Gender refers to …(s) ocially produced distinctions between male and female, feminine and masculine. Gender is *not something people are …"* (Acker1992: 25, cited in Kronsell 2012:8; emphasis added). Thus, gender is mutually constructed, by doing "it" and that "it" being recognized as accepted performance associated with one of two gendered identities. Building on this understanding, gendered subjectivities or how masculinities and femininities are lived, done or performed through individuals are mutually constructed and dependent on each other, but are ordered hierarchically. Similar to how the category of a protector would not exist if there were no one to be protected, masculinity needs a complimentary femininity (Enloe, 1993:17).

Laura Shepherd, building on this conceptualisation of gender as a performance, argues that the "sexed body is as much a product of discourses about gender as discourses about gender are a product of the sexed body" (2014: 8). By looking at gender this way, it does not aim to find the "doer" behind the deed, but rather it is more curious to analyse the deed as representations of gender or "gendered behaviour", where "the doer is at once produced by and productive of their representations" (ibid). Thus by looking at the physical body of the peacekeeper, gender becomes the social meaning attached to bodies. We then begin to see why it is necessary to look, on one hand at how gender functions and shapes practices in peacekeeping operations, and on the other, how gendering is used to shape the practice of peacekeeping (Shepherd, 2014:5). By examining this process, we move away from the essentialist assumptions of men and women having fixed identities and explore the possibility that there are gendered subjectivi*ties*.

In the institutions of military police and peacekeeping, sex and sexuality play a major part in the construction of these gendered subjectivities, where they are "created (and resisted) through performance of institutional tasks and procedures" (Kronsell, 2012:9). Section 3 above, highlighted that feminine subjectivities are mapped on heteronormative female bodies and are associated with skills and tasks that are considered feminine and thus devalued in the gendered order traditional peacekeeping operations create (Kronsell, 2012). Thus certain tasks are seen as masculine and expected of men, in contrast with other tasks seen as feminine and expected of women. This is problematic as this process of gendering tasks simultaneously fixes the boundaries of the categories of men and women respectively in stronger, tougher, masculine identities and softer, caring, sympathetic, feminine ones. Here it becomes important to question the very act of fixing these bodies –why and how? Since masculinities and femininities are not only socially constructed, but also have implications as political categories, in particular with regard to assumptions about power, agency, sex and sexuality (Cornwall et al, 2011:10).

With this focus, one could ask what is the gendered relationship between female/male peacekeepers body and their identities? (ibid: 7). And when there is a multiplicity of gender identities, masculini*ties* and feminit*ies*, how does peacekeeping practices reduce them to the binary of male/female bodies? By looking at the practice of peacekeeping as an embodied performance, this might offer us some clues.

4.2 Peacekeeping as a (gendered) performance

Peacekeepers are not born, but are created through "masculinized regimes of military (and police in our study) training that transforms their physical sense of self" (Higate and Henry, 2010: 39). Peacekeeping is an institution of hegemonic masculinity because male bodies dominate in them, and have done so historically, embodying/enacting a particular form of masculinity, which has become the norm (Connell, 1995: 77, cited in Kronsell, 2006: 108)

Paul Higate urges us to analytically deconstruct the social meanings attached to the peacekeeper's body by using a lens of embodiment[6]. This lens allows us to collapse the gendered discourses produced by global norms and institutions to the realities on the ground where the body of the male/female peacekeeper acts (Higate, 2014). He argues that bodies need to be seen as "dynamic

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[6] For further theoretical discussion on "bodies" and "embodiment", see analytical conceptualization of "geocorporeality" in Higate (2012)

repositories of acquired, pre-reflective habit" acquired through training (Higate, 2014). Peacekeepers (men and women) are trained, fit, responsible and masculinized. The military (and police service) are one of the most gendered institutions, and despite what might seem as men and women getting trained to be gender neutral and "just police officers" as some of the participants of this study also echoed, the training trains them to be police officers who enact hegemonic masculinity[7].

The most elucidating example of this was that every women police officer interviewed was referred to as "Sir" and even she referred to her female colleagues as "Sir". When questioned about this, they said that "Sir" is a gender neutral term for senior ranking police officer. They referred to me as "Madam" since I was not in the police force and "outside the system". Applying the feminist lens to this small act, one could argue that authority and seniority (thus respect) is synonymous with masculinity. This becomes even clearer through their responses to my question of what might be the consequence of addressing a senior female officer as "Madam". They responded that this might be seen as "disrespectful" and "rude", as "she would think we don't think she is as capable as the other (male) officers". Although women and men police officers complete the same training, it is the masculine traits that are valued and expected to be performed by both male and female officers. This training builds on disciplining the mind and the body in aggression and strength, but also the rejection of the femininity (Higate, 2014). The BBC documentary, *Girl Squad,* capturing the first all female FPU from India serving in Liberia, is peppered with clips of women confidently speaking of being "trained", "disciplined", "bold" (Pruitt 2013; Henry 2012). The women police officers who participated in this study all spoke of being as "bold", "strong", "disciplined" and "physically and mentally able *as male peacekeepers* from Bangladesh and other countries" (emphasis added). Interestingly one does not find the same narratives for men peacekeepers, thus the same demands are not put on men indicating a distinct hierarchy of gender (Higate, 2014; Puechguirbal, 2010). The standards of achievement are set by what men can do, women are trained and expected to perform according to this standard, ensuring women's bodies are trained as masculine soldiers.

4.3 Embodied Peacekeeping

This section tried to pull together the concepts elaborated above – gender as performance where the performance is seen as gendered through the tasks men and women do, but also as it produces a gendered subject in the form of a male and female peacekeeper. It conceptualises peacekeeping as an embodied practice, which is made comprehensible through the gendered subjectivities mapped on to

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[7] For further discussion on "hegemonic masculinites", see Connell (2005)

the body of the male/female peacekeeper. In doing so, it seeks to explain the concept of embodied peacekeeping.[8]

Poststructuralist feminism encourages the examination of how gender is performed by individuals inside and outside of institutions, particularly in institutions where masculine and hegemonic norms remain hidden – silenced – yet continue to be affirmed in the daily practice of institutions (Kronsell, 2006: 108-110). These hegemonic norms are silent but still powerful in perpetuating gendered stereotypes and binaries. To proceed with examining gendered performances in these institutions, we use a poignant question posed by Kronsell "what happens when women claim to take part or when gender issues are 'imposed' on traditional masculine, militarist institutions?" (2012:13) What happens when to these powerful norms when women are integrated in peace operations?

In the UN and peacekeeping operations these hegemonic masculine norms pose a challenge to the integration of women peacekeepers as UN struggle to reconcile what it considers as the added value of women in peacekeeping operations, with UN's attempt to make them more credible by masculinising them (Higate, 2014). The objective of integrating women in peacekeeping is for women to bring the skills, insights and tactics that are assumed to be uniquely and universally feminine and present in every female body, thus women are valued as "empathising bodies", which seems to contrast with traditional masculine skills for which peacekeepers are trained and valued (Higate, 2014). UN faces the challenge of marrying gender equality and gender mainstreaming agendas with the practicalities of deployment. By advocating that women can be trained the same as men, but posses certain inherent qualities that differentiates them from men, peacekeeping practises reinforce the idea of masculinities and femininities as rooted in biological differences. Women's added value is thus the qualities assumed to be embodied in a female body; it is not what they do, but who they are (Higate, 2014; Jennings, 2011). How you value something is how you perceive it and what objectives it fulfils. The UN and TCCs value women for the specific set of qualities that only women posses, which serves to "save their [institution's] image" (Simic, 2010:190), at the expense of gender equality and advocate for increasing women peacekeepers as a non political activity and an easy fix solution to the hyper masculine culture of peacekeeping (Puechguirbal, 2010).

Through such initiatives/policies of gender mainstreaming, women are not only used as tools or instrumentalised towards political goals of the UN and TCCs, but at the same time their gendered identities are (re) constructed. Tarja Väyrynen argues that "UN's discourse on gender and peacekeeping operations represents a typical modern gender binary structure, where gender is

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[8] For more on "peacekeeping as an embodied performance of security", see Higate and Henry (2010).

synonymous with women; and women are differentiated from men" (2004:137). Not all women are effective listeners, virtuous and sympathetic towards the several complex issues faced by the women in the country where their mission is deployed, neither are all men exactly the opposite. By creating this binary, not only does peacekeeping move away from the concept of gender mainstreaming as valuing and incorporating diversities of lived gendered experiences, it also leaves the more difficult task of transforming hegemonic militarized masculinities untouched.

4.3 Performing like a (female) peacekeeper- an analytical framework

Through the performance of gender and peacekeeping as illustrated above, we can see that men and women are negotiating dual identities being a peacekeeper, but also being a female/male peacekeeper. In "doing" or "performing" gender, individuals and institutions internalize, exemplify and resist gender norms that form their gender subjectivities (Kronsell, 2012:8). And it is through this embodied performance that these gendered identities are etched out. A limited understanding of multiplicity of these identities makes the boundaries of these identities fixed, which in reality is the opposite – they are fluid and negotiated constantly.
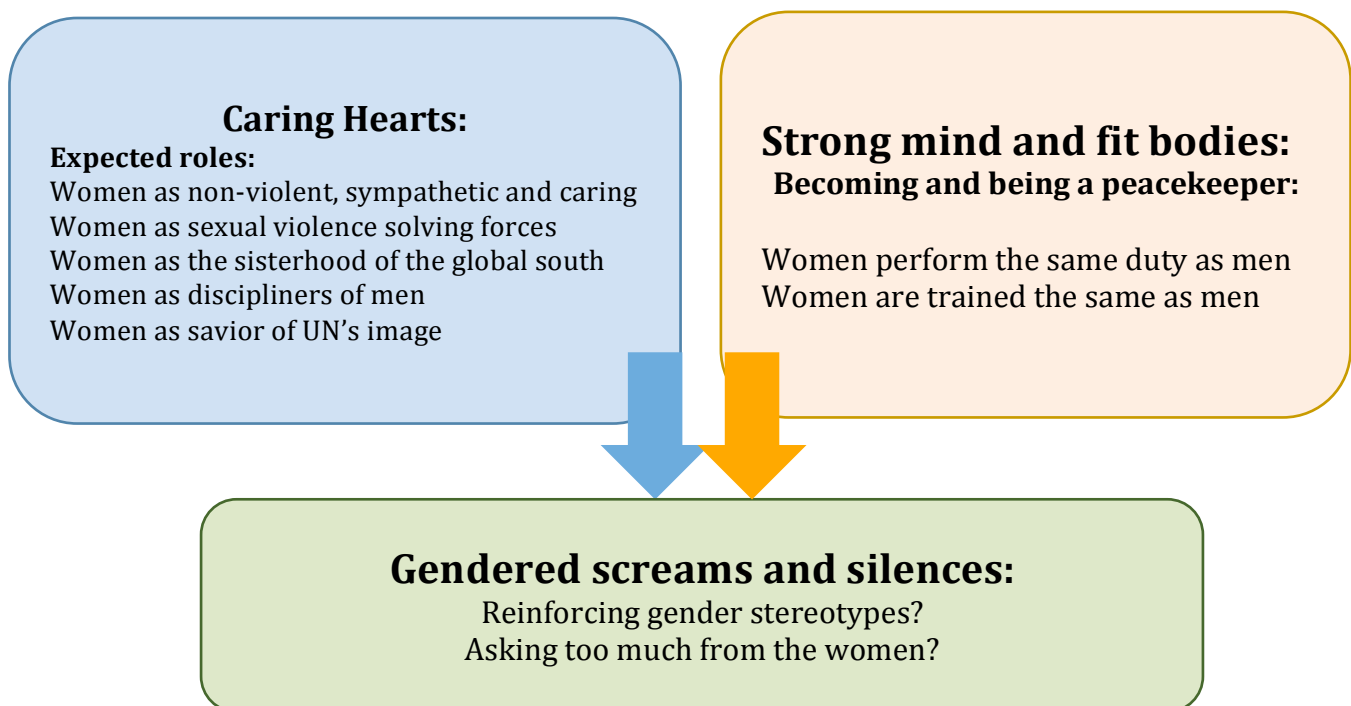
An important aspect of this performance is the expectation from women peacekeeper of certain roles and tasks on the ground. The dominant discourses discussed in Section 3 emphasise the roles that women are thought to perform universally as justification for increasing women's numbers in peace operations. The first building block of the framework – "Caring hearts" – looks at what kind of roles are being expected by external actors and how women peacekeepers perform these roles when deployed on the ground. This section thus (re)turns to the very relevant question that Olivera Simic (2010) asks "does the presence of women really matter?" and utilizes the rich stories of how women peacekeepers from Bangladesh perform tasks expected of them on the ground.

The framework then moves onto what is labelled as "Strong minds and fit bodies". This seeks to capture the concept of embodiment, asking women about their experience of 'becoming' a peacekeeper – including training, deployment and 'being' – experiences from their year long mission, as another way of gauging how women experience their gender. As Higate and Henry (2010) have argued, peacekeepers are not "born, but are made", this section looks at the performance of women in roles that are expected of them but turns the question around to ask them "what roles do they see they actually perform?"

As argued above, gender is both embodied and performed (Higate 2014; Kronsell, 2012). With an aim to research *with*, rather than *about* women peacekeepers the analytical framework seeks to highlight the roles and experience of women peacekeeper, hopefully giving us clues on how women value their own presence on the ground – as women, as peacekeepers and as both.

The study of gender is the study of power and by looking at the "visible performance" it analyses how power operates to create gendered subjectivities and how these subjectivities are mapped onto male/female bodies, leading us explore how an individual experiences gender. The study also employs the lens of "invisibility" to examine the silent and invisible performance of gender and power in peacekeeping practises, tasks and narrative (Kronsell, 2006). The framework comes together by analysing the gendered "screams" and "silences" or what is visible and invisible about gender and power by comparing roles that are expected to be performed and performances are valued.

Figure 1: Analytical framework

Caring Hearts:
Expected roles:
Women as non-violent, sympathetic and caring
Women as sexual violence solving forces
Women as the sisterhood of the global south
Women as discipliners of men
Women as savior of UN's image

Strong mind and fit bodies:
Becoming and being a peacekeeper:

Women perform the same duty as men
Women are trained the same as men

Gendered screams and silences:
Reinforcing gender stereotypes?
Asking too much from the women?

5. Methodology

5.1 Creating feminist research

This research aims to follow a feminist research ethic (Ackerly and True, 2008) paying extra attention to *how* the research is conducted (Harding, 1989; Beckman, 2014). Following a social constructivist epistemology, the study builds on the understanding that our worldview – of the author and the respondents – is socially constructed through interpersonal realities and social discourses (Bryman, 2008: 19). In similar vein, gender is also seen as social construct, made and remade through practices of individuals, organisations, state and in our study police forces and the peacekeeping practices. Socially constructed power inequalities such as race, gender, caste among others, all shape our perception and understanding of our lived realities and the meaning we attach to interactions. Thus following an interpretivist logic, this study argues that knowledge then is then continuously socially constructed (Bryman, 2008: 15).

Feminist methodology argues that all of women's experiences are situated and listening to women's voices brings richness and an alternative, often unknown perspective (Beckman, 2014:167). Feminist methods, thus intentionally seek out these stories and experiences to what hooks (2000) calls "centering the margin". This research acknowledges Bangladeshi women peacekeepers as carriers of knowledge and the best informants about the lived experiences of women peacekeepers. By making women peacekeepers the subjects of my study is an attempt to make their agency visible, making explicit the power of these women's narratives to inform the gender discourses around international peace and security.

5.2 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design informed by primary and secondary data. This research is an exploratory case study of Bangladeshi women peacekeepers. Case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon, in its real life setting in depth, especially when the boundaries of the case and its context are hard to separate out. (Yin, 2014:16). In an exploratory case study, often field work and data comes in before the final study questions are fixed, since the empirical findings lead us to the final questions and queries which form the starting ground for future research. The research thus follows an "intuitive path" (Yin 2012:29). For the purpose of this research, there was no conceptual framework that would do justice to the richness of data and highlight the potential avenues for future research, there have been very few studies looking at narratives of women peacekeepers from the global south and how they experience their gender through lived realities of peacekeeping. Yin

(2012) argues that exploratory case studies have a notorious reputation for "just wandering about", but if they follow a clear explanatory theory, then it can stay true to its path (ibid).

5.3 Methods

The focus of the study is to capture a plurality of embodied experiences of women peacekeepers from Bangladesh, thus interviewing them seemed to be the method that would provide rich data and do justice to the depth of material the women had to offer (Ragin and Amoroso, 2010: 26). The data was collected through in depth interviews, of fifteen respondents and analysed through "horizontalisation" or pulling out cluster of meaning (Creswell, 2009).

The specific findings from this case are not generalizable to other cases, as my research is very much time and space bound (Sultana, 2007: 378; Bryman, 2008: 53-58). The data collected during my study is the narrative created during my interactions and through my interpretation of the respondents' experiences and thus should be seen as one of the realities of women's experiences in peacekeeping operations (Marvasti, 2008: 65-70). These stories are knowledge in itself – as it represents the "social reality of the narrator" along with the depth, contradictions and messiness of the stories as it was conveyed in their own words (Etherington, 2004: 81). This methodological choice also includes the role of the researcher, in particular in creating the dialogue and co-constructing meaning through posing the questions in a certain manner.

5.3.1 Sampling choices and gaining access

As many other qualitative studies, this research also employs purposive sampling to identify my sample. Due to lack of time, funds and security concerns, with regard to travel, the study only focuses on women police personnel who were posted to Dhaka during the period of this study.

I moved to Dhaka, Bangladesh, to work with UN Women Bangladesh Country Office and through my work, I have gained access to women's rights organisations and gender advisors such as the Gender Advisor at the Police Reform Project (PRP) working with Bangladesh Police. The PRP project aims to improve the effectiveness of the Bangladeshi Police Force, including having a strong focus on gender equality and sensitivity. Through the Gender Advisor as the gatekeeper, I was able to secure access to a few female police officers who had served as peacekeepers in UN missions in the past. From these initial contacts, I followed snowball effect sampling and was introduced to more female police officers.

5.3.2 Data collection and analysis

This study builds on several sources of data and draws its findings from semi-structured, in depth interviews with 15 women police officers.[9] The study also looked at texts such as the DPKO/DFS Guidelines and Gender Strategy; UNSC Resolutions that speak to the women, Peace and Security agenda; reports and publications from UN Women and NGOs on implementation of UNSCR 1325 and media reports and the website of Bangladesh Police.

The participants of this study are not homogenous and are different in age, rank, educational attainment and were recruited from different parts of Bangladesh. But for the purpose of this study they all have successfully served as in a UN peacekeeping mission as part of the UN Police – either as an individual recruit serving in a mixed contingent[10] or as all-female formed unit.

These interviewed were conducted at the participants work-space and mostly during office hours. Keeping in mind these constraints, semi structured interviews provide a structure to be able to analyze the interviews later, while still giving enough flexibility for the respondent to put across their views and perspectives (Bryman, 2012: 470-2). Prior to the interview process, I had developed an interview guide which help me steer my interviews through a semi structured format allowed me to ask follow up questions and follow divergences in conversation topic that could be lead to offering richer information from the respondents (Silverman and Marvisti, 2008: 68-70).
All interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of two that were in Hindi. Most interviews were recorded and later transcribed, however for some interviews were the respondents felt more comfortable not having their responses recorded, only notes were taken. I use the analytical model developed in the previous section to code the interviews into relevant categories that would best elucidate to my research questions (Creswell, 2009: 143).

5.4 Ethical considerations

5.4.1 Reflexivity and positionality

Reflexivity and consciously addressing your positionality is at the core of feminist research ethics (Ackerly and True, 2008; Tickner, 2005; Sultana, 2007; England, 1994). During my research, I was

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[9] See Appendix 2 for a full list of women peacekeeepers that were interviewed for this study.

[10] UN Police (UNPOL) is made up of individual officers and formed police units . Formed Police Units can be all male or all female. For more information, see : http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/police/

constantly shifting between the boundaries of insider/outsider. Being female, Indian and comfortable in Bengali , I was made to feel like an insider and addressed as "apa"[11], but markers such as being young, educated in the West and working with "the UN" clearly positioned me as an outsider. Farhana Sultana (2007:377) captures the reflective process of "coming back" to a place familiar[12] and reworking not only the boundaries identity but also the dichotomy of "field vs. home", constantly reworked and negotiated by how I identify myself but also by how my respondents perceived me.

Reflexivity can be seen as an important lens and process in creating an egalitarian research – where you acknowledge and address the power differences between the researched and the researcher – aware of biases, social and economic hierarchies (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010: 4). My historical, social and cultural experiences shape my world-view and influence how this research is designed and even how answers are interpreted. For me being reflexive is not limited to data collection, but acts as a check through out the process of conducting this research. As Beckman argues, self-reflections, but also reactions and responses from respondents in the research process help uncover multiple co-existing knowledges (2014:169).

Although from the onset, I was honest with my affiliations and explicit that even though I am employed by UN Women in Bangladesh the study is part of my personal research, during some interactions I was still addressed as a representative of the UN (or UN agencies, such as DPKO). This could have led to creating expectations regarding their participation, outcomes of the research and possible changes in UN peacekeeping operations.

5.4.2 Informed consent and confidentiality

The participants of this study were informed about the purpose and the scope of the research prior to the interviews. It was also made explicit that the interviews are completely voluntary and they can refrain from not answering any question they are uncomfortable with. All participants felt more comfortable with verbal consent.

In the study I have used pseudonyms and any other marker of identity, such as age and home district have not been disclosed. The only thing that is mentioned in which mission and what kind of contingent they served in when they were deployed. Since each participant's experience is so

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[11] "Apa" is in affectionate term for big sister or sister in Bangladesh.

[12] Even though I have never lived or worked in Bangladesh, language , customs and traditions are very familiar/similar to what I grew up with in New Delhi, India.

uniquely individual, these markers will not be used to compare stories, but rather reflect the diversity of experiences of women peacekeepers this study focuses on.

5.5 Limitations

Time was a crucial factor that could be seen as a limitation, as the study was conducted while I was employed full time. Although I enjoyed support and flexibility from my work supervisor, I could have interviewed more respondents, particularly from lower ranks to include more perspectives. Limited time meant that only two of my respondents were able to give feedback on my draft. Political unrest, country wide blockade, high levels of violence on streets including murder of few human rights activists by fundamental groups in the first quarter of the year in Bangladesh caused major delays in the data collection process.[13]

6. Empirical analysis

> "poststructural form of policy analysis highlights the ambiguities and tensions inherent in any policy document;[and an] alternative visions provide a promise of empowerment, through ambiguity rather than certainty" (Shepherd, 2011:514)

This section uses the lenses and arguments developed in the Section 3 and 4 that come together as the analytical framework to explore what kind of gendered narratives are shared by women peacekeepers from Bangladesh. In particular it aims to bring out how gender is "made" or constructed by individuals, institutions, peace operations and the state and how this construction of gender fits with the goal of gender equality (Kronsell and Svedberg, 2012:10)

Returning to our analytical framework discussed in Section 4, the section below first lists out the main 'roles' that women peacekeepers are supposed to perform and, using the findings from the interviews with the participants, attempts to answer Olivera Simic's question "does the presence of women really matter?" (2010). The section then moves on to discuss how these findings speak to the centrality of gender as a category in the embodiment and performance of peacekeeping – the becoming and being a peacekeepers on the ground. It analyses gender being "made" through parallel

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[13] To give a glimpse of how blockades or 'hartals' caused major disruption and quickly become violent in Bangladesh , see coverage in international and national news dailys : http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/22/bangladesh-shutdown-protest-opposition-arrests and http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2015/feb/13/non-stop-hartal-after-feb-14-if-demands-not-met

processes of gendered roles that women are expected to perform and gendered subject that women are supposed to be, in negotiation with other identities and expectations. The section concludes with the implications of these negotiations and the challenge of reconciling the expected roles and value women bring to peacekeeping with 'messiness' of the gendered realities on the ground.

6.1 *Caring hearts:* roles women are expected to perform

When deploying female troops on the ground, there are some arguments and assumptions about the value they bring and the roles they will be performing. As Section 3 has illustrated, calls to increase the number of women in the mission is seen as the solution to certain issues UN is facing, as women are better at interviewing survivors of SGBV; providing support to local women and mentorship to women in the security sector and make the peacekeeping force more approachable in the society among other functions. This section looks at how the women's experience on the ground engages with these roles and expectations from them.

Women as non-violent, sympathetic and caring

Literature indicates that female peacekeepers enjoy a better reputation than their male counterparts in the eyes of the local population (Bridges and Horsfall, 2009; DeGroot, 2001). Women peacekeepers are less intimidating and provocative, thus have better contact with the civilians. Building on this trust, troops can mitigate potentially violent situations and even gather more information that will be crucial to the mission's success (Bleckner, 2013: 347; Mazurana, 2005: 65). The women are expected to be "good listeners" in order to gather information and to assist in victim support, specifically with incidences of SGBV. All the participants of this study are married women and all had young children (except one) when they were deployed. Most participants agreed that women are better listeners, specially when it comes to women and children's "problems and needs", since they could identify with it as mothers. When they were asked to share a story of how they used this special skill to provide assistance, there were mixed responses. Most women said that they never got a chance to interact with the local population- not even women and children.

> "we were not allowed to interact with locals, security is a big matter. But if they came to us with a problem, surely we would understand their problems" – Rumana

Peacekeepers and UN staff usually stay in heavily guarded compounds and do not have access to local population. Participants mentioned that while language was not a problem since there were

translators around, their daily tasks did not involve much direct interaction with locals. The interviews revealed that women in all female FPUs had more interaction with locals as opposed to women in mixed contingents, where they mostly performed administrative roles. In a FPU, since women were present in every rank, from front line to command officers, they get to access different tasks and roles, roles that might be considered "dangerous" or "feminine" for women peacekeepers in a mixed contingent. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> " we were two women (in a mixed unit), and mostly stayed in the camps as it was dangerous for us to go out alone. We did not go out on patrols or in the night time , men did that" – Shaarmin

And when they had close interactions with civilians, such as in Haiti[14], the women were see as uniformed, tough soldiers, not as caring, sympathetic mothers.

> " we had access to all the IDP women and children population in the area. We saw lots of domestic abuse, but they came to us for food and UN supplies, we are the UN soldiers." – Kudletri

In the instance above the local population reacted to their uniform and not their sex. They were reacting to their authority and the provisions they had as UN peacekeepers and humanitarian actors.

Most of the women interviewed, agreed that women were different than the men, in the skills they have due the fact that they are biologically different then men. Women tended to internalise essentialist arguments promoted by UN, but also TCCs like Bangladesh in our case. It could also be that women have used their femininity as a tactic or strategy in their fight for inclusion and empowerment. If playing the game is the only way to be let into the "boy's club", then it could be that women used this argument to access roles and opportunities that they could not in the past. Kunz argues that introducing women in peacekeeping has a potential to challenge the dominant "protector (male/masculine)-protected (female/feminine)" binaries, but often stronger essentialising notions reinforce these boundaries (2014: 612). Women peacekeepers are then just seen as "pacifists" and when they enter traditional male security institutions they are either sidelined or "co-opted to be 'governed'" (ibid).

Women as sexual violence solving forces[15]

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[14] The participants that were deployed to Haiti or MINUSTAH describe it as a "humanitarian" mission as the main tasks and duties of peace were providing food m medical and shelter to IDPs, unlike MONUSCO which was more of a "security" mission.

[15] I borrow this phrase from Olivera Simic (2010).

One of the loudest arguments for increasing women in peace operations is the potential for reduced SGBV since women are seen as "good listeners" and "less threatening", thus easier to be approached by victims for protection and local women's groups for information sharing. While this still echoes essentialism as highlighted above, there is also limited evidence from the ground confirm this assumption. In her research with women peacekeepers from Bangladesh, Julia Bleckner shows that there was a difference between responses from participants of an all female FPU and women who had served in mixed contingents when it came to addressing SGBV (2013: 384). There was a clear indication of "higher awareness" and "sense of responsibility and experience in addressing SGBV" from all female units (2013:350-3). She argues that serving in an FPU, women have access to a variety of roles that expose them to more interactions with civilian population, which is limited when women are kept isolated in administrative positions in mixed contingents (ibid: 358f). This line of argument has a slight advantage on the ground. Since an FPU is seen to be deployed to address SGBV specifically, there are clearer channels of communication with the gender advisors and for gender unit to work closely with peacekeepers, both men and women. But how much does the sex of a peacekeeper play a role in reporting and addressing instances of SGBV? Below we see that skills more than sex become important:

> "before being deployed (to DRC), I took some basic French classes in Bangladesh. With limited number of key phrases, I could communicate better with some of the local women and men's groups in the area. I would get sms from the women in the village…mostly to inform me that everything was ok 'tous bien', but sometimes to ask for specific help on days we were not doing night patrol" – Farzana

She also mentioned that she was aware of incidents of GBV and based on the trust she had built due to her language skills with the locals, she would get contacted by other male FPUs in the area to report any incidences of GBV. She also said that her FPU was in regular contact with the Gender Unit of MONUSCO and they "worked together sometimes".

SGBV is a complex problem rooted in unequal power and gender relations. These difference, based on the subordination of the feminine are present in "normal" times, but get aggregated in times of conflict (UNIFEM/DPKO, 2010). Women peacekeepers interviewed also discussed that SGBV was very complex matter but felt under trained to address it , as expressed by

> "would help to know more , if we have to respond properly" -Meher

Women as the sisterhood of the global south

The deployment of the first female FPU from India to Liberia has got a lot of attention as it challenged traditional gender norms and continues to be showcased by the UN as a role model for women' s empowerment and leading to an increase in the number of Liberian women joining their national police (Pruitt, 2013: 69). Argued as a positive effect of the increase in number of women peacekeepers, this argument assumes that there is a notion of the global sisterhood. Marsha Henry (2012) argues that the assumption that women are more likely to feel an affinity towards other women is problematic as it assumes women across cultures and geographic location have the same interests and needs. Interestingly, the participants in this study did however refer to the "responsibility to respond to the call" and signing up for being deployed as a peacekeeper to "inspire and encourage" other female policewomen in Bangladesh.

> " I did not sign up for me, but when the call came you have to do it. It is your responsibility. You see, I was doing this for my girls, they need to see a lady officer going abroad and doing things that we could not do before. We have to take this opportunity. It is simple, I went for women's empowerment." – Kudletri

> " I am only doing my duty like everyone else. I am not a role model." – Shawly

The notion of the global sisterhood is problematic because it assumes that all women have the same gendered experiences (Penttinen, 2012: 177). When speaking to the participants, factors that motivated them to apply for the post, "career development" and "international exposure" were the top responses from all participants. Only one respondent mentioned "protecting women and children" as a factor. A kind of sisterhood that can be imagined is one that seeks to resist gender stereotypes that prevent women from accessing different roles and professions, thus women "helping" other women by challenging these norms.

Women as discipliners of men

Incidences of SEA by male peacekeepers have been an issue that has questioned the integrity and credibility of the UN and peacekeeping forces for years. Increasing female peacekeepers is seen as way to "soften" the hyper masculine culture that promotes SEA in peace operations and "discipline" men that indulge in such acts (Simic, 2010). The responses from participants when asked if they ever witnessed or reported any incidences of SEA are very interesting,

"SEA and other things are not part of the Bangladeshi culture." – Shima

"Bangladeshi men and women are very well behaved and professional …there is no need for getting worried about SEA and other sexual issues, we are trained well and will never misbehave". – Rumana

"not where we were present. We are living far from the male accommodation, so we have heard, but never seen." – Mehnaz

The responses reveal that SEA is seen as a matter of discipline. If disciplined well, which the Bangladeshi forces are, they will not indulge in SEA. Adding women to discipline male peacekeepers as a solution to SEA, is an easy solution, and does not challenge the status quo by looking at the problem from the lens of privilege and impunity that certain peacekeepers enjoy (Higate, 2007). And if women's presence can reduce SEA, for which again there is limited evidence, which women are these? Women in an all female FPU that are segregated from male units? Female peacekeepers in mixed units where they are a minority and thus more likely to follow the "boys will be boys" attitude and not report an incident? Or civilian women in a mission?

Women as saviour of the UN's image

Scholars argue that the UN's response to SEA has been inadequate (Simic, 2010; Bleckner, 2013). Although the instances of SEA have come up for years, it was only in 2003 that UN Secretary General announced a "zero-tolerance policy" for all acts of SEA. In 2006, the then Secretary General Kofi Annan shared that the message of zero tolerance had still not reached everyone "from managers to commanders on the ground, to all our personnel" (United Nations Press, 2006). Given the reluctance of UN and TCCs to prosecute individuals and address the culture of impunity, women are added to solve the issue and save UN's image.

" we are there under the flag of the UN and the uniform of Bangladesh…our image is very important." – Kudletri

" I think now when they see female troops , they know why we are here . We are there to be more disciplined and well behaved then men. We are there to perform better." – Shima

"They looked at us with curiosity…what will these women do next…how will they perform now…where will they live…what do they do? There was a lot of focus on how we behave." – Reshma

The focus and attention that is felt by these women on how they behave and conduct themselves in public is very interesting. Simic (2010:196) argues that women feel an addition burden of not only addressing SGBV, disciplining men, but also to uphold the integrity and credibility of the UN as well as TCC. The participants responded that as one of the very few FPUs in the world, the spotlight never goes away. Women are under pressure to perform and behave with extra caution, where as their male colleagues can get by with a lot because as one respondent mentioned:

" they are men , boys will behave like children sometimes.– Farida

There is a serious need (and enough evidence) to move away from the "boys will be boy" attitude and a culture of impunity that exists in peacekeeping operations and for this responsibility of addressing SEA in peace operations to fall on the UN and particularly TCC, not the women peacekeepers (Simic, 2010: 197). Apart from adding an extra role that is expected from women, this argument also further reinforces gender stereotypes of women as virtuous and men with vice.

6.2 *Strong minds and fit bodies:* Becoming and being a peacekeeper

This section looks at how peacekeeping comes through as an embodied performance. Returning to Butler, and her concept of performativity, the section below elaborates how through the everyday practice of peacekeeping, gender gets mapped on to sex. Similar to the process of how a girl is "girled", it is through social practices in peacekeeping that gender is produced (Higate and Henry, 2010:37). The performance of peacekeeping, like the performance of gender are also guided by "pre-existing scripts" (ibid). The social meanings that are attached to the every performance of peacekeeping are connected to the political process and dominant discourses that feed into the expectation of the audience – here both local and international actors (Higate and Henry, 2010:38). The stories of women peacekeepers bring out the social meaning attached to their gender as they negotiate their performance through the roles and expectations on them (discussed above) and the security tasks they are expected to perform as a UN police officer.

We perform the same duty as the men

The stories shared by the participants provide an insight into the gap between what was an expected behaviour from the women peacekeepers and the kind of tasks they took on. When asked what kind of tasks they were performing, women responded,

"we do all kinds of duty …*even* VIP duty[16] " - Meher

"we would do night patrols, all –night guarding duty and *even* work during riots" -Shima

(all emphasise added)

Looking at how the roles and tasks that women are expected to perform and what they end up doing, brings forth two assumptions – what women can and can't do, and what is seen as women's or a feminine task. Another interesting aspects that comes forth is the pressure to perform or showcase the various facets of womanhood that is placed on the shoulders of the female peacekeepers. There is pressure to perform both hegemonic masculinity as well as an emphasised femininity (Connell, 2005). Thus women as gendered subjects are seen as incapable to perform certain task expected of a traditional masculine soldier. The excerpts below echo a gendered hierarchy of labour, not found in male narratives that others have studied[17], as expressed in the following quotations:

"my FPU there were four women who worked in riot control team back home. We can do this better than some men from western countries, but it depends on if we are allowed" – Farzana

"women don't join to help other women and be caring, that is human to do. But I joined because I want to advance in my career and not sign files. I want to gain experience" – Farida

There is a resistance to redefinition of tasks, roles and responsibilities that acknowledge women's experiences, competencies and motivations. Women want to challenge the gendered division of labour that exists domestically in the police service in Bangladesh, by signing up as international peacekeepers. However this is only reinforced. In particular, there is a lot of resistance by women interviewed regarding the assumption that they are deployed to address 'gender issues'. The participants responded that they were deployed as soldiers to provide security and not to address issues that specifically dealt with gender. Gender issues were "solved" by the gender unit, as one participants expressed,

"we were doing hard duty, soft issues like gender are the mandate of the gender unit" –Mehnaz

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[16] VIP stands for Very Important Person. VIP duty was referred to tasks that required providing physical security to important personnels, such as guarding homes and offices, providing security escort to political and national elite in DRC.
VIP duty is seen as mentally and physically demanding – as it requires vigil and stamina to be on guard for long hours at a stretch in unforgiving conditions.

[17] For studies looking at narratives of male peacekeeepers, please see Higate (2007), Higate and Henry (2010) and Higate (2014).

While an FPU increases the overall number of women in the mission , this increase is insignificant compared the total number of men employed in the mission. All female FPUs are also very new to peacekeeping and there is a significant time that takes for women to prove themselves (Bleckner, 2013:356). The disassociation from feminine tasks is performed explicitly to prove themselves as to international actors on the ground, local populations and other security actors. While a previous rotation of the all female FPU might have done the "heavy work" of trying to prove their worth, the women still felt that they could not appear to be weak at any point.

> "sometimes I was on very long duty . We had to guard the compound or the important building for a VIP, more than eight hours without food or rest. But we were there with other peacekeepers."   – Pakhi

> "we were very well received. They called us Bangla mama. FPU before us had been very professional and hardworking, they had done a good job of creating confidence" – Farzana

Thus while there is acceptance and the women peacekeepers are seen in a positive light, there is a need to prove their credibility and earn respect in performing traditional masculine tasks. As women in peacekeeping grow in number, it might take less time for women to prove themselves despite their biological sex in a predominantly masculine and patriarchal set up, women might feel necessary to disassociate themselves from "women's issues" (Bleckner, 2013:356).

We are trained the same as the men

The first part of the title of this study "Strong minds, fit bodies", comes from the emphasise in all interviews on the peacekeeping assignment as physically and mentally demanding that required certain type of body and mind that are trained and condition for such tasks. Women peacekeepers also added in the same breath that it was "not a problem, we are trained for it ". The aspect of physical training and the process of "becoming" a peacekeeper are highlighted as a display and performance of physical and mental strengths. Most importantly, these stories are shared with comparisons to the masculine standard, "as long as the men gave duty", "as strong as the men", "same qualification as the men". Thus peacekeeping can be seen as masculine performance, something very different from the performance (roles) expected of women peacekeepers.

> "we are soldiers first", "we perform the same as men" – Shawly

> " we are bold and tough like men but more smart. We are bold , we worked harder and we are any day more disciplined than the men soldiers. " – Laiqua

"we are caring and can fight also" – Mehnaz

When speaking with a peacekeeper that was part of the first FFPU to Haiti, she mentioned how when they arrived to their campsite , it was covered in "big rocks and no place to put up tents". She shared that there was a lot of curiosity from male troops stationed in the same area as to "what will the women do now ", "maybe their male support staff can fix this " and " if you need we men can help". She said that this was her golden moment to

"prove a point as a woman, because you know, we are seen as traditional and weak"– Shamina

All participants in this study expressed that they were very aware of how they were seen as different from the male soldiers,
"even though they went through the same training and exams" -Meher

When asked about how others perceive the women peacekeepers, in particular how the national and international media portrays them, participants responded that although their efforts and sacrifices were acknowledges, but they were still seen as " female first, then peacekeeper".

6.3. Gendered screams and silences: the visible and the invisible

In war and military (and armed police force), masculinity is promoted and femininity is marginalized both "institutionally and ideologically" (Simic, 2010:189). In the analysis previously presented, women peacekeepers find themselves and their femininity reified, resisted and reconstructed in a space where masculine performance is recognised and respected. Women are made very visible and the spotlight is on them by casting them in essentialist roles. On the other hand, women are playing down their femininity to make it invisible. This seems like an obvious contradiction – why are women trying to silence the traits and differences, which peacekeeping operations seem to value them for?

Kronsell (2006) argues that it is critical to look at women's invisibility in male dominated institutions, where men are still considered the norm and women have to adapt to it. When women enter these bastions of male power, these hegemonic masculine institutional norms are taken for granted , "appear" and position women as different from the men (Kronsell, 2006: 123). This section combines the lens of where and how is women's participation screamed about and where the

discourse stays silent to examine what happens women are integrated into peacekeeping missions and thus what kind of gendered bodies are created.

Reinforcing stereotype: masculine norms, female body

As Section 5.1 illustrated, women's added value built on an essentialist argument can be limiting – to the roles that women can play and the kind of issues that women might be better at addressing. While there is more acceptance of women peacekeepers on the ground, little has changed in how women are viewed. When speaking to the women peacekeepers who had recently returned from mission, they all expressed that women's presence was not seen as unique anymore, but taken for granted. The stories above illustrate that women's presence might be a normal sight in Haiti and DRC, but this still has not changed how their gendered identity is constructed. Women still have to "prove themselves as good as men" even in doing tasks which are seen to be routine duty for the male peacekeepers, tasks still considered masculine. The (still limited) presence of female peacekeepers does not challenge the conventional understanding of femininity and masculinity – women with peace and men with war (Hutchings, 2008). So the presence of women does little to change the patriarchal ways of peacekeeping operations and make little effect on the lives of women and men on the ground.

Kronsell (2006) argues that even women's presence in the work that was previously only done by men begins to make the way gender is constructed within the institution appear (2006:119-120). One of the ways that this "invisible" is made visible is through the gendered roles, what roles women are expected to perform and gendered division of tasks – what is that women can and can't do. As sexual division of labour is still remains at the core of the UN system, adding women to peacekeeping then ignore the multiplicity of their identity and reinforces stereotypes – what women do versus what men do (Puechguirbal, 2010:179). By preventing women peacekeepers from equal rights, responsibilities and leadership roles as male peacekeepers, gender balancing can be seen as challenge to patriarchal structures, without necessarily transforming it (Enloe, 2007:80)

> "…there is no added value to sending female FPUs – as long as men are trained and gender sensitive, that's fine." – Shima

> "FPU, mixed contingent, single civilian officer, medical nurse even, it depends on what she is doing. Decision making is important." – Fahida

It is important to note that deploying female FPU is not the only and not the best way to integrate gender perspectives in peacekeeping operations. This could lead to further strengthening the

argument that increasing women is the solution to gender inequality in peace operations and further isolating women from other all male or mixed contingents, a step clearly in opposite direction to the path towards gender mainstreaming and ultimately gender equality (Dharmapuri, 2013). Even in a mixed unit, gender stereotypes are hard to shake off women are seen as weak, assigned to kitchen duties or admin support, as some participants shared. Even when women's roles in certain situation is seen as advantageous, they are not encouraged to do so in order to keep them safe (such as night patrols, leaving the base at night).

Women peacekeepers responded that in fact mixed teams can be more effective – provided they allow women to have decision making roles, see women as equal and having skills that can complement the men's skills. As one of the respondent remarked:

> " how can you call it mixed (contingent) when there are only males and one or two women. We should call it male contingent, that's how we are seen and have to act."
> – Shaarmin

In a masculine space like peace operations, women tend to fit in and act like men (Sion, 2008). Kronsell (2006) shows in her study with the small number of women in the Swedish Armed Forces illustrates that since the small number of women often stand out, in an attempt to "fit in" they play down certain aspects of their femininity. There are different ways in which the femininities of women peacekeepers are both highlighted and played down as the excerpts above illustrate. Women are seen as different to men by highlighting invisible traits that form the essence of a women and are useful in a mission. Women, on the other hand, try to lessen this gap by making either making their femininities completely invisible or downplaying the ones that don't fit the expected performance of a peacekeeper.

So, adding women to this hyper masculine environment will not increase the gender sensitivity (Simic, 2010:194). In fact it does the opposite, it further reinforces the differences between men and women, and firmly places masculine as the norm.

Extra burden on women: replacing gender with women

Increasing the number of women in peacekeeping is a clever strategy – it reaffirms the UN and TCCs' commitment to gender equality and it showcases women's advancement through accessing male dominated professions. The facts and figures presented in very eye catching inforgraphics on the DPKO website really do fill one's heart with hope - finally the women are here! Cynthia Enloe's

question that motivated this research is whispered again, but where are the women? Where here stands for the physical presence of women on the ground but also where are the women in the dominant discourses?

The answer is rather straightforward, everywhere and nowhere, doing everything and nothing. While women might be present on the ground the roles and responsibility they can access are limited. But it seems that women are also solving every complex issue that peacekeeping operations have faced for years. Not only are women peacekeepers expected to address GBV, they also have the added "burden" of disciplining other male peacekeepers to "save the image of the UN and the TCC" (Simic, 2010). Women peacekeepers have to perform at a higher standard than their male peacekeeper colleagues, since they get judged more "for being a Bangladeshi woman first and then also for being a Bangladeshi soldier in international setting" (Farzana). Thus they need to "always" act like a model soldier and woman.

By only increasing the number of women peacekeepers present on the ground, gender is conflated with women and gender mainstreaming becomes a non-political activity (Puechguirbal, 2010). Gender is a value loaded complex noun and verb, no wonder that replacing it with the body of a female peacekeeper adds to the burden of all things women 'must' do. An interesting question that was raised by a participant during the interview, she asked

"but whose job is it to do gender equality (in peacekeeping) ?" - Shaarmin

The dominant discourses might speak to it being a process that involves transformation of the gender order in peace operations, but it definitely screams "women peacekeepers". The limited argument of gender balance as the ultimate goal not only renders women powerless by making them just a "number" and ignoring the difference in experience, interests and identities, it also reduces their inclusion as a tokenistic gesture and not a transformative exercise.

The current power order unfortunately seems uninterested in recognizing the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities that exist and that can exist with each other (Enloe 2004). Instead it seems to have found a likeable and convenient way of maintain status quo, by recognising only a limited version of woman/female and silencing or making invisible all the other things that women are and do, in a way to legitimize the bigger patriarchal culture (Parashar, 2012: 204). It is with feminist "outrage and patience" that we seek to bring out these silences and make power as it

operates visible, both exposing and embracing the messiness of gender as it operated on the ground (Enloe, 2010).

7. Conclusion: the messiness of gender on the ground

7.1 Summary of thesis

This exploratory study started with the aim of looking at the politics of increasing the number of women in UN peace operations and its impact on the lives of female peacekeepers from Bangladesh. By exploring the main arguments and policy guidelines that advocate for increasing the number of women as security actors on the ground, the research highlights the roles women are expected to perform and the traits that they are believed to bring to the mission. The integration of women is seen in functionalist terms where women are seen to increase the operational efficiency of the mission. By using the concepts of "performativity" as articulated by Judith Butler to see how gender is something we do and not who we are, the study then looks at how women peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations "do" gender. The doing of gender can be seen in parallel processes of "what gendered roles are created/expected to be performed" and the "becoming and being" a gendered subject takes place. Dominant discourse articulated by UN and TCCs value women peacekeepers as caring, sympathetic and non-violent, they are seen as upholding the credibility and image of the UN by disciplining male peacekeepers and preventing SEA. Such discourses highlight that these expected roles are performed but also challenged by various other roles and identities that emerge when peacekeepers discharge their duties on the ground. Some of these identities are of a "tough", "well trained", possessing a "strong mind and a fit body".

When considering women as gendered subjects and how women negotiate with these identities (women, mother, soldier), the thesis brought out the messiness of how gender is experienced on the ground. By exploring the gendered narratives of women peacekeepers from Bangladesh, we see how increasing the number of women does not make the mission more gender sensitive or equal. By promoting a parochial understanding of gender as women, it sees women as a solution to unequal gender relations based on gender stereotypes that are reinforced.

7.2 Connecting back to the research questions

This thesis now returns to the questions that it set out to answer in the beginning.

How is gender experienced by women serving in international peacekeeping missions ?
Following our theoretical concepts, a gendered experience is a product of and integral to producing meaning - how gendered bodies are created and how they act out a gendered performance understood socially as masculine and feminine. This study illustrates that the construction of gendered bodies follows gendered binaries of male/female and expects socially constructed masculine/feminine behaviours from male/female peacekeepers. Alternative forms of masculinities and femininities are not recognised nor valued, thus women peacekeepers are created as female and valued for their feminine traits.

What kind of assumptions and connections about men/women, their bodies and gendered identities do dominant discourses of (gender equal) peacekeeping create?
Women as identifies as caring, sympathetic, peaceful and disciplining bodies are applauded and recognised for their added value. But women as tough, brave, bold and violent bodies are never mentioned, or are silenced. Women are then made both visible and invisible in the patriarchal performance of peacekeeping. The increase in women peacekeepers, through their presence and actions definitely has made women's unique contributions visible, and has demonstrated the value of different skills and experiences that they bring as individuals and not just women that can enhance a mission's success. There is unfortunately still a lack of recognition and concrete actions that incorporate these in missions.

Does an increased number of women challenge gendered discourses and practices in peacekeeping?
The answer would be yes, but to a limited degree. The politics of integrating women in peacekeeping is still seen with reference to the "narratives of dimorphism" (Shepherd 2014:12). Looking at Butlers's "matrix of intelligibility" where gender must be performed in a certain culturally and historically appropriate way for it to be recognised by ourselves and others (Butler 1999: 23–24, Shepherd 2014). The study highlights identities that fit in and identities that challenge the "limits of intelligibility" in the "cultural matrix" of peacekeeping (Shepherd 2014:12).

The findings conclude that adding women as token gestures does not increase the mission's operational effectiveness by building on women's diverse experiences and skills – as the diversity is silenced. Nor can this gesture be seen as step towards gender equality as it still reinforces gendered hierarchy and stereotypes. It is a good step in the fact that it gets women on to the ground, but it cannot be conflated to fulfilling the goal of gender mainstreaming and advancing women's rights. This study argues that a limited framing and recognition of women's political activities and voices is problematic since it disregards the different experiences and restricts women to a powerless singular category (Parashar, 2012).

This research suggests to go back to the Beijing Declaration signed in 1995, which provided a basis for how recognition and incorporation of the diversity of experiences of men and women – their gains and challenges – can provide pathways towards empowerment and gender transformation in the future. There is a need to go back to the future.

7.3 Going back to the future: what this means for policy making…

Elina Penttinen argues that the politics of increasing women in peacekeeping is "politics of hope"(2012: 189). The hope is that women embody essentialist qualities that will help to solve SGBV and discipline men to curb SEA and by increasing their numbers we can make peace operations more gender sensitive. She argues that this is a weak form of politics, of hoping that a desired outcome will happen, leaving it to circumstances and without agency (ibid).

Some would argue that it is politics of despair. Despairing to see the limited success of feminist contribution to theorizing about gender and call to pay more attention to gender relations in the making of war and peace (Kornsell and Svedberg 2012; Puechguirbal 2010). All these attempts have been co-opted to reduce gender mainstreaming as a "practice is not about advancing the ability of women to enjoy their human rights, but rather to harness and exploit capabilities and qualities associated with women, so as to improve the operational effectiveness" (Kronsell and Svedberg, 2012: 243).

In going back to the future where gender mainstreaming is seen as an approach – in policy and on the ground – that pays attention to the politics of peacekeeping in how it constructs masculinities and femininities by reducing gender to women and challenging but not transforming patriarchy.

7.4 …and future research ?

As this thesis has documented, true knowledge lies with bodies on the ground – men and women that negotiate their identities and performances daily. There is a lack of documentation of the experiences of women peacekeepers on the ground – before, during and after deployment. Since the number of women in peace operations is so few, addressing this scarcity in documentation is even more critical.

There is a need in academia and research that informs policy and analysis to value and incorporate women's voices and epistemologies in what is asked and shared. While field work remains a challenge when working with protected and security institutions such as peacekeeping missions, but there are also enough researchers[18] that have demonstrated that the "field" or where you find women and men on the ground is where gender is (re)made, theories are contested, identities are negotiated and lives are saved/lived. To capture women and men's diversities and alternate forms of masculinities and femininities is what lies at the heart of capturing gender as a complex and shifting experience and should be seen as the first step towards gender equality.

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[18] See Karim and Beadersley (2013), Higate (2007), Higate and Henry (2010), Henry (2012).

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Security Council mandates on Women, Peace and Security

UN Security Council Resolution	Date	Mandate
1325	2000	This resolution stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building and peacekeeping. It calls on member states to ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspective in all areas of peace building.
1820	2008	This resolution was the first to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and a critical component of the maintenance of international peace and security, requiring a peacekeeping, justice, and peace negotiation response.
1888	2009	This resolution strengthens tools for implementing 1820 through assigning leadership, building judicial response expertise, and reporting mechanisms. In particular requests that the Secretary-General appoint a special representative on sexual violence during armed conflict (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict)
1889		This resolution addresses women's exclusion from early recovery and peacebuilding and lack of adequate planning and funding for their needs.
1960	2010	This resolution established a monitoring, analysis and reporting mechanism on conflict-related sexual violence in situations on the Council's agenda, and also called upon parties to armed conflict to make specific, time-bound commitments to prohibit and punish sexual violence and asked the Secretary-General to monitor those commitments.
2106	2013	This was a resolution focusing on accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict and stressing women's political and economic empowerment.
2122		This resolution addressed the persistent gaps in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as highlighted in the most recent Secretary-General's report.

Appendix 2. Bangladeshi peacekeepers at a glance- numbers and figures

At a Glance Bangladesh Police in UN Mission (Updated on 028/05/2015)

Bangladesh Police	No. of Countries	No. of Missions
Bangladesh Police Working as FPU	6	8
Bangladesh Police Working as UNPOL	5	5
Bangladesh Police Working as Secondment	4	4

Mission Completed Peacekeepers	15,106
Total UNPOL Mission Completed	4,304
Total FPU Mission Completed	10,802

Mission Completed Female Peacekeepers

Unit	Number of Peacekeepers	Total
FPU	722	773
UNPOL	51	

Presently deployed (Total)

FPU	1211	1,302
UNPOL	85	
UN JOB	6	

Presently deployed Female Peacekeepers

FPU	MONUSCO-1 = 81	164	171
	MINUSTAH-2 = 83		
UNPOL & UN JOB	UNPOL = 05	7	
	UN JOB = 02		

Appendix 3. List of participants interviewed[19]

No	Pseudonyms	Part of peacekeeping mission in / as	Date	Language	Interview recorded	Quoted in text
1	Kudletri	MINUSTAH /Female FPU	12.05.15	English	Y	Y
2	Shima	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	26.05.15	Hindi	Y	Y
3	Reshma	MINUSTAH /Female FPU	12.05.15	English	Y	Y
4	Farida	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	26.05.15	English	Y	Y
5	Shamina	MINUSTAH /Female FPU	12.05.15	English	Y	Y
6	Shawly	MINUSTAH /Female FPU	31.05.15	Hindi	Y	Y
7	Shaarmin	UNAMID /UNPOL, Mixed contingent	31.05.15	English	Y	Y
8	Farzana	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	14.06.15	English	N	Y
9	Rumana	MINUSTAH /Female FPU	31.05.15	English	N	Y
10	Laiqua	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	14.06.15	English	N	Y
11	Pakhi	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	28.06.15	English	N	Y
12	Meher	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	28.06.15	English	Y	Y
13	Mehnaz	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	28.06.15	English	Y	Y
14	Mahfuza	MONUSCO/ Female FPU	05.07.15	English	Y	N
15	Majeda	MINUCI /UNPOL, Mixed contingent	31.05.15	English	Y	N

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[19] Interview guide can be made available upon request from the author