



**UNIVERSITY OF THE
PHILIPPINES OPEN
UNIVERSITY**

DOCTOR OF COMMUNICATION

Maria Lourdes L. Aseneta

Pearl of Peace: Unmuting Women's Voices in Peacebuilding

Dissertation Adviser:

Benamina Paula G. Flor, PhD
Faculty of Information and Communication Studies

11 June 2022

Permission of the classification of this academic work access is subject to the provisions of applicable laws, the provisions of the UP IPR policy and any contractual obligations:

Invention (I)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Publication (P)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Confidential (C)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Free (F)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Student's signature:

Dissertation adviser signature:

University Permission Page

PEARL OF PEACE: UNMUTING WOMEN'S VOICES IN PEACEBUILDING

"I hereby grant the University of the Philippines a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free license to reproduce, publish and publicly distribute copies of this Academic Work in whatever form subject to the provisions of applicable laws, the provisions of the UP IPR policy and any contractual obligations, as well as more specific permission marking on the Title Page."

"I specifically allow the University to:

- a. Upload a copy of the work in the theses database of the college/school/institute/department and in any other databases available on the public internet*
- b. Publish the work in the college/school/institute/department journal, both in print and electronic or digital format and online; and*
- c. Give open access to the work, thus allowing "fair use" of the work in accordance with the provision of the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 8293), especially for teaching, scholarly and research purposes.*

MARIA LOURDES L. ASENETA

11 June 2022

Acceptance Page

This paper prepared by **MARIA LOURDES L. ASENETA** with the title: **“Pearl of Peace: Unmuting Women’s Voices in Peacebuilding”** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Course.

DR. BENJAMINA PAULA G. FLOR
Chair, Dissertation Committee

(Date)

DR. ALEXANDER G. FLOR
Member, Dissertation Committee

(Date)

DR. MELINDA DP. BANDALARIA
Member, Dissertation Committee

(Date)

DR. DIEGO SILANG S. MARANAN
Dean
Faculty of Information and Communication
Studies

11 June 2022

Biographical Sketch

As an educator and consultant, I have engaged with individuals, communities, and organizations to impact positive change. Deeply committed to my advocacy for the 5 Ps of peace, people, planet, prosperity and partnerships, I have worked with the academe, government, business, and non-government organizations on sustainability, gender, governance, well-being, team development, and conflict transformation.

Having completed my undergraduate degree in Philosophy, master's degree in Theological Studies from the Ateneo de Manila University, and my doctoral degree in Communication at the University of the Philippines dovetails with my profound hope to enhance the power of communication in the praxis and pedagogy of ethics and spirituality, be it peace, climate change, or any social endeavor.

With a soft spot for women (and the children they bear), this dissertation is a testimony to awaken the immanent power of the feminine that breeds in each human soul in creating a more peaceful world.

Maria Lourdes L. Aseneta

Acknowledgement

This dissertation would not have been possible without the inspiration and support of my Advisory Panel, Chair Dr. Benjamina Paula G. Flor and Members Dr. Alexander A. Flor and Dr. Melinda dP. Bandalaria, who have guided me in this study.

I am also deeply grateful to the women peacebuilders I dialogued with in this research, namely, Ms. Teresita Q. Deles, Ms. Irene Santiago, Dr. Gloria J. Mercado, MP Atty. Laisa M. Alamia, Ms. Yasmin B. Lao, Dr. Jasmin N. Nario, and Ms. Samira Ali Gutoc who trusted in opening their hearts and sharing their peace stories with me. They have opened my eyes to new perspectives and illumined the path towards authentic peace and a truly “en-gendered” peacebuilding.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who gave me the time, space, and support I needed to complete this dissertation. Special heartfelt thanks to my youngest and only sister, Carmelita, a gifted artist, a loving mother, and a co-traveler in my social pursuits, for rendering the creative art work and illustrations for this study.



Dedication

To all women peacebuilders who have committed unceasingly to peace and gender advocacy with love and sacrifice, I heartily dedicate this study. To the Bangsamoro community who have lived through both war and peace and still continue to pursue the path of peace with courage, I dedicate this piece of peace. To all peace-loving individuals and peace-promoting institutions I have met and worked with through the years in the four corners of the globe, your inspiring memories are always remembered and the seeds of friendship have quietly and abundantly blossomed into an immense green land of hope. Yes, peace is real; peace is possible!

Last but not least, to the God of Peace, the divine and androgynous source of love, light, and power whose invisible hand is shaping us into beautiful and brilliant pearls of peace that we truly are, I humbly put this work of love into the palm of Your hands.

Table of Contents

University Permission Page	ii
Acceptance Page	iii
Biographical Sketch	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Dedication	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xi
Pearl of Peace: Unmuting Women’s Voices in Peacebuilding	xii
 CHAPTER I	 13
Statement of the Problem	15
Purpose of the Study	16
The Research Questions	16
Significance of the Study	17
 CHAPTER II	 20
Overview: The Mindanao Conflict and the Bangsamoro Peace Process	20
Women Engagement in Peacebuilding	22
Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology	28
On Hermeneutics and Language	34
Defining Sensemaking	39
On Sensemaking and War	46
Deficiencies or gaps	48
 CHAPTER III	 50
Phenomenology as the Philosophical Worldview	50
Qualitative Design	50
Role of the Researcher	51
Data Collection Procedures	52
Narrative Structure for the Stories of the Women Peacebuilders	60
Ethical Issues	61
 CHAPTER IV	 62
“Unmute, please!”	62
MP Atty. Laisa M. Alamia	66
Ms. Teresita “Ging” Quintos- Deles	75
Jasmin N. Galace, PhD	81
Ms. Samira Ali Gutoc	84
Ms. Yasmin B. Lao	88
Gloria J. Mercado, PhD	93
Ms. Irene M. Santiago	98

CHAPTER V	103
Stage 1: Immersion: Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience	104
Stage 2: Investigating Lived Experience and Identifying First Order Constructs	107
On Gender Relations	107
On Language	108
On Culture and Tradition	112
Stage 3: Reflecting on Essential Themes and Abstraction by Identifying Second Order Constructs	115
Opportunities	125
Limitations	128
Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development: Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting	132
Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena: Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon	135
Stage 6: Integration and Refining the Themes: Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole	147
 CHAPTER VI	 153
Summary	153
Opportunities:	156
Limitations:	157
Kite Flying Model in Peace Communication: The Interplay of Peace and Power	162
Conclusion	165
Recommendations	169
 CHAPTER VII	 171
Implications of the Study on Peace Communication as a Discipline	171
Framework for Peace Communication: From Engendering to En-gendering	174
Quadrant 1: Engendered Peace Communication	176
Quadrant 2: En-gendered Peace Communication	177
Quadrant 3: Emaciated Peace Communication	178
Quadrant 4: Endangered Peace Communication	179
Implications of the Study on Peace Communication as a Practice	181
 REFERENCES	 185
A. Printed Book/E-book	185
1. Printed book with one author	185
2. Printed book with two authors	187
3. Chapter in an Edited Book	187
4. E-book with one author	189
5. E-book with two authors	190
B. Serials	190
1. Journal Article (Print)	190
2. Journal Article with Multiple Authors	191
3. Online Journal Article	191
4. Magazine Article (Online)	193
5. Newspaper Article (Online)	194

C.	Image	194
1.	Digital Image or Photograph	194
D.	Interview	195
E.	Website	195
1.	Website	195
2.	General Web Article without an Author	198
F.	Video	198
1.	Direct Quote from a Video	198
G.	Thesis/Dissertation	199
H.	Conference Proceedings/Papers	200
2.	Conference Papers	200
I.	Discussion Papers	201
J.	University Research Publication	202
1.	Published Research	202
2.	Online Research Paper	202

List of Figures

Figure 1. Hermeneutic Circle	59
Figure 2. The Dance of Peace and Power: Kite Flying Model in Peace Communication	163
Figure 3. Quadrant Matrix of Peace Communication	176

List of Tables

Table 1. Description of Women Peacebuilder-Participants by Name, Designation and Code	53
---	----

Pearl of Peace: Unmuting Women's Voices in Peacebuilding

The meaningful participation and leadership of women was key in the success of the Bangsamoro peace process in the Philippines. This study focuses on the communicative aspect of the sensemaking experiences of seven key women peacebuilders and explores the unmuting of women's voices in peacebuilding from the lenses of gender, language, and tradition using hermeneutic phenomenology as research methodology. By integrating the different frames of narratives and conversations with these women peacebuilders, five major themes were derived in the synthesis of meanings, "making sense" of the sensemaking of the women peacebuilders. Integrating and refining the five interwoven themes using the hermeneutic circle has led to an illuminating "epiphany": The overarching dimension of the sensemaking and communication experiences of women in peacebuilding is power.

Power, both internal and external, has the capacity to impact change in consciousness, culture, and political processes. This study contributes the Kite Flying Model in Place Communication for a deeper appreciation of how power interplays with peace in the meaningful engagement and leadership of women in peace processes. It also presents the Quadrant Matrix of Peace Communication that is useful for elevating peace communication approaches from simply engendered to "engendered." Like the grain of sand that shifts the inner composite matter of the oyster to painstakingly give birth to an iridescent pearl, this study is paradigm-shifting as it navigated an unexplored terrain in the male-dominated seascape of peace and security to re-discover the pearl of peace.

CHAPTER I

DIVING FOR THE PEARL: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Pearls don’t lie on the seashore, if you want one, you must dive for it.”

- Chinese Proverb

The South Sea pearl has always fascinated me. By my birth month, pearls are my lucky gem but compared to other kinds of pearls, the South Sea pearl is larger in size and more colorful. The Philippines is one of the world's main sources of South Sea pearls. The South Sea pearl is the Philippines' national gem. One lazy afternoon many years back when I was at a beach front in Davao, while gazing at the sea, a little boy walked his way towards me. I wondered what he was up to. When he came much closer, I was awed that he was peddling some South Sea pearls! He told me that he was from the Badjao tribe of Sulu Archipelago, south of the Philippines. His diver-father harvested the pearls from the oysters that produced them. I bought his daintily crafted South Sea pearl necklace and up to this time, I have fond memories of that rare encounter.

I remember Mindanao and this pearl story as I begin my journey in this phenomenological study of unmuting women's voices in peacebuilding. It is said that every pearl is the result of an oyster that has been wounded by a grain of sand or foreign bodies that entered it, forming a nacre or mother pearl as an inner protective layer that is strong, resilient, and iridescent which pearls are made of. For pearls to be produced takes a lot of time, patience, determination, commitment, and steadfastness—very much like how women's engagement in peacebuilding takes place. Just like south sea pearls which are painstakingly cultured in the tropical waters of Mindanao, the locus of women's participation in the peace process has been much focused on the Mindanao crisis, a conflict that has wrought pain and agony

in the life of many Filipinos.

For more than five decades, the protracted struggle with the minority Muslims have led to massive displacement, devastating loss of human life, and violence against women and children. However, hopes were pinned with President Duterte's signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in 2018 which paved the way for the creation of a new political entity, as well as with the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in 2019, a significant and historic event in the Philippines, although only the beginning of the path to lasting peace in the South.

In the world, the Philippines made history for having the first woman chief negotiator who signed a peace accord with a rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014 (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Deles, March 2014; Santiago, 2015; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021). The meaningful participation and leadership of women in the Bangsamoro peace process was key in the success of the peace negotiations, despite the limited space of women on the peace table. Aligned with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325, 2000) on Women, Peace, and Security which called for the increased participation of women in peace processes and in all peacebuilding-related activities (Coomaraswamy, 2015), women peace leaders in the country cohesively worked towards mainstreaming gender-related agenda in the peace agreement. Apart from the few top-notch and competent women key players from the government and civil society in the peace negotiations, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the body to govern the BARMM has a powerhouse cast of women in the cabinet, although only 16 out of the 98 members are women (Arguillas, 2019; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

Conflict and violence have continued to make women and children most

vulnerable victims of war; yet women did not remain silent. Voices of many women have been unmuted as they experienced, communicated, and enacted their active engagement in the peace process. Using the gender lens, this dissertation is a qualitative inquiry on the communicative aspect of the meaningful participation of women in the Bangsamoro peace process, as they continue to make sense of the future it holds, hopeful yet ambiguous as it is.

The dissertation will focus on the experiences of key women peacebuilders and their meaningful engagement and leadership in the Bangsamoro peace process. By exploring the value of sensemaking and communication, their narratives and personal stories will form the basis of organizing and interpreting sense data from their experiences and how they communicated them which not only shifted the landscape of peace and security in the country, but also provided “new eyes” with which to see it.

Statement of the Problem

The sensemaking experience of women in their meaningful participation in the peace process and its communicative aspect are enmeshed in their tradition, language, historical and cultural context. Specifically, investigating the phenomenon of the Bangsamoro peace process and the key role of women peacebuilders entails a keen and intuitive understanding of what is taking place and how each one is describing, making sense, and communicating what is happening to them and around them.

In this light, this dissertation explores sensemaking and communication through hermeneutic phenomenology to unmute the voices of women and unravel the knowledge and wisdom embedded in the stories and narratives of their meaningful engagement in the peace process using the lenses of gender, language, and tradition.

Purpose of the Study

The dissertation aims to achieve the following objectives:

General objective: To explore, understand, and articulate the sensemaking and communication experiences of key women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process from the lenses of gender, language, and tradition.

Specific objectives:

1. To describe what constitutes the sensemaking and communication experiences of key women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process; and
2. To discover and interpret the practice, opportunities, and limitations of sensemaking and communication of these women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process.

The Research Questions

The major question that will be answered in this research is: How do women peacebuilders make sense of their experience and unmute their voices in peace processes in the context of gender relations, language, and tradition? The research sub-questions are the following:

1. What do women peacebuilders experience in their engagement in the Bangsamoro peace process? What meaning does it have for

them?

2. What opportunities and limitations do they experience in sensemaking and communication in the Bangsamoro peace process?

Significance of the Study

The term “sensemaking”, introduced by Karl Weick in the 1970s, has been used by various disciplines as a methodology to interpret and give meaning to individual and shared experiences. Although originally used as an organizational vocabulary, it is relevant in the macro environment where “mapping the unknown” is crucial in finding direction in the midst of chaos. As scholars Taylor and Van Every (2000) would iterate, sensemaking by its very nature, is an essential arena of communication with significant applications in knowledge management. The term, although originally focused on the physical senses, has expanded its meaning to emotional, intuitional, and spiritual responses involved in giving meaning to one’s internal and external experiences. There is no single agreed definition of ‘sensemaking’. However, there is an emergent consensus that sensemaking refers generally to those processes by which people seek plausibly to understand ambiguous, equivocal, or confusing issues or events (Colville, Brown, & Pye, 2012; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995).

This dissertation aims to study sensemaking from a qualitative perspective, attempting at a rich understanding of sensemaking narratives, as it is triggered by circumstances, whether as single-case scenarios or daily events, that continue to remain ambiguous or unpredictable even in the manner they are described and interpreted. As such, this dissertation is significant for several reasons.

First, with the increasing unpredictability of our dynamic environment beset by conflict, chaos, and violence, sensemaking can be viewed as the way to move

forward in peacebuilding, where definitely there are no certainties, yet open to plausible opportunities. The successful development of the Bangsamoro peace process could not have been possible without the sensemaking experience of women whose personal stories, knowledge, competence, and experiences have opened opportunities for impactful change. However, as there is a dearth of research on sensemaking narratives in war contexts, and much more from a woman's perspective as war zones are male-dominated, this study can serve as an eye-opener for unexplored peacemaking terrains.

Secondly, peacebuilding, is about change and communicating change.

Vuuren and Elving (2008) emphasize that since change is a core element of human life, then organizing sense data and experiences as they come along, which sensemaking does, becomes an emergent response to change. As there is human propensity for storytelling about things that help to make sense out of them, communication through narratives becomes the means of organizing one's thoughts. Both authors assert that the rise of the Montreal School can be understood as a confirmation of the link between sensemaking and communication (Vuuren and Elving, 2008). They add that conversations and storytelling as a medium of sensemaking are important as they provide meaning that is derived from interactions.

Thirdly, the last but not the least, sensemaking as a hermeneutical approach to organization has been critiqued and argued by some, claiming that Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation is untenable from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics as it is based on a narrow understanding of interpretation where the metaphor of the framing of cues is contrasted with the metaphor of fusion of horizons of hermeneutics (Maasdorp, 2019). Maasdorp (2019) argues that Weick's narrative is regarded as mere content for sensemaking and not

considered as a constitutive element for the sensemaking process alongside the notion of enactment. However, it is hoped that this dissertation will shed light on the complementation of sensemaking and hermeneutic phenomenology as communication paradigms that are driven by language and historicity, rather than putting emphasis on the weakness of one approach versus another as both sensemaking and hermeneutics are distinctly evolving and finding its own place of relevance and practicality in the human world, whether for individuals, communities, or organizations.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORING THE SEA: LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

“How could you reach the pearl by only looking at the sea? If you seek the pearl, be a diver.” – Rumi

South Sea pearls are lovely, whether still attached to its oyster or already designed as an exquisite piece of jewelry. They shine with an iridescent glow that is awesome. My experience of delving into this study is akin to exploring the sea to find the pearls therein. Touching and gazing at pearls is a visceral experience of coolness and warmth that impacts one's inner feelings. The same experience was true for me as I reviewed various literature for this study.

Overview: The Mindanao Conflict and the Bangsamoro Peace Process

Although Christians are an overwhelming majority in the Philippines, Mindanao, the second largest island, has, for centuries, been home to both indigenous peoples and Muslims called Moro (from the Spanish word “Moor”). Muslims in Mindanao, also known as Bangsamoro (the Moro Nation) are concentrated in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi provinces and comprise 13 ethno-linguistic groups (Kamlan, 1995; Abinales, 2000; Ozerdam, 2012). The conflict in Mindanao, one of the world's longest running conflicts, can be traced back to the colonial era from the 16th century until 1898 when Moro sultanates fought against the Spanish regime that dominated the northern Philippines (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021). However, this continued under the American rule from the early 20th century until the independence of the Philippines on 4 July 1946 when the Muslim population faced various acts of marginalization and displacement (Ozerdam, 2012).

After Philippine independence from the Americans in 1946, the newly installed Filipino government instituted policies that did not particularly address the Moro question but instead instituted policies with the idea of the eventual integration of the Moros into the Christian Filipino mainstream (Hernandez, 2017). The subsequent administrations encouraged resettlement away from Luzon and pushed them towards Mindanao which contributed to hardships faced by the Moros, neglecting their issues on land reform. During that time of post-war optimism, a large influx of Christian Filipinos from the northern regions migrated to Mindanao. Hundreds of thousands resettled in the Mindanao provinces, mainly Cotabato and Lanao, where majority are Muslims. This resulted in more disagreements over land and inflamed Moro hostility. The post-colonial administrations created land laws that defined all unregistered territory in Mindanao as military reservations or public land. (Brown, 2010; Hernandez, 2017). Thus, while the Muslims formed 98 per cent of the population in 1913, this was reduced to 19 per cent in 1999 (Ozerdam, 2012).

Overall, the confiscation of land from the Moros and indigenous tribes for corporate expansion and the concomitant resettlement policies led to over 80 per cent of the remaining Moros becoming landless tenants (Ozerdam, 2012).

These issues on land ownership and property rights were the chief points of contention that have led to the creation of the Moro insurgencies—the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1971 and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that split from the MNLF in 1981. MILF formed its own group as it rejected the 1996 peace agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine government, and pushed for full Bangsamoro independence that aims to create a separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines (BBC News, 2012; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

Although the Mindanao conflict has been commonly perceived as an ethno-

religious conflict between Christians, Muslims and indigenous people, it has its roots in the local resistance against political, economic, and cultural assimilation (Buenaobra, 2011; Petilla, Aseneta and Adversario, 2021). In reality, the conflict in Mindanao is ethno-religious-cultural-political in nature, deeply rooted in the economic deprivation caused by competing interests in land and other natural resources, and identity issues emerging from the de facto second-class status of much of the Muslim population (Parks et al, 2016; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021) which necessitated a “call for freedom and self-determination which have been complicated, sidetracked, and ignored in the Philippine state’s post-war initiatives for nation building.”(Dictaan-Bang-oa, 2004:153)

After a protracted struggle with the Moro insurgency groups that has led to massive deaths and displacement amidst a series of failed peace negotiations and ceasefires for over five decades with both the MNLF and the MILF, hopes were pinned on the signing of Bangsamoro Organic Law in 2018 and the successful vote in January 2019 that paved the way for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Regional Government. Despite this positive political development, economic hardship and political tensions and *rido* or clan wars have persisted in Mindanao (Conciliation Resources, n.d.; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

Women Engagement in Peacebuilding

Amidst this conflict in Mindanao, gender concerns in addressing peace and security issues which have led to deeper injustices and violence against women were direly neglected. Since women are often treated merely as conflict victims and passive receivers of protection, the men dominated the high politics while women remained merely in the periphery (JICA and GIWPS, 2016; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021). Due to the widespread view that armed combatants are the primary drivers of

peace and security, the analysis of the Mindanao conflict often concludes it to be a men's arena where gender issues have little importance. The crisis in Mindanao has generally set aside women's experiences when exploring potential responses (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010; Petilla, Aseneta and Adversario, 2021). Although women have been impacted by violence that does not affect the men in the same way such as rape (Barron et al, 2016; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021) and other forms of gender-based violence, these issues were not addressed. The need to involve women in peace processes and solutions has been a central focus because the number of female victims of internal conflicts have increased through time. The understanding of women as crucial and effective actors in conflict mediation, resolution, and prevention has shifted mindsets on the importance of the role of women in peacebuilding.

While women have become most vulnerable in situations of armed conflict, they did not remain simply as victims of war. Women survivors in Mindanao became peace agents who set up organizations and associations of women advocates to address political subordination, gender-stereotyping, and violence against women. For the past two decades, women peace advocates and key actors from different professions and sectors have un-muted their voices and acted as peace negotiators, educators, and facilitators in the Bangsamoro peace process. The high stakes of war made it necessary to engage in the kinds of difficult conversations required by a gendered perspective on peacebuilding. And to attain this, women had to express and speak their minds. Women's leadership became a powerful driving force for integrating women's voices and experiences into peacebuilding processes and facilitating collective female action to achieve positive peace (JICA and GIWPS, 2016; Petilla, Aseneta and Adversario, 2021).

In Track 1, women's participation has evolved and progressed through the years. In 2010, Mindanao women did not have the ability to participate in Track 1 negotiations (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010). However, in that same year, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer became the lone female in the five-member peace panel and chaired the Philippine government panel under President Benigno Aquino III in 2012. She was the first woman to be a signatory to a major peace accord with the MILF as chief negotiator (Santiago, 2015; Petilla, Aseneta and Adversario, 2021). In 2011, the MILF panel appointed two women, Bai Cabaybay Abubakar and Raissa Jajurie, as part of the Board of Consultants of the Bangsamoro (Buenaobra, 2011). In the formal peace negotiations between the government and the MILF, women represented 22 per cent of the total number of negotiators—two of the four government negotiators, and 27 per cent of the total signatories to the final agreement. There were no women on the MILF side. Women served as advisors on both the government and MILF teams (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Petilla, Aseneta and Adversario, 2021). Women served as “trust” brokers in the formal peace process. At the negotiation table, women facilitated the understanding between the government and the MILF representatives. Moro women were known to be better at preserving inter-ethnic alliances than men when conflict escalates (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

In the field of Women Peace and Security (WPS) around the world, there are arguments in favor of increasing the number of women mediators to be included in peace processes because they create more sustainable agreements (Turner, 2020). In a study with mediators from North Ireland, Turner (2020) suggests that women have “soft ways of doing hard things” that enable them to be effective catalysts to women's empowerment.

In Track 2, most local women peace activists have been involved in drawing on their personal and political convictions, courageously tackling questions of social justice, human rights, and gender-based violence (GBV). The same positive trend of increased women's participation and leadership can be seen in track 3. Women-led CSOs have closely monitored the substance of formal negotiations and ensured that negotiators advocate for the priorities of groups previously excluded from the process, including such issues as access to basic services, women's political and economic participation, and their protection from violence (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021). WE Act 1325 (Women Engaged in Action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325) was launched on November 17, 2010 as a national network of civil society organizations to serve as a primary civil society network that serves as the main partner of the government to implement the National Action Plan – Women in Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) (Maligalig, n.d.). In Asia, the Philippines was the first country to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) which had four priority areas: 1) ensure the protection of women's human rights and prevention of violation of these rights in armed conflict and post- conflict situations; 2) build the capacity of women to engender peace and reconstruction processes; 3) mainstream gender perspective within the ongoing peace agreements and security reform agenda; and 4) institutionalize monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on NAP implementation (PeaceWomen, 2010, p. 1; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

Local CSOs (Civil Society Organizations), on the other hand, focused their attention on mitigating clan-based conflict, providing support to people displaced by conflict, and training citizens in small-scale dispute resolution with high levels of women's participation (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021). To build public support, women's groups conducted grassroots campaigns to

gather input for the formal peace process, relay updates to the public, and lead extensive national consultations to ease community fears regarding specific provisions to the peace agreement (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

In general, Muslim women engaged in peacebuilding as “mothers of the nation” since women have a unique perspective on the human costs of conflict and often have an intimate view of the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children. Suffering so much in war pushed women to assert the necessity of non- violence (Santiago, 2015; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021). Across the three tracks in the Philippines, women have served as negotiators, mediators, consultants, trainers, community mobilizers, or monitors of the normalization process such as the decommissioning of firearms (Ferrer, 2015; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021).

Viewing conflict through a gender lens, peace can no longer be defined as the simple absence of war, which can be achieved simply through negotiations on the peace table or the signing of a formal peace agreement with rebel groups. Peace must be able to address discrimination, prejudices, and power relations of gender.

Both women and men exist in a historical and cultural context that give them a sense of power and meaning in their lives. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), universities, and grassroots communities became a breeding ground for women leaders who advocate for the meaningful participation of women in the Bangsamoro peace process.

In 2012, during the exploratory talks between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine Government peace negotiating panel, the MILF wanted to know what the government panel meant by their specific entry to the peace agreement: the right of women to meaningful political participation, and protection

from all forms of violence. Peace negotiation chief Miriam C. Ferrer (2014) narrated an anecdote:

“Put on the chopping block on 14 February 2012, the second day of the 25th Exploratory Talks, was GPH’s entry on “the right of women to meaningful political participation, and protection from all forms of violence.” Our MILF counterparts wanted to know what we meant by meaningful. Did we mean substantial? Did we mean maximum? At what level should that participation be? They recommended deleting the word and keeping the rest of the sentence. Sensing a prolonged discussion on the matter, Tengku Gaafar moved to leave the matter to the team tasked to reconcile the two lists.

However, the word “meaningful” persisted as the locus of discussion onto the third day of the talks, with the members of the ICG asked to give their definitions. “Meaningful means genuine,” said Christ Wright of UK. David Gorman of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue mused if “equal participation” might be better, Emma replied that would be privileging quantity over quality. Johaira countered with court cases to illustrate that it is not just about equality, and that what is meaningful is defined on a case-to-case basis. Yasmin affirmed that we intended the right to be substantial, not a mere token. For her, meaningful means having equal opportunity to influence decision-making at all levels. I put in my two-cent’s worth: meaningful is best understood by its opposite, which is meaningless. One can have participation that is meaningless. MILF Panel Chair Mohager Iqbal said his piece. Speaking from his heart, he believed that women and men cannot have absolute equality because they are different physically, biologically, and even emotionally. This prodded me to go into the difference between being equal and being the same, a matter long articulated in the discourse on women.

Yes, we are different, biologically, socially. Men traditionally carried arms, women gave birth. But equality is not about sameness. It is about relationships founded on mutual respect and the dignity of both persons. It is no different from what the MILF wanted for the Bangsamoro -- parity of esteem. The same 'parity of esteem' or mutual respect that is desired between the majority and the minority population is desirable as well between men and women. GPH Chair Marvic rounded up that discussion with his idea of a compromise: Let's use meaningful as appreciated by the women in our panel, and also based on your own understanding. He then moved to retain the word. The MILF chair agreed. And so, it came to be. The 'meaningful political participation of women' was 'entrenched' as among the protected rights, first in the Decision Points and later, in the October 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro." (Ferrer, 2014, pp.4-5)

Such anecdote reveals the profound sensemaking experiences of women peacebuilders in an attempt to understand the incomprehensible and grapple with the meaning of their own ideals and advocacies. Sensemaking, whether intended or not, has become a worthwhile endeavor for women to respond to the call of commitment to bring peace in a devastatingly war-torn world that heavily discriminates women.

Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Phenomenology attempts at bracketing or "epoche" of pre-conceived ideas in order to essentially study lived experience or the life world (van Manen, 1997). It is descriptive and so it asks the questions "What is this experience like?" as it attempts to unfold meanings lived in everyday existence. Husserl (1970), the father of phenomenology, saw phenomenology as a promise of a new science of being. Koch (1995) identified that Husserl viewed intentionality and essences as key to our understanding of phenomenon. Husserl's interest was focused on acts of attending,

perceiving, recalling, and thinking about the world, and human beings were understood primarily as knowers (Koch, 1995).

For Husserl, “act” refers to experiences of meaning, since the meaning of a phenomenon is in the act of experiencing it, and not in the object itself. Acts are intentional experiences. Intentional experiences are the combination of the outward appearance of something and how it looks like ‘inside your head’, based on memory, image and meaning. Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). The challenge according to Moustakas (1994) is to look, look again, and keep looking and reflecting to obtain complete descriptions. Shifts occur when one looks from a different angle, a different frame of reference, a different mood. No perception of a thing is conclusive and deeper layers of meaning may always unfold when you keep searching. To finally arrive at essences of a phenomenon one must unify the noema (external perception) and the noesis (internal perception).

Like phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the life-world or human experience as it is lived. Its focus is toward illuminating details of seemingly trivial aspects that may be taken for granted in our lives with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). However, the way in which this exploration of lived experience is where Husserl, and Heidegger, the father of hermeneutic phenomenology, differed. Heidegger focused on “dasein”, that is translated as “the mode of being human” or “the situated meaning of a human in the world” (Koch, 1995). He believed that understanding is a basic form of human existence in that understanding is not a way we know the world, but rather the way we are (Polkinghorne, 1983). Heidegger’s emphasis on the historicity of understanding one’s background or

situatedness also includes what a culture gives a person from birth and is handed down, presenting ways of understanding the world (Koch, 1995). Claiming that to be human was to interpret, Heidegger (1927/1962) stressed, that every encounter involves an interpretation influenced by an individual's background or historicity, not just a description of the lifeworld which Husserl stresses.

On the other hand, Emmanuel Levinas, a phenomenologist himself, critiqued the phenomenology of his two principal teachers, Husserl and Heidegger. Levinas believed that in the precognitive or pre-intentional level, there is “embodied intersubjectivity” where ethics is the first philosophy—the phenomenology of intersubjective responsibility. One's relationship with the world is not just between the self and the object from which I can dissociate myself but it also has an I-thou relationship with is a connection between myself and the human “other” to whom I am responsible (Levinas, 1982).

A hermeneutic orientation towards research is one which emphasizes the mutually productive and illuminating relationships between things; the presence of other possibilities and perspectives; the value of dialogue and reflection; and a tolerance of ambiguity, inconsistency and disjuncture in meaning. One major phenomenological tradition that has been mainstreamed in social science research is the hermeneutic phenomenology of van Manen (1990). Hultgren (1990) describes van Manen's hermeneutical approach as one that can significantly contribute to one's “interior renewal” because his use of language sets the pedagogic tone that allows his presence to help others experience and respond to the pedagogic call of researching lived experience. Thus, for each of the six steps of van Manen, Hultgreen cites an inspiring quotation from him which embodies a strong way of “lighting the way”:

1. Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience

“A phenomenological researcher cannot just have a question. He or she must live it.”

Until the researcher displays his or her interest in the phenomenon as lived, a true phenomenological questioning is not possible because lived experience is the starting point and ending point of phenomenological research. It is this interest that brings about the need for a closer look at the collecting of such experience from others (Hultgren, 1990).

2. Investigating Experience as We Live It

“We gather people’s experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves.”

Hultgren (1990) explains that van Manen provides the notion of "collecting data" in doing phenomenological research with a reinterpretation that breaks from the association with quantitative overtones. He suggests that it is not entirely wrong to consider methods of phenomenological inquiry such as conversational interviewing as the collecting or gathering of data. With the original meaning of datum as something given or granted, we can see the connection of our experience given to us in everyday life. Van Manen develops most compellingly the idea of anecdote—which he describes as a "narrative with a point." An anecdote is as "collection of experience" in which the conversational partnership reveals the limits and possibilities of one's own interpretive achievements (Van Manen, 1990).

3. Hermeneutic Phenomenological Reflection

“Themes have phenomenological power when they allow us to proceed with

phenomenological descriptions”

Hultgren (1990) stresses that themes are not conceptual formulations or categorical statements but rather the "knots in the webs of our experience, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (van Manen, 1986, p. 90). These efforts at exploration of the life world reveal, four existential themes which pervade the life world of persons (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality), which become categories for the posing of questions, reflecting, and writing (Van Manen, 1990).

4. Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing

“Silence makes human science research and writing both possible and necessary”

Van Manen (1990) shows how human science research is a form of writing, and how silence (literal, epistemological, and ontological) reveals the limits and power of language (Hultgren, 1990). The value of anecdotal narrative is displayed in its ability to compel, to lead to reflection, to involve persons, to transform, and to measure one's interpretive sense. Writing distances us from the life world, but at the same time draws us more closely to it. Van Manen (1990) says, "To write means to write myself, not in a narcissistic sense but in a deep collective sense ... "(p. 132).

5. Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Relation

“To be oriented as researchers ... means we do not separate the theory from life.”

As Van Manen says, we must "listen" to pedagogy and "see" it rather than "possess" it. "Pedagogy is something that a parent or teacher must continuously

redeem, retrieve, regain, recapture in the sense of recalling” (p. 149). "Human science is concerned with action in that hermeneutic phenomenological reflection deepens thought and therefore radicalizes thinking and the acting that flows from it

... [bringing us] to the edge of speaking up, speaking out or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action" (p. 154). Pedagogic competence is a form of thoughtful praxis.

6. Balancing the Research Context by Considering Parts and Whole

“Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher himself or herself.”

Hultgren (1990) has seen the transformation that has occurred with his doctoral students in their phenomenological projects. As Max van Manen's work has been influential in helping his work with doctoral students as well as his own, he believes that van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology shall contribute to the interior renewal of those who are oriented phenomenologically already or who have begun to turn in this pedagogic way.

Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) created a hermeneutic phenomenological research method similar to Van Manen's six stages of hermeneutic phenomenological research method: 1) Immersion, which involves organizing data and iterative reading of texts, 2) Understanding, which focuses on first-order constructs, 3) Abstraction, which develops second-order constructs and grouping them into sub-themes, 4) Synthesis and theme development, where sub-themes are grouped into major themes, 5) Illumination and illustration of phenomena, which involves reconstructing interpretation into stories and linking literature to the themes, and 6) Integration and critique of findings, which is the final stage of interpreting the

research findings. Both authors used this hermeneutic phenomenological research method in investigating how twelve (12) experienced physiotherapy practitioners learn to communicate their clinical reasoning in professional practice, which is often subconscious. They devised such a research strategy that flows directly from the research questions.

On Hermeneutics and Language

Hermeneutics is an approach to interpretation of phenomena attributed to Heidegger. Derived from the Greek word “hermenein” which means to interpret, it is now known as both a philosophy and method of interpretation (Odman, 1988). Heidegger believed that man’s existence in the realm of being was unavoidably hermeneutical (van Manen, 1990).

Having potent implications for research, the Heideggerian hermeneutic perspective has been used in research in the human and caring vocation of nursing where nursing researchers would be therefore “less occupied with conventional notions of validity and bracketing preconceptions and more concerned with how researchers could use their foreknowledge to deduce meaning from their phenomena in even practical ways to change or improve practice” (Williamson, 2005, p 46). The researcher would be more concerned with uncovering meanings about “what it is to be” than with describing experience, and the best way to relate to the phenomena under investigation. Using the lens to view the world from the inside, with the help of all the senses, including intuition, it helped to understand the world of women who have had postnatal depression, and to gain a picture of the helpful and unhelpful health professional interventions, one would need the privilege of listening to their experiences (Williamson, 2005). In his research, Williamson (2005) who interviewed women with postnatal depression encouraged the flow of their conversation, then

afterwards attempted to locate and reveal the meanings of these stories.

Furthermore, Williamson (2005) in his research notes that Hans Georg Gadamer who was a student of Heidegger developed four concepts, which may be seen as relevant to nursing research methodology which he used. Since Gadamer, like Husserl and Heidegger, was a philosopher and not a researcher, his concepts were ideas, not a research method in themselves. Gadamer's book, *Truth and Method* (1975) was first published when he was 60 years of age, and is pure philosophy, not a treatise on research methodology. Yet, in Williamson's opinion, Gadamerian thought refines and builds upon the work done by Husserl and Heidegger and can be usefully incorporated into research work. Gadamer's four concepts are: (1) Prejudice, (2) the Fusion of Horizons (3) the Hermeneutic Circle and (4) Play (Gadamer, 1975). Gadamer takes the position outlined by Heidegger, that all existence is hermeneutical and builds on that by focusing on the idea that any situation in which human understanding occurs is always an understanding through the lens of tradition and language. Likewise, Clark (2008) explains these four concepts of Gadamer in the context of medicine, particularly in the patient-doctor relationship. He stresses that for a doctor to appreciate what is happening he must have a dialogue with a patient. He claims that the early models of the consultation were disease-centered with little consideration of the patient's perspective. But currently, the medical profession has been harnessing the idea of patient-centered medicine. Clark (2008) notes that the works of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) explains that 'the modern concepts of science are not adequate to understand people and the experience of art and even communication. So, through his book 'Truth and Method,' he referred to philosophical hermeneutics which is a process that helps interpretation and understanding things from someone

else's perspective. He originally applied this to an interpreter and a religious text but then later he referred to hermeneutics as a fundamental significance for our entire understanding of the world.

Using Gadamer's four concepts of philosophical hermeneutics which he used in medical research, Clark (2008) elaborates:

Prejudice. In any situation, we all take ideas and attitudes. Gadamer (2004) calls these 'prejudices' not in our negative sense, but "a judgement that is rendered before all elements that determine a situation have been finally examined." For instance, a patient may have already decided they are not worried about their blood pressure or that if the doctor doesn't examine their chest, the examination will be inadequate.

Fusion of Horizons. When applying hermeneutics to the human process of interpretation, Gadamer explains horizon as the breadth of what you can see or understand. Both patient and doctor go into a consultation with a horizon and out of this encounter and both will leave with a new horizon of their own. Gadamer describes a horizon as "the totality of all that can be realized or thought about by a person at a given time in history and in a particular culture. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better". The old and the new horizon combining into something of living value. Thus, Gadamer refers to the process of understanding as a "fusion of horizons." We could see the "fusion of horizons" as a metaphor for the consultation process, a simple image of what happens in a consultation, with patient and doctor interacting and resulting in changed horizons.

For Gadamer, the doctor's encounter with the patient can enable him to see new horizons. We cannot simply drop in a new story or horizon. We need to help

them to a new understanding and always remember that the patients' horizon and that of the doctors are different. Wisdom is increased as experience grows. By fusing our horizons, a new understanding is formed.

What is the meaning of “understanding”? What is the meaning of “meaning”? Clark (2008) explains that the power of language was expressed by Wittgenstein (1922): “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”. Gadamer (2004) also says that “understanding itself has a fundamental connection with language.” The language of the doctor and that of the patient are therefore crucial to understanding. Thus, using creative ideas and application one may find another view for the patient who is stuck and unable to see a way forward (Clark, 2008).

Hermeneutic Circle. In the same breadth, Clark (2008) refers to hermeneutic circle as the “circle of understanding.” In defining hermeneutic circle, Gadamer (2004) explains that “the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to part and back to the whole.” It is in this process that we apply our pre-understanding, involve our prejudices, and make use of our fore conceptions, language and imagination. All the time we remain open to meaning. This circle of meaning in hermeneutics is important because “nothing that needs interpretation can be understood at once.” (Gadamer, 2004).

Tomskin and Eatough (2018) explain that one of the most appealing ideas in hermeneutics is that of the hermeneutic circle. The circle is a simple yet powerful symbol, usually taken to signal a move away from linear towards more iterative, integrative thinking where we understand something by connecting it with something we already know, whether through comparison, contrast, or juxtaposition.

Schleiermacher, the father of modern hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969), uses the notion of the hermeneutic circle to connect whole and parts making them mutually

dependent and co-constitutive. The whole can only be understood as it relates to the parts, and the parts can only be understood as they relate to the whole. Complete knowledge is always in this apparent circle, that each particular can only be understood via the general, of which it is a part, and vice versa (Schleiermacher, 1998).

The fourth concept of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is play. Grondin (2001) asks: How is it possible that an artwork can so speak to us, can be so much "truer," than an academic argument? In a work of art there is, therefore, a statement, also a truth, that one can only understand, if one allows oneself to be lifted into its play.

Grondin (2001) claims that according to Gadamer, we are more players in the play, the ones spoken to, and in the happiest case, taken up. Play is not something purely playful. The play of art is not simply a disingenuous "diversion" or "entertainment." This is not so for Gadamer. In play, in every play, there is something like a "sacred seriousness." This is true not only for art, but also for athletic games, child's play, and also for the most trivial social games of all types. Hence, even when we are playfully concerned with something, we are also seriously there, with "sacred seriousness." Gadamer (2001) adds that when we hear a musical work, we are at the same time inextricably invited to sing along and to dance-- a tapping of fingers or foot, a following along. In the same manner we recognize ourselves in a poem or painting; or captivated by a novel or tragedy. It concerns us and it speaks to us. A work of art always wishes to be executed in this manner, i.e., to be "gone along with."

Just as Gadamer used hermeneutics for patient-doctor relationship, Lavery (2003) explains that Gadamer (1960/1998) understood hermeneutics, likewise, as a process of co-creation between the researcher and participant, in which the very

production of meaning occurs through a circle of readings, reflective writing, and interpretations. Through this process, the search is toward understanding of the experience from particular philosophical perspectives, such as feminist or postmodern positions, as well as the horizons of participants and researcher. Hermeneutic research demands self-reflexivity, an ongoing conversation about the experience while simultaneously living in the moment, actively constructing interpretations of the experience and questioning how those interpretations came about (Hertz, 1997).

Defining Sensemaking

Sensemaking is our ability and motivation to retrospectively understand and communicate our experiences, thoughts, and actions (Shukla, 2020). Human communication and interactions are vital knowledge for attaining the goals of any organization, community, and society. Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld (2005) explain that sensemaking is the process by which people give meaning to their collective experiences, that is ongoing and retrospective. Further, they stress that sensemaking is the primary site where meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action.

While Shukla (2020), distinguishes meaning-making from sensemaking where sensemaking is defined as a process in which you make sense of experiences retrospectively with plausible explanations while meaning making is a process that attempts to make sense of the now and the future in ways that give you purpose. Mason (2014) argues that sensemaking often precedes meaning-making. While meaning-making plays a pivotal role in knowledge construction or formation of concepts, discernment or inference of meaning is a sensemaking activity (Mason, 2014).

Sensemaking, as originally conceived, was related to organization and leadership studies. Karl Weick, the father of organizational sensemaking defined sensemaking to simply mean “the making of sense” (Weick, 1995, p. 4). It is the process of “structuring the unknown” (Waterman, 1990, p. 41) by “placing stimuli into some kind of framework” that enables us “to comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate, and predict” (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988, p. 51). Weick (1995) explains that in an equivocal, postmodern world, infused with the politics of interpretation and conflicting interests, an obsession with accuracy, rather than plausibility, seems fruitless.

Weick (1995) identifies seven properties of sensemaking which is summarized as follows:

Allard-Poesi (2005), on the other hand, claims that sensemaking research consequently involves a fundamental paradox. While it defines reality and meanings as socially constructed, yet it seeks to disengage from that experience and objectify it (Schwandt, 1994: 119). Allard Poesi (2005) affirms that the sensemaking of the sensemaking process itself is not an easy task. Specifically, to engage in sensemaking processes may take two different routes. The postmodern route, on the one hand, invites us, through deconstruction, to engage against our sensemaking as a way of uncovering both the constitutive and the undecidable character of sensemaking activities; however, the pragmatist (or participative) route, suggests that through participative action research, we fully engage in sensemaking with organization members and recognize the socially constructed aspect of all sensemaking activities. As such, the different approaches to the study of sensemaking, may contribute to the exercise of “disciplined reflexivity” which Weick (1999; 2002) invites us to pursue.

Additionally, Allard-Poesi (2005) explain that sensemaking, which takes place in actions and interactions mainly through language, becomes a paradoxical movement of construction and self-negation. This implies shifting the emphasis away from oppositional strategies of interpretation towards those processes that shape multi-meanings and equivocality. This research approach is not so different from Weick's: his studies of the Mann Gulch Disaster (1993) and the Tenerife Air Disaster (1990) focus on the understandings that people develop as events unfold and at the same time on the destruction of collective meaning. Rather than relying heavily on comparative methods, Allard Poesi (2005) further explains that pushing this constitutive and undecidable conception of language further, postmodernists invite us to define our sensemaking of sensemaking as a writing process that, as such, is animated by the continual and paradoxical logic of difference, implying both inscription and undecidability (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 151). The aim is to denounce the illusion of control and referentiality of language and research, and to provoke new interpretations: Our sensemaking of sensemaking becomes a "fiction", which, through the reflexivity and re-creation it involves, may open up new possibilities for action (Chia, 2000) and sensemaking. This implies resisting the closure of meaning and authority and giving the reader back the freedom to rewrite our own writings/readings. Here, postmodernists invite us to adopt deconstructive and reflexive approaches (Allard-Poesi, 2005).

In the MIT Sloan School of Management, "sensemaking" is considered a key leadership capability for the complex and dynamic world we live in (Ancona, 2012). It is considered one of the most valuable concepts of effective business leadership today. There are many sensemaking literatures on crisis and change that have developed and the important parallels between the two contexts. Sensemaking is

most often needed when our understanding of the world becomes admittedly unintelligible in some way. Since the environment is changing rapidly, presenting us with surprises for which we are unprepared for, they require a response outside our existing repertoire of known responses, presenting a gap between an aspiration and an existing capacity. At such times, insights, changes and solutions must come from the flux of raw experience and knowledge. Sensemaking calls for courage especially when an organization's strategy has not been successful and there could be a clash with those who want to project the image of achievement or success. But such threat and fear are associated with rigidity and erratic behavior which work against effective sensemaking (Ancona, 2012).

From this perspective, Ancona (2012) further says that sensemaking is an emergent activity that allows us to "play the game" while continuously looking for and providing evidence and generating and testing our clues. So, this requires leaders who have emotional intelligence and self-awareness, the ability to deal with cognitive complexity, and the flexibility to go between the "what is" of sensemaking and the "what can be" of visioning as well as engage others in their organizations in figuring out how to play the game.

Sense data exploration, organizing, and enactment (Ancona, 2012; Brown et al, 2015) are the three core elements of sensemaking. Sense data exploration, the first core element, is exploring the wider frame or system because we learn the most about events or issues when we view them from a variety of perspectives (Weick, 1995). Ancona (2012) adds that by involving many others and going beyond stereotypes, we are able to keep an open mind and discover the unique aspects of every new situation. We learn the most about events or issues when we view them from a variety of perspectives. The second core element is organizing. Weick (2009)

explains that we live not just in times of continuous change but continuous discontinuous change. As the world is not just equivocal but unpredictably equivocal, the key is to stay in contact with the context and create a map/story/frame that—at least for a brief period of time—adequately represents the current situation that an organization is facing (Weick, 2009; Ancona, 2012). The third core element is enactment or to act to learn from the system. People learn about situations by acting in them and then seeing what happens (Weick, 1985).

Ancona (2012) asserts that while action is a key sensemaking tool, it is often wiser to begin with—and learn from—small experiments, before broadening the action to drive change across the larger system. Sensemaking involves “acting thoughtfully,” which entails working with trusted frameworks and at the same time “mistrust those frameworks by testing new frameworks and new interpretations.

Weick et al (2005, p. 412) puts it another way: “[A]daptive sensemaking both honors and rejects the past.” Oftentimes, we act our way into meaning (Bruner, 1990). By doing so, Colville et al (2012) explains that sometimes we make sense mainly by thinking and complicating our beliefs, which is beloved of academics, while at other times mainly by taking simple action, which is beloved of practitioners. But this is not an either/or question, but a both/and issue. Through “simplicity”, a term coined by Colville, the synthesis of complexity of thought and simplicity of action, the balance between the two is juggled depending on time and circumstance.

As yet, there is no universally agreed definition on what sensemaking is (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Brown et al, 2015). There is even no agreement on whether sensemaking is past-oriented (retrospective) or future-oriented (prospective). What is crucial in sensemaking is that in an effort to tame the ‘wild profusion of things’ (Foucault, 1977) and to introduce a workable level of certainty

as people make informed bets as to what they think is going on. To make sense, they sometimes think first before acting and at other times, they make sense by acting first. That is, they wade into situations and enact environments (not entthink) and then make sense of information they had a large hand in creating. There are general agreements, however, among scholars on sensemaking aspects, or the sensemaking perspective (Brown et al, 2014; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015). First, it begins with the discovery of the unexpected; and then second, it engages cycles of action and interpretation until sense is restored, that could lead to invention.

Despite the key explanations of Weick on the meaning of sensemaking and how it can be simplified from a complex theory, the literature on *sensemaking* is theoretically fragmented (Odden and Russ, 2018). In an attempt to bring clarity by defining sensemaking in the science education research literature Odden and Russ, (2018) claim that despite our extensive experience, what we mean when we talk about ideas “making sense” is somehow nebulous and intuitive, and for that reason, elusive. However, they have proposed a definition of sensemaking to address the previously fragmented theoretical nature of the concept in literature. Based on their organization of the science education research literature, they define sensemaking as a dynamic process of building an explanation in order to resolve a gap or inconsistency in knowledge. These explanations are built in one's own words, through an iterative process of construction and critique. Cognitively, when students are sensemaking they are building and refining their mental models. According to them, science education researchers have used the theoretical construct of framing, a term borrowed from the sociology, linguistics, and psychology literature, referring to the expectations that individuals or groups of people bring to an activity—that is, how they answer the question “what's going on here?” (Odden and Russ, 2018).

Thus, sensemaking constitutes a certain stance toward trying to “figure something out,” which may differ from the approach of getting right answers or communicating existing explanations.

Sensemaking has a hermeneutic phenomenological dimension as it “involves the construction and bracketing of cues to be interpreted, linking them to a previous frame of reference that summarizes past experiences (such as traditions, ideologies, theories of actions or stories), and revising the interpretations that have thus developed as a result of actions, interactions and their consequences.” (Weick, 1995: 8) What people make sense of, and how they do it, depends on where they look, how they look, what they want to represent and their tools of representations (Schwandt, 1994). There is no “one best way” to represent reality, and even if there is, the sensemaking perspective consequently insists that the meanings people develop and attach to their experiences are fundamentally fluid, unstable and idiosyncratic, and that there is no such thing as a common, unified or shared representation in organizations: “individual histories are too diverse” (Weick, 1995: 188), and influence processes are too complex and multiple to produce similarity (Fiol, 1994; Allard-Poesi, 1998; 2001). “So, if people in organizations share anything, what they share are actions, activities, moments of conversations, and joint tasks, each of which they then make sense of, using categories that are more idiosyncratic.” (Weick, 1995: 188)

Further, Tomkins and Eatough (2018) explain that the way sense is generated, shaped, experienced and resisted, including the ways in which both researchers and participants are enmeshed, are all connected to context (e.g., discourse, ideas, habits, practices, norms, systems), whether they are primarily interested in capturing and crystallizing a participant’s lifeworld or exposing and exploring the vulnerability and ideology of sensemaking. Whatever the different emphases may be, these

methods are all fundamentally “historical.” Both authors argue that there is more to human phenomena that can be disentangled and categorized into things that make sense. There is more to understanding sense than what we can capture, encapsulate, describe and control. This would include acknowledging the role of intuition in interpretation, the elusiveness of meaning hidden behind symbols, the role of the pre-conscious, including the constitutive power of public meanings that pre-date private ones, and the radical challenge to consciousness for its ideological distortions. Thus, in several ways, hermeneutics takes us beyond sense and our attempts to harness it. They explain that we see fascinating connections between this challenge to the primacy of sense and Weick’s (1995) organizational sense-making approach. They claim that Weick’s description of sensemaking as “a frame of mind about frames of mind” (Weick, 1995: xii) has distinct Heideggerian overtones. Returning Weick’s sensemaking to its Heideggerian roots, they argue that we should redefine sense to encompass a broader range of experiences. For instance, moods of dislocation and unease, could signal some kind of shift or disconnect between self and world. In their different ways, boredom and anxiety both signal that the world is not anchoring us; and feelings of awe can be read as a sign that the world may be overwhelming us (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013). Thus, moods may suggest that there is more to understanding than what we can grasp and intellectualize.

On Sensemaking and War

A number of war-related literature provided some information about war contexts on the basis of the Weick-inspired sensemaking movement. In Aceh, Indonesia, a sensemaking research of Mogensen (2015) revealed how it worked for both warring parties to move from extreme distrust to institutional trust. Leaders helped citizens make sense of the human suffering endured and created a foundation

for reconciliation. Representatives of the two conflicting groups chose to tell stories in which life was perceived as better after the war than it had been before. There were also narratives that provided indications that religion, faith, and spiritual trust helped powerless people deal with the horrors and insecurity caused by civil war. In this way, religion provided an alternative framework for sensemaking during times when institutions cannot support trust.

On the other hand, in another study on the war in Afghanistan, Martin (2014) unveiled that the American and British strategy implementation was crippled by a failure to understand adequately the history, context, people, actions, and events in which they were embroiled: that is, a failure of sensemaking. The nature of this failure and its implications for the West's strategies were analyzed primarily with reference to Weick. As a contribution to that sensemaking research, Brown (2018) explained in another study that in understanding the West's strategic failure in Afghanistan from a sensemaking perspective, he concluded that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO-led military mission in Afghanistan, established by the United Nations Security Council, enacted an ongoing crisis in which their denuded sensemaking led to inappropriate actions which fed a vicious circle that continually threatened and ultimately undermined its most fundamental goals. Martin (2014) and Brown (2018) aligned in their conclusion that without the required knowledge of local politics, outsiders have made the conflict worse.

In another conflict-related research on Sierra Leone, although not Weick-inspired, Osborn (2013) affirmed the value of reliable and transparent communication in providing peaceful methods of dispute resolution. From his data on third party interventions from 1946-2006, he concluded that peacekeeping missions promoting transparency, credible information sharing, and strong signals of commitment present

the best possibilities for peace during and after the mission. His analysis from empirical tests and case study support that peacekeeping missions are most effective when they allow for credible and reliable communication between domestic adversaries. Sensemaking, although not explicit, comes into play as an emergent response in such a crisis context.

The above-mentioned studies on war-related sensemaking research illuminate our understanding on how sensemaking can either be helpful or discrepant. To understand history, culture, religion, and gender are crucial in effective sensemaking because diversity in all aspects provides a wider frame of knowledge and learning.

Deficiencies or gaps

The deficiency in most literature in sensemaking and hermeneutic phenomenology is the exploration of the communicative aspects of the phenomenon of lived experiences. There is emphasis on understanding the lived experience of the phenomena of peacebuilding, for example, but not necessarily how the experience is communicated and what role language plays as a medium for conveying meaning and understanding peace, which can provide depth in unraveling nuances in peace communication.

There is also very little research on gender-based phenomenon, per se, although there has been research on the sensemaking of women with post-natal depression (Williamson, 2005). More so, Women in Peace and Security (WPS) is a relatively new arena which gained traction only in 2000 with the UNSCR 1325 on the Women in Peace and Security (WPS) agenda with its four pillars: participation and representation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. Although six other related resolutions from 2008 to 2013 followed suit, namely: UNSCR 1889 and 2122 which strengthened articles in 1325 and UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1960, and 2106 which

highlighted conflict-related sexual violence (UN Peacemaker, n.d.; Petilla, Aseneta, and Adversario, 2021), these resolutions are only fairly recent. Thus, there is a dearth of literature on sensemaking and hermeneutics on WPS-related concerns.

Even among women, the comprehension and acceptance of the meaningful participation of women in the peace process has been understood only gradually in the last decade. This became even more challenging to men in the peace table who could not fully comprehend why the meaningful participation of women had to be emphasized. Thus, what is lacking in the sensemaking of women, especially in peacebuilding, is the communicative aspect of these lived experiences.

Sandberg and Tsoukas (2014) explain that while much has been written about sensemaking, the application range of the sensemaking perspective and as well as identifying the types of organizational sensemaking have been under-researched.

Additionally, the researcher also wants to discover what lies beyond organizational sensemaking such as individual sensemaking, community sensemaking, or even gender-based sensemaking which are all under-researched. Further, while there are major limitations of the sensemaking perspective, these explorations can serve as enhancements to strengthen the sensemaking perspective in this study and other future studies.

CHAPTER III

CULTIVATING THE PEARL: THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

“A pearl is only a pearl once it’s out of its shell.” – Nigerian Proverb

It is a known fact that pearls are formed painstakingly. Only when the oyster is injured by grains of sand or foreign bodies that some composite matter develops as a protective inner layer inside the oyster which later forms as the mother pearl.

Exactly how the pearl is being cultured is a very tedious natural process inside the oyster but what we eventually see is the harvested pearl that is taken from the oyster shell and brought out of the sea.

In the same way, as this study uses phenomenology as its philosophical worldview, much of its hermeneutic phenomenological process as its method is an inner experience of the self in relation to the “other” which is peace. What I will share eventually are my churned insights through a dialogue with peace, my “other”, which is inextricably linked with my inward-looking conversations with women peacebuilders.

Phenomenology as the Philosophical Worldview

Although pure phenomenological research seeks to describe rather than explain with a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions from the standpoint of Husserl (1970), more recent humanist and feminist researchers refute the possibility of starting without preconceptions or bias and emphasize the importance of making clear how interpretations and meanings influence findings which hermeneutics will provide.

Qualitative Design

The methodology for this dissertation is qualitative, using the hermeneutic

phenomenological approach as it describes and interprets the lived experiences of women peacebuilders of their participation in the Bangsamoro peace process.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as substantiated by the interweaving of the research method of Max van Manen (1997) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), is the chosen methodology for this research as it aims to produce textual descriptions of how selected phenomena are experienced in the lifeworld of individual women peacebuilders which connect to our collective human experience (Smith, 1997).

From identification of the experience of phenomena, a deeper understanding of the meaning of that experience will be sought (Smith, 1997).

Van Manen (1990) acknowledges that “it is true that the method of phenomenology is that there is no method, yet there is a tradition, a body of knowledge and insights, a history of the lives of thinkers and authors, which taken as an example, constitute a source and methodological ground for present human science research practices” (p. 30). Thus, his approach to hermeneutic phenomenological research is through a dynamic interplay of his six stages of hermeneutic phenomenology, not to be taken as a set of procedures, but rather to initiate inventiveness and insight. “A hermeneutic orientation towards research is one which emphasizes the mutually productive and illuminating relationships between things; the presence of other possibilities and perspectives; the value of dialogue and reflection; and a tolerance of ambiguity, inconsistency and disjuncture in meaning.” (Tomkins and Eatough, 2018, p. 30)

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in the data collection comes from my experience as a peace educator and advocate, who has made sense of the sensemaking experiences of selected women peacebuilders by facilitating rapport and trust with

them early in the data gathering process. Reflexivity is as an important dimension in designing and implementing this research. Through reflexivity, I examined my own beliefs, judgments, and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced my study (Finlay 1998). I also maintained hermeneutic alertness in this research by stepping back to reflect on the meanings of situations rather than accepting their pre-conceptions and interpretations at face value (Van Manen, 1997).

Data Collection Procedures

Through hermeneutic phenomenology, I constructed my insights and observations of the sensemaking experience of the phenomenon of meaningful participation of women in the peace process using a broad range of data collection methods that are appropriate:

1. Desk research and literature review on sensemaking, communication, and hermeneutic phenomenology;
2. Desk research and literature review of the Bangsamoro peace process and the meaningful participation of women in this endeavor;

Online semi-structured interviews through Zoom communication with selected key women peacebuilders involved in the Bangsamoro peace process, mostly personally known to me. Each participant was given a choice whether to maintain anonymity or allow the revelation of their identity for the interview. All of the women peacebuilders-participants in this study allowed the public acknowledgement of their real identity in this research:

Table 1. *Description of Women Peacebuilder-Participants by Name, Designation and Code*

	Name (in alphabetical order)	Designation	Code Name
1	MP Atty. Laisa Alamia	Minority floor leader of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) and first woman executive secretary of the ARMM (Autonomous Region Of Muslim Mindanao)	WPAlamia
2	Ms. Teresita Quintos -Deles	First woman appointed as Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in 2003 - 2005 (under President Gloria Arroyo) and in 2010 -2016 (under President Benigno Aquino, Jr.)	WPDeles
3	Dr. Jasmin N. Galace, PhD	VP for Academic Affairs and Former Executive Director of the Center for Peace Education, Miriam College; Headed Secretariat of the Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WE-Act 1325)	WPGalace
4	Ms. Samira Ali Gutoc	2019 TOWNS Awardee for Peace Advocacy; and Member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission tasked to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law	WPGutoc

	Name (in alphabetical order)	Designation	Code Name
5	Ms. Yasmin B. Lao	Secretary of the National Commission of Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) and member of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPNP-MILF) from 2010-2016	WPLao
6	Dr. Gloria Jumamil-Mercado, PhD	Cabinet Assistant Secretary, 2016-2018; Executive Director of OPAPP 2018-2019; and Chairperson of the GPH-MILF Peace Accord 2018-2019	WPMercado
7	Ms. Irene M. Santiago	Founder of Mindanao Commission on Women (MCW) in 2001; Member of the Philippine Government peace panel negotiating with the MILF from 2001-2004; Chair of the Government Implementing Panel for the Bangsamoro Peace Accord 2016;	WPSantiago

In hermeneutic phenomenology, interviews serve very specific purposes (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007). First, it is used as a means for exploring and gathering narratives of lived experiences. Second, it is a vehicle by which to develop a conversational relationship with the participant about the meaning of an experience. In this research, key informants shared their stories in their own words or creative form (e.g., photographs). A semi-structured interview format was used to provide the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews. The use of semi-structured interview was purposive as it provided greater breadth or richness in data as compared with structured interview. It also allowed participants freedom to respond to questions and probes, and to narrate their experiences without being tied down to specific answers (Morse & Field, 1995). Further, the advantage of semi-structured over unstructured interviews is the ability to compare across interviews because some of the questions are standard (Minichiello et al., 1999).

The semi-structured interviews highlighted but were not limited to, the following questions:

1. Whenever you think about the Bangsamoro peace process, do you have any favorite photo, creative or written item that brings you treasured memories of your experience? Please share its significance.
2. What sense does your participation in the peace process as a woman have for you? Have you communicated this in any way? How? To whom?
3. What does unmuting voices mean to you? How have you and other women unmuted your voices to be heard? Have they listened?
4. In the midst of the ambiguities of the peace process and the other contexts that affect it how have you responded?
5. As you envision the future of women participation in peace and security,

what hopes do you have? What opportunities do you see? What limitations exist?

6. What drives you to continue doing what you are doing? What constrains or limits you?

Data Analysis Procedures and Validation of the Findings

The data analysis for this dissertation used hermeneutic phenomenology to understand and interpret the sensemaking and unmuting of women's voices in the Bangsamoro peace process. Through hermeneutic phenomenology, data analysis emerged from phenomenological and hermeneutic principles and from guidelines for interpreting research data.

Specifically, the qualitative methodology for this dissertation used the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, substantiated by the work of Max van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), as it describes and interprets the lived experiences of seven (7) women peacebuilders in their participation in the Bangsamoro peace process. The interweaving of the phenomenological process of Van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) for the data collection and analysis traversed six stages, namely:

Stage 1: Immersion: Turning to the nature of lived experience;

Stage 2: Investigating lived experience and identifying first order constructs;

Stage 3: Reflecting on essential themes and abstraction by identifying second order constructs;

Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development: Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;

Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena: Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon; and

Stage 6: Integration and refining the themes: Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole.

Stage 1: Immersion: Turning to the nature of lived experience

Texts were constructed for each participant from the interview transcripts, field notes, and published secondary literature about their stories and personal experiences. The aim in the first stage is to get a “sense” or preliminary interpretation of the texts, which then facilitates coding.

Stage 2: Investigating lived experience and identifying first order constructs

First order constructs refer to participants’ ideas expressed in their own words or phrases, which capture the precise detail of what the person is saying (Titchen & McIntyre, 1993). The researcher’s understanding of the participants’ first order constructs was checked at each stage with the participants by feeding back to the participants ideas raised in previous phases and by probing questions during interviews. This form of iterative checking provided a progressively richer and deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences and learning journeys.

Stage 3: Reflecting on essential themes and abstraction by identifying second order constructs

Second order constructs were generated using the researchers’ theoretical and personal knowledge as abstractions of the first order constructs. Interpretation of each interview transcript was used to form a picture of that participant’s data as a whole, such that a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomena evolves. Any similarities between participants will also be identified. Thus, at the end of stage three all relevant text material were grouped under each relevant construct in order to

answer the principal research question and sub-questions.

Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development: Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting

“Conversation” themes were developed from the results of stages one to three of the analysis. The second order construct files were grouped together into a smaller number of broad themes both across and within participants.

Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena: Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon

In this stage, literature was linked to the themes identified above. Participants’ narratives were repeatedly examined during this stage to ensure that the constructed stories were faithful to participants’ learning experiences.

Stage 6: Integration and refining the themes: Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole.

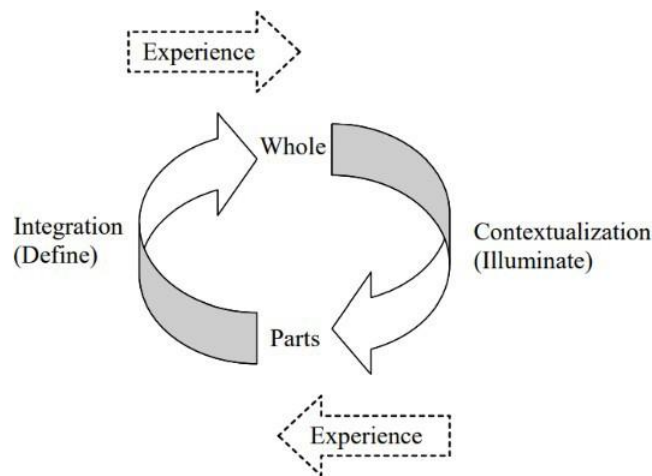
The final stage of data analysis involved the critique by the researcher for key developments that could increase understanding of the phenomenon. The identified themes that emerged in the narratives were validated with the participants. By constantly cross-checking interpretations with the original transcripts, fidelity to the participants’ constructs was maintained (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Dialogic communication between the researcher and the participants about emerging findings ensured faithfulness and authenticity to the data (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007).

The hermeneutic circle and dialogue employed as the two key strategies enabled circular and iterative loop to bring about an understanding coming from a process of dialogue between the researcher and the text of the research. Through the hermeneutic circle, illumination on a range of mutually constitutive relationships

between context and text, whole and parts, general and particular, anticipation and encounter, familiarity and strangeness, presence and absence, and sense and non-sense were attained. Figure 1 below is the basic form of the hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996, p. 4; Ajjawi-Higgs, 2007, p.623):

Figure 1.

Hermeneutic Circle



The use of an e-reflective journal to engage in a hermeneutic circle was utilized to move back and forth between the parts and the whole of the text (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Van Manen (1997) believes that writing forces an individual into a reflective attitude in which one writes themselves in a deeply collective way.

As Kvale (1996) notes, this interpretive process continues until a moment in time where one has reached sensible meanings of the experience, free from inner contradictions. Caputo (1987) adds that coming to a place of understanding and meaning is tentative and always changing in the hermeneutic endeavor. It is therefore necessary to account for one's position and trace one's movement throughout the research process using this hermeneutic circle.

Narrative Structure for the Stories of the Women Peacebuilders

The narrative structure in composing the stories of the selected women peacebuilders in this research followed the four phases of the hermeneutic phenomenology method of Guillen (2019):

First Phase: Clarification of Hypothesis and Preconception

The phenomenologist performs a skillful epoché (bracketing) that establishes the hypotheses from which the researcher starts, recognizing that they could intervene in the research.

Second Phase: Collecting the Experience Lived

Anecdote writing was utilized for this hermeneutic phenomenology method. In this phase, the researcher took into consideration the stance of Van Manen (2003) that "before asking others to give us a description of a phenomenon to be explored, we do it ourselves, in order to have a more punctual perception of what we are trying to obtain" (p. 82). To this end, the researcher wrote a personal experience (personal anecdote) of her engagement in the Bangsamoro peace process as an educator and advocate.

Third phase: Reflecting on the Experience Lived - Structural Stage

In this stage I comprehended the essential meaning of peace and women's engagement in peacebuilding through phenomenological reflection.

Fourth Phase: Writing about the Experience Lived by Integrating All Particular Structures into a General Structure

After writing the personal anecdotes of each individual woman peacebuilder-

participant I integrated their stories into a general structure which mirrored the common “conversation” themes and synthesized them as the results and findings of the research.

Ethical Issues

There were some ethical issues that I anticipated in this research as I know that the Bangsamoro peace process is a highly sensitive topic of conversation even while it is celebrated as a momentous event in our history. While majority of the women peacebuilders who were part of this research are friends who trust intimating their gender-related issues to a fellow woman peace advocate, we know that “gender and peace” is an evolving advocacy and some may have qualms about the implications of sharing their personal experience for public knowledge. Nonetheless, they were given a choice to maintain their anonymity or allow me to reveal their personal identity in this study. However, as all of them have been previously interviewed in the past and publicly shared their experiences in other fora and conferences related to women participation in peacebuilding and have published articles and interviews in this regard, all of the research participants allowed me to personally quote them for this study. I also used my sense of discernment in determining which of their stories during the interview I could include in this research, with their kind permission. Further, I assured them that though I will be journalizing their stories, whatever is the final output of the written narratives from my lens will be validated with them to maintain fidelity to their own meaning.

CHAPTER IV
THREADING THE PEARL NECKLACE: NARRATIVES OF WOMEN
PEACEBUILDERS

“The world is your oyster. It’s up to you to find the pearls.” – *Chris Gardner*

Conversing with seven women peacebuilders in this study is a profound phenomenon of finding uniquely beautiful pearls. In this chapter, we will experience every lovely “pearl” that each woman peacebuilder is. I will begin with my own narrative and let all seven women peacebuilders shine with their own story as they glimmered with their own wisdom.

“Unmute, please!”

In 2015, I taught Peace Studies for a master’s program at a state university where most of my students were military men. I felt a lump on my throat one evening while reading a reflection paper from one of my students. He wrote:

“I was a very young lieutenant, having just graduated from the Philippine Military Academy. I was very excited to have my first taste of battle. While enjoying a cup of coffee, I heard a loud hissing sound coming from above followed by a loud explosion near our patrol base; it was the enemy troops welcoming us with mortar fires. Up to this time, I have a vague memory of those days and all I remember is the fog created by artillery fires from both sides. But one memory lingers in my head up till today, a memory I wished I will forget forever. I saw a boy in a fatigue uniform going down. he was aged 15 to 16, a teenager with a skinny body. I wondered what he was doing in a no man’s island at that time.

Then he raised an M-16 rifle and heard him shout, "Allah, huakbar!" He was one of the snipers tasked to halt our advance. He continued shouting the battle cry until he disappeared in a vegetated area near the creek line. I tasked one of my team members to recover the boy and bring him to safety. But he shot a fire. As a threat, he was dealt with return fires from my troops. After a few seconds, I saw his bloody body floating in the creek and was washed away by the current. That was his last bullet and he spent it to sacrifice his own life."

Why would this piece of reflection strike me as I think of my own involvement as a peace educator? Knowing that the theme of my research is about women's participation in the Bangsamoro peace process, I know that there is nothing in my story that directly refers to women's participation in the peace process. The central figure in my story is a military guy and the teenager who was killed in the battle is a young boy. So how are women involved here? Yes, war is a man's world yet the victims are not just men. Who suffers in war? Not just the men (and the boys armed to battle) but the mothers of these men, their wives, their sisters, and all the women in the community. In fact, everybody for that matter gravely suffers due to these unfortunate events. Women, most especially, struggle to overcome the physical, emotional, psychological, and economic challenges of being left behind while the men are in battle. Yet, have we listened to them, both to what they say and not say? No one wants war. No one of us want it, whether woman or man.

My soldier-student was candid in saying that he was very excited for his first taste of battle, just as little boys are excited to use their toy guns and make believe that they are heroes who have killed the enemies. Yet, he was quick, too, in realizing that when faced with the reality of actually killing a warm-blooded human like himself,

a youngster at that from the other camp, something within him wanted to erase in his memory the fog of war. Towards the end, he wrote: “We are living in a country of conflict and chaos and is shrouded with false hopes of peace. But does that mean we should be satisfied with that? I do not intend to take Peace Studies only to understand its concepts but to apply it in my own field. And I hope that someday, even not in my lifetime, I will be able to contribute to a just and lasting peace that will be held dearest by future generations to come.”

War is real yet the quest for peace is also real. Relating his experience in Lanao del Norte, one of the strongholds of the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) in 2008 at a time when more than 400,000 were killed and more than 750,000 were displaced due to renewed fighting as negotiations failed, my student spoke not about these deplorable numbers but the actual experience of angst and distraught of those who battle, more often against their will.

We know how gender stereotypes happen at home—dolls for girls to cuddle and guns for boys to shoot with. Apart from that, conflict throws us in situations where there seems to be no way out but to “fight or take flight.” It is an instinctive human reaction just as a prey would react towards its hunter. The amygdala of the brain signals us to do so—fight or run away! Whether soldiers or rebels, whether women or men, when pushed against the wall will fight to win a battle, or to survive at least. Until their last breath and their last bullet, soldiers and rebels are trained to fight.

If so, how can peace happen? Is there a way where we don’t push each other in situations of threat? To threaten is to invite retaliation and fighting. To talk or communicate is to create a space for peace negotiation. But if men engaged in war are not trained to communicate among themselves, so how can they initiate communicating with women? So how can they listen to women and unmute their

voices?

But first of all, it is good to ask this question: Is it really the men who mute women's voices? Or is it one's culture or religion? Or have women muted themselves, wittingly or unwittingly? Or maybe the interplay of all these influences is permeating into the lived world of a woman? What could be the reason? Regardless of the reason, however, the control key in unmuting (or muting) is in the hands of the women themselves, not in anyone else's, unless the system has deliberately cut the communication lines. The spoken word is only one communication mode. If one medium of communication is cut, there are other creative ways of getting across, other language modes, so to speak.

Secondly, is it possible that men also mute themselves to a certain extent in peacebuilding? And for this reason, some peace dialogues and negotiations fail? Therefore, how do men unmute themselves, too?

Thirdly, what does it really mean to mute or unmute oneself? Do voices only refer to that which comes from the mouth that speaks? And what about voices from one's body, mind and heart? The actions of the body can also speak without a single word uttered. Don't the mind and heart also speak even without words? Conversely, there may be words spoken from one's lips, yet come from a muted mind and heart?

For all that has been said, what truly is this phenomenon and lived experience of muting and unmuting voices in peacebuilding? The narratives of the seven women peacebuilders in this chapter reveal the unique character and experience of each "pearl" as they glimmer in their story of peace.

"Unmute please", women peacebuilders!

MP Atty. Laisa M. Alamia

Minority Floor Leader of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA)

First woman executive secretary of the ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao)

“Whatever pearl you seek, look for the pearl within the pearl!” – Rumi

Choosing My Battles

In the late 1970s, MP Alamia’s family survived a massacre in Tictapul, North Zamboanga. They were lucky because during the time it happened, no one from the family was there. She related, “I was still a child when the massacre took place. I could barely remember what transpired. But what remained in my memory when I was five is that herds of people slept in our home. Later I found out that they were displaced after the Tictapul siege. Tictapul is a MNLF enclave in the hinterlands. The military looted my mother’s business and then burned it.”

MP Alamia realized all about the details of the harrowing experience of the Tictapul massacre only later in her adult life. Her parents never narrated the story to her nor to any of her siblings. However, when she worked in the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Region 12, she was assigned to do a field study in Tictapul. It was only then that she fully awakened to the social realities of her birthplace and her Moro origins.

MP Alamia narrated to me, “As I was growing up, I already felt that as Moros we were looked down upon. My classmates would call me “muklo”, a derogatory term for Moro. I tried my best to excel academically because I felt that is the only way that others would respect me. As I became more aware of the discrimination, I also felt that I had the moral responsibility to show that I am a good person, not barbaric, not a monkey with a tail, unschooled or uneducated.”

MP Alamia further related that ethnic discrimination at gender stereotyping exist even within the Bangsamoro itself. For example, the Badjaos maintained their cultural practices that were taken against them by the entire Moro community. MP Alamia explained, “There exists a ‘cultural hierarchy’ within the 13 Moro ethno-linguistic cultural communities. The Sama Dilaut or “Badjaos”, who have retained their traditional cultural practices as indigenous people (IP), occupy the lowest rung in that hierarchy. They have suffered multiple layers of discrimination not just from the mainstream Filipinos but also within the Moro communities. From the advent of the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao up to the present time, the Badjaos were treated as subjects or something similar to the concept of ‘aliping sagigilid’ of the North. In our engagements with Moro communities while doing human rights and women’s rights advocacy, we have discovered that among the different IP women such as the Badjaos, there are even more layers of discrimination to contend with. Aside from the historical prejudice against the Bangsamoro that we have been experiencing, in general, our own Moro women are discriminated internally as a result of interpretation and implementation of both formal laws and informal laws or norms, and the harmful traditional practices in the Bangsamoro culture, including the practice of child marriage.” According to her, “The giving of the dowry or mahr, which is an essential requisite of marriage under Shari’a law, is traditionally received (and taken) by the parents when they betroth their daughter to a man, thus, this becomes one of the reasons why they marry off their daughters at a very young age – the dowry is seen as a way out of poverty. However, under Shari’a law, the dowry is supposed to be a gift to the bride herself and should not be considered as a bride price.” MP Alamia further explained, “In our research at Nisa UI-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro (Women for Justice in the Bangsamoro) we discovered that the

Philippines has the most antiquated practice of Muslim laws. In Saudi Arabia, the age of marriage is 19 years old just like in Indonesia. However, in the Philippines, according to Code of Muslim personal laws or PD 1083, a daughter can be betrothed even upon birth as long as the father allows it. So, at Nisa Ul-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro, we realized that our advocacy must be evidence-based. To achieve this, we consulted Moro women on the ground about their experience.”

She further claimed: “Basically, all these acts of injustice and discrimination against Moro women are rooted in patriarchy. An example is the increasing feminization of migration and human trafficking in the Bangsamoro. A large number of Moro women go abroad to work as domestic helpers and they are prone to exploitation and abuse. Because they’re women, they can be easily ‘dispensed with’ and are the ones who are expected to make the supreme sacrifice for their families, no matter how dangerous it is for them. Many of them end up being trafficked, especially the minors, sometimes even with the knowledge of the parents who ‘give away’ their daughters to illegal recruiters and traffickers, believing that this would take them out of poverty. The higher the magnitude of poverty, the lower the level of education, the more likely that traffickers and illegal recruiters would take advantage of the prevailing situation.”

As a practical example, MP Alamia talked about the wearing of the *hijab*. “Moro women wear the hijab as a religious identity. Men, on the other hand, do not wear anything to identify that they are Moros. In an Islamophobic world, wearing the hijab sometimes becomes a hindrance. When hailing a taxi, I sometimes need to remove my hijab because no driver would take me as a passenger. In the airport, even my husband would tell me not to wear the hijab so there will be no unnecessary difficulties along the way. I consider myself a cosmopolitan or modern Moro woman.

I actually did not wear the hijab before. However, after I became a lawyer, when I had to immerse myself in the communities in our advocacies for women's rights and engage with male religious leaders, I felt that I needed to start wearing the hijab if I wanted them to 'listen' to me and focus on the substance of what I was trying to impart to them. How I looked mattered and the message that I was trying to bring to them (gender justice) was affected by my being "uncovered." And that's when my journey to being a hijabi started. Later, my wearing of the hijab somehow added credibility to what I was advocating for and gave me my identity as a Moro woman and as a Muslim woman."

In 2012, just as MP Alamia co-founded the Nisa UI-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro she was also asked to help set up the Commission of Human Rights (CHR) in the ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao). She was the first regional director of CHR in ARMM with Ms. Etta Rosales as the National Chair. As regional director, she moved residence to Cotabato. As she was tasked to reform the ARMM bureaucracy, MP Alamia and her colleagues at Nisa UI-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro strategized how they could bring about change in the ARMM. Thus, they planned that Atty. Raissa Jajurie would help in the MILF, Ms. Yasmin Lao would support the GPH panel and MP Alamia would steer the ARMM.

MP Alamia met very inspiring Moro women and men at the global level who use their expertise and platforms to promote gender justice. By using the gender lens, they were able to contextualize the verses of the Qu'ran and the prophets in a manner that relates and applies to the current situation. She shared, "By using the gender lens and applying juristic methods, they are able to contextualize the verses of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings and practices) of Prophet Muhammad, make an analysis of these sources of Islamic law, and apply these

contextually (not literally) to current issues prevailing in Muslim communities. Polygamy, for instance, is allowed in the Qur'an but this practice has been abused and has become one of the reasons for gender-based physical, economic, and psychological violence in the current context. More than 1,400 years ago when the verse on polygamy was revealed in the Qur'an, said verse actually restricted the practice of unlimited polygamy to just four wives (men had many wives and concubines at that time), with the general rule to 'marry only one' because that would be 'more just'. At the time that this verse was revealed, polygamy was allowed in the context of men having the obligation to protect and support widows and orphans who have lost their husbands during the wars at that time, and give justice to them."

For MP Alamia, her participation in the peace process is a very personal journey. She expressed that strongly through setting up NGOs like Nisa UI-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro and engaging with government like spearheading the ARMM Commission of Human Rights. What was simply an initiative in 2012, the Human Rights Commission was eventually institutionalized in 2013 and budget was put in place for the body. This commission has continued in the BARMM which is now called the Humanitarian Emergency Assistance and Response Team, or HEART.

MP Alamia recognized that, generally, Muslim women were voiceless at the beginning. Although they could speak in their community, they needed to be capacitated on how to speak and communicate their advocacies. She believes that quality young women can only come from quality parents who do not marry them off at a very young age.

"I also needed to learn my own lessons in communicating my advocacy for gender justice. At the beginning, I argued and confronted men (and women who were

actually proxy-men voicing out the stance of men) head-on. I quoted laws that indicated that what they were doing is wrong. I also touched on religion which was unacceptable because I was not wearing the hijab which for them was a symbol of credibility and identity as a Moro. So, instead of using the confrontational approach, I, together with other Moro women at Nisa Ul-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro, researched on their lived realities of Moro women. We consulted Moro women and gathered their narratives and capacitated them.”

According to MP Alamia, after admittedly committing some mistakes in their strategies for Moro women participation in peacebuilding, they developed an evidence-based four-prong approach in their gender training: 1) Rootedness in the lived realities of Moro women; 2) Consultation with Moro women to validate these realities in the community; 3) Giving credence to what local and global human rights agenda (eg. CEDAW, NAP-WPS) and Islamic laws (Qu’ran, Shari’a) say about these gender issues (e.g., Do these experiences violate the Qu’ran?); and 4) Analysis of PD 1083 (Code of Muslim Personal Laws).

MP Alamia emphasized, “Contextualization is very important to us, putting in spiritual and anthropological perspectives before discussing PD 1083 with the Moro women. While it is true that Moro women’s voices are often muted, we needed to get used to it. It is essential to contextualize the lived realities of women at the community level: What acts of discrimination are they suffering from? What are these traditional, formal and informal practices that are harmful for women and girls? Then, juxtapose these contextualized lived realities with international human rights conventions (e.g. CEDAW, NAP-WPS, CRC), domestic laws and policies (e.g. the Constitution, women’s national human rights laws, and the Code of Muslim Personal Laws), and an analysis of Islamic law using the primary sources of Shari’a law (i.e. Qur’an,

Hadith/Sunnah of the Prophet) as applicable. Do these practices violate the universal principles and values espoused in the Qur'an? Are these practices violative of international human rights conventions, the Constitution and domestic laws?"

She continued, "It was difficult for my own personal journey because from 2006-2012, I experienced an 'imposter's syndrome'. Even if I knew the laws as I had trainings abroad to study the Qu'ran and the Shari'a, I did not know how to change mindsets within my own family and own community. It was then that I learned to choose my battles. I decided to work on PD 1083. So, in the drafting of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), the language of gender was included."

MP Alamia realized that one of her mistakes in the past is not being strategic as a woman peacebuilder. And one important strategy is being innovative in involving men in the gender and peace advocacy. She related that one of the fruits of this endeavor is that the male religious leaders whom they have trained in Nisa Ul- Haqq Fi Bangsamoro have become imams and provincial muftis who are considered the most learned in the community.

As a woman peacebuilder, MP Alamia also needed to learn how to unmute herself. It was not easy. Her experience globally with other Moro women leaders was an opportunity for her to be mentored in public leadership. Thus, in the same way, she is also mentoring other Moro women to be to take on formal positions of leadership which needs strategizing. In the ARMM it was an achievement for MP Alamia that she led the ARMM as executive secretary after 29 years when it was headed by a man. However, since the ARMM was abolished, the BARMM started from zero. MP Alamia narrated, "It was challenging for me that I wanted to resign since 2019. I would speak out openly in the BARMM and when I talked about the

'elephant in the room', I was surprised that the others reacted to me and other Moro women also remained unmuted, not offering support." Despite the challenges of being identified with the ARMM and belonging to the minority, MP Alamia realized that she needed to step back, be quiet, reflect, and choose her battles. She said, "In the myriad of issues, I learned to focus on transitional justice which is a common need and non-debatable, but includes the issues of women and children. I also filed a bill creating the Parliamentary Women's Caucus."

MP Alamia pensively said, "*Mangyayari ba talaga ang pagkakaisa?* (Can unity really happen?)?" Regardless, I do what I can do on my level. *Reresbakin ka man ng ibang kababaihan na "proxy-men"* (Even men or women who are 'proxy-men' retaliate) and do not want you to question, especially if the male leader has spoken, what drives me to continue what I am doing despite the attempts to mute me is my sense of responsibility. I focus on my 'why' which comes from my life experiences as a Moro woman."

MP Alamia knows herself as a very optimistic person. She said, "Although I can be removed in the BTA with the extension of the BARMM, she can still do her part as the OPAPP-appointed chair of the GPH Task Force for Decommissioned Combatants and their Communities (TFDCC). What is important for her is that all questions and recommendations are documented fully in black and white even if they are not immediately implemented. For pursuing my goals, my guiding principle is, 'What is the positive impact of the steps I am doing on others?' I do not lose focus of the needs of people whose lives are at stake and so I use my platform for them.

Another important question for me is, 'Will the impact of what I do be sustainable? I do not want band-aid solutions.'" Thus, her Office of the Minority Floor Leader (OMiFL) has taken steps towards building the first Bahay Pag-asa (House of

Hope) in the Bangsamoro region in Basilan last August 2021. Bahay Pag-asa is especially for children who are in conflict with the law and those who are orphans of war such as the children of the MILF, MNLF, Abu Sayaff who have surrendered.

MP Alamia shared that for her to remain unmuted despite the difficulties and lack of support from others, she needed to see things from a bigger perspective. She also needed to purposively mute herself so that those who were trying to mute her could also rest for a while. MP Alamia lamented, “The BTA was supposed to set up the codes and structures in the BARMM but sadly it is not ready with codes up to now. Up till now we don’t have the electoral code and the national government code. Our budget utilization for 2020 is very low. Thirty-six thousand ARMM staff were removed but we did not hire new ones.” Yet, MP Alamia is firm in her belief that regardless of the ambiguities and challenges, the act of muting and unmuting of women’s voices is dynamic, never static. “For me, even choosing to be muted temporarily is also an empowered choice,” she asserted.

(L. M. Alamia, personal communication, 29 September 2021)

Ms. Teresita “Ging” Quintos- Deles

First woman appointed as Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in 2003 - 2005 (under President Gloria Arroyo) and from 2010 -2016 (under President Benigno Aquino, Jr.)

“Why she is a pearl, whose price hath launched a thousand ships, and turned crowned kings to merchants.” – Shakespeare

En-gendering Peace

In the women’s movement in the Philippines, Ms. Teresita “Ging” Quintos-Deles and gender advocacy are synonymic. Back in the 1980’s when the struggle for women’s rights was at its peak, Ms. Deles co-founded PILIPINA and was in the forefront of gender education among civil society groups. In 1986, Ms. Deles began her engagement in peacebuilding, a staunch advocacy inextricably linked to gender as women and children are most vulnerable to war and violence. For Ms. Deles, bridging together two of her most precious advocacies, gender and peace, and the opportunity to bring them to fruition is a privilege she values to this day.

Having been the Secretary of OPAPP under President Benigno Aquino III from 2010-16, she keeps as memorable photos two significant events symbolic of unprecedented historical moments in peacebuilding in the country: the 2014 signing of the GPH-MILF Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro where there were five women on stage and the last negotiation in Kuala Lumpur where Ms. Deles tightly embraced Miriam Ferrer-Coronel at the conclusion of the peace talks.

As Ms. Deles emphasized, “It has always been my thing that women must play a specific role in the peace process because I know they would bring something of high measure to the peace table. As OPPAP secretary, I brought other women with me to play roles in the different peace processes under the watch of my office. At the beginning of talks with the MNLF in my first term at OPAPP, there were no

women on the side of the MNLF so I would ask them ‘Where are your women?’” She said that it was very fortunate that, prior to Miriam Ferrer as GPH chief negotiator, the GPH chief negotiator Atty. Marvic Leonen recruited young women to the GPH secretariat and legal team, including a young Moro woman as head of the legal team. She recounted the impact on the MILF negotiating team which, for the first time, brought in women to the negotiating room as advisers. The international community also helped to bring pressure on the MILF to keep up with the international standards set requiring women's participation in peace negotiations.

Ms. Deles also related how women on the side of the MILF were first brought into the room as 'advisers' to the MILF negotiating panel. One of them actually began to sit at the negotiating table to discuss particular issues, taking the place of a male panelist. The international community also helped to bring pressure on the MILF to keep up with the international standards set by the UN and other bodies regarding the participation of women in peace processes and in deciding security issues.

Ms. Deles has always wanted women to play concrete roles in the peace process. She explained in a powerpoint presentation on “Engendering the Bangsamoro Peace Process” which she delivered for the UN Senior-Level Training on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in Helsinki, Finland on November 2017, that there are very few women in Track 1 of peace processes due to: 1) traditional view of peace as security issue in a narrow sense (a military matter); 2) focus on the combatants and not on communities; on leaders, not on members; 3) male domination of usual institutions: military, bureaucracy, legislature, foreign service, religious institutions, 4) cultural and/or religious biases against women’s capacity and participation, and 5) men as appointing authority such that men know more men and

appoint more men.

Thus, to engender peace, the following steps were seriously taken: 1) moving away from traditional security to a broader view of peace and security (human security which necessitated multi-agency, multi-sectoral engagement considering the broadened negotiating agenda; 2) civilianizing the peace track which meant appointments from other fields of expertise, including from civil society and taking into account geographic and generational representation; 3) women appointing other women; 4) lobbying by women-led civil society peace movement to include gender agenda in peace talks and mechanisms; and 5) adoption of legal and institutional tools: national legislation, UN treaties/resolutions, National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 on WPS. In engendering the peace agreements, it is considered a milestone that the 2010 Terms of Reference is the first document that mentioned the special need to take into account the welfare and interests of women, citing UNSCR 1325 & 1820 and that the 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) also included in the list of basic rights of Bangsamoro residents the right of women to meaningful political participation and protection from all forms of violence. In the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), the following engendered provisions were included: 1) For the Annex on Power Sharing: Representation in the Assembly and in the Council of Leaders; Appropriate mechanisms for consultations; and Special development programs; 2) For the Annex on Wealth-Sharing: Allocation of at least 5% of all ODA funds received for programs and activities in accordance with a Gender and Development (GAD) plan; and 3) For the Annex on Normalization: Special socio-economic programs for MILF decommissioned women

auxiliary forces and Setting up of Trust Fund and adoption of criteria for eligible financing schemes.

For Ms. Deles, unmuting women's voices means recognizing that when women speak, they bring in a perspective that must be heard: "Women carry the heaviest burden of war and, therefore, in post-conflict discussions and decision, it is important that they don't disappear. In the Final Peace Agreement between the GPH and the MNLF, although it was strong in the development agenda, it channeled the promised rehabilitation and post-conflict development assistance through the base commands structure which were all led by men. MNLF communities would complain many years later that nothing had happened - there were no improvements in their lives. For her, the reason for this was because the women had been excluded. In the 2014 CAB between the GPH and MILF, the Annex on Normalization explicitly stated that women auxiliary combat units should be prioritized and women should play a role in the rehabilitation of conflict-affected communities.

According to Ms. Deles, what makes women effective in leadership is their holistic perspective. Even early on, peace movements were led by women. "From my experience, as a convenor of peace groups, my staying power kept the group together. As a convenor I did not have a set mind on many issues. I was very open to new perspectives and able to listen to others. Although my subordinates in OPAPP may think of me as strong-headed, I spend time exploring solutions with others, patient in listening to others. During my time, I did not provide the technical solutions for security as this has become a specialized arena of men, yet I can now see women catching up on this field. Although the core security institute has become a specialized arena dominated by men, there are more women entering the field. In the Bangsamoro peace process, National Security Agency Undersecretary Zen Brosas

served as GPH co-chair of the Normalization process which includes the decommissioning of firearms”, Ms. Deles related.

As to the unmuting of women’s voices, Ms. Deles shared her insight: “Unmuting is how we deal with issues. It is a meaningful act with a personal touch. I remember that Valentine's Day fell during one round of negotiations in Kuala Lumpur and our government panel and team, mostly women, decided to give heart-shaped chocolates to the MILF panel, who were all male. The MILF panel were caught off-guard. It changed the atmosphere.” Yet, gender inequality still exists. This means women are somehow culturally bound to patriarchy. Further, the political situation under the present administration is such that there is male toxicity and the fear to take a political stand. Peace advocates have become muted because they are afraid that, if they questioned or protested what was going on, they would be excluded.”

Ms. Deles added, “Women participation in peace and security cannot be independent of the political climate. Although the foundation of the peace process is strong, trusting and sustaining MILF’s cooperation and participation in peace work is the way to go. The fight for the next administration is to keep their eye on the ball.

The MILF is very clear on what they want. The women in these ideological groups are bringing change. Even the women from the other side or from other groups can be talked to. There is a way to reach out to them. Part of my arsenal is letting go of the need to know all. I just have the act of faith that everything will just happen and we contribute our small or big parts.”

When asked what keeps her going in her commitment to peacebuilding, she passionately shared: “What drives me to continue doing what I am doing are my

children. I want the world to be a better place for them. I am 72 and I have lived my life fully. I have made hard choices and did not turn my back on my commitment to peace because of faith and hope. I believe there will always be something I will be asked to do to play my part. I ask God, “What is my part? I am an actor of big narratives and I am supremely privileged. I just need to reflect and ask myself: Am I listening or catching God’s call?” (T. Q. Deles, personal communication, 14 August 2021)



Teresita Deles tightly embraces Chief Negotiator Miriam Coronel Ferrer during the conclusion of the peace talks in Kuala Lumpur.

Jasmin N. Galace, PhD

VP for Academic Affairs, and former Executive Director of the Center for Peace Education (CPE), Miriam College, Secretariat of the Women Engaged in Action on 1325

“A pearl is only a pearl once it’s out of its shell.”

– *Nigerian Proverb*

Women Count!

Women count for peace. Why women? The answer of Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace in a published *Inquirer* article in 2015 was very simple: “Women have historically been left out. It’s time they counted. They make up half of the population, after all. We cannot forever ignore what 50 percent of the world’s people have to say, especially in matters that concern peace and security in the public space.”

Peace cannot be separated from women’s issues. Upholding human dignity is connected to peace. Dr. Galace explained, “You cannot dissociate one from the other. In arms proliferation and gun violence, women become victims. If a man has a knife, he can rape one woman, but if he has a gun, he can rape the whole village.” According to her, gender violence is present in a culture of domination, hierarchy, and patriarchy.

Thus, women’s voices need to be unmuted. For Dr. Galace, to “unmute” means to listen to the voices of women who cannot articulate their perspectives, because the culture does not permit so. Women need to be heard and consulted. She shared, “In some webinars that I either facilitated or attended, I have heard men say that women have no place in leadership. UNSCR 1325 was very helpful, because it is in effect an international law which all member states of the UN are mandated to uphold. By mandating women’s participation in global frameworks such as the Magna Carta of Women and UNSCR 1325, I have something to hold on to. When they see that it

is part of the law what can they say? It's not just an opinion of someone else.”

Although Dr. Galace finds herself lucky that she has mingled with groups where the men were progressive thinkers, she has also encountered an instance where a man walked out and said, “What is so special about women that we are talking about you?” There were also incidents in our consultation seminars that men had frowned on women’s issues. Through the years, men became more open to women's participation and gender equality. Women also became braver to answer the questions of men without anger but with the intent to reach out and communicate. There has been an improvement through time as more women and men responded positively to gender-related peace issues.

Before the pandemic, the Center for Peace Education (CPE) was busy training women from far-flung areas on conflict resolution and mediation and how to handle interpersonal and community conflicts. However, the pandemic did not succeed in stalling their efforts. Women continued to monitor the peace and order situation in their communities and reported to CPE what is happening on the ground. However, Dr. Galace lamented, “The work has not intensified because of the situation right now. So, we're thinking of other ways to connect and reach out. For example, we're thinking of producing comic-type manuals with lots of illustration.

Words alone do not interest our audience. Virtual connection is also a major problem.” Dr. Galace emphasized, “To push for women's participation in the public space, they need to target and educate both women and men because men are the ones who make the decisions traditionally. Without the support of men, there will be resistance.” Dr. Galace recalls their success stories, “In the past administration, we trained the military, the Philippine army, in particular, on UNSCR 1325. And so, after

that, they started appointing women in leadership positions.” She believes that the Philippine army was generally receptive because they spoke to their leaders first. It was an awakening experience for them.

Despite the uncertainties of the present time, Dr. Galace sees a bright future for women’s participation in peacebuilding. She said, “It is not shining bright but still bright because many women have laid down the foundation already. The mindsets of both men and women have also changed. Transforming mindsets and attitudes does not happen overnight but through a series of events and experiences. The lobbying of civil society has helped a lot in moving forward women’s participation in peacebuilding. Through persistent messaging done through letters, emails, and social media campaigns international support for our work from foreign missions, such as Norway, UK, Australia, and Canada grew and intensified.”

Women’s groups work as a network. Thus, Dr. Galace is firm on the need to dialogue with one another. She shared, “I realize that dialogue is not a mere exchange of words. It also means giving each other space. Dialogue among women and beyond women’s issues is very important, otherwise, women can mute each other, too. To sustain peaceful relationships among women, sensitivity to each other’s space is very essential. Personal spaces have to be respected. I learned that important lesson, too.” She further emphasized, “To unmute women’s voices also means to unmute misunderstandings. It means unmuting fear and negativity, not just with men but among women as well. These dynamics are very challenging and not an easy task. Yet, it is part of the reality that every woman peacebuilder needs to face.”

(J.N. Galace, personal communication, 3 June 2021)

Ms. Samira Ali Gutoc

2019 TOWNS Awardee for Peace Advocacy

Member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission tasked to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law

“Perhaps the sea’s definition of a shell is the pearl.” – Khalil Gibran

Dream and Do

“Dear President, please do not blame the Maranaos. We would have wanted (you) to visit evacuation centers and see the mothers and children sleeping on floors and elderly survivors who continued fasting despite the odds.”

Ms. Samira Ali-Gutoc, 2019 TOWNS awardee for peace advocacy, wrote these words in a Rappler article, “The Day Marawi Died”, as a viral open letter to President Duterte on June 16, 2017, nearly one month after the Marawi siege on May 23, 2017. Ms. Gutoc started as a journalist where she documented her activism in an unconventional way. She was the editor of Moro Times, a national supplement inside Manila times where she chronicled her vision and dream for the Bangsamoro. This is how she communicated her thoughts as a woman peacebuilder. “I do not wait for peace talks. I travel from village to village, involved in informal peace talks,” she narrated. Ms. Gutoc has actually written many speeches and essays of her life experiences and she has brought them together in a compilation entitled, “Dream and Do.” When I asked her if “dream and do” is her mantra as a woman peacebuilder, she replied, “I am both a journalist and a worker. Yes, I dream but I put my dreams to work. The peace process is a process but you actually have to do something outside of that (formal) process. If you're going to wait for that process to end, many more people will die. So, I was aggressive enough to do the unconventional type of peacebuilding. I sat among men for discussions and even found myself by the feet of soldiers when women were not even supposed to face soldiers and policemen, ‘kasi

nakakahiya raw' (it was shameful). We actually founded a change movement that shifted those attitudes.” Ms. Gutoc realized that as a woman you can actually work with men on the presiding table and sit with soldiers at the checkpoint to educate them on human rights, clean up with them in their solid waste management program, or join them in the rehabilitation for Typhoon Yolanda. She stressed, “I am not going to wait for leadership to provide the policy framework for peace. One has to do something on the ground, in the community level. Yes, there are level of talks that are government to government but we also have to be also be engaged not just in the formal peace process on the bilateral and multilateral levels but also in the village level. For instance, in 2012, during the time of President Aquino III, we worked hard to change Marawi that used to be a cheating capital of Lanao del Sur to a transformed city where voting registration has been cleansed and around 300,000 guest voters had been removed in the voter’s list.

For Ms. Gutoc, “unmuting voices” means participation, being given the stage for decision-making where one is not a passive listener. She says, “For me, peace is not between the government and the MILF. The women who are victims of the conflict and “unpeace” must be able to say the impact of violence to them.” Ms.

Gutoc shared that the Bangasamoro is lucky to have sympathetic peace negotiators in Manila, Peace Secretary Deles and the OPAPP itself that was very supportive of Young Moro professionals who were engaged in conducting hundreds of peace seminars. It was also a momentous experience to be invited together with Cardinal Quevedo to interphase with Congress Speaker Belmonte on the Bangsamoro Organic Law. Although it was a sensitive moment because that was right after the Mamasapano encounter, being in Congress is in itself a high level of influence which diverted the legislators’ minds.

Ms. Gutoc further explained, “But the struggle in gender issues is from within the community itself. What is gender and how do we inject that in the peace process? We need women who will operationalize gender concerns. So, what is gender? For others, it is fulfilling your duty as a wife to your husband. That is the basic level of discourse, not even political realities. Thus, unmuting means unmuting ourselves from cultural practices that view women and younger people as inferior.

The struggle of gender relations is within the Bangsamoro itself. This issue is generational and is related to governance.” She noted that even if MILF may have an outstanding leader, it is still an elite institution with 40,000 men with their own views about gender. So, it is not just about one leader representing all.

In the midst of the ambiguities of the peace process with the global pandemic, Ms. Gutoc shared that the more they are investing on peacebuilding at the present time. They know that they are running against the current because the more everything is quiet, the more one knows that the tentacles of unrest are just sleeping and can attack at the most unexpected moment. She explained, “The presence of many armed groups in Southern Philippines is proven by International Alert research. The non-support of the present administration for peace talks has a big impact for violence to erupt. And we know that the bombing of one place connects to the whole country. The pain of one locality connects to the pain of everyone in the Philippines.”

Ms. Gutoc envisions that although there are still many gaps in women participation in peacebuilding, women of today are inheriting the grand vision of the women of the past. She expressed, “I am hopeful not just in the spiritual sense but I know that the 12-year olds of today like Greta Thumberg will rise above the occasion. So, in the same way, there will be 9-year old or 12-year old Muslim girls

who can show that by studying hard, they can break barriers and be the first police officer of the family or ('whatever first'). This would be symbolic of the peace process. That counts a lot in a 'tiktok' manner where a 30-second video is the story of the day. There is a lot of outpouring of Muslim women now who are taking the lead. They are not accepting tradition as the sole basis of their life. Tradition can either be positive or negative. There are some aspects of (Muslim) tradition that are good. For example, women as holders of the wallet, purchasers, and decision-makers can be turned around so women use those platforms for change. Clan decisions for women to study by pouring financial support is good because everyone takes pride in the success of their family members like having the first doctor of the family.”

What continues to drive Ms. Gutoc in her passion for peacebuilding is her youth and belief that Islam is very progressive. She narrated, “Even as a child, I was already curious, writing letters to the editor. My foreign exposure, my college activism, and these so-called awards and recognitions, I carry them to heart. The awards are simply accidental but I am taking the chance of turning them to something real. Logistics may be a limitation, but whatever limits there are, I always see the possibility of limitless limit, the limitlessness amidst limitations.”

(S. Gutoc, personal communication, 7 July 2021)

Ms. Yasmin B. Lao

Secretary of the National Commission of [Muslim Filipinos (NCMF)]and member of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPNP-MILF) from 2010-2016

“As a pearl is formed and its layers grow, a rich iridescence begins to glow...”
– Susan C. Young

Coming Home to Myself

*“I ask the entire nation, and the entire world, to join me in imagining:
A Mindanao finally free from strife, where people achieve their fullest potential. A child in Lamitan will be offered the same education as a child in Quezon City; the sick of Patikul will gain access to the same healthcare as those in Pasig; tourists visiting Boracay will also have Sulu in their itineraries; a businessman will earn a profit whether he sets up shop in Marikina or Marawi. . . From constant displacement, there will be now a stable employment. Children who have had to witness immeasurable suffering will now get to witness a harvest; sons and daughters who have had to sweep bullet casings from their yards will now get to pick fruit . . . Together, we move forward with a conviction to lift each other, so that in turn, our nation may grow and reach greater heights.”*

Ms. Yasmin Busran-Lao recalls herself being in tears as these words were being uttered during the presidential speech of then President Benigno Simeon “Nonoy” Aquino III on October 15, 2012 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia during the signing of the Framework of Agreement on the Bangsamoro. At that time, she was the Secretary of the National Commission of Muslim Filipinos and member of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPNP-MILF). During my conversation with her, she shared with me this meaningful

memoir as a peace negotiator under the Aquino administration.

Peace is very precious to Ms. Lao and particularly during that event, what really touched her was the sincerity of both parties to come together not with the labels of “president” and “rebel group”, but as brothers and sisters who have the deepest desire for the war to end. She considers the Bangsamoro process as a global model that showed that with political will and sincerity, building pathways to peace, no matter how painstaking, is not impossible after 50 years of protracted war. Although she laments that hundreds of thousands who were killed during those 50 years of conflict, still she rejoices that a peace agreement has been finally signed between the two warring parties—the MILF and the Philippine government. Among the crucial elements that made it possible was the participation of women who played a critical center stage at that time. She said, “Teresita Quintos-Deles was the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer was the chief negotiator of the peace panel of the government, the heads of the legal team and 60% of its support staff, the head of the secretariat, three of the four heads of Technical Working Groups which negotiated the CAB Annexes, the Co-chair of the Normalization Committee, and the GPH representatives in three of the four independent bodies created by the CAB. The presence and support of the international community and the Malaysian third party facilitator Tengku Dato Ab Ghafar Tengku Mohamed, were also very significant to facilitate the peace agreement.”

Growing up in Marawi city, the seat of Christian-Muslim conflict, Ms. Lao’s participation as a Muslim woman in peacebuilding emanated from a primordial personal reason: “Coming home to myself.” Ms. Lao expressed that she needed to make life meaningful to her by vowing to help build a better Marawi. During her

peacebuilding involvement, it was significant to her that the head of the negotiating panel was a woman after all those years that it had always been a man. It was good that leadership positions in peace work during her term were chosen not on the basis of gender but on capability. Although she herself experienced that her loyalty to the Bangsamoro was questioned as having been chosen to represent the government panel negotiating with the Bangsamoro, she proved her sincerity through her dedicated work for peace.

For Ms. Lao, “unmuting of voices” in peacebuilding means letting the voice of the marginalized be heard. It means setting aside gender prejudice and allowing women communities to talk to both warring parties involved. In 2007, she recalled, “I was in a car with all men one early morning as we went off for an important mission in the hinterlands of Lanao del Norte to talk to Commander Bravo to seek his support for a ceasefire agreement to be in place. She said, “Commander Bravo needed to listen to me because I worked in the evacuation centers and I know what it means to lose homes and loved ones and *“mag-bakwit ulit”* (evacuate again). And he did. I felt at that time, while being surrounded by men, that women can push peace forward and not be side-lined in the decision-making process for peace.”

Fast forward five years later after her term as part of the government peace panel that ended in 2016, she envisions the future of women participation in peace and security as bright and hopeful. She said, “When the Bangsamoro Transition Authority was formed, improving the lives of the Bangsamoro people which is work in progress, everyone saw it from different perspectives: for some a glass half-full, and for others, a glass half-empty.” For her, in whatever way we look at it, however, women cannot be set aside and excluded. Women are the best speakers of their own lives. Every woman is uniquely her own although women in general come from

the same gender. Therefore, consultation is important. Let every women community emanate as its own kind, speaking their own voice.” For Ms. Lao, it is disempowering for her to speak on behalf of other women.

What drives Ms. Lao to continue doing what she has been doing is her faith. It gives her sense of meaning knowing that peace is the only choice. She refuses to accept the status quo of violence. However, she has learned to be grounded on the distinction between aspirational vs. pragmatic peace. Aspirational approach to peace means ensuring all historical injustices are addressed. A pragmatic approach means that although we cannot address fully the land dispossession of the Bangsamoro, co-existence is possible. It means putting the systems in place so as not to aggravate the problem. Yet transitional justice must be there which includes gender justice. “We need to address the grievances of hurt, including violence against women. The guarantee of non-occurrence of past injustices is an assurance that will heal the wounds of the Bangsamoro people and help them move forward. This truth cannot be escaped: The success of the Bangsamoro is the success of the whole nation. And its failure is our collective failure as a Filipino nation,” she stressed.

After many years of untiring commitment to peacebuilding, Ms. Lao harped on her primordial mantra and ended with this note: “Peace for me is ‘coming home’. So deeply ingrained, I will never ever let go of that!”

(Y.B. Lao, personal communication, 1 June 2021)



2012 Signing of the Framework of Agreement on the Bangsamoro

Gloria J. Mercado, PhD

Cabinet Assistant Secretary, 2016-2018

Executive Director of OPAPP 2018-2019

Chairperson of the GPH-MILF Peace Accord 2018-2019

Undersecretary, Office of Streamlining Government Processes, Office of the President

“What strikes the oyster shell, doesn’t damage the pearl.” – Rumi

Soaring Higher

“Women were segregated from the men. The men in front spoke. The women at the back were quiet. Yet, lunch break was a heart-filled chatter of women’s stories. No, women were not muted.”

Dr. Gloria Jumamil-Mercado began to narrate her journey in Camp Bilal in 2018, the dreaded territory of Commander Bravo with a distinct memory. At that time, she was the Undersecretary of OPAPP and the new Chair of the Government Implementing Panel of the GPH-MILF peace accords. She planned for the consultation sessions with the Bangsamoro people right in the camps where they were so she could have spatial appreciation of how they lived, not just relying on physical maps which are essential for planning the normalization process more specifically the camp transformation of the six (6) acknowledged MILF camps. She came back awed and inspired by the way Commander Bravo managed the community very well such as its waste segregation system. She knew it was quite risky and some of her friends said that it was foolish of her to travel to those camps but she felt that that it was the right thing to do. Having good predecessors in OPAPP like former Peace Adviser Teresita Q. Deles and Chief Negotiator Miriam C. Ferrer, she felt she needed to build on what they started in the Bangsamoro peace process. To accomplish this, she wanted to be closer to the Bangsamoro people.

Dr. Mercado grew up in a family environment where women and girls were allowed to shine on their own. From 2016-2018, Dr. Mercado was designated as Deputy Cabinet Secretary by then Cabinet Secretary Leoncio 'Jun' B. Evasco Jr. while concurrently being the Executive Director and Undersecretary of the Performance and Projects Management Office at the Office of the Cabinet Secretary. In 2018, she was requested to join the peace government panel under Secretary Jesus 'Jess' Dureza. She warmed up easily with Chair Iqbal of the MILF. During the first panel meeting, she requested for a pre-meeting with Chair Iqbal to humanize some of the contentious issues in the agreement. During their lunch with Chair Iqbal, he teased and gave a compliment that women are really powerful because they have a special way of communicating with men, alluding to Dr. Mercado's predecessors, too. Alongside her government role in peacebuilding, she also lobbied for women generals in the Armed Forces of the Philippines — Army, Air Force, and Navy through the NGO she founded, WiNDS (Women in National Development and Security). She learned to play golf so she would be able to talk to the men between holes. Her intense lobbying efforts bore fruit. General Ramona Go became the first woman general of AFP in 2010. Brig. Gen. Emma Ignacio, the first woman pilot, became a general in 2018. In the navy, Dr. Mercado became the first female Commodore herself of the Philippine Navy Reserve in 2017. In the active service of the Philippine Navy, the first female commodore was Luz Camacho in 2020.

Dr. Mercado recalls that her engagement as a women peacebuilder was an uphill climb. To a large extent, she had to swim among the male generals. She felt her vulnerability at that time. She felt alone, not feeling the support of other women. There were times when she felt that although she is from the government, a man like Chair Iqbal from the Bangsamoro was even more supportive of her. Her work was

fulfilling but it was a lonely advocacy. She helped Chair Iqbal and the BARMM in the normalization advocacy backed with adequate research. However, it was not easy because issues on transitional justice and reconciliation are not in the language of the military. Injustices against women had to be addressed to ensure the non-occurrence of these violent acts but they were not very receptive.

In this regard, when it came to issues on gender and peace, she observed that not only voices are muted by violence, but acts of generosity and decisions as well. Not just women, but entire families were also ostracized just because of their identification with red-tagged groups. Physical and financial help extended to them were muted simply because of the prejudices against these families. But having been to Marawi, the fire to do something to reach out and help was constant-- a glowing ember inside Dr. Mercado in her desire to “unmute” everyone regardless of religion, gender, age, and ideology. She said, “Even military men, too, have to be unmuted of their structural rigidities that prevent them to take risk and be more courageous in the innovative ways of peacebuilding and bringing about normalization.”

Dr. Mercado’s realization is that muting and unmuting oneself as a woman peacebuilder is a deep personal decision. From her experience, no matter how strong she felt she was as a woman, at a certain point, she also allowed herself to be muted by the men in uniform around her. She recalled, “There were two major reasons for this: self-preservation and sanity. There was a point when I consciously decided to just quietly leave my post. I needed to recoup myself emotionally. It was a difficult moment. I felt a deep burn-out. I had spent 42 years of my career in government but I had to let go.”

Dr. Mercado expressed, "Muting is not just a personal issue but also a structural one. In our society, there are institutional authorities who are perceived to be 'muting triggers' that constrict us to do right actions. To a great extent, the perceived authority of men can mute the voices of women."

In the midst of the global pandemic, structural decisions also matter. She said, "Due to the concern about the Covid-19 vaccination, the peace process had been left behind. The general who is assigned to the peace process is also the same general assigned to oversee the vaccination. So, the peace process has not been put forward as the first priority."

She believes, however, that if the present administration has a preference for engaging the military in the peace process, then the women in the military can be tapped for peace work. It would make a big difference. "Yet to do this, we need to find champions among the men. We have to work with the male leaders to put forward women's issues. This is still our cultural limitation," she lamented.

Despite the odds, Dr. Mercado considers being a woman peacebuilder as a life vocation. "It becomes challenging when you have to work with people who do not have the same trajectory for peace as you. It is important that all those working for peace are standing on the same platform. Peace is not just negative peace. It is not just the absence of war. Military people focus on negative peace which is why there is emphasis on physical security. Positive peace is important," she stressed.

Dr. Mercado recounted, "To be honest, there were moments that I regretted my decision to be muted. I was very silent about my experience for several months. But I realized that every moment of our life is a building block. So, when you invited me as a key participant to your dissertation, I thought that this may be the right time for me to speak as a woman peace advocate. In the space of my long silence, I have

recouped myself. I am now building my wings again . . . this time to soar higher!” (G. J. Mercado, personal communication, 5 July 2021)

DFA Conducts “Women in Peacekeeping” Forum in Manila



PHOTO: Female peacekeepers – a force to reckon with in keeping the peace. Major General Kristin Lund (front row, third from left), the first woman to serve as Force Commander in a United Nations peacekeeping operation graced the “Women in Peacekeeping” forum held at the Department of Foreign Affairs on 06 June 2019. She was joined by her fellow speakers: (front row, from left) Police Colonel Portia Manalad, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) Undersecretary Gloria Jumamil-Mercado, UN Resident Coordinator Ola Almgren, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Peacekeeping Operations Center Commanding Officer Colonel Oriel Pangcog, and Navy Captain Luzviminda Camacho. (OSCP photo)



Dr Mercado in the MILF Dialogue with Women in Butig affected by Marawi Siege

Ms. Irene M. Santiago

Member of the Philippine Government peace panel negotiating with the MILF from 2001-2004

Chair of the Government Implementing Panel for the Bangsamoro Peace Accord 2016

“From a grain of sand in the Pearl comes.” – Confucius

Women: The Critical Yeast

Ms. Irene “Inday” M. Santiago signed the ceasefire agreement with the Bangsamoro in 2007. As one of her most memorable experiences of engaging in the Bangsamoro peace process, she related, “During President Arroyo’s administration, Jess Dureza was the chair of the peace negotiating panel. My “unmuting” began when he sought my help and I told him pointedly, ‘Jess, I will not sit behind you. I will sit beside you. Let me be a full member of the panel.’ So, it happened! Regarded as “value-added” to the panel, Ms. Santiago was a voice to be listened to, not just on gender issues but also on security issues. She studied security matters and made herself an expert on ceasefire agreements. She said, “If one is seen only as a single-issue gender expert, one is very quickly marginalized. It is important to build one’s expertise in the issues on the table, such as security. Thus, I developed expertise on ceasefire mechanisms. But beyond developing expertise, there is also a need to make sure one is taken seriously, and this is where having a constituency mattered.” In amusement, she recounted, “I remember it was a turbulent time with the MILF because they did not want to be under the Philippine government. But when we were all in Malaysia, President Arroyo was going there, too, and wanted to sign an agreement and so Jess told me to be ready with the signing of the ceasefire agreement. With the unexpected turn of events, the ceasefire agreement was signed and I was a signatory to that.”

Ms. Santiago was also the first woman who chaired the implementation of the peace process in 2016. Her experience of many years of organizing gave her the skill and the courage to speak her mind. Through the women's movement, she learned to analyze and be confident. Through time, she learned peacebuilding, inside and out and developed her own framework of the three barriers to peace that needed to be overcome: 1) conceptual, 2) technical, and 3) political. Initially, these three peace barriers, according to her, seemed difficult to overcome because they are taken as "givens." For the conceptual barrier, for instance, because peace negotiation has always been seen as putting an end to war, women have been excluded since it is the men who engage in war. For the technical barrier, women need to be more educated on security matters. Yet at the same time, the understanding of peace and security needs to be reframed because human security is mainly viewed as physical security. However, human security is also about economic security, health, and psychological security, especially of those affected by war. For the political barrier, women need to be prepared for public leadership.

Ms. Santiago brought significant contribution to women participation in the peace process by founding the Mindanao Commission on Women in 2001. Many providential events happened to Ms. Santiago since then that surround her trailblazing role in peacebuilding. She narrated with amusement one specific incident. "In 2018, I was invited to be a keynote speaker and cut the ribbon for the inauguration of Abreeza Mall in Davao City. In that same inauguration, Mayor Sara Duterte was there. Only later did I find out that since we were both "Inday S"—Inday Santiago and Inday Sara, the staff was confused and so, the two "Inday S" were invited and came to the event!"

She recounted, "Mayor Sara and I shared the same stage! But that was no

ordinary coincidence. A week later, she asked me to lead the negotiating panel with the New People's Army in Paquibato, the killing fields of Davao. By designing the entire initiative for local peacebuilding in a locality with a population of 40 thousand in 14 barangays, occupying 67,000 hectares of ancestral domain, the people, especially the women, started to have a voice. "Peace 911" first addressed fear and hunger in the community as a way of addressing what the people articulated as their immediate needs. The women were trained to do container gardening which was successful because it was compatible with their gender roles. For example, they could tend to their gardens while preparing children for school and cooking breakfast. On May 2019, Paquibato was considered clear of the NPAs and "Peace 911" was institutionalized as the Center for Peacebuilding through a local ordinance. The Center will engage the entire city in building the "8 Pillars of Positive Peace" as a way of building a peaceful society: 1) A well-functioning government, 2) Low levels of corruption, 3) Acceptance of the rights of others, 4) Good relations with our neighbors, 5) Sound business environment, 6) High levels of human capital, 7) Equitable distribution of resources, and 8) Free flow of information. Ms. Santiago's mantra for unmuting is "participate at the table, on the table, and turn the table." She further explained, "Participating at the table means engagement and inclusion. Exclusion is actually one of the major forms of muting women. 'On the table' means ensuring that women's agenda and perspectives are taken into serious consideration. 'Turning the table' means transforming inequality – in opportunities, assets and access – that is at the root of violent conflict. Often people say that 'peace is development and development is peace.' It is not so. Many times, it is the type of development that has led to violent conflict. It is therefore, important to make clear the distinction between peacebuilding and development although both are processes. Peacebuilding is the

process of increasing connectors and decreasing dividers so that development can occur. Development is the process of increasing capacities and decreasing vulnerabilities so that people can expand their choices to lead long, happy lives.”

What drives Ms. Santiago as a woman peacebuilder is that peacebuilding is not a job for her, but her life. She expressed, “Peacebuilding is my life purpose and this is my reason for waking up every morning. Beyond my own family is the bigger global human family that I am serving. Having been blessed with expertise and experience, nothing can stop me now. She continued emphatically, “To unmute is to find your own voice and when you find it, you don’t stop nor should you mute your own self. Anyone from society and societal norms themselves may want to mute you but you should not listen. Always consider that you are not alone and that you are doing peace work with others. As John Paul Lederach said, “It is the critical yeast that makes the dough rise. For me, women are the critical yeast.” Ms. Santiago added, “I always tell women: “Name it or you can’t have it. So naming is a very important empowering act.” One of the functions of leadership is to inspire because one must have hope in order to find the courage to act.

Ms. Santiago added, “Creativity is essential to a peacemaker and peacebuilder because expanding people’s choices to lead long and happy lives is the aim of human existence. Being able to find different options is a big part of the process of unmuting. I was effective when I stopped looking at things as “either/or” and worked on “and” which considers what connects people rather than what divides them.”

Ms. Santiago believes that culture is not static. It can change and that is where the “unmuting” plays a big role in its transformation. In fact, according to her, not just women are muted. Even men are muted, too. She explained, “Unmuting is

about self-awareness. And unless men and women become self-aware, they will remain unmuted.” She recounted a special experience, “I ran a series of seminars for the police. And one day, a policeman came up to me and said, ‘I now understand where my violent instincts are coming from.’ This is the unmuting process through self-awareness. The 30 policemen I trained told me that the seminar was ‘paradigm shifting and life-changing’ for them. This makes us understand that violence against women is really a men’s issue, not just a women’s issue. It is all about the issue of power.” And what is power for Ms. Santiago? “Power is the potency to act for what is good. Capacity. Action. Value. In brief, power is to be transformative,” she underscored. (I.M Santiago, personal communication, 8 July 2021)

CHAPTER V

MY DIALOGUE WITH THE PEARL: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

“It is the hour of pearl—the interval between day and night when time stops and examines itself.” – John Steinbeck

The bond of every oyster shell to the pearl is intimate. While the sea of lived world of humanity is vast and can be left unnoticed, the world of the oyster in relation to the pearl is up close and personal. Too, my bond with the pearl—my dialogue with “peace” was a moment of interiority. I engaged in a dialogue with peace as my “other” that is inseparable from my “I-thou” intersubjective encounter with every woman peacebuilder-participant. Thus, peace spoke to me in various languages, tones, and decibels through these women’s “voices” illuminated in this chapter on the results and discussion of findings of the study.

My dialogue with my pearl of peace was a transcendental experience of exploring my inner consciousness, a sustained and continuous process of unlimited discovery, taking from the profound experiences of women peacebuilder- participants who were key players in the Bangsamoro peace process. Interweaving the hermeneutic phenomenological research method of Van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), I traversed six stages, not to be taken as a strict set of procedures, but rather as steps for inventiveness and insight. These stages are:

Stage 1: Immersion: Turning to the nature of lived experience

Stage 2: Investigating lived experience and identifying first order constructs

Stage 3: Reflecting on essential themes and abstraction by identifying second order constructs

Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development: Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting

Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena: Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon

Stage 6: Integration and refining the Themes: Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole

Stage 1: Immersion: Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience

Absorbed in the lived experiences of the women peacebuilders by intently listening to their narratives, the voice of peace spoke to me through their commitment grounded on their deep passion for peace as their life mission. Here below is my sensemaking and phenomenological reflection on the echoes and whispers from the unmuted voices of these women peacebuilders clustered in common threads of conversation themes:

1. Peacebuilding digs deep into a woman peacebuilder's inner core.

More than just simply performing a job or a role, all women peacebuilders expressed how peace work is deeply connected to their inner convictions and commitment. Peacebuilder Y. Lao, driven by her Islam faith and belief that peace is the only choice, looks forward to the day that *“sons and daughters who have had to sweep bullet casings from their yards will now get to pick fruit”* as quoted from President Benigno Aquino III's speech during the signing of the Framework of Agreement on the Bangsamoro. Likewise, Peacebuilder S. Gutoc passion is driven by her belief that Islam is very progressive and carries that to heart. Peacebuilder L. Alamia declared that due to the discrimination of the Moros, she feels she has the moral responsibility to show she is a good person, “not barbaric, unschooled or uneducated.” Peacebuilder T. Deles stressed she has never turned her back on

her commitment to peace because of faith and hope. Coming from her Christian faith, she believes that there will always be something that God will ask her to do to play her part. She continues to do what she does for peace because she wants to build a better world to live in for the sake of her children. For Peacebuilder J. Galace, she sees a bright future for women in peacebuilding because the foundation has been laid down albeit the challenges. Galace, herself, has deeply realized that to unmute women's voices is to unmute misunderstandings which is not easy whether it is between men and women or even among women themselves. Peacebuilder I. Santiago expressed that peacebuilding is not a job but her life. It is her life purpose and this is the reason she wakes up every morning. Her family extends to the bigger human family that she believes she is called to serve. Peacebuilder G. Mercado lamented a time in her peacebuilding work when she regretted giving up a professional post because of burn-out. However, she has realized that every moment of her life is a leveling up for her wings of peace to soar higher.

2. Unmuting one's voice in peacebuilding as a woman is dynamic, moving through varying degrees and forms of muting and unmuting.

While it is true that muting may come from fear, some women peacebuilders expressed that muting their voices at some point in their involvement was a decisive strategy to retreat, reflect, and recharge. Thus, on one hand, their silent response to conflict was purposive. On the other hand, there were situations from the stories of women peacebuilders when keeping mum was a "flight" reaction to threat of male dominance, that sometimes segues into a "fighting" mode of indignation.

Peacebuilder L. Alamia narrated that at the beginning, she aggressively argued

and confronted the men (and women whom she described as “proxy-men”) head-on. Then she realized that she needed to step back, be quiet, reflect, and choose her battles. In the myriad of issues, she learned to focus on crucial yet non-debatable issues such as transitional justice. Likewise, Peacebuilder G. Mercado shared as hindsight that there is always a ripe time to speak. There were moments when she chose not to speak as she swam with male generals because she needed some silent space to recoup herself and gain more power.

For Peacebuilder L. Alamia, to remain unmuted despite the difficulties and lack of support from other women, she needed to see things from a bigger perspective. At times she decisively chose to mute herself so that those who were trying to mute her would also “rest” and calm down.

3. Beyond the act of muting and unmuting, there is the cultural context of letting one’s voice be heard.

Cultural context is crucial to understand why some women may be muted in formal public spheres but unmuted in informal safe spaces of family and friends. Peacebuilder G. Mercado recalled a situation when in Camp Bilal the Moro women were separated from the men and only the men spoke. Yet, during lunch break there was an endless chatter of women sharing their stories with her. This means safe spaces are important for women to unmute their voices publicly. Women feel safe in the presence of other women. This explains why the strategy of “women bringing other women” worked in peace negotiations. Further, for Peacebuilder L. Alamia, the context of unmuting her voice is the commitment to provide a platform and focus to address the needs of people whose lives are at stake.

Stage 2: Investigating Lived Experience and Identifying First Order Constructs

The women participants' own words and their interpretations, referred to as first-order constructs, capture precise details of their experiences. The direct quotations categorized below address the main research question: How do women peacebuilders make sense of their experience and unmute their voices in peace processes in the context of gender relations, language, and culture and tradition?

On Gender Relations

WPGutoc: "What is gender and how do we inject that in the peace process? We need women who will operationalize gender concerns. So what is gender? For others, it is fulfilling your duty as a wife to your husband. That is the basic level of discourse, not even political realities.

WPAlamia: "Mangyayari ba talaga ang pagkakaisa? (Can unity really happen?)" Regardless, I do what I can do on my level. Reresbakin ka man ng ibang kababaihan na "proxy-men" (Even men or women who are 'proxy-men' retaliate) and do not want you to question, especially if the male leader has spoken, what drives me to continue what I am doing despite the attempts to mute me is my sense of responsibility. I focus on my 'why' which comes from my life experiences as a Moro woman.

WPSantiago: "Actually violence against women is a men's issue, not just a women's issue. It is all about power. And what is power for me? Power is the potency to act for what is good through capacity, action and values. In brief, power is to be transformative."

WPGalace: "Women have also become braver to communicate without indignation."

WPGutoc: “As a woman you can actually work with the men on the presiding table and sit with soldiers at the checkpoint to educate them on human rights, clean up with them in their solid waste management program, or join them in the rehabilitation for Typhoon Yolanda.”

WPMercado: “In our society, there are institutional authorities who are perceived to be ‘muting triggers’ that constrict us to do right actions. To a great extent, the perceived authority of men can mute the voices of women. So, even military men have to unmute their human goodness and let go of their structural rigidities to open up to creative ways of building peace.”

WPDeles: “It has always been my thing that women must play a specific role in the peace process because I know they would bring something of high measure to the peace table. In the big ceremonies where I spoke, it was very essential that they listened to a woman’s voice.”

On Language

Unmuting women’s voices in peacebuilding take many language forms, as gleaned from the women research participants. These language modes were experienced as complementary to each other in peacebuilding work.

Some used the **language of law** as an effective entry point:

WPGalace: “When one quotes from the Magna Carta of Women and UNSCR 1325, it puts more teeth to one’s discourse because then it’s not just an opinion of someone else.”

In the same breath, Peacebuilder MP Alamia developed an evidence-based four-prong approach in their gender training, the two of which are law-based:

WPAlamia: “Contextualize the lived realities of women at the community level (What acts of discrimination are they suffering from? What are these traditional,

formal and informal practices that are harmful for women and girls?), then juxtapose it with international human rights conventions (e.g. CEDAW, NAP-WPS, CRC), domestic laws and policies (e.g. the Constitution, women's national human rights laws, and the Code of Muslim Personal Laws), and an analysis of Islamic law using the primary sources of Shari'a law (i.e. Qur'an, Hadith/Sunnah of the Prophet) as applicable (Do these practices violate the universal principles and values espoused in the Qur'an? Are these practices violative of international human rights conventions, the Constitution and domestic laws?).

The **language of community engagement** also created greater impact:

WPGutoc: "I was aggressive enough to do the unconventional type of peacebuilding. I sat among men for discussions and even found myself by the feet of soldiers when women were not even supposed to face soldiers and policemen, 'kasi nakakahiya raw' (because it was considered shameful)."

WPMercado: "I planned for the consultation sessions with the Bangsamoro people right in the camps where they were so there could be spatial appreciation of how they lived, not just relying on physical maps which are essential for planning the normalization process. I came back awed and inspired by the way Commander Bravo managed the community very well even with its waste segregation system."

WPGutoc: "I do not wait for peace talks. I travel from village to village, involved in informal peace talks. . . I am not going to wait for leadership to provide the policy framework for peace. One has to do something on the ground, in the community level. Yes, there are level of talks that are government to government but we also have to be also be engaged not just in the formal peace process on the bilateral and multilateral levels but also in the village level."

WP Deles: "Women's successful involvement in the peace process is more

than just having a woman chief negotiator battling for important provisions in the peace agreement. Beyond the peace talks, women engagement in the peace process had a personal impact for me.”

The language of creative human connection was another level of communication:

WPDeles: “I remember that Valentine’s Day fell during one round of negotiations in Kuala Lumpur and our government panel and team, mostly women, decided to give heart-shaped chocolates to the MILF panel, who were all male. The MILF panel were caught off-guard. It changed the atmosphere.”

WPMercado: “During my first lunch with Chair Iqbal, he teased and complimented that he finds the women in the panel very powerful because they have a special way of communicating and dealing with the MILF.”

WPSantiago: “Creativity is essential to a peacemaker and peacebuilder because expanding people’s choices to lead long and happy lives is the aim of human existence. Being able to find different options is a big part of the process of unmuting. I was effective when I stopped looking at things as “either/or” and worked on “and” which considers what connects people rather than what divides them.

WPGalace: “We’re thinking of other ways to connect and reach out. For example, we’re thinking of producing comic-type manuals with lots of illustration. Words alone do not interest our audience.”

WPGutoc: “I am both a journalist and a worker. I dream but I put my dreams to work. The peace process is a process but you actually have to do something outside of that (formal) process. If you’re going to wait for that process to end, many more people will die.”

The **language of persuasion** through shared interests was also effective:

WPLao: “I was in a car with all men one early morning, off to an important mission to travel to hinterlands of Lanao del Norte and talk to Commander Bravo to fully respect the ceasefire agreement. Commander Bravo needed to listen to me because I worked in the evacuation center and I know what it means to lose homes and loved ones and *“mag-bakwit ulit”* (evacuate again). And he did. I felt at that time while being surrounded by men that women can push peace forward and not be sidelined in the decision-making process for peace.”

WPDeles: “From my experience, as a convenor of peace groups, my staying power kept the group together. As a convenor I did not have a set mind on many issues. I was very open to new perspectives and able to listen to others. Although my subordinates in OPAPP may think of me as strong-headed, I spend time exploring solutions with others, patient in listening to others.”

WPAlamia: “In the myriad of issues, I focus on transitional justice which is a common need and not debatable, but includes the issues of women and children. I also filed a bill creating the Parliamentary Women’s Caucus.”

The **language of collaboration** of all genders was also well-spoken of:

WPSantiago: “I was once asked what I would tell a young Irene Santiago. I said that I would tell her to work with men, too, although I recognize that for women to find their voice there needs to be the temporary exclusion of men. Liberating the consciousness of both women and men about the oppression both suffer from although differently is the first step toward transforming patriarchy. Power has to be re-defined from dominance and superiority to this: Power is the potency to act for what is good. Capacity. Action. Value. That kind of power is transformative”.

WPGalace: “Without the support of men, there will be resistance to women’s participation. In the past administration, we were able to train the military, the Philippine army in particular, on UNSCR 1325. After that, they started appointing women in leadership positions.” We need to find champions among the men. We have to work with the male leaders to put forward women’s issues. This is still our cultural limitation.”

WPDeles: “As a OPPAP secretary, I brought other women with me. In our first meetings with the MNLF during my first term as head of the peace office, there were no women on their side of the peace table and so I would ask them, ‘Where are your women?’”

The language of silent spaces was evident, too, in some of the peacebuilders:

WPAlamia: “For me, even choosing to be muted temporarily is also an empowered choice.”

WPMercado: “In the space of my long silence, I have recouped myself. I am building my wings again . . . this time to soar higher!”

On Culture and Tradition

WPLao: “As violence is associated with culture of domination, hierarchy, and patriarchy, change in cultural habits, behaviors, and traditions must take place.”

WPAlamia: “Moro women were voiceless at the beginning. Although they could speak in their community, they needed to be capacitated on how to speak and communicate their advocacies. “Quality” young women can only come from “quality” parents who do not marry them off at a very young age.”

WPGutoc: “Unmuting means unmuting ourselves from cultural practices that view women and young people as inferior.”

WPAlamia: “The giving of the dowry or mahr, which is an essential requisite of

marriage under Shari'a law, is traditionally received (and taken) by the parents when they betroth their daughter to a man, thus, this becomes one of the reasons why they marry off their daughters at a very young age – the dowry is seen as a way out of poverty. However, under Shari'a law, the dowry is supposed to be a gift to the bride herself and should not be considered as a bride price.”

WPGutoc: “I am hopeful that the 12-year old children of today like Greta Thunberg will rise above the occasion. So, in the same way, there will be 9-year old or 12-year old Muslim girls who can show that by studying hard, she can break barriers and be the first police officer of her family or ('whatever first'). This would be symbolic of the peace process.”

WPGutoc: “The culture of corruption shifted in Marawi: During the time of President Benigno Aquino III, in 2012, we worked hard to change Marawi that used to be a cheating capital of Lanao del Sur to a transformed city where voting registration has been cleansed and around 300,000 guest voters had been removed in the voter's list.”

WPAlamia: “I consider myself as a contemporary Moro woman. I did not wear the hijab before. However, after I became a lawyer, when I had to immerse myself in the communities in our advocacies for women's rights and engage with male religious leaders, I felt that I needed to start wearing the hijab if I wanted them to 'listen' to me and focus on the substance of what I was trying to impart to them. How I looked mattered and the message that I was trying to bring to them (gender justice) was affected by my being “uncovered.” And that's when my journey to being a hijabi started.

WPAlamia: “I met inspirational Muslim women and men at the global level who use their expertise and platforms to promote gender justice. By using the gender lens

and applying juristic methods, they are able to contextualize the verses of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings and practices) of Prophet Muhammad, make an analysis of these sources of Islamic law, and apply these contextually (not literally) to current issues prevailing in Muslim communities. Polygamy, for instance, is allowed in the Qur'an but this practice has been abused and has become one of the reasons for gender-based physical, economic, and psychological violence in the current context. Its context is that of men having the obligation to protect and support widows and orphans who have lost their husbands during the wars at that time, and give justice to them."

WPGutoc: "There is a lot of outpouring of Muslim women now who are taking the lead. They are not accepting tradition as the sole basis of their life. Tradition can either be positive or negative. There are some aspects of (Muslim) tradition that are good. For example, women as holders of the wallet, purchasers, and decision-makers can be turned around so women use those platforms for change. Clan decisions that allow women to study by providing financial support is good because everyone takes pride in the success of their family members (e.g., having the first doctor of the family)."

WPDeles: "In the midst of the ambiguities, gender inequality exists. This means women are somehow culturally bound to patriarchy. Further, under the present administration, there is male toxicity and the fear to take a political stand. Peace advocates are muted because they are afraid of being excluded."

WPAlamia: "There exists a 'cultural hierarchy' within the 13 Moro ethnolinguistic cultural communities. The Sama Dilaut or "Badjaos", who have retained their traditional cultural practices as IPs, occupy the lowest rung in that hierarchy. They have suffered multiple layers of discrimination not just from the

mainstream Filipinos but also within the Moro communities. From the advent of the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao up to the present time, the Badjaos were treated as subjects or something similar to the concept of 'aliping sagigilid' of the North. Aside from the historical prejudice against the Bangsamoro that we have been experiencing, in general, our own Moro women are discriminated internally as a result of interpretation and implementation of both formal laws and informal laws or norms, and the harmful traditional practices in the Bangsamoro culture, including the practice of child marriage.”

WP Alamia: “Basically, all these acts of injustice and discrimination against Moro women are rooted in patriarchy. An example is the increasing feminization of migration and human trafficking in the Bangsamoro. A large number of Moro women go abroad to work as domestic helpers and they are prone to exploitation and abuse. Because they're women, they can be easily 'dispensed with' and are the ones who are expected to make the supreme sacrifice for their families, no matter how dangerous it is for them. Many of them end up being trafficked, especially the minors, sometimes even with the knowledge of the parents who 'give away' their daughters to illegal recruiters and traffickers, believing that this would take them out of poverty. The higher the magnitude of poverty, the lower the level of education, the more likely that traffickers and illegal recruiters would take advantage of the prevailing situation.”

Stage 3: Reflecting on Essential Themes and Abstraction by Identifying

Second Order Constructs

In this stage, I derived common “conversation” themes from the similarities and contrasts among the narratives of the women research participants and culled answers to all the research questions by providing my own reflections and interpretations of their lived experiences, referred to as the second-order constructs of the author-researcher.

For the principal research question, **“How do women peacebuilders make sense of their experience and unmute their voices in peace processes in the context of gender relations, language, and culture and tradition?”**, here below is my “framing” of the common “conversation” themes:

1. Peacebuilding is an expression of the lived personal mission and faith of women peacebuilders, not just a sense of duty.

Peacebuilding becomes a woman’s lived personal mission because of deep faith and an experience of violence, either direct or vicarious. All women research participants personally understand what it means to be in a situation of armed conflict and be impacted by it either directly or indirectly through a witnessed experience. This is where they draw their courage, strength, and passion to continue working for peace despite the challenges, and even failures. Peacebuilder Y. Lao, for instance, personally worked in an evacuation center and felt the agony of the evacuees who have lost their loved ones and their homes. She related that peacebuilding work is so ingrained as her faith continues to drive her passion.

Peacebuilder T. Deles had also made hard choices in her life but commitment to peace because of faith and hope did not waver. For Peacebuilder S. Gutoc, what fueled her passion for peacebuilding is her youth and belief that Islam is very progressive.

On the other hand, Peacebuilder G. Mercado felt the fire to do something when she personally went to visit Marawi. There was a deep yearning inside her to reach out and help in the “unmuting” of everyone regardless of religion, gender, age, and ideology.

1. Peace is viewed as inseparable from gender issues. Thus, women play a unique and invaluable role in peacebuilding.

Women peacebuilders view their commitment to peace work never as stand-alone but always connected to their advocacy for gender equality. As women and their children are the most vulnerable in situations of armed conflict, gender concerns need to be prioritized in addressing the effect of violence on them. Women cannot be ignored in decision-making on peace issues that impact them. Yet, the reality is that there are very few women in the formal leadership roles of the peace process.

Peacebuilder T. Deles always wanted women to play concrete roles in the peace process because she knows they would bring something of high measure to the peace table. But she explained in a powerpoint presentation she shared that in most peace processes there were very few women in Track 1 of peace processes due to the following reasons: 1) predominance of the traditional view of peace as security issue in a narrow sense (a military matter); 2) focus on the combatants and not on communities; on leaders, not on members; 3) Male domination of usual institutions: military, bureaucracy, legislature, foreign service, religious institutions, 4) cultural and/or religious biases against women's capacity and participation, and 5) men as appointing authority such that men know more men and appoint more men.

Further, Peacebuilder S. Gutoc viewed the gender issue in peacebuilding as generational and is related to governance. In the same way, Peacebuilder J. Galace stressed that women count for peace because they have historically been left out and it's time that they are counted.

2. “Unmuting” is beyond physical voice and gender for both men and women

need to unmute their courage which can be silenced by fear, cultural prejudice, religious traditions, cultural norms, and a repressive political climate.

Unmuting is the act of bravery to be with the people who have been at the forefront of violence and suffered from violence. It is the act of speaking one's thoughts, issues, and perspective. Yet, beyond that is genuine participation in decision-making which is also dependent on the political climate. Additionally, unmuted is beyond the verbal voice for it has other communication modes such as active engagement, public leadership, and even reflective silence for what one unmutes is not just the physical voice but the power and freedom to let go of one's fear, rigidity to norms, and the subjugation to patriarchal tradition.

For Peacebuilder G. Mercado, to be closer to the Bangsamoro people, she planned for the consultation sessions with the Bangsamoro people right in the camps where they were so there could be spatial appreciation of how they lived, not just relying on physical maps. She added her observation that not just voices are muted by violence, but acts of generosity as well. For Peacebuilder T. Deles unmuted women's voices means presence. When women speak, they bring in a perspective that must be heard. Especially in post-conflict discussions and decision-making, it is important that they don't disappear.

Additionally, for Peacebuilder S. Gutoc, "unmuted voices" is participation, which means being given the stage for decision-making. Peacebuilder L. Alamia echoes the same line of thinking as she believes in the importance of mentoring other Moro women to be to take on formal positions of leadership.

On the other hand, Peacebuilder T. Deles stressed that women

participation in peace and security cannot be independent of the political climate. For her, politics of gender and peace needs to be understood so that the fear of taking a strong political stand can be overcome. In the same breath, for Peacebuilder I. Santiago, unmuting is to participate at the table, on the table, and turning the table.

Participating at the table means engagement and inclusion. Exclusion is one of the major forms of muting women.

3. As culture and tradition have a marked influence on patriarchy that has lowered women's self-value and esteem, change in consciousness and culture is imperative.

Peacebuilding sees the bigger picture where plans and initiatives have a clear road map. It is moving forward to address problems with sustainable solutions which includes change in consciousness and culture that is not temporary but long-lasting.

When there is a change of consciousness, both women and men will think differently and thus act differently, putting a stop to gender discrimination and violence. As Peacebuilder I. Santiago reiterated during our conversation, "Liberating the consciousness of both women and men about the oppression both suffer from although differently is the first step toward transforming patriarchy."

In the same way, cultural norms also have to be changed where women are recognized for their competence. Peacebuilder G. Mercado intentionally lobbied for women generals in the Armed Forces of the Philippines through the NGO she founded, WIND (Women in National Development). She learned to

play golf so she would be able to talk to the men between holes. Her intense lobbying efforts bore fruit. To date, there are more women Generals in the Philippine Army, Air Force and Navy. Even Dr. Mercado became the first female Commodore in the Philippine Navy Reserve. Peacebuilder T Deles also related how women on the side of the MILF were first brought into the room as 'advisers' to the MILF negotiating panel. One of them actually began to sit at the negotiating table to discuss particular issues, taking the place of a male panelist. The international community also helped to bring pressure on the MILF to keep up with the international standards set by the UN and other bodies regarding the participation of women in peace processes and in deciding security issues. In addition, Peacebuilder L. Alamia has realized the important strategy of involving men in the gender and peace advocacy. One of the fruits of this endeavor is that the male religious leaders they have trained in Nisa UI- Haqq Fi Bangsamoro have become imams and provincial muftis who are considered the most learned in the community. She also added that she pursues her goals with sustainable impact, not simply band-aid solutions.

4. The mode of communication of women peacebuilders in their peace work is creative and inclusive.

The creative and inclusive approach of women peacebuilders appeal not just to the intellect but to the human heart that knows how to connect and engage beyond gender, religion, and social status, both in the formal and informal levels of peacebuilding. Peacebuilder I. Santiago emphasized that exclusion is actually one of the major forms of muting women. Participation means engagement and inclusion are together, so no one is left behind.

Peacebuilder T. Deles fondly remembers how, during Valentine's Day, they gave chocolates to everyone in the GPH-MILF negotiating panel which changed the atmosphere and immediately established human connection. In the same way, Peacebuilder Gutoc also built connection by sitting with soldiers at the checkpoint to educate them on human rights, or cleaning up with them in their solid waste management program, or joining them in rehabilitation work.

For the first sub-question, **“What do women peacebuilders experience in their engagement in the Bangsamoro peace process? What meaning does it have for them?”**, similarly, I derived common “conversation” themes from their sensemaking:

1. **“Women bringing more women” is a key strategy in the Bangsamoro peace process.**

As it is humanly natural to love company, women working together is a peacebuilding surefire formula. The support network of women creates collaborative synergy far beyond isolated engagement of women in the herculean task of creating and sustaining peace.

Peacebuilder Deles, as OPPAP secretary, brought other women with her to play roles in the different peace processes under the watch of her office. She said that it was very fortunate that, prior to Miriam Ferrer as GPH chief negotiator, the GPH chief negotiator Atty. Marvic Leonen recruited young women to the GPH secretariat and legal team, including a young Moro woman as head of the legal team. She recounted the impact on the MILF negotiating team which, for the first time, brought in women to the negotiating room as advisers. The international community also helped to bring pressure on the MILF to keep up with the international standards set requiring women's

participation in peace negotiations.

2. Parallel to women engagement, strong and deliberate collaboration of both men and women in peacebuilding is necessary.

Women in peacebuilding may be quite limited to “she talks peace” but what we need is “s/he talks peace.” It does not matter what gender someone belongs. All genders must be involved in peacebuilding. And this is what our women peacebuilders have realized. We cannot be myopic in our engagement in peace work.

All levels of peace communication engender peace. Having different communication modes and kinds of engagement create an orchestra that sings only one song in harmony: peace! Just like instruments that have different sounds, when played together create a symphony that one cannot help but stop and listen to it. The same is true with peacebuilding communication. All kinds of voices from men and women, formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal, physical and spiritual, must all be blended towards the one goal of peace.

Peacebuilder J. Galace mentioned that through the years men became more open to gender equality. Likewise, women have become braver to communicate without indignation. Peacebuilder S. Gutoc also expressed as a woman you can actually work with male soldiers, and men in general to do community work for peace.

3. Unless truly empowered and progressive women, shine in public leadership, the dominance of men and the prevalence of gender prejudice in decision-making will continue to exist.

Together with women empowerment, public leadership of women is a key factor to ensure that men do not overpower women and patriarchal perspectives in decision-making do not prevail. Peacebuilder T. Deles, expressed “Women carry the heaviest burden of war and, therefore, in post-conflict discussions and decision, it is important that they don’t disappear.”

In the Final Peace Agreement between the GPH and the MNLF, although it was strong in the development agenda, it channeled the promised rehabilitation and post-conflict development assistance through the base commands structure which were all led by men. MNLF communities would complain many years later that nothing had happened - there were no improvements in their lives. For her, the reason for this was because the women had been excluded. In the 2014 CAB between the GPH and MILF, the Annex on Normalization explicitly stated that women auxiliary combat units should be prioritized and women should play a role in the rehabilitation of conflict-affected communities. She added that what makes women effective in leadership is their holistic perspective. Even early on, peace movements were led by women.

Peacebuilder I. Santiago also emphatically shared that her “unmuting” began when she told the then 2016 OPAPP Secretary Jesus Dureza pointedly, ‘Jess, I will not sit behind you. I will sit beside you. Let me be a full member of the panel.’

4. The reframing of the meaning of human security and protection has widened women engagement and leadership in all areas of security beyond physical security towards ensuring a dignified and peaceful human life.

Women have helped reframe human security using a holistic perspective.

It is not just about physical protection which is usually associated with men. It is about total security where all levels, physical, economic, psycho-emotional and health, among others, are all complementary and not limited to a singular gender, male or female, because in any level of security, either a man or woman can be capacitated for it.

Peacebuilder T. Deles explained that although the core security institute has become a specialized arena dominated by men, there are more women entering the field. In the Bangsamoro peace process, Department National Security Agency Undersecretary Zen Brosas served as GPH co-chair of the Normalization process which includes the decommissioning of firearms.” In the same way, Peacebuilder I. Santiago as the first woman who chaired the implementation of the peace process in 2016, she learned to analyze and be confident. She developed her own framework of the three peace barriers to be overcome: conceptual, technical, and political. She also made herself an expert on ceasefires.

5. The success of the Bangsamoro peace process is an ongoing collective effort which can only be sustained with knowledge management and engagement translated into action and lived experience not just with stakeholders but with the public, both in the local and global arena.

Knowledge management and engagement translated into action and lived experience ensure that best practices are not only documented, but shared and applied to current and new situations with an openness to learn, relearn, and unlearn. For even failures and mistakes can be translated into learning and growth if there is collaborative effort to listen to different “voices” and venture into untried and uncustomary ways of building peace. Only with this kind of courage and maturity can there be success in peacebuilding.

For Peacebuilder T. Deles, women's successful involvement in the peace process is more than just having a woman chief negotiator battling for important provisions in the peace agreement. Engagement of all women in the peace process is very important. Deles was then the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

Peacebuilder S. Gutoc also shared that she will not wait for leadership to provide the policy framework for peace. One can do something on the ground, in the community level. For her, there are levels of talks that are government to government but we also have to be also be engaged not just in the formal peace process on the bilateral and multilateral levels but also in the village level.

For the second sub-question, **“What opportunities and limitations do they experience in sensemaking and communication in the Bangsamoro peace process?”**, I classified the common “conversation” themes as follows:

Opportunities

- 1. The experiences that women peacebuilders learned in the Bangsamoro peace process have served as an opportunity to influence and expand women engagement and leadership.**

Like a rubber band, peacebuilding needs the creative tension that allows it to expand and be flexible to move into the direction that needs support. It must take different shapes to influence all sectors and stakeholders.

Peacebuilder T. Deles emphasized that women's successful involvement in the peace process is more than just having a woman chief negotiator battling for important provisions in the peace agreement. Beyond the peace talks,

women engagement in the peace process had a personal impact for me.”

Peacebuilder I. Santiago narrated that beyond the formal peace talks, she oriented key decision-makers in the local government and the military to use the framework of the eight pillars of positive peace as a way of ensuring durable peace. In May 2019, Paquibato was considered clear of the NPAs and “Peace 911” had been institutionalized as the Center for Peacebuilding in the city through a local ordinance. The Center’s programs will now cover the entire city of Davao, the first city in the Philippines.

Peacebuilder L. Alamia expressed that regardless of the instability of her position in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) with the extension of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), she can still do her part in other capacities such as being the OPAPP-appointed chair of the GPH Task Force for Decommissioned Combatants and their Communities (TFDCC).

Peacebuilder J. Galace affirmed that despite the uncertainties of the present time, she sees a bright future for women’s participation in peacebuilding. What she senses as the turning point in being more open to gender equality and giving voice to women in peacebuilding is not a single event or incident but a series of events and experiences. The lobbying of civil society, with the help of the international community, has helped a lot in moving forward women’s participation in peacebuilding.

2. The Bangsamoro peace process has become a global model in women’s participation in peacebuilding that other countries have emulated and took inspiration from.

The Bangsamoro peace process is considered a global model to learn

from. Many painful lessons have been learnt along the way but it is noteworthy that the signed peace pact in 2014 is the first of its kind in the world where a rebel group signed the agreement.

Peacebuilder Y. Lao considers the Bangsamoro process as a global model that showed that with political will and sincerity, building pathways to peace, no matter how painstaking, is not impossible after 50 years of protracted war. Women such as Teresita Quintos-Deles was the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process and Miriam Coronel Ferrer was the Chief negotiator of the peace panel of the government played a critical role at the center stage. The presence and support of the civil society, the international community, particularly of the then Prime Minister of Malaysia were very crucial.

According to Peacebuilder T. Deles who was then the Presidential adviser to the peace process, to engender peace, the following steps were seriously taken: 1) moving away from traditional security to a broader view of peace and security (human security which necessitated multi-agency, multi-sectoral engagement considering the broadened negotiating agenda; 2) civilianizing the peace track which meant appointments from other fields of expertise, including from civil society and taking into account geographic and generational representation; 3) women appointing other women; 4) lobbying by women-led civil society peace movement to include gender agenda in peace talks and mechanisms; and 5) adoption of legal and institutional tools: national legislation, UN treaties/resolutions, National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 on WPS.

3. The Bangsamoro peace process was a platform for humbling learning

experiences which at the same time harnessed the expertise and creativity of women peacebuilders.

Peacebuilding is eating a lot of “humble pie” and many of the women peacebuilders have realized that there is no limit to learning along the way. Some even admitted making “mistakes” along the way but would say that these mis-steps are simply part of a learning curve that is natural to any learning journey. Yet, it also became an opportunity to build up one’s capacities and become an expert.

According to Peacebuilder L. Alamia, after admittedly having a humbling learning experience in their strategies for Moro women participation in peacebuilding, they developed an evidence-based four-pronged approach in their gender capacity- building and advocacies: 1) Rootedness in the lived realities of Moro women and consulting with Moro women to validate these realities in the community for evidence-based advocacy; 2) Promoting their rights using international/global human rights conventions and policies (CEDAW, NAP-WPS, CRC) and 3) domestic laws on women’s human rights, including the PD 1083 or the Code of Muslim Personal Laws; and 4) Re-reading the primary sources of Islamic or Shari’a law (Qur’an, Hadith/Sunnah) as applicable to the current context of the lived realities of women.

From the experience of Peacebuilder I. Santiago, on the other hand, she purposively mastered security matters and made herself an expert on ceasefire agreements. Thus, she became a voice to be listened to, not just on gender issues but also on security issues.

Limitations

1. Despite extensive experience in women empowerment, the impact of culture and political climate can still limit a woman's mindset and courage to overcome gender-based challenges in peacebuilding.

Although the Philippines has consistently ranked in the top 20 in the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum, even taking the top slot in Asia, women in the country are still fearful to speak up and assert in situations where they may be attacked due to veering away from traditional religious beliefs and cultural norms or due to a repressive political climate that may exclude or ostracize them.

Peacebuilder T. Deles emphasized that under the present administration, male toxicity dominates. Women are somehow culturally bound to patriarchy that exists. Further, the political situation is such that there is fear to take a political stand. Thus, she does not consider women participation in peace and security to be independent of the political climate.

Peacebuilder L. Alamia added that although women can speak in their community, they needed to be capacitated on how to speak and communicate their advocacies. Taking her own story as an example, she, herself, is a modern Moro woman used to not wear the hijab before. She said, "However, after I became a lawyer, when I had to immerse myself in the communities in our advocacies for women's rights and engage with male religious leaders, I felt that I needed to start wearing the hijab if I wanted them to 'listen' to me and focus on the substance of what I was trying to impart to them. How I looked mattered and the message that I was trying to bring to them (gender justice) was affected by my being "uncovered."

And that's when my journey to being a hijabi started. Later, my wearing of

the hijab somehow added credibility to what I was advocating for and gave me my identity as a Moro woman and as a Muslim woman.”

2. The gender-based challenges of peacebuilding is often experienced as running against the current where women may need to choose their battles and focus on non-adversarial common needs (e.g. transitional justice) and temporarily “mute” on controversial gender issues.

The most difficult direction is running against the current. Yet in reality this is the painful truth: To win peace, we cannot “wing” it. Peace is work in progress and needs to be sustained in the most conducive context in all facets—economic, political, social and spiritual. As time, energy, and commitment dedicated to peacebuilding is not without limits, it can be tiring if we are not able to manage our inner resources very well. Thus, we need to choose our battles to be productive and experience bite-size successes if we cannot win peace at all times.

Peacebuilder S. Gutoc expressed that in the midst of the ambiguities of the peace process with global pandemic, the more they are investing on peacebuilding at the present time. They know that they are running against the current because the more everything is quiet, the more one knows that the tentacles of unrest are just sleeping and can attack at the most unexpected moment. The non-support of for peace talks has a big impact for violence to erupt.

Peacebuilder G. Mercado realized that to a great extent, the perceived authority of men in our culture of patriarchy triggered her to mute herself, especially since she did not feel the support of women around here. In the

same way, despite the challenges of being identified with the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and belonging to the minority, Peacebuilder L. Alamia learned that she has step back and choose her battles. She has chosen to focus on transitional justice among the myriad of issues which is a common need. For this purpose, she formed the Women Parliamentary Caucus in the BARMM.

- 3. While women peacebuilders have courage and power to pursue their goals, deep issues in mental health may haunt them that they sometimes buckle in battling against gender prejudice in peacebuilding. However, they are quick to recoup themselves and consider their momentary rest and silence as an opportunity for growth, especially when supported by a strong women's network.**

Making sense of peacebuilding work is inevitably connected to total wellbeing.

If unmuting one's voice gives a woman greater freedom and wholeness, then to speak and be engaged makes great sense. However, if muting one's voice is needed to create the space for healing one's brokenness and that of others, then creating some silent space is needed to reflect and recharge, and be a watchful observer of one's lived inner and outer worlds.

Peacebuilder G. Mercado related her experience that no matter how strong a woman she felt she was, she decided to be temporarily muted with the men in uniform around her. There were two major reasons for allowing herself to do so: self-preservation and sanity.

Peacebuilder L. Alamia also had a similar experience of the cultural

pressures of male domination in the Bangsamoro. She did not know how to change the mindsets of the members of her own family and community on how to regard men and women despite her steep knowledge of the laws of the Shari'a. For several years, she continued to experience some difficulty in her personal journey because of impostor's syndrome, a state where she doubted that she is well-deserving of her success despite her capabilities and expertise.

Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development: Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting

The hermeneutics of synthesizing the identified essential "conversation" themes from stages one to three of the analysis and selecting key "interwoven" themes was an insightful yet challenging endeavor. But through the art of writing and rewriting, bracketing and engaging with my own inner and outer lived experiences of peacebuilding, I have grouped together five interwoven themes across and within participants:

- 1. Women play an invaluable role in peace work because for them, sensemaking in peacebuilding is communicating a lived personal mission that strategically embodies their core values, not simply a call of duty.**

Women peacebuilders participants view peacebuilding not just an activity or a task but a strategic means of communicating their deep values that inspire their life purpose. As such, they take the extra mile to fulfil their responsibilities, undaunted to do high-risk ventures. Their peace work engagements speak of what is in their heart, whether it is verbalized or not. The act of making peace is the medium of letting the world know who they really are and what they are willing to live and die for as the experience of violence and prejudice for them

are real.

- 2. Communication in peacebuilding among women peacebuilders is creative, conscientious, and inclusive, expressed in varied “languages” and complementary modes of influence.**

Peacebuilding is a language of many languages as expressed in various modes of relating, communicating, and influencing. According to the woman peacebuilder’s natural inclination, expertise, and level of comfort will be the communication medium—legal, immersive, consultative, persuasive, collaborative, and multi-level-- all of these with a high level of creativity, conscientiousness, and inclusivity. The more multi-modal the language of peacebuilding is, the richer and clearer the “voice of peace” is. Even the silent spaces of sometimes “muting” are also necessary for the true music of peace to be heard like the “rest between the notes.”

- 3. Women peacebuilders communicate peace as inseparable from their gender advocacy where gender inequality can only be resolved if women bring more empowered women in public leadership. To achieve this end, the engagement of both progressive men and women is extremely essential to eradicate gender prejudice and discrimination.**

All women peacebuilder spoke about their peace work as an expression of who they are as a woman. Everyone viewed peacebuilding as interlinked with gender. Violence is an assault on those considered weak and perceived to be under one’s control. In a macho culture, violence is an issue of taking one’s sense of power through weapons or through women battering. Whether individual or social, prejudice against women is still prevalent even when peace

agreements have been signed.

Yet, to resolve gender inequality, all genders have to work together to eradicate all forms of bullying, prejudice, and exclusivity. Women cannot do it alone nor can they act as “proxy-men” embodying patriarchal values. We have to touch the inner core of every human individual regardless of gender that upholds human dignity and equality. Women have to bring in other progressive women and men, too. Only then can we overcome the violence that all forms of discrimination bring.

- 4. Women peacebuilders have creatively and successfully shaped, shifted, and steered knowledge management and engagement in the understanding of an all-encompassing human security as an ongoing collective effort in the local and global stage.**

There has been a limited understanding of peace and security stuck to the gross dimension of absence of war. It is referred to as negative peace. But positive peace is the condition where the structures and cultures of violence have been dismantled. Women peacebuilders have not only taken part in conversations and knowledge sharing but have contributed their expertise and skills that have steered the understanding and implementation of human security encompasses all levels of a quality lived experience -- food security, health security, economic security, political security, social security, and psychological security that ensure a happy humane life for all.

- 5. Unmuting women’s voices in peacebuilding is not simply a matter of gender; it is also a matter of cultural and political context.**

Communication is a lived experience within a cultural context and political climate. What then is the cultural and political context of a woman unmuting

her voice? Or muting her voice? These aspects of cultural and political context need to be understood to appreciate the dynamics of muting and unmuting of women's voices in peacebuilding, apart from using the gender lens. Additionally, there is the common notion that to unmute or to speak is always the best option as muting is considered weak or an act of cowardice. Yet, many of the women peacebuilders spoke about purposive muting as an empowered act of communication where one finds the right timing and space to speak and thus, impact change. The change that is needed is profound for it demands deep cultural and political understanding.

Conscious will as well as political will are needed to transform not just traditions, norms, and beliefs, but also policies from the lens of an evolving culture and transformative political climate.

Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena: Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon

In this stage, I illuminated and illustrated the phenomenon by linking each interwoven theme in Stage 4 to the narratives of the women peacebuilder-participants, ensuring that the constructed stories were faithful to participants' learning experiences. Likewise, additional secondary sources were also complemented and linked to their narratives.

- 1. Women play an invaluable role in peace work because for them, sensemaking in peacebuilding is communicating a lived personal mission that strategically embodies their core values, not simply a call of duty.**

For women peacebuilders, their commitment to peacebuilding is a life mission that advocates for the empowerment of women that eradicates gender

prejudice and injustice. To achieve this, without doubt, parity of esteem is key to peace and gender equality. Men and women are equal in human value. Christians and Muslims are at par with the honor and regard they rightfully deserve. The word parity is common as it is synonymous with equality. But “esteem” is a seldom used word in peace circles, yet holds deep meaning and sense as it alludes to respect and honor which must be accorded to every human individual.

Like the women peacebuilders I interviewed, my passion for peace comes from my commitment to uplift the esteem of individuals and communities. Having been a development worker and a peace educator for many years, I have realized that the moment I look at another as weaker or lesser in value, I will trample upon their human dignity. Then violence begins from disrespect and abuse to gross forms of killing and war. Prejudice can exist even in the same ranks of one’s gender, religion, and ethnicity. This search for parity of esteem between men and women has made many of the key women participants I interviewed make sense of their experience by doing something for peace, whether individually or for the women sector at large.

2. Communication in peacebuilding among women peacebuilders is creative, conscientious, and inclusive, expressed in varied “languages” and complementary modes of influence.

With the many communication modes and languages of peacebuilding, the Bangsamoro women peacebuilders had an inclusive common language: immersion with our people and making history. Having been maligned as “muklo” (derogatory name for Moro) in school when she was growing up,

Peacebuilder L. Alamia continues to commit herself to uplift marginalized Moro children, most especially girls. Thus, her language of peace is all-embracing. Her Office of the Minority Floor Leader (OMiFL) has taken steps towards building the first Bahay Pag-asa in the Bangsamoro region in Basilan last August 2021. It marked the beginning of a multiphase project in the hope of protecting the rights of children who are among the most vulnerable (Atty. Laisa Masuhud Alamia, 2021, About Section). In another speech for sponsoring the Transitional Justice Bills, she said, “Many, if not all of us, were raised by communities of struggle. Growing up, we have lost family and friends—many of them we would have known better and grown older with, if only we had lived a life of peace and security. But even those of us who survived were indelibly changed. I remember how the light in my mother’s eyes dimmed following the massacre, as if a part of her died together with her friends and relatives that dark day in her hometown’s history.” (Atty. Laisa Masuhud Alamia . MP Alamia’s Sponsorship Speech on the TJ Bills Package, (2021), News Section)

Peacebuilder Lao saw with her own eyes how women in the evacuation camps were uncared for that melted her hearts. Her language of peacebuilding is conscientious on concrete action. She wanted to make sure that in this lifetime she made a difference in the lives of the marginalized. Lao said during her interview after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement for the Bangsamoro in 2016: “At least in my lifetime, I have made a difference, I am part of history. Let us take part in this historic moment. . . I have made history . . . Isn’t this a beautiful legacy to hand down to our children.” (Rappler. Yasmin Busran-Lao 1, 2016). This quality of conscientiousness was also reflected in the meticulous process women peacebuilders drafted the peace agreements.

Former Secretary of Agriculture Senen Bacani, who was appointed to the GPH peace panel negotiating with the MILF in July 2010 related, “Aside from knowing their stuff, (women are) very competent. In terms of style, yes -- they’re really more diligent and meticulous than the men. . . I think, even in terms of style, in terms of the way the texts were worded, they’re definitely better.” (Rallonza, Ma. Lourdes V., 2014, p, 16)

Having seen homelessness as a child, Peacebuilder S. Gutoc’s simple dream is for this country to have peace and for everyone to have a home that is not burned and caught in the crossfire of war and where the family is not ejected. She tearfully shared in an interview in 2019: “I am a survivor of the conflict of Marawi, the siege where 1000 died... soldiers, first time soldiers, a mother of five who lost all her children. I don’t know if I can find answers for them. The voices of the dead call out. That is my darkest fear.” (Rappler, 2019).

Like the Bangsamoro women peacebuilders, my immersion experience with the farmers of Apalit, Pampanga and Bukidnon in the early 1980s when the country was in political turmoil prompted me to set my career helping vulnerable sectors. The experience of hardship, poverty, and inequality made me realize that there is so much that needs to be done to allow economic justice to prevail. It was through this immersion experience that I understood why many young people, including my students during my first year of teaching in a region where insurgency was at its peak, opted for armed struggle. Yet I wanted to prove to myself that the peaceful means for social change can prevail.

To traverse the landscape of peacebuilding, I also spoke the “language/s” of these women peacebuilders. Like Peacebuilders J. Galace and G. Mercado,

active engagement in peace education was my language, too. Like Peacebuilder I. Santiago, I also communicated peace by organizing communities to influence them to work for change. Like Peacebuilder T. Deles, I was involved in peace advocacy and education for women. During these experiences, I used various languages and “voices” (economic, political, cultural, legal, psychological, creative, and spiritual) as communication modes for pushing inclusive peace and development forward.

The more multi-modal the language of peacebuilding is, the richer and clearer the “voice of peace” is. Even the silent spaces of sometimes “muting” for self- reflection are also necessary for the true music of peace to be heard.

3. Women peacebuilders communicate peace as inseparable from their gender advocacy where gender inequality can only be resolved if women bring more empowered women in public leadership. To achieve this end, the engagement of both progressive men and women is extremely essential to eradicate gender prejudice and discrimination.

All women peacebuilders resonate the same voice that peace is inseparable from gender issues. As such, it is important that truly empowered women are placed in public leadership and that both men and women collaborate and engage in gender advocacy.

Peacebuilder I. Santiago in her framework of the three barriers to peace which are conceptual, technical, and political, she specifically stressed that for the political barrier to be overcome, women need to be prepared for public leadership. Likewise, seeing the big picture, she believes that that the manifestation of war is that there is a breakdown of nurturing relationships.

“War is a breakdown of trust (in relationships). So, we need to bring back the heart of humanity. I do not see how peace can be achieved without women.” (IPI Global Observatory, 2015)

Peacebuilder J. Galace experienced discrimination and bullying in her own personal life. When she transferred in high school to a big city, she experienced bullying from classmates who looked down on her because she came from the province and dressed and spoke differently. These experiences of prejudice in different forms that make one commit for peace and equality. In 2015, Galace said in an interview entitled “Candid Voices of the Field”: “Now I am very passionate about the issue of prejudice and intolerance. Challenging discrimination is close to my heart so whoever is marginalized, be it a man or a woman, a laborer, peasant, or fisherfolk, I get passionate about it.” (Women Peacebuilders Program, 2015)

Peacebuilder G. Mercado experienced being sidelined by retired male generals she worked with. It was a tough time for her considering she has already been in the security sector for quite some time. With a very strong “yin,” Mercado had a dominant feminine side – a soft, and compassionate harmony-builder within. Having been raised in a family that was quite liberal and where women were allowed to shine, exclusion was unfamiliar and a very painful experience (G. J. Mercado, personal communication, 5 July 2021).

I resonate with Peacebuilder Mercado who reiterates that the perceived authority of men can mute the voices of women and that the cultural rigidities of men prevent creative ways of building peace (G. J. Mercado, personal communication, 5 July 2021) and Peacebuilder Deles who believes that women bring something to the peace table of high value that nobody else can.

Thus, a woman's voice is very essential (T. Q. Deles, personal communication, 14 August 2021).

Peace and gender are so intertwined because both themes are related to the interplay of power. As all women peacebuilders emphasize, the moment anyone dominates the other, there will be abuse that segues into violence. It should also be stressed that not just any kind of woman should be placed in public leadership.

Unless progressive and empowered women are given political power and put into public leadership, exploitation and oppression of women will continue. If women who are proxy-men sit in power, they will simply perpetuate gender prejudice and injustice.

4. Women peacebuilders have creatively and successfully shaped, shifted, and steered knowledge management and engagement in the understanding of an all-encompassing human security as an ongoing collective effort in the local and global stage.

There have been long-standing stereotypes of peace and security as linked with the military. As a teacher of Peace Studies in a graduate school where soldiers and policemen were my students (and there were hardly any women) proves the obvious point that security matters have been associated with men and military power.

Women peacebuilders, however, have shifted that notion to a more holistic understanding of human security, not just national security. This paradigm shift has engaged more women in the security sector. This active participation of women in the security sector has shifted the arena of security to an inclusive

security that is gender-fair, gender-sensitive, and encompasses all dimensions of human life where we need to be safe and secure in all levels– economic, political, social, cultural, physical, psychological, and spiritual.

Peacebuilder Mercado shared in a video interview with the Institute for Inclusive Security that while in her job in the security sector she did not have to act like a man but she needed to be credible and be ready to level-up with the men. She said, “What I do is I try to get more information so that when we have discussions I can say more. You have to show them that you are capable of thinking far.” (Inclusive Security, 2011)

Peacebuilder I. Santiago had a similar experience of having to prove her credibility which she successfully did by developing her expertise in ceasefire agreements. She said, “If one is seen only as a single-issue gender expert, one is very quickly marginalized. It is important to build one’s expertise in the issues on the table, such as security. Thus, I developed expertise on ceasefire mechanisms. But beyond developing expertise, there is also a need to make sure one is taken seriously, and this is where having a constituency mattered.” (I.M Santiago, personal communication, 8 July 2021)

While shaping, shifting, and steering knowledge sharing and communication on the understanding of peace and security has been an uphill climb, much has been accomplished in breaking through the walls of the rigidities of the security sector. This breakthrough can bring about growth and maturity of both men and women who are equal in esteem and dignity. As I listened to the word “prove” quite often from the women peacebuilders, I felt the longing for a ripe time when self-esteem and dignity would be so naturally embodied that women do not need prove anything to men because they are

as credible as any man, for credibility is not the property of men alone. Credibility is a human value rooted in trustworthiness, regardless of you are a man or a woman. This is why peace and security are basic human rights of everyone who breathes in this planet.

5. Unmuting women’s voices in peacebuilding is not simply a matter of gender; it is also a matter of cultural and political context.

To use the lens of culture as well as political knowledge, and not just the lens of gender is essential in understanding why women mute and unmute their voices in a dynamic manner in peacebuilding. There are women who refuse to speak purposively, not because they are afraid but because they consciously “choose their battles.” Some women mute their voices intentionally so as not to fuel the conflict more. On the other hand, there may be women who mute their fellow women, carrying the perspective of “proxy-men” who do not want you to question, especially if the male leader has spoken.

Thus, muting and unmuting in peacebuilding has a cultural and political context. If in one’s culture the man of the house is considered the king, then the women will never really speak unless the man speaks first. The key participants among Moro women peacebuilders consistently spoke about a patriarchal culture in the Bangsamoro. GPH Chief negotiator Prof. Miriam C. Coronel shared an amusing story, “After signing an Annex for the first time as panel chair in the 35th Exploratory Talks held in January 2013, Tengku Gaafar and I shook hands. He joked, “First time I shook the hand of a woman.” I smiled and said, “First time I shook hands with a prince.” Tengku is a Malay royal title equivalent to a prince. We had a good laugh.” (Ferrer, Miriam C, 2014, p. 6)

In my conversation with Peacebuilder L. Alamia, she related how Bangsamoro women are married off at a very young age and remain uneducated (L. M. Alamia, personal communication, 29 September 2021). Peacebuilder G. Mercado, on the other hand, experienced that in a safe space among fellow women, women have many stories to tell and ideas to share but in the company of men in a formal gathering, they hardly speak (G. J. Mercado, personal communication, 5 July 2021). Peacebuilder S. Gutoc added, “The struggle of gender relations is within the Bangsamoro itself. This issue is generational and is related to governance.” She noted that even if MILF may have an outstanding leader, it is still an elite institution with 40,000 men with their own views about gender. So, it is not just about one leader representing all.” Yet, Peacebuilder J. Galace related that she knows some Muslim men who are working for the same cause. She noted, “If there is really an understanding of women’s perspectives and how marginalization has affected them, I think there will be more empathy. I always say that culture is constructed and can be deconstructed so I am not giving up on that. You cannot just say (to the men) you are just so horrible! No, they grew up in such a culture where it is very difficult to get out of that. So, education is still a very powerful tool.” (Women Peacebuilders, Jasmin Nario-Galace on creating a culture of peace to advance women’s participation, 2015)

Peacebuilder T. Deles was the 2012 N-Peace Awardee for the Philippines and in her interview video, she said: “My dream for the future is that we can have differences, we can disagree and yet not take a gun out on each other... We are here coming from different cultures, different histories. If we learn to celebrate all our differences, find a common ground between these differences

to build a stronger nation. Certainly, I go for a rainbow kind of peace, not a dull one. This is my principle of peacebuilding: Not to make us all one, dull and grey but to let the rainbow of all our different cultures come out.” (The N-Peace Network, Teresita Quintos Deles wins the N-Peace Award: the Philippines, 2012)

Peacebuilder Deles was a teacher before becoming an activist and was appointed Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in 2003 with oversight over multiple on-going peace processes in the country, including the decades-long conflict in Mindanao. She served in that role from 2003-2005, and again from 2010-2016. It is a learning experience to know how one particular incident embedded in her the need for dialogue and understanding between the security sector and the civilian sectors, including civil society, to make peace: “We were stuck traveling in the car together and talking and realized we had stereotypes about each other. It was not that ‘every soldier is a human rights violator’ and that every civil society activist agitator is a communist rebel. In civil society we tended to paint all military as black and white, and I saw that there were some good people on the ground.” (Ssg/R Champions: Meet Teresita Quintos-Deles, 2020, Blog Section). This is building a culture of peace in action, not just in words.

Creating and sustaining a culture of peace is a gargantuan work in progress. In the year 2000, I participated in the launch of UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace as a lead volunteer of my peace organization. The initiative was based on the fifty-third session of the General Assembly which proclaimed the period 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (resolution 53/25) and adopted the Declaration and

Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243). (United Nations, No date)

One of the most important highlights of the International Year for the Culture of Peace was the UNESCO campaign for the Manifesto 2000 resulting in 75 million signatures (David, 2005). Here below is an excerpt from the Manifesto (UNESCO, 2000):

Recognizing my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, especially for today's children and those of future generations, I pledge, in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region, to:

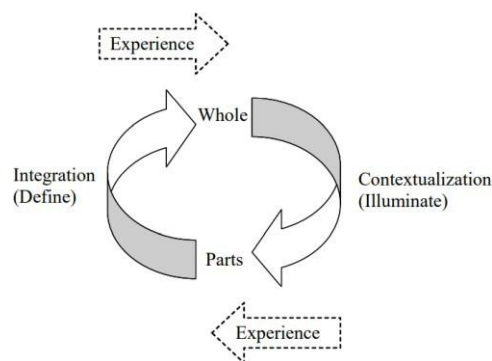
1. Respect the life and dignity of every person without discrimination or prejudice.
2. Practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical, and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.
3. Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression.
4. Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening rather than fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.
5. Promote consumer behaviour that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.
6. Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.”

As I recall, my volunteer peace work for the UNESCO Manifesto 2000 was

the beginning of my serious commitment to peacebuilding as my way of life, inside and out. The integration of the culture of peace within my own self as a meditation practitioner and as a peace educator has made me investigate its ramifications in the peace dynamics of individuals, communities, and societies.

Stage 6: Integration and Refining the Themes: Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole

Integrating and refining the five interwoven themes have helped me arrive at an “epiphany”, a sudden insight on the meaning of the lived experiences of the women peacebuilders. As I reflect on all the five interwoven themes in the previous stage, the overarching dimension I see is the core theme of power. Using the hermeneutic circle of the phenomenological approach (Bontekoe, 1996, p. 4; Ajjawi-Higgs, 2007, p.623) as illustrated below, the interplay of power threads through the five identified interwoven themes as a dynamic element of the lived experience of the women peacebuilders.



My insights that clearly connect the five major themes to the integral core theme of power are as follows:

1. Women play an invaluable role in peace work because for them, sensemaking in peacebuilding is communicating a lived personal mission that ignites their inner power for life meaning, not for a short-term, but for a

strategic long-term.

2. Peacebuilding among women peacebuilders is “voiced” in various languages as complementary modes of communicative power, with the qualities of creativity, conscientiousness, and inclusivity.
3. Women peacebuilders communicate peace strategically as inseparable from gender issues because from a systemic view, just as peace is an issue of power relations, so is gender. As long as power is kept in the hands of the male-dominated political and military institutions, we can never attain peace, gender equity, and equality.
4. Women peacebuilders have creatively shaped, steered, and shifted knowledge management and engagement in human security that signals the importance of empowerment on all levels. Security is not just national security with the military as its main protagonist. Security is all-encompassing that it addresses all aspects of human dignity and empowerment-- economic, political, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual.
5. Unmuting in peacebuilding is not just a matter of gender but also a matter of cultural and political context because where there is a lop-sided power structure due to a patriarchal tradition, women then need to make purposive decisions when to mute or unmute themselves to uphold their human dignity. The space for empowering quiescence (not suppressed silence) is also important to create a beautiful symphony.

Women peacebuilder-participants also resonated with this theme of power, whether directly or tangentially during my conversations with them. Peacebuilder T. Deles noted that In the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), an

Annex on Power Sharing was attached which included these engendered provisions: Representation in the Assembly and in the Council of Leaders and Appropriate mechanisms for consultations; and Special development programs. Peacebuilder I. Santiago, also churned on the meaning of power: “Power is the potency to act for what is good. Capacity. Action. Value.” In brief, “power is to be transformative,” she underscored. Peacebuilder L. Alamia was also quoted in one of her speeches as Minority Floor Leader of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission: “Let us not just merely recognize the potential of women and girls. Let us give them the space and resources necessary for them to realize their potential and embrace their own power.” Likewise, embracing her own inner power, Peacebuilder G. Mercado said during our conversation: “In the space of my long silence, I have recouped myself. I am now building my wings again . . . this time to soar higher!”

Truly, with immanent power, we are able to rebuild and recoup ourselves where women will no longer need to prove or beg for their worth to men or to anyone because power is inside all of us and economic and political power must also be shared fairly by both men and women because if not, a lopsided social structure will continue to persist that breeds poverty, injustice, and inequality.

Apropos to power, a powerful matriarchal society existed in India prior to the Aryan migrations (2500, B.C. [B.C.E.]). The Earth Mother is worshipped in India up to this day as the power that nurtures the seed and brings it to fruition. In the Indian culture, this feminine power is referred to as “sakti” or “shakti.” Kingsley (1986) relates the theme of “sakti” which means “power” to the active dimension of the divine power that underlies the ability to create the world. He further explains that shakti is the complementary pole of the divine tendency toward quiescence and stillness. This historical and cultural context in India that gave rise to theme of “shakti” points to the

important truth that there is inherent power in the feminine and that femininity is not equal to weakness or lack of credibility. Additionally, the emphasis of the interdependence of the two poles—the shakti goddess and her male consort echoes what all women peacebuilders have emphasized: The complementarity and equality of both genders, men and women, are the foundation of building and sustaining peace in the world. The unmuting (and muting) of women’s voices from a position of power or “sakti/shakti”, not from a position of fear and subservience is the complementarity of activity and stillness, the perfect balance of the power of prominence and quiescence.

In the global context, the emergence of collective violence and the patriarchal culture are historically linked to the shift from predation to a production economy. Pre-historian Patou-Mathis (2020) explains that traces of acts of violence were more frequent in the Neolithic period, the time of transition from nomadic hunting to farming. This period was marked by many changes of a different nature: environmental (global warming); economic (domestication of plants and animals, search for new territories, surplus and storage of food); social and societal (sedentary lifestyle, local population explosion, the emergence of an elite and castes) and religious (at the end of this period, goddesses gave way to male divinities). The Neolithic Revolution led to masses of people establishing permanent settlements through farming. “It paved the way for the innovations of the ensuing Bronze Age and Iron Age, when advancements in creating tools for farming, wars and art swept the world and brought civilizations together through trade and conquest.” (Inside History, 2018, Neolithic Revolution, last paragraph)

In the local Philippine context, a pre-colonial longstanding matriarchal tradition of leadership and mysticism long existed before the feminism in the West.

Before the Spanish colonized the Philippines, there existed a 500-year long tradition of indigenous feminism through the “*babaylans*”, the pre-colonial female mystical leaders whose spiritual connectedness was a source of political and social power. Even today, *babaylans* of lumad communities of Mindanao such as the Matigsalom appoint a *babaylan* who are credible to lead their community through crisis and hardship (Filipina Women’s Network, 2016). However, when colonialism, feudalism and capitalism were introduced in the Philippines, gender subordination of women within and outside the home became prominent (Luna, 2016). “It’s time to unlearn patriarchy. We should never call a home at peace when there is no democracy inside the house,” Luna noted.

While the Filipino society is labelled as patriarchal due to the male dominance in the public sphere and machismo attitudes that have led to the rising cases of violence against women and girls, it continues to exhibit a matriarchal tradition in reality. In most families, a female figure is depended on —an “ate” (elder female), a “nanay” (mother), or a “lola” (grandmother) to look after the money matters especially when the financial resources are tight. The woman is referred to as “ilaw ng tahanan” (the light of the home), the one who takes care of the family’s “kaban” (treasure chest) and shows the way when there are dark moments and difficulties in the family.

Thus, as a social norm in the Philippines, it can be said that it follows a matriarchal system. “Long before it was colonized by Spain, Filipinas inherited property, were religious leaders, and even joined military forces as combat soldiers. These norms have over the years influenced the Philippines society in which women have a greater say.” (Mathkar, 2019, The Hindu, News International Section)

The historical roots of women’s power are deeply entrenched in the Filipino collective consciousness that manifests in our courageous women champions for

equality and emancipation up to this day. In this sense, Filipino women peacebuilders are truly “sakti”, the embodiment of power, the modern-day *babaylans* whose competent leadership will light the way and heal in the face of crisis. Unlearning patriarchy, our women peacebuilders are our matriarch leaders who empower the whole society, regardless of race, color, culture, religion, ethnicity, and gender, towards inclusive peace and security.

CHAPTER VI
SHOWCASING A RARE FIND: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

“Dive into the sea of thought, and find there pearls beyond price.”

Moses ibn Ezra

As every South Sea pearl is unique in size, shape and color, all women peacebuilders glowed with their own experience, background, religion, and political persuasion. Yet, the common thread that wove them was their passion for peace and gender advocacy.

This chapter on Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations synthesizes my “rare find” of valuable discoveries on unmuting women’s voices in peacebuilding, as precious as the pearl of great price—peace.

Summary

This dissertation explored sensemaking and communication through hermeneutic phenomenology to unmute the voices of women and unravel the knowledge and wisdom embedded in the stories of their meaningful engagement in the peace process.

The general objective of the study was to explore, understand and articulate the sensemaking and communication experiences of key women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process from the lenses of gender, language, and tradition. The specific objectives were: 1) to describe what constitutes the sensemaking and communication experiences of key women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process; and 2) to discover and interpret the practice, opportunities, and limitations

of sensemaking and communication of these women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process.

With these objectives, this study answered the major research question: How do women peacebuilders make sense of their experience and unmute their voices in peace processes in the context of gender relations, language, and tradition? Two research sub-questions were also answered: 1) What do women peacebuilders experience in their engagement in the Bangsamoro peace process? What meaning does it have for them? and 2) What opportunities and limitations do they experience in sensemaking and communication in the Bangsamoro peace process?

The qualitative methodology for this dissertation used the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, substantiated by the work of Max van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), as it describes and interprets the lived experiences of seven (7) women peacebuilders in their participation in the Bangsamoro peace process. The interweaving of the phenomenological process of Van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) for the data collection and analysis traversed six stages as steps for reflection and insight, namely:

Stage 1: Immersion: Turning to the nature of lived experience

Stage 2: Investigating lived experience and identifying first order constructs

Stage 3: Reflecting on essential themes and abstraction by identifying second order constructs

Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development: Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting

Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena: Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon; and

Stage 6: Integration and refining the Themes: Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole.

For the principal research question, **“How do women peacebuilders make sense of their experience and unmute their voices in peace processes in the context of gender relations, language, and culture and tradition?”**, the following common “conversation” themes describe how I “made sense” of the sensemaking of seven women peacebuilders who “unmuted” their voices:

1. Peacebuilding is an expression of the lived personal mission and faith of women peacebuilders, not just a sense of duty.
2. Peace is viewed as inseparable from gender issues. Thus, women play a unique and invaluable role in peacebuilding.
3. “Unmuting” is beyond physical voice and gender for both men and women need to unmute their courage which can be silenced by fear, cultural prejudice, religious traditions, and a repressive political climate.
4. As culture and tradition have a marked influence on patriarchy that has lowered women’s self-value and esteem, change in consciousness and culture change is imperative.
5. The mode of communication of women peacebuilders in their peace work is creative and inclusive. It appeals not just to the intellect but to the human heart that knows how to connect and engage beyond gender, religion, and social status, both in the formal and informal levels of peacebuilding.

For the sub-question, **“What do women peacebuilders experience in their engagement in the Bangsamoro peace process? What meaning does it have for them?”**, the following common “conversation” themes describe my own sensemaking

and hermeneutics of their experiences:

1. “Women bringing more women” is a key strategy in the Bangsamoro peace process.
2. Parallel to women engagement, strong and deliberate collaboration of both men and women in peacebuilding is necessary.
3. Unless truly empowered and progressive women shine in public leadership, the dominance of men and the prevalence of gender prejudice in decision-making will continue to exist.
4. The reframing of the meaning of human security and protection has widened women engagement and leadership in all areas of security beyond physical security towards ensuring a dignified and peaceful human life.
5. The success of the Bangsamoro peace process is an ongoing collective effort which can only be sustained with knowledge management and engagement translated into action and lived experience not just with stakeholders but with the public, both in the local and global arena.

For the next sub-question, “**What opportunities and limitations do they experience in sensemaking and communication in the Bangsamoro peace process?**”, here below is my “framing” of the common “conversation” themes drawn:

Opportunities:

1. The experiences that women peacebuilders learned in the Bangsamoro peace process have served as an opportunity to influence and expand women engagement and leadership.

2. The Bangsamoro peace process has become a global model in women's participation in peacebuilding that other countries have emulated and took inspiration from.
3. The Bangsamoro peace process was a platform for humbling learning experiences which at the same time harnessed the expertise and creativity of women peacebuilders.

Limitations:

1. Despite extensive experience in women empowerment, the impact of culture and political climate can still limit a woman's mindset and courage to overcome gender-based challenges in peacebuilding.
2. The gender-based challenges of peacebuilding is often experienced as running against the current where women may need to choose their battles and focus on non-adversarial common needs (e.g., transitional justice) and temporarily "mute" on controversial gender issues.
3. While women peacebuilders have courage and power to pursue their goals, deep issues in mental health may haunt them that they sometimes buckle in battling against gender prejudice in peacebuilding. However, they are quick to recoup themselves and consider their momentary rest and silence as an opportunity for growth, especially when supported by a strong women's network.

By integrating different frames of perspectives, employing polarities and reversals through intuition, and constantly relating the parts to the whole and the whole to the parts of the hermeneutic circle, I derived major themes, leading to the final step in the phenomenological research which is the **synthesis of meanings**

or “fusion of horizons”:

1. Women play an invaluable role in peace work because for them, sensemaking in peacebuilding is communicating a lived personal mission that strategically embodies their core values, not simply a call of duty.

Women peacebuilders participants view peacebuilding not just an activity or a task but a strategic means of communicating their deep values that inspire their life purpose. As such, they take the extra mile to fulfil their responsibilities, undaunted to do high-risk ventures. Their peace work engagements speak of what is in their heart, whether it is verbalized or not. The act of making peace is the medium of letting the world know who they really are and what they are willing to live and die for as the experience of violence and prejudice for them are real.

2. **Communication in peacebuilding among women peacebuilders is creative, conscientious, and inclusive, expressed in varied “languages” and complementary modes of influence.**

Peacebuilding is a language of many languages as expressed in various modes of relating, communicating, and influencing. According to the woman peacebuilder’s natural inclination, expertise, and level of comfort will be the communication medium—legal, immersive, consultative, persuasive, collaborative, and multi-level-- all of these with a high level of creativity, conscientiousness, and inclusivity. The more multi-modal the language of peacebuilding is, the richer and clearer the “voice of peace” is. Even the silent spaces of sometimes “muting” are also necessary for the true music of peace to be heard like the “rest between the notes.”

3. Women peacebuilders communicate peace as inseparable from their gender advocacy where gender inequality can only be resolved if women bring more empowered women in public leadership. To achieve this end, the engagement of both progressive men and women is extremely essential to eradicate gender prejudice and discrimination.

All women peacebuilders spoke about their peace work as an expression of who they are as a woman. Everyone viewed peacebuilding as interlinked with gender. Violence is an assault on those considered weak and perceived to be under one's control. In a macho culture, violence is an issue of taking one's sense of power through weapons or through women battering. Whether individual or social, prejudice against women is still prevalent even when peace agreements have been signed.

Yet, to resolve gender inequality, all genders must work together to eradicate all forms of bullying, prejudice and exclusivity. Women cannot do it alone nor can they act as "proxy-men" embodying patriarchal values. We must touch the inner core of every human individual regardless of gender that upholds human dignity and equality. Women have to bring in other progressive women and men, too. Only then can we overcome the violence that all forms of discrimination bring.

4. **Women peacebuilders have creatively and successfully shaped, shifted, and steered knowledge management and engagement in the understanding of an all-encompassing human security as an ongoing collective effort in the local and global stage.**

There has been a limited understanding of peace and security stuck to the gross

dimension of absence of war. It is referred to as negative peace. But positive peace is the condition where the structures and cultures of violence have been dismantled. Women peacebuilders have not only taken part in conversations and knowledge sharing but have contributed their expertise and skills that have steered the understanding and implementation of human security encompasses all levels of a quality lived experience -- food security, health security, economic security, political security, social security, and psychological security that ensure a happy humane life for all.

5. Unmuting women's voices in peacebuilding is not simply a matter of gender; it is also a matter of cultural and political context.

Communication is a lived experience within a cultural context and political climate. What then is the cultural and political context of a woman unmuting her voice? Or muting her voice? These aspects of cultural and political context need to be understood to appreciate the dynamics of muting and unmuting of women's voices in peacebuilding, apart from using the gender lens. Additionally, there is the common notion that to unmute or to speak is always the best option as muting is considered weak or an act of cowardice. Yet, many of the women peacebuilders spoke about purposive muting as an empowered act of communication where one finds the right timing and space to speak and thus, impact change. The change that is needed is profound for it demands deep cultural and political understanding. Conscious will as well as political will are needed to transform not just traditions, norms, and beliefs, but also policies from the lens of an evolving culture and transformative political climate.

Further integrating and refining the five interwoven themes reflecting back and forth have led to my “**epiphany**”, using the hermeneutic circle. I

experienced a deep self-renewal in realizing that the overarching dimension of the sensemaking and communication experiences of women engagement in peacebuilding is power. Below are my insights that clearly connect the five interwoven themes to the integral core theme of power:

1. Women play an invaluable role in peace work because for them, sensemaking in peacebuilding is communicating a lived personal mission that ignites their inner power for life meaning, not for a short-term, but for a strategic long-term.
2. Peacebuilding among women peacebuilders is “voiced” in various languages as complementary modes of communicative power, with the qualities of creativity, conscientiousness, and inclusivity.
3. Women peacebuilders communicate peace strategically as inseparable from gender issues because from a systemic view, just as peace is an issue of power relations, so is gender. As long as power is kept in the hands of the male-dominated political and military institutions, we can never attain peace, gender equity, and equality.
4. Women peacebuilders have creatively and successfully shaped, steered, and shifted knowledge management and engagement in human security that signals the importance of empowerment on all levels. Security is not just national security with the military as its main protagonist. Security is all- encompassing that it addresses all aspects of human dignity and empowerment-- economic, political, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual.
5. Unmuting in peacebuilding is not just a matter of gender but also a matter of cultural and political context because where there is a lop-sided power

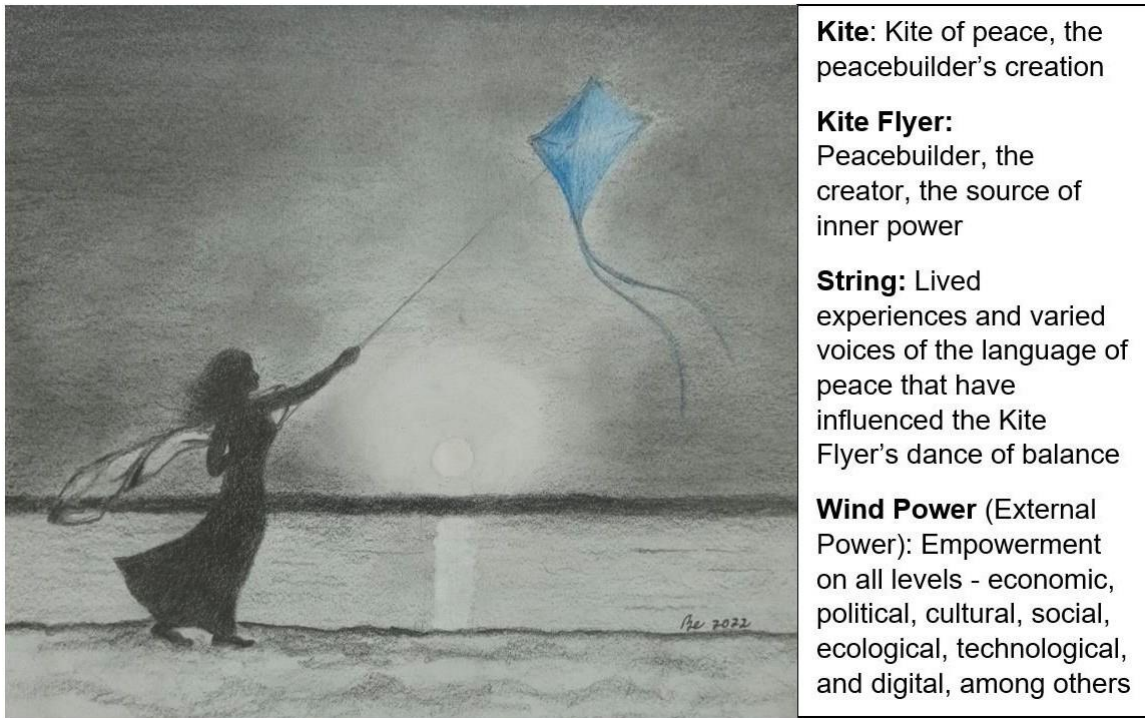
structure due to a patriarchal tradition, women then need to make decisions when to purposely mute or unmute themselves to uphold their human dignity. The space for empowering quiescence (not suppressed silence) is also important to create a beautiful symphony.

Kite Flying Model in Peace Communication: The Interplay of Peace and Power

Power is both internal and external. It is the capacity to impact change in consciousness, culture, and political processes which begins with myself. After my dialogue with the “pearl of peace”, my epiphany on “power” as the overarching dimension of the sensemaking and communication experiences of women participation in peacebuilding carried me to an experience of “kite flying.” In my mind’s eye, I looked at my imaginary kite and “imagineered” a Kite Flying Model for peace communication. In this model, I consider my kite of peace and the stuff it is made of as my own creation. The wind is the power from without—economic, political, cultural, social and ecological. And the kite flyer is “I, the peacebuilder”—the creator of peace from which my inner power emanates. And the string I use to steer my kite are my lived experiences and the varied voices of peace that have influenced and maneuvered my “dance of balance” or the lack of it. Here below in Figure 2 is a graphic illustration of “kite flying” in peace communication and how I made sense of this analogy as the “dance of peace and power” from the sensemaking narratives of the women peacebuilders I conversed with.

Figure 2.

The Dance of Peace and Power: Kite Flying Model in Peace Communication



Balance is the basis of the kite flyer's inner power. For the kite of peace to soar, the peacebuilder must have the balance of yin and yang, feminine and masculine power. Yin is the power of coolness, softness, intuition, introspection, and nurturance. Yang is the power of intensity, firmness, logic, competition, and authority. With balance comes resilience. The kite is only an instrument of the kite flyer. The string to control the kite of peace is within the hands of the peacebuilder. The kite flyer must not hold on tight to its string but must, in fact, let loose of its strings so that the kite can soar. Thus, a peacebuilder cannot be uptight—it must be free to let loose of its string of fear, anxiety, ego, and complacency, and raise its string of courage, compassion, confidence, and creativity to steer the kite with love, care, fun, and discipline. At the same time, holding tension in the string is important for kite flying. As the force of tension increases, the pull increases. When the pull increases, eventually the kite reaches a new balance and becomes stable on a

higher altitude. Resilience in the face of the challenges of “empowerment” on all levels is holding on the tension of the strings amidst the power of the wind, like holding on to my inner values despite the temptations of external power.

For the kite to soar higher in the sky, it cannot be “gone with the wind”, but must fly against the wind. The wind of power on all levels—economic, political, cultural, social, ecological, technological, and digital power cannot be without challenges, unpredictability, and ambiguity. Digital power, as we can observe, can easily be misused for disinformation through viral social media such as Tiktok and Youtube. Economic and political power, likewise, can easily give way to corruption, without a well-founded ethical life. External power can give so much intoxication like wine to a drunkard, beyond one’s control. The story of MNLF leader Nur Misuari may be quite familiar to many peacebuilders. In 1996, President Fidel Ramos signed a significant peace agreement with the MNLF led by Nur Misuari ending 26 years of war which paved the way for Misuari to be elected as Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) governor that same year. However, between 2000 and 2001, he was charged with graft and malversation of over P100 million worth of educational materials supposedly purchased but turned out to be non-existent. Yet until today, Misuari enjoys freedom although he had been charged for the non-bailable case of rebellion over his alleged involvement in the 2013 Zamboanga siege (Rappler, 2018). But this is only a singular high-profile case of corruption within the Bangsamoro. There are thousands of stories from our marginalized communities, perhaps not on malversation of funds but on the utter misuse of government financial support. Poor families were provided “economic power” through condition cash transfer (CCT) schemes but sadly, many have wasted their “ayuda” (support) through gambling and other vices. This is the paradox of external power.

Ethical power is not external power. Authenticity, honesty, wisdom, compassion, empathy, kindness, harmony, openness, humility, strength, and determination, and all virtues come from the inner power of the peacebuilder steering the kite of peace. Just like the power of the wind, external power is only the backdrop of opportunities and facilities that peacebuilders can maximize for peace work, but the creator of peace is still the peacebuilder. For the kite of peace to soar higher especially when the going gets tough, the peacebuilder must keep the inner power of values grounded to maintain balance— lifting, dragging, thrusting, pulling back, and sometimes stopping or pausing against the power of the wind, very much like a graceful dancer.

Conclusion

I conclude that this study is eye-opening and paradigm-shifting in the field of sensemaking and communication in peacebuilding. First, it navigated an unexplored terrain in peacebuilding as it achieved the main objective of this study which is to understand and articulate the experiences of key women peacebuilders from the lenses of gender, language, and tradition. The unexplored terrain of sensemaking from a woman's perspective on peacebuilding is a huge milestone, as sensemaking narratives from previous literature have been from male-dominated war contexts.

The study was able to describe what constitutes the sensemaking and communication experiences of key women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process. The narratives of women peacebuilders have become a means of organizing and expressing their thoughts, providing meaning derived from human interaction and dialogue. While previous literature critiqued Weick's sensemaking approach as untenable from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, this study has proven that narratives are not mere content for sensemaking but constitutive elements of the

sensemaking process itself. Van Manen (1990) defines anecdote as a “narrative with a point.” Thus, an anecdote is a collection of experiences that can open possibilities and interpretations which release us from traps and limitations. This is affirmed by a woman peacebuilder-participant who described our conversation as deeply “cathartic”, healing her of a trauma from the past. Another woman peacebuilder considered it a break-through experience, expressing profound gratitude for an engaging dialogue she has never ever done before.

Second, this study affirmed the value of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology that finds practicality and relevance in human science and in the human world. My sensemaking and that of the women peacebuilders did not only generate sense data but encompassed a whole range of emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences as emergent responses to change and communicating change. A hermeneutic phenomenological orientation towards research through these sensemaking narratives opened a wide horizon of perspectives, plausibilities, and interconnections where data emerged from lived experiences, and the pedagogic tone of engagement combined reflection, action, and embodiment.

Third, this study allowed me to churn on a more holistic phenomenological meaning of “unmuting.” For a long time, I have held on to the belief that muting is connected to verbal voice alone. Yet, through this study, I have realized that muting is intertwined with many voices, inner and outer-- thought, perception, moods, intuition, sight and insight which affect one’s words, attitude, and behavior, all related to consciousness. Thus, when consciousness is muted, then language, freedom of thought, and humane relationships would also be muted. I also discovered that the language of peacebuilding, too, is multi-modal. So, even if one mode of language closes or mutes such as the “language of logical persuasion”, another language can

open and “unmute” such as the creative language of kindness or the language of quietude.

Fourth, in this study, my experience of traversing the juxtaposed six stages of the hermeneutic phenomenology of Van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) has allowed me to merge the perspectives of phenomenologists Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas. In Husserl’s definition of “act”, intentional experiences that combine “*noema*” or outward appearances of objects and “*noesis*” or how it looks like ‘inside your head’, perception or interpretation is a main source of knowledge.

For Heidegger’s *dasein* or the “mode of being human”, understanding is not about the way we know the world, but rather the way we are. In this case, interpretation is influenced by an individual’s background or historicity. For Levinas, in the pre- intentional level, there is intersubjective responsibility where the ethical principle is not just between the self and the object but between the self with the human “other” connecting in an “I-thou” relationship. Through this study, my phenomenological experience of “unmuting voices” in peacebuilding is akin to all three phenomenologists Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas, merging in harmony. From Husserl’s phenomenological standpoint, I perceive that both genders have long been “muted”, although in the world outside women appear to be the most-muted. Yet, this perception or interpretation is consistent with Heidegger’s definition of *dasein* or mode of being where my understanding is not about the way I know the world or how my education defines “unmuting”, but rather about the way I am. I define “unmuting” based on its subtle meaning and repercussions coming from my self-identity.

Likewise, akin to Levinas’ notion of intersubjective responsibility, I view “unmuting voices” as an ethical principle of valuing the human “other”, which is not separate from valuing the “object” of peace. I dialogued with peace” in this study

but it was inseparable from my dialogue with the women peacebuilders in the Bangsamoro peace process I engaged with. Yet, my value for these women peacebuilders does not negate my regard for both men and women in all tracks of peace work, both formal and informal who must collaborate in peacebuilding.

Fifth, last but not least, I deeply value the significance of my “epiphany” on power. Peace dances with power, both internal and external as it makes us soar higher in peace communication that can be truly life-changing, not just for women peacebuilders but for everyone-- applicable not just in the macro level of peacebuilding but in the micro level of creating peaceful homes and gender-fair, powerful families. Further, while I often assumed that unmuting women’s voices is always an indication of power and that a “muted’ woman’s voice is a sign of disempowerment, I have gained insight that what is more essential than the act of muting is the inner impetus or intention behind it. If a woman is muted driven by fear, then then that is disempowerment. But if a woman is muted to create space for quietude and self-awareness, then that is an act of power—a healthy and necessary step for one’s personal growth and inner change. Silence, whether literal, phenomenological, or ontological, reveals the limits and power of language. “Silence makes human science research and writing both possible and necessary.” (Van Manen, 1990). Silence, therefore, is empowering.

My stake in this study springs from my personal interest in the research questions formulated in this dissertation. As sensemaking is a “social activity that preserves, retains, and shares stories where the audience are the speakers themselves and the narratives are evolving products of conversation with the self and others” (Weick, 1995), by making sense of my own story and the sensemaking of other women peacebuilders through hermeneutic phenomenology, I liberated myself from

the prison of my own assumptions of the language of peace and peacebuilding. Precisely, by hearing diverse women's voices whether from the eloquence of the wise or the silence of the "lamps", wisdom and power are reinforced where truth echoes, reverberates and crystallizes in our lived world, lighting our way to true freedom and emancipation of every woman, and every human.

Recommendations

1. For future study, more sensemaking and phenomenological research could be conducted on the multi-modal dimension of the language of peace. This can include Appreciative Inquiry studies on women engagement in their non-violent communication styles or "quiet rituals" that are indigenously practiced as peace communication approach among our cultural tribes in the North and South of the Philippines. Another aspect for future research is a qualitative study on the role of women in peacebuilding, not just as "trust brokers" but as "trust guardians" or "trust champions" of peace communication. Peacebuilding does not begin and end with "brokering peace." Peace must be sustained by guarding that trust among conflicting parties is communicated and kept as a sacred pact.
2. For government policymaking and legislation, there must be a communications plan to advocate more laws on WPS (Women, Peace, and Security) that are consistent with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other related international and local laws.
3. For practical implementation, women peacebuilders must use their communicative power to "en-gender" and implement decisions that ensure gender justice and break gender prejudice and discrimination.

4. For public leadership, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) must strongly consider a progressive woman peacebuilder at the helm of the department and its peace communications agenda to “genderize” the formal and informal tracks of peacebuilding, with strong collaboration with men.
5. For addressing women’s health, especially mental health issues due to increasing gender-based violence, there must be a social and behavior change communication plan on Peace, Gender, and Health advocacy that convey the impact of patriarchal norms on women and men, girls and boys that make them suffer physically, emotionally, and psychologically and how these could be overcome.

CHAPTER VII

THE OYSTER'S MESSAGE: IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

“...Oyster responds beautifully to external pressure, giving birth to a priceless pearl.” – Mukhtar Aziz

Humans and nature respond differently to pressure. While others fold up, some rise up to life-transforming experiences. The Pincada oysters in Mindanao are resilient to pressure as it is the tear that produces the awesome South Sea pearl. It is the oyster that gives birth to the miracle of the pearl.

Imbued with challenges and joy, pain and healing, the precious pearls of wisdom from the sensemaking of women peacebuilders have lighted the way not only to the path of peace and peacebuilding, but also the way to the path of peace communications as both discipline and practice.

Implications of the Study on Peace Communication as a Discipline

Understanding the phenomenon of peace and peacebuilding through unmuting of women's voices through sensemaking and hermeneutic phenomenology is a breakthrough in peace communication research. Theorizing peace has been more emphasized through the approach of sensemaking and hermeneutics that has deduced the meaning of the phenomena of peace and peacebuilding from the lenses of gender, language, and tradition. Through a research-based peace communication approach, women peacebuilders themselves have realized that this a more effective peacebuilding platform than engaging in debates and discourses, especially with men. In view of this, I find sensemaking and hermeneutic phenomenological research as a very viable approach for peace communication.

Traversing the six stages of hermeneutic phenomenology juxtaposing Van Manen (1990) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), not as a set of fixed procedures but as steps for reflection and insight, was a fluid and effective harmonious interweaving of phenomenologists Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas. Hermeneutic phenomenology has permeated the human dynamics and the inner world of women engagement in the Bangsamoro peace process which can never be explained through exact science where accuracy and validity are the rules of the game. The discoveries in this research are “precious finds” in appreciating how women peacebuilders interpreted their lived experiences from self-identity or who they are, perception or from where they are looking, and consciousness or how they think. My “sensemaking” of the sensemaking of these women peacebuilders were founded on the same. Through self-awareness and self-reflexivity, I realized that any perception always comes from a particular “bias” which influences the way I interpret my lived world and that of others. My data validation experience of my interviews with the women peacebuilders proved to me that unless I check and validate my written perspective of their lived experiences, I cannot remain faithful to the reality of their own perspective and simply nuance my language in the way I want it interpreted. It was liberating and humbling to be transparent to all the women peacebuilders I interviewed as I listened to their feedback, especially on how I interpreted or possibly “misinterpreted” the text and context of their narratives.

Nonetheless, the meanings we give to objects in our lived world are our unique interpretations that give plausibilities of the phenomenon, worthy of value, from wherever they come from—pre-conscious, subconscious, or conscious. The Latin word *plausibilis* from which the term plausibility is derived means “worthy of applause.” Thus, arriving at common “conversation” themes, rather than a “unified

interpretation” to answer the research questions of this study point out that as the researcher of this study, I was able to provide a plausible “frame of mind” from my vantage point that is valuable to be considered. In a paradoxical world of multi-meanings and equivocality, theorizing peace as it interplays with gender and power, rather than finding conclusive correlations among them, provide more meaningful explorations to address human crisis and chaos by opening up new possibilities for actions as deeper layers of sensemaking and hermeneutics unfold. Through construction, deconstruction, and self-reflexivity moving through an iterative loop of the hermeneutic circle connecting parts to the whole and vice-versa, there is more flexibility in navigating “what was”, “what is” and “what will be”, apropos to what Gadamer (2004) calls “fusion of horizons”, arriving at Weick’s “enactment” (1990), a core element of sensemaking which is to act through learning. The hermeneutic circle is a veering away from linear thinking towards systemic and integrative thinking where we understand something by connecting it with something we already know or may not know and yet discovered through “epiphany”, either through comparison, contrast, or juxtaposition.

Although Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, was a philosopher not a researcher who provided ideas but not research methods, his concepts of hermeneutics namely, prejudice (or frame of perception), fusion of horizons, hermeneutic circle and, play can be usefully incorporated in the research work of peace communication. I have already adequately explained the first three concepts: prejudice, fusion of horizons, and hermeneutic circle. But the fourth concept, play, is an interestingly profound aspect I unraveled in this study. Through the “play” of beginning my conversation with the women peacebuilders with a piece of art, like a memorable picture that they associate with their participation in the peace process or

a journalistic piece, rather than an academic discourse, I engaged them profusely in their own “peace stories” from which I gained new knowledge, perspective, and experience.

Through sensemaking that was juxtaposed with the hermeneutic phenomenological method, where actions and interactions took place through language, I was able to embrace and appreciate the multi-modal dimension of language in peace and peacebuilding. As we recognize the power of language where the “limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein, 1922), then the essence and meaning of language must be enriched, beyond limitations. Only by having a “fusion of horizons” on the meaning of the language of peace can the world of theorizing peace communication be also enriched.

Framework for Peace Communication: From Engendering to En-gendering

With my “fusion of horizons”, I attempted to theorize peace communication as a movement from “engendering to en-gendering”, my humble contribution to the body of knowledge and discipline of Peace Communication.

To engender means to “to give rise to a situation or condition” or in simple terms, “to make something happen.” Thus, to engender peace communication is to ensure that peace is communicated or rendered in an efficient manner. Yet, leveling up to a higher notch from engendering to “en-gendering”, the experience takes us to a loftier dimension with a clearer gender lens: To en-gender peace communication means to effectively bring the meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding into perspective where parity of esteem in gender relations is imperative in the praxis of peace communication.

Just like a pearl becomes a pearl according to the oyster’s capacity to withstand the pressure of foreign bodies entering its shell, peace communication can

only move higher from engendering to “en-gendering” through the increase of intensity of power of peacebuilders within themselves to withstand the external pressures of patriarchal cultural traditions and political processes. The higher the level of consciousness, self-identity, self-awareness, and self-esteem in the face of intense pressures of gender discrimination in culture and political climate, the more en-gendered peace communication will be, as the mettle of women peacebuilders can only shine in the face of crisis.

The “fight” for peace is not against each other, nor any gender or religion but a revolution of human consciousness that is connected to power. The active form of power is in the decision- making processes. However, the subtle form of power is latent in one’s level of consciousness where self-empowerment manifests as respect for “parity of esteem” of both men and women and the promotion of positive peace in all levels of relationships, structures, and institutions in our community and society.

Consciousness refers to insight, intuition, and thought processes which affect our words, attitude, and behavior, all reflected in one’s level of self-identity, self-regard and self-awareness. When consciousness is low or muted, then peace-promoting language, freedom of thought, and humane relationships would also be muted.

Below is a quadrant matrix of peace communication for all peacebuilders, regardless of gender which may be useful in understanding the interplay of a peacebuilder’s level of consciousness, self-identity, self-esteem, and self-awareness with the level of threat or pressure coming from a patriarchal culture and political climate.

I have identified four quadrants of Peace Communication: 1) Engendered Peace Communication, 2) En-gendered Peace Communication, 3) Emaciated Peace

Communication, and 4) Endangered Peace Communication, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Quadrant Matrix of Peace Communication

Level of Consciousness: Self-Identity, Self-Esteem and Self-Awareness	High	<p>Engendered Peace Communication "Sakto" ("Just enough"; Compliant)</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> Delivery of output; uplifting esteem of male-dominated warring parties</p> <p><u>Communication Approach:</u> Self-empowered but exclusive; Rigid; Traditional; Linear Thinking; Muted Voices of Women</p> <p><u>Peace Engagement:</u> Negative peace (Absence of war); focused on national security and the military; no women leaders in the peace process</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q1</p>	<p>En-gendered Peace Communication "Sakti" (Power)</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> Gender "Parity of Esteem" in structures, systems, institutions, processes and relationships</p> <p><u>Communication Approach:</u> Self-empowered and inclusive, Creative, Conscientious, Non-traditional; Integral thinking; Unmuted multi-modal voices of peace (including empowering silent spaces) of both men and women</p> <p><u>Peace Engagement:</u> Positive Peace; Empowerment on all levels of human security; Gender mainstreaming in all economic, political, and social processes; Women in public leadership</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q2</p>
	Low	<p>Emaciated Peace Communication "Sakit" (sick and weak)</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> No focus on peace</p> <p><u>Communication Approach:</u> Disempowered and unaffected; No engagement in peace conversations</p> <p><u>Peace Engagement:</u> "Muted" women's voices due to indifference</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q3</p>	<p>Endangered Peace Communication "Salto" (Off-track)</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> Distracted focus on peace</p> <p><u>Communication Approach:</u> Disempowered and harmfully affected; Aggressive or passive-aggressive engagement in peace conversations</p> <p><u>Peace Engagement:</u> Muted freedom due to voices off-track from the path of peace (Avoidance or Violence)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q4</p>
		Low	High
<p>Level of Experienced Pressure from a Patriarchal Culture and Political Climate</p>			

Quadrant 1: Engendered Peace Communication

This is the "Sakto" Peace Communication quadrant where engagement of peacebuilders is simply compliant. "Sakto" means "just enough" in Filipino slang. In this quadrant, the focus is on the drafting of the peace accord and uplifting the esteem of male-dominated warring parties, usually the military and the rebel group/s.

The communication approach in this quadrant is self-empowered due to a high level of confidence of the main actors, but quite exclusive and can even be elitist, since there is no experienced pressure to include women. The stakeholders, who are mostly men, do not consider the prevailing cultural patriarchy as an issue to be dealt with. Women's voices are unmuted as peace engagement is simply linear-- achieving "negative peace" or the absence of war. The focus is on national security and silencing the guns of warring parties. There are no women leaders in the peace process. The 1996 Final Peace Agreement is an example of a peace accord signed by the government with the MNLF that was competently engendered yet did not bring authentic peace. Women were sidelined in the peace conversations. The end- result is that the Moro conflict in Mindanao continued for several decades even after the signing of the 1996 peace agreement.

Quadrant 2: En-gendered Peace Communication

This is the quadrant of the "Sakti" or Shakti which from its Sanskrit roots means "power." In this quadrant of peace communication, the focus is on respect for gender parity of esteem as reflected in peace-promoting structures, systems, institutions, processes and relationships. The communication approach is self- empowered due to a high level of consciousness but as the same time, it is inclusive, as the need to address the pressures of a patriarchal culture and political climate is very high. Peacebuilders also use creative, conscientious, and non-traditional communication strategies, leaning towards integral thinking where multi-modal voices of peace of both men and women are encouraged, including empowering spaces for silent reflection. Peace engagement is on building positive peace where there is empowerment on all levels of human security. Gender issues are mainstreamed in all economic, political, and social processes and women are placed in public leadership.

In this quadrant, authentic “peace and gender” champions, both male and female, are born. They shine in the face of chaos and uncertainty, no matter if it means engaging in difficult conversations.

In 2010, the shift to an en-gendered peace communication took place in the Bangsamoro peace process. According to Peacebuilder T. Deles who was then the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, the 2010 Terms of Reference is the first document that mainstreamed the welfare and interests of women, citing UNSCR 1325 & 1820. Further, the 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) included the right of women to meaningful political participation and protection from all forms of violence as part of the list of basic rights of Bangsamoro residents. The flag of victory for women peacebuilders in the Philippines was hoisted with the signing of the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine government led by the first woman chief peace negotiator in the world, Prof. Miriam C. Ferrer. In this quadrant, women play an important role in the rehabilitation of conflict-affected communities and the normalization process which includes the decommissioning of firearms. Peacebuilder L. Alamia, a lawyer and BARMM Minority Floor Leader, is the OPAPP-appointed chair of the GPH Task Force for Decommissioned Combatants and their Communities (TFDCC). The Bangsamoro Organic Law signed in 2019 is regarded as “en-gendered” because it ensures an allocation of at least 5 per cent of the budget for gender and development programs and considers women’s needs in rehabilitation.

Quadrant 3: Emaciated Peace Communication

I call this quadrant in the Filipino local language as the “sakit” (sick and weak)

quadrant of peace communication. In this quadrant, there is no focus on peace. The communication approach is disempowered due to a low level of self-esteem, especially of women, and yet remain unaffected due to a low level of experienced pressure of gender prejudice and discrimination that bothers them. Women have no engagement in peace conversations and their voices remain “muted” due to indifference. Peacebuilders, both men and women, are content with the status quo of peacebuilding. It is not that patriarchy does not exist in their environment. It may exist and they may be victims of it, but they don’t mind as they don’t care about patriarchy. Peacebuilder L. Alamia shared about the challenge of dealing with “proxy-men” (women with strong patriarchal tendencies) even within her own circle of women peacebuilders within the Bangsamoro. Women who are “proxy-men” may proliferate in Quadrant 3 but these women are subtle in their patriarchal tendencies. For instance, they will not bother to talk about the “elephant in the room” when sensitive gender issues have to be dealt with.

Quadrant 4: Endangered Peace Communication

This is the quadrant of “Salto” peace communication which in Filipino slang means “off-track.” In this quadrant, the focus is distracted from peace. The communication approach is disempowered due to a low level of consciousness and also damaging because in the wave of high levels of patriarchy in culture and political climate, the danger signal is on. In the face of danger, the human tendency is to fight or take flight. Thus, peace engagement of those in this quadrant is either aggressive or passive-aggressive. There is muted freedom due to “voices” off-track from the path of peace, taking either the stance of violence or avoidance. Peacebuilders who consciously or subconsciously fight become aggressive, if not harming physically, they harm through words, actions, and strategies. In this quadrant, both men and also

women who are “proxy-men” proliferate and become violent as the threat of cultural or political dominance consumes. A concrete example was when peace communication was thwarted among the Moros despite the signing of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with MNLF leader Nur Misuari due to heightened political differences. The MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front), a faction group, felt that the provisions of the peace agreement with the MNLF did not give regard to the self-sovereignty of the Bangsamoro people which led to the protracted Mindanao conflict for many decades. On the micro level, one key women peacebuilder narrated that even among women, the level of self-value may drop to a lower plane when a threat of “territorial dominance” is experienced. The threat, whether real or perceived, can make them lose their peace, leading to harmful language and actions. One great lesson that the key woman peacebuilder learned from her experience is that “respecting and recognizing personal space” is very essential because if anyone feels that their space or role is intruded, they feel very hurt and they may hurt you back. Peacebuilder L. Alamia also shared a story where she argued and confronted men and women who were proxy-men head-on, fighting with them and accusing them of doing wrong actions. However, she realized it was counter-productive so she changed her strategy. There are those however, who respond in the opposite direction. They consciously or subconsciously choose to “take flight” and withdraw. They hibernate and do not engage, at least momentarily. Peacebuilder L. Alamia, herself, experienced a time in her life when from being aggressive and feisty, she saw a more withdrawn side of herself due to an impostor’s syndrome. Beleaguered with self-doubt despite her capabilities and challenged by an overwhelming patriarchal Bangsamoro culture where she could not change even the mindsets of her own family and community, her spirit was on a standstill.

Likewise, Peacebuilder G. Mercado experienced such a scenario where she needed to leave her high-level post to keep her sanity due to a personal burn-out at the height of the toxicity of swimming with male generals.

Looking at all the four quadrants, we can see that success in creating and sustaining an en-gendered peace communication does not lie in the formal signing of en-gendered peace accords. Change in gender relations and attitudes must take place in the current flux of change. As we are in a flux, situations within the level of consciousness of peacebuilders and the level of the impact of patriarchy in our culture and political climate continues to fluctuate. Thus, the quality of peace communication among peacebuilders also fluctuates. At one moment, a woman peacebuilder may seem to be enjoying the ride in the Quadrant of En-gendered Peace Communication, yet when an unexpected self-identity crisis happens, she may momentarily slide to the Quadrant of Endangered Peace Communication, slipping back into a state of withdrawal or outright anger. To stay constantly in the Quadrant of En-gendered Peace Communication, a peace communicator must consistently and adeptly ride the crest and trough of the challenging waves of a patriarchal political seascape and culture with wisdom and competence as a good, skilled, and experienced surfer would.

The goal of an “en-gendered” peace communication may be quite lofty but we are not alone in this journey. Women are bringing in more women. More men are collaborating with women. As the world becomes more chaotic, our levels of consciousness will rise higher. We are longing for peace. Violence is traumatic. And the face of traumatic scenarios, not only post-traumatic stress disorder is true, but post-traumatic growth is real, too.

Implications of the Study on Peace Communication as a Practice

The priceless narratives of our women peacebuilders can impact transformation both in our consciousness and culture to address problems of patriarchy and gender inequality. Yet, to achieve this end, multi-modal language channels of formal and informal education on “genderizing” peace need to be institutionalized from childhood so that women and men, girls and boys, can be empowered. The Department of Education can explore themes on gender and peace in their character education or Social Studies through a planned communications strategy. In a recent post-pandemic Trainer’s Training Program on Peace and Non-violence for Children I conducted in Mindanao, I was awe-inspired with Bangsamoro representatives from their Ministry of Education who shared how they have successfully conducted peace education in schools using various creative methods such as story-telling, theater, and art.

As gender issues in peacebuilding are historical and cultural, women regardless of religion, ideology, social status, and political color, have similar gender concerns of prejudice and discrimination. They can collectively act towards a common advocacy of protecting women’s rights. This implies that by mobilizing and strengthening a “rainbow” support network for peace and gender advocacy, gender-based violence can be addressed. The NAP-WPS was created to ensure protection of women’s rights, build capacity of women for engendering peace and mainstream gender perspective in peace agreements and security reforms. The WE-Act 1325 formed in 2010 must actively lobby for more government policies and laws that support the implementation of this national action plan. Let not our formal and informal laws discriminate our women even more as patriarchy is already deeply entrenched in our culture. Among poor families, some daughters are dispensed with by their parents and sold to predators due to poverty. Sadly, daughters are victimized by their

own mothers, women who act as “proxy-men” prostituting their own children. Human trafficking and cybersex trafficking must end. Any narrow and rigid reference to cultural and religious beliefs that further subjugate women must be illuminated through “contextualization” of their texts which enlightened men and women who are cultural and religious experts can formulate and communicate through different media platforms.

Although the Bangsamoro peace process has been won through the signing of the peace agreement and the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), peacebuilding does not end there. It is just the beginning. To sustain the initial gains, women peacebuilders must be placed in public leadership to take the helm of the peace process, especially in the decommissioning of firearms and the normalization process. This implies that women have to be capacitated not only in developing expertise in all levels of human security—national, economic, health, political, and psychological, but must also be adept in peace communication strategies. The natural propensity of a woman for “soft ways of doing hard things” through their creative and inclusive “language” power, which is not to be equated with simply the capacity to “speak” but truly to “communicate” in a manner that appeals to both the logical mind and compassionate heart has made them effective “trust champions” who can transform their emotional vulnerability to emotional sensibility that inspire various target audiences.

By keeping alive the dynamic interplay of peace, gender, and power in my peacebuilding practice through sensemaking and hermeneutic phenomenology I can harness the medium of dialogue and conversation as tools for knowledge engagement, not just for “knowing” peace but for “living” it. “A phenomenological

researcher cannot just have a question— He or she must live it.” (Van Manen, 1990)
Theory cannot then be separated from life. Through my commitment of “living peace”,
I know I can impact meaningful change in my humble ways in the world of peace
communication, which is as vast as the sea, where voices will continue to rumble,
where silence runs deep, and where iridescent pearls naturally thrive.

REFERENCES

A. Printed Book/E-book

1. Printed book with one author

Abinales, P.N. (2000). *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State*. Manila: Ateneo De Manila University Press.

Bontekoe, R. (1996). *Dimensions of the hermeneutic circle*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press

Caputo, J. D. (1987). *Radical hermeneutics: Repetition, deconstruction, and the hermeneutic project*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sydney, New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Foucault, Michael. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

Sheridan, Alan (Trans.). New York: Pantheon.

Gadamer H-G. *Truth and method*. (2004) 2nd revised edition. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Gadamer, H. (1983). *Hermeneutics as practical philosophy. Reason in the age of science*. Lawrence, F. G. (Trans.), pp. 88-138. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Gadamer, H.G. (1976). *Philosophical hermeneutics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1998). *Truth and method (2nd ed.)*. New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1960.)

- Hertz, R. (1997). *Reflexivity and voice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical investigations*. (Trans. J. Findlay). New York: Humanities Press. (German original, 1900)
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Martin, Mike. (2014). *An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict, 1978-2012*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Martínez, M. (2014). *Ciencia y arte en la metodología cualitativa*. (2nd ed.). México: Trillas.
- Moustakas, Clark. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications.
- Palmer, R.E. (1969). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Schleiermacher, F. (1998). *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (A. Bowie trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Spurling, Laurie. (1977) *Phenomenology and the Social World: The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and its Relation to the Social Sciences*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Taylor, J.R. and van Every, E.J. (2000), *The Emergent Organization*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy (2nd ed.)*. London, Ontario, Canada: Althouse Press.

Van Manen, M. (2003). *Investigación educativa y experiencia vivida. Ciencia humana para una pedagogía de la acción y de la sensibilidad*. Barcelona: Idea Books.

Weick, K. E. (2001). *Making sense of the organization*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Waterman, R. H., Jr. (1990). *Adhocracy: The power to change*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Wittgenstein L. (1922) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.

2. Printed book with two authors

Lewis, Michael, and Staehler, Tanja, (2010). *Phenomenology: An Introduction*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Morse, J. M., & Field, P. A. (1995). *Qualitative research methods for health professionals (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

3. Chapter in an Edited Book

Dictaan-Bang-oa, Eleanor. (2004). *The Question of Peace in Mindanao, Southern Philippines*. In Roy, C.K., Tauli-Corpuz, V., and Medina, A. R. (Eds.), *Beyond the Silencing of the Guns* (pp.153–60). Baguio City: Tebtebba.

Gadamer H.G. (1967.) On the scope and function of hermeneutical reflection *In* Linge DE, (Ed.), *Philosophical hermeneutics* (pp. 18–43). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hodgkinson, Gerard P. and Starbook, William H. (January 2008). *Organizational Decision Making: Mapping Terrains on Different Planets*. In Hodgkinson, G. P. and Starbook, W.H. (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Decision Making* (Chapter 1). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262179450> Organizational Decision Making Mapping Terrains on Different Planets/stats

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). *Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences*. In Denzin N. K. & Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Minichiello, V., Madison, J., Hays, T., Courtney, M., & St. John, W. (1999). *Collecting and evaluating evidence: Qualitative interviews*. In Minichiello, V. G. Sullivan, G. Greenwood, K. & R. Axford. R. (Eds.), *Handbook for research methods in health sciences* (pp. 396-418). Sydney, New South Wales, Australia: Addison Wesley.

Odman, P.J. (1988) *Hermeneutics*. In Keeves, J. (Ed.), *Educational Research methodology and measurement: An International handbook* (pp. 63-69). Pergamon Press, New York U.S.A.

Smith, D. (1997). *Phenomenology: Methodology and Method*. In Higgs, J. (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Discourse on methodologies* (pp. 75-80). Sydney, New South Wales, Australia: Hampden Press.

Swanson-Kauffman, K., & Schonwald, E. (1988). *Phenomenology*. In Sarter, B. (Ed.). *Paths to knowledge: Innovative research methods for nursing* (pp. 97-105). New York: National League for Nursing.

Titchen, A., & McIntyre, D. (1993). *A phenomenological approach to qualitative data analysis in nursing research*. In Titchen, A. (Ed.), *Changing nursing practice through action research (Report, No. 6, pp. 29-48)*. Oxford, England: National

Institute for Nursing, Centre for Practice Development and Research.

4. E-book with one author

Ancona, Deborah. (2012). *Sensemaking: Framing and Acting in the Unknown*.

The Handbook of Teaching Leadership. Sage Publishing. Retrieved

from: https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/42924_1.pdf

Levinas, Emmanuel. (1982) *Beyond the Verse*. Translation by Mole, Gary D. (1994).

Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. Retrieved from:

[https://monoskop.org/images/e/e2/Levinas Emmanuel Beyond the Verse Talmudic Readings and Lectures 1994.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/e/e2/Levinas_Emanuel_Beyond_the_Verse_Talmudic_Readings_and_Lectures_1994.pdf)

Grondin, Jean. (2001). *Play Festival and Ritual in Gadamer. On the Theme of*

Immemorial on his latest works. Translated by Schmidt, Lawrence.

Retrieved from:

https://www.infoamerica.org/documentos_pdf/gadamer01.pdf

Luhmann N. (1996). *The Sociology of the Moral and Ethics*. International Sociology.

11(1):27-36. doi:10.1177/026858096011001003

Maasdorp, Christiaan Hendrik. (2019). *Narrativity and Organisation: An*

Investigation in Sensemaking Theory. Retrieved

from: <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/106143>

Odden, Tor Ole B. and Russ, Rosemary S. (2018). *Defining sensemaking: Bringing*

clarity to a fragmented theoretical construct. Retrieved from:

<https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.21452>

Weick, K.E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257397559> Sensemaking in organizations by Karl E Weick Thousand Oaks CA Sage Publications 1995
231 pp.

5. E-book with two authors

Borges, M.L, & Gonçalo, C.R. (2010). *Learning process promoted by sensemaking and trust: a study related to unexpected events*. Cadernos EBAPE.BR, 8(2), pp. 260-277. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1679-39512010000200006>

Dwyer, L. & Guiam, R.C. 2010. *Gender and Conflict in Mindanao*. Asia Foundation.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Gender%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Mindanao.pdf>

Weick, K.E. & Sutcliffe, K.M. (2007). *Managing the Unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty*.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265106124> *Managing the Unexpected Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty*

B.Serials

1. Journal Article (Print)

Heidegger, M. (1962). Being and time. New York: Harper. (Original work published 1927) *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2003, 2(3) 34.

Gadamer H-G. The universality of the hermeneutical problem (1966) In: Linge DE, editor. *Philosophical hermeneutics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 1977. pp. 3–17.

Koch, T. (1995). Interpretive approaches in nursing research: The influence of Husserl and Heidegger. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 21, pp. 827-836.

Koch, T. (1996). Implementation of a hermeneutic inquiry in nursing: Philosophy, rigor and representation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 24, pp. 174-184.

Weick, K. E. (Ed.). (2009). Making sense of the organization: The impermanent organization, Vol. 2. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

2. Journal Article with Multiple Authors

Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8, 57-125.

3. Online Journal Article

Allard-Poesi, F. (2005). "The paradox of sensemaking in organizational analysis", *Organization*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 169-96. Retrieved from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247746871_The_Paradox_of_Sensemaking_in_Organizational_Analysis

Brown, A. D., Colville, I., & Pye, A. (2015). Making sense of sensemaking in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 36(2), pp. 265-277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840614559259>

Clark, Jeff. (2008). Philosophy, understanding and the consultation: a fusion of horizons, *British Journal of General Practice*. 58(546), pp. 58–60.
Retrieved from:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2148246/>

Colville, I., Brown, A. D., & Pye, A. (2012). Simplicity: Sensemaking, organizing and storytelling for our time. *Human Relations*, 65, pp. 5-15. Retrieved from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254097836_Simplicity_Sensemaking

ng organizing and storytelling for our time

Finlay, L. (1998). Reflexivity: An Essential Component for All Research? *British*

Journal of Occupational Therapy. Retrieved from:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/030802269806101005>

Guillen, D.E. Fuster. (2019). Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical

Phenomenological Method. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. Jan. -

Apr. 2019, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 201 – 229. Retrieved from:

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1212514.pdf>

Holt, R. & Cornelissen, J. (2013). Sensemaking revisited. *Management Learning*,

45(5), pp. 525-539. Retrieved from:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1350507613486422>

Hultgren, Francine H. (1990). Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an

Action Sensitive Pedagogy by Max van Manen. Review Article.

Phenomenology+ Pedagogy, Volume 8. London: Althouse Press. Retrieved

from: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29173/pandp15124>

Lankton, Nancy K., McKnight, Harrison and Tripp, John. (December 2015).

Technology, Humanness and Trust: Rethinking Trust in Technology.

Journal of the Association for Information Systems. Retrieved from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274374551_Technology_Humanness_and_Trust_Rethinking_Trust_in_Technology

Vuuren, Mark van and Elving, Wim J.L. (2008). Communication, sensemaking and

change as a chord of three strands. Practical implications and a research

agenda for communicating organizational change. *Corporate*

Communications: An International Journal Vol. 13 No. 3.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235288998> Communication Sensemaking and Change as a Chord of Three Strands Practical Implications and a Research Agenda for Communicating Organizational Change

Van Manen, M. (2007). Phenomenology of practice. *Phenomenology & Practice*, Volume 1, No. 1, pp. 11-30. Retrieved from:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228480543> Phenomenology of Practice/stats

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., and Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16, pp. 409-421. Retrieved from:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/211395920> Organizing and the Process of Sensemaking

4. Magazine Article (Online)

Deles, Teresita Q. (Editorial Board). (March 2014). Kababaihan at Kapayapaan, Issue

1. OPAPP. Retrieved from: <https://peace.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Kababaihan-at-Kapayapaan-Issue-No-1.pdf>

Ferrer, Miriam C. (March 2014). "Woman at the Talks." Kababaihan at

Kapayapaan, Issue 1. OPAPP. Retrieved from: <https://peace.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Kababaihan-at-Kapayapaan-Issue-No-1.pdf>

Rallonza, Ma. Lourdes V. (March 2014). "Sec. Senen Bacani: 'The women

were more diligent and meticulous'." Kababaihan at Kapayapaan, Issue 1.

OPAPP. Retrieved from: <https://peace.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Kababaihan-at-Kapayapaan-Issue-No-1.pdf>

5. Newspaper Article (Online)

Arguillas, Carolyn O. (2019, April 7). Only 16 women out of 98 in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority but powerhouse cast. *Mindanao Daily*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mindanaodailynews.com/news/the-region/northern-mindanao/only-16-women-out-of-98-in-the-bangsamoro-transition-authority-but-powerhouse-cast>

Buan, Lian. (December 4, 2018). Nur Misuari arraignment for corruption set in 2019. *Rappler*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/218170-nur-misuari-corruption-arraignment-set-in-2019/>

Luna, Nikki. (22 March 2016). Patriarchy, Manny Pacquiao and Madonna. *Rappler*. <https://www.rappler.com/voices/imho/patriarchy-manny-pacquiao-madonna>

C. Image

1. Digital Image or Photograph

Department of Foreign Affairs. (2019). *Women in Peacekeeping Forum*. OSCR

Photo File photo shared by Dr. Gloria Mercado to the Author

Dino, Carmelita A. (2022). *Kite Flying Model in Peace Communication*. Original Illustration Unpublished.

Dino, Carmelita A. (2022). *Pearl of Peace*. Original Illustration.

Unpublished. Official Gazette. (2012) 2012 Signing of the Framework

Agreement on the Bangsamoro. File photo shared by Ms. Yasmin B. Lao.

OPAPP. (2014). *2014 Signing of the GPH-MILF Signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro*. File photo shared by Ms. Teresita Q. Deles.

OPAPP. (2014). *Secretary Deles Embraces Chief Negotiator Miriam C. Ferrer*. File photo shared by Ms. Teresita Q. Deles.

OPPAP. (2019). *MILF Dialogue with Women affected by Marawi Siege in Butig*. File photo shared by Dr. Gloria J. Mercado

D. Interview

Alamia, L.M. (2021, September 29). Personal Communication. Online Interview.

Deles, T.Q. (2021, August 14). Personal Communication. Online Interview.

Galace, J.N. (2021, June 3). Personal Communication. Online Interview.

Gutoc, S. (2021, July 7). Personal Communication. Online Interview.

Lao, Y.B. (2021, June 1). Personal Communication. Online Interview.

Mercado, G.J. (2021, July 5). Personal Communication. Online

Interview. Santiago, I.M. (2021, July 8). Personal Communication.

Online Interview.

E. Website

1. Website

Adams, David. (2005). *Global Movement for a Culture of Peace*. Index,

Paragraph 6. <https://www.culture-of-peace.info/copoj/index.html>

- Atty. Laisa Masuhud Alamia. (2021). <https://laisaalamia.com/about/>
- Coomaraswamy, Radhika. (2015). *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. USA: UN Women. Retrieved from: <http://wps.unwomen.org/en>
- Johnson, Jean. (2021). *Shakti: The Power of the Feminine*. Asia Society Center for Global Education. <https://asiasociety.org/education/shakti-power-feminine>
- Maligalig, Rosary Diane B. (No date). *WE Act 1325: Six Years of Implementing the Philippine National Action Plan*. Retrieved from: https://www.mc.edu.ph/Portals/8/Resources/WEAct_1325_PNAP.pdf
- Mathkar, Manasi. (23 February 2019). *The Hindu*. News International. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/philippines-leads-asia-in-gender-equality/article26351544.ece>
- Patou-Mathis, Marylène. (Apr 2020). The UNESCO Courier. Volume 2020, Issue 1, p.38 – 41. <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/journals/22202293/2020/1/11/read>
- PeaceWomen. (2010). National Action Plan 2010. Retrieved from: https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/philippines_specificity_pournik_2014.pdf
- Petilla, J, Aseneta, M.L., and Adversario, P. (2021). *Building Peace and Changing Lives: Role and Participation of Women in Peace and Security in Myanmar*,

Philippines, and Thailand. Nonviolent Peaceforce Philippines. Retrieved from:

https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/Diary_of_a_Peacekeeper/FINAL_WPS_Baseline_Study_Nonviolent_Peaceforce.pdf

Santiago, Irene M. (2015). *The Participation of Women in the Mindanao Peace Process*. UN Women. Research paper prepared for the United Nations Global Study on 15 Years of Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Retrieved from:

<https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/research/Santiago.pdf>

Shukla, Aditya. (2020). *Sense-Making: How We Make Sense of the World and Find Meaning*. Cognition Today. December 7, 2020 Retrieved from:

<https://cognitiontoday.com/sense-making-and-meaning-making/>

UNESCO. (2000). *Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence*. <http://culture-of-peace.info/history/Manifesto-launch.pdf>

United Nations Peacemaker. (No date). Retrieved from:

<https://peacemaker.un.org/wps/normative-frameworks/un-security-council-resolutions>

United Nations. (No Date). All Sessions. General Assembly of the United Nations. Home Section. Culture of Peace Par. 2.

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/62/plenary/peaceculture/bkg.shtml>

Vision of Humanity. (2020). Global Peace Index 2020. Retrieved

from: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2020/10/GPI_2020_web.pdf](#)

2. General Web Article without an Author

Council of Foreign Relations. (No date). The Philippines Case Study.

Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. Retrieved from:

<https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/philippines>

E-International Relations. (2019). Interview of Mike Martin. Retrieved

from: <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/78081>

Inside History. (2018). Neolithic Revolution. <https://www.history.com/topics/pre-history/neolithic-revolution>

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Georgetown Institute for

Women, Peace and Security. 2016. Case Study on Mindanao: The

Philippines Women's Participation and Leadership In Peacebuilding.

Retrieved from: [https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-](https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/l75nbg00000697z9-att/JICA_MindanaoLO.pdf)

[ri/publication/booksandreports/l75nbg00000697z9-](https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/l75nbg00000697z9-att/JICA_MindanaoLO.pdf)

[att/JICA_MindanaoLO.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/l75nbg00000697z9-att/JICA_MindanaoLO.pdf)

F. Video

1. Direct Quote from a Video

Atty. Laisa Masuhud Alamia. (October 14, 2021). MP Alamia's Sponsorship

Speech on the TJ Bills Package. Website: laisaalamia.com. News Section.

<https://lisaalamia.com/2021/10/14/mp-alamias-sponsorship-speech-on-the-tj-bills-package/>

DCAF Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance. (12 August 2020). Ssg/R

Champions: Meet Teresita Quintos-Deles. YouTube. <https://dcaf.ch/ssgr-champions-meet-teresita-quintos-deles>

IPI Global Advisory. (April 22, 2015) Interview with Irene Santiago. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8X63ONbM_0c

Inclusive Security. (6 January 2011). Gloria Mercado (Philippines)- Thinking Far. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V_9myrjXVE

Rappler. (Feb. 26, 2019). Samira Gutoc: Are you #TheLeaderIWant? YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RCiNG3kODU>

Rappler. (June 18, 2016). Yasmin Busran Lao 1 . YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyR2g2EziAQ>

Women Peacebuilders. (2015). Jasmin Nario-Galace on creating a culture of peace to advance women's participation. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nQxM0hXbq0>

G. Thesis/Dissertation

1. Thesis or Dissertation Published Online but not from a Database

Hernandez, Mary Beatrice. (2017). The Philippines' Moro Conflict: The Problems and Prospects in the Quest For A Sustainable Peace. A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Continuing Studies and of The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies. Retrieved from https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/1043903/Hernandez_georgetown_0076M_13671.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Lee, David. (2018). Phenomenology in Crisis: The Relevance of Phenomenology

in Twenty-First Century Contemporary Art and the Importance of the Fourth World of Imagining as a Modality of Perception. A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Arts in Fine Art. Birmingham School of Art. Birmingham City University. Retrieved from:

https://www.academia.edu/38259710/Phenomenology_in_Crisis_docx

Osborn, Barrett J. (2013). "Peacekeeping and Peace Kept: Third Party Interventions and Recurrences of Civil War". Theses and Dissertations-- Political Science. 7. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/polysci_etds/7

Williamson, Victoria Heather. (2005). A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of Women's Experiences of Postnatal Depression and Health Professional Intervention. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Adelaide. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/37724>

H. Conference Proceedings/Papers

1. Conference Proceedings

ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. (2018). AIPR- United Nations Workshop: ASEAN perspectives in conflict management and conflict resolution in the region. Jakarta, AIPR. Retrieved from: <https://asean-aipr.org/resources/asean-perspectives-in-conflict-management-and-conflict-resolution-in-the-region/>

2. Conference Papers

Coco, A. (1999). "Using sense-making in phenomenological research", paper presented to Communication and Contradictions: Embracing Differences through Discourse: International Communications Association Conference,

San Francisco, CA, 27-31 May. Retrieved from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47330631_Using_sense-making_in_phenomenological_research

Ferrer, Miriam C. (2015). Gender Dimension in the Bangsamoro Basic Law. ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR). Workshop on Strengthening Women's Participation in Peace Processes and Conflict Resolution, Cebu City, Philippines. Retrieved from: <https://asean-aipr.org/resources/aipr-workshop-on-strengthening-womens-participation-in-peace-processes-and-conflict-resolution-18-19-mar-2015-cebu-city-philippines>

Leslie, Emma. (2015, March 18-19). Lessons Learned and Insights As A Woman In Two Asian Peace Tables. ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR). Workshop on Strengthening Women's Participation in Peace Processes and Conflict Resolution, Cebu City, Philippines. Retrieved from: <https://asean-aipr.org/resources/aipr-workshop-on-strengthening-womens-participation-in-peace-processes-and-conflict-resolution-18-19-mar-2015-cebu-city-philippines>

Mason, J. (2014). "Does it Make Sense" or "What Does it Mean"? In Liu, C. et al. (Eds.) Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on Computers in Education. Japan: Asia-Pacific Society for Computers in Education. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271138299_'Does_it_Make_Sense'_or_'What_Does_it_Mean'

I. Discussion Papers

Brown, Graham K. (2010). The Long and Winding Road: The Peace Process in

Mindanao, Philippines. IBIS Discussion Papers, no.6.

J. University Research Publication

1. Published Research

Kamlan, J.A. (1999) *Bangsamoro Society and Culture: A Book of Readings on Peace and Development in Southern Philippines* (Iligan City: Iligan Center for Peace Education and Research MSU-IIT 1999).

2. Online Research Paper

Ajjawi, R., & Higgs, J. (2007). Using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate how experienced practitioners learn to communicate clinical reasoning. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(4), 612-638. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12-4/ajjawi.pdf>

Brown Andrew D. (2016). Making Sense of the War in Afghanistan. *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*. Retrieved from: <https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/publications/making-sense-of-the-war-in-afghanistan>

Mogensen, Kirsten. (2016). Making Sense of War and Peace: From extreme distrust to institutional trust in Aceh, Indonesia. Retrieved from: https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/59391434/Making_sense_of_war_and_peace_april_26_2015.pdf