Not a Care in the World: an exploration of the personal-professional-political nexus of international development practitioners working in justice and security sector reform.

Abstract

This paper explores the implications for international development policy and practice - specifically within the sectors of building security and justice after conflict - of the departure of those assuming caring roles, predominantly women who become mothers. More broadly, this paper explores how personal life stories impact the choices we make in our professional lives, including where, when and how we engage, in this instance, in international development, and the subsequent implications for the field. These choices (the personal) have an impact on policy and practice (the professional), and inform how knowledge is created, circulated, legitimised and becomes expert knowledge (the political). This paper thus explores the implications of an epistemic community being predominantly male (in part as a consequence of the lack of support for social reproductive work) on how security and justice in post-conflict environments are conceived and, ultimately, rebuilt. The authors reflect upon their engagement in conflict-affected environments – as scholars and former practitioners – and draw from life stories of international development practitioners to investigate the personal-professional-political nexus and the impact of narrow epistemic communities on how 'security work' is done, whose security matters, whose voices count.

Keywords: Security sector, justice sector, international development, caring responsibilities, epistemic community, peacebuilding

INTRODUCTION

"Aid workers circulate through projects despite being both encumbered (by visas and security provisions) and empowered (by freedom from the constraints of stable relationships, personal and professional)" (Heathershaw 2016, 81).

"When I look at the kind of people that remain in very senior leadership roles in these organisations… they're getting more and more distant from societal norms. They've been away from watching the typical rites of passage" (Interviewee 3)

The literature often paints a certain picture of the sectors in which international development practitioners work: transient, detached from context, devoid of substantial relationships and 'ties'. But this is only one part of the story for those individuals who work in these sectors. In fact, the continuous negotiation of the 'encumbered' nature of personal lives in the 'unencumbered' professional space is part of a nuanced and complicated personal-professional-political nexus. By this we mean the way that our choices (the personal) have an impact on policy and practice (the professional), and inform how knowledge is created, circulated, legitimised and becomes expert knowledge (the political). This is not to suggest that the personal/professional/political are distinct and neat categories. Rather, they are connected in a series of complex and poorly understood ways.

Because this complexity often goes unrecognised, fractures and tensions arise for those whose 'encumberances' are not comprehensively acknowledged or responded to in international development policy or practice. Assumptions regarding an 'unencumbered' personal life permeate work culture, often leading to toxic environments and a narrow and un-diverse epistemic community. This, we argue, leads to a series of harms which warrant further investigation: for the

individual practitioner; for the sector itself; and for the beneficiaries of programs. This paper explores the harms associated with the personal-professional-political nexus by focusing on the engagement and disengagement of those with caring responsibilities with the world associated with Security and Justice Sector Reform (SJSR)[1]. Disengagement is an issue throughout the aid and development sector but is particularly prevalent within SJSR for a number of reasons, which we will explore below, and the resultant harms are particularly pernicious. While avoiding essentialist notions of what it is to 'care' and who 'cares', this paper argues that if those engaged in SJSR are predominantly male or child-free women, there are implications that warrant investigation.

In order to make this argument we bring together key strands of literature, drawing on and connecting an emerging literature on personal change and agency in development studies (see for example Fechter 2012 and Eyben 2012), work which reflects on the way in which the epistemic boundaries of 'aidland' are constructed and maintained (see for example Heathershaw 2016), with feminist approaches to SJSR (Bastick 2017; Wilén 2019). We also draw to a lesser extent on literature which has explored the harms associated with care and caring (what has been referred to as 'depletion through social reproduction' by Rai, Hoskyns and Thomas 2014, and Goldblatt and Rai 2017) to explore how the harms - caused by SJSR's narrow epistemic community and marginalisation of women and their security needs - extend beyond individual practitioners to programmes and their beneficiaries. We are drawn to the richness of these bodies of literature, but

[1] SJSR involves the reform, construction or reconstruction of security and justice sector institutions, including their management and oversights organisations (DCAF 2012). International organisations including the UN as well as governments, military organisations, non-governmental organisations and others are engaged in SJSR. Activities include institution building, policy development, and capacity building through training and mentoring. Over the past 15 years, SJSR has been a central part of formal peacebuilding efforts, with the UN and other external actors often taking a lead role (UN 2008).

note there has been little research undertaken to date which connects them, including ways in which caring responsibilities interact with the ways in which fields of practice and expertise are shaped and maintained.

We connect these analytical strands by engaging with 8 life story interviews with current or former practitioners working in SJSR and related fields[2], including our own experience as scholars and former practitioners working in this sector. We acknowledge our personal motivations that have informed this paper and the demands we have made on our interviewees by also sharing small vignettes of our background and experiences. In so doing, we also recognise that our 'selves' are not singular nor static: we are the situated subject (reflecting upon our own experiences or the stories we have told ourselves about who we are and what we have done – our own 'life stories'), the analytical observer (engaging with the life stories of others and the stories that organisations tell of their own work through discourse and practice), and the constituted subject (recognising that we come into being as much through this research as our research comes into being through us, rather than exists as a static, objective reality waiting to be discovered) (Shepherd 2016). We have also presented our preliminary findings at international workshops and conferences, and have engaged with key social media and internet platforms targeted at women and/or carers working in SJSR and broader international development. This includes *Aid Mamas* and *Holding the Blue - Women in the UN System*. In doing so, we have been able to contextualise our interviews in current discussions among the practitioners who are the focus of our study.

[2] Our interviewees and ourselves are all working, or have worked, in SJSR or on security and justice issues in post-conflict environments. We recognise that there is much security and justice work beyond SJSR in conflict-affected environments and that security work and justice work can be very different. The main focus of our paper is on SJSR (and the impact this has on the security and justice sector in conflict-affected environments), but also other security work and justice work where a narrow demographic impacts conceptions of security and justice and, as a consequence, security and justice outcomes.

Methodologically, we adopt a narrative approach (Jackson 2002; Ravecca and Dauphinee 2018; Shepherd 2016; Wibben 2011) whereby interviewee explanations, including autoethnographic explanations, of how their personal and professional worlds collide enable us to analyse and present a counter narrative to popular discourse in which the individual, notions of care and intimacy, and the private are often peculiarly absent from the international community. These counter narratives are often ignored, suppressed or delegitimised in an effort to control meaning, maintain power and sustain the status quo, and have been similarly discredited by international relations scholarship which, until recently, silenced others by speaking for them and privileging the scholar as producer of knowledge (Ravecca and Dauphinee 2018). In this regard, we draw from Wibben (2011) and Jackson (2002) who have shown how narratological tools can help us reveal the tensions between public and private realms and help expose the power relations, including the gendered power relations, that structure these tensions.

We are motivated by our intellectual curiosity, our own personal experiences, and above all a concern with highlighting an issue which has been hitherto overlooked and which causes, as we will argue, a complexity of harms at the individual, organisational and societal levels. We do not seek to make claims for 'mothers' 'fathers' or 'SJSR workers' as homogenous categories. Nor do we suggest that this paper responds to all of the nuanced and complex factors at play in any individual's personal, professional and political choices. What we do seek to highlight is the importance of the blurred and complex ways in which the personal, professional and political interact, and the resulting harms. We aim to do this by placing at the centre the narratives of those who have worked, or do work, in the sector.

EXPERTISE AND THE BOUNDARIES OF 'AIDLAND'

We have intentionally focused on the international actor in this research for two main reasons. Firstly, our experience of being international actors in international development organisations and disengaging upon assuming caring responsibilities, has informed our desire to investigate the individual, organisational and programmatic harms caused as a result of this typical occurrence. Secondly, we have noted along with other scholars that the composition of the international community engaged in SJSR has an effect on the design and outcomes of their work as well as norms which guide practice, and ultimately whose security and justice matters.

Our approach to the 'international' owes an intellectual debt to postcolonial scholars and those that draw on their work in the context of contemporary critiques of fields related to SJSR. Spivak's question 'can the subaltern speak?' has been pivotal in our understanding of "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other" (Spivak 2010, 76) while Said's work on orientalism connects the process of othering explicitly to the colonial encounters which underpin the emergence of international development, writing of "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (1995, 1). Bilgin, in turn, applies this work to contemporary interventions in post-conflict contexts, using the concept of 'worlding' to understand framings of expertise and disjunctures between Global South and Global North knowledges, where the Global South is not 'absent' from 'Western' thought and action but is constitutive of its regimes (2018, 78-80).

This distinct separation between the 'international' and the 'other/local' is fundamental to the framing of the international as operating in 'unencumbered' space, as mobile experts free to move

from place to place as part of an international aid bureaucracy, utilising their 'exclusive expertise' (Leander and Wæver 2018). The neo-colonial and uneasy figure of the 'international' which is present in the Global North-South encounters in SJSR and International Development (see for example Bouka 2019; Bouka 2018; Datta 2019) underpins a racialized element of the care and care labour of international intervention which we discuss in this paper (Sarabatnam 2017). While our interviewees did not address this explicitly, and nor is it the focus on this paper, it is important to mention here that the critiques of neo-colonial encounters which we draw on are as relevant for the care economy – where internationals hire local care labour – as they are for the professional act of 'intervening' through programmes and policies.

Our approach also takes forward Mosse's concern with a lack of attention to knowledge practices 'at the top':

> "the rich literature on the intended and unintended effects of development interventions on populations, regions and communities is hardly matched by accounts of the internal dynamics of development's 'regimes of truth' or of the production of professional identities, disciplines and the interrelation of policy ideas, institutions and networks of knowledge workers who serve the development industry" (2011, 2).

This refers to the actual knowledge production in and through the life worlds of the actors themselves (Mosse 2011, 8). Heathershaw's work on the problematic and slippery category of 'international community' reminds us that it is approached in terms of what it does for its supposed beneficiaries "rather than what it confers to the agents of aid themselves" (2016, 79). In his work he describes workers in 'aidland' as members of an epistemic community with certain characteristics: encumbered by logistics of visas and security concerns yet at the same time free from the constraints of stable personal and professional relationships (Heathershaw 2016, 81).

Smirl (2012) similarly describes the 'liminal' space of 'aidland' as a place free from the constraints of aid workers' societies of origin, and as being transitory, permissive and exceptional in character. Such transient lifestyles pose particular risks to the maintenance of consistent support structures, and thus lead to less resilient functioning from a psychodynamic perspective (Snelling 2018, 3). However, because the boundaries of the epistemic community operate as if they were 'unencumbered', more often than not those with specific personal relationships – in the case of this paper caring responsibilities for children – have to adjust their professional lives accordingly. There is lack of attention given to the relational words of these workers (Snelling 2018, 4), hidden by the narrative of 'unencumbered' and 'liminal' lives.

Fechter, however, argues that individuals are relevant as objects of analysis, that the personal dimension impacts outcomes of policies and projects, and that individuals can become points of intervention to improve practice (2012, 1388). Fechter also invites us to consider the role of personal conviction and of the nature of overseas residency that create exceptionally close links between the personal and the professional. Values which motivate work may overlap with professional choices, choices which in turn concretely shape, and are shaped by, personal life. If we bring this together with Heathershaw's work on 'aidland' we see some tensions between expectations of freedom of movement, of the necessity to move families to overseas residencies, and a personal commitment to the work. Such tensions may lead to the kind of 'bricolage' identified by Eyben through her analysis of life histories of women development professionals: "In the context of managing and sustaining complicated personal lives and relationships their professional practice was the art of bricolage and make-do. Indeed, it may have been just that which made their individual agency matter as much as I believe (or hope) it did" (2012, 1420).

What we can observe is a reinforcing of the relationship between the nature of the epistemic community and the nature of the agent which is part of it. Epistemic communities are not static, of course, they are "sites of constant struggle" (Bush and Duggan 2014, 233) but they cluster around certain agreed intellectual reference points. We argue that they are maintained both by conditioning the individuals who join the communities but also by the individuals self-selecting entrance and exit from the communities. Indeed, in the work cited so far, the emphasis has been placed on how the agents who are part of a given epistemic community have certain personal contexts which may influence the nature, output and outcomes of their work. We argue in this paper that the terms of entrance for an epistemic community will condition who is able to maintain their place within it.

A FEMINIST APPROACH TO HARM AND CARE IN SECURITY AND JUSTICE SECTORS

While there is an increasing body of literature on gender-responsiveness in SJSR (including Bastick 2017; Dharmapuri 2011; Mobekk 2010; Wilén 2019), it has not yet fully engaged with the construction and impact of epistemic communities nor the ways in which the role and influence of those who assume caring responsibilities can be engaged or sustained. Wilén (2019), however, has recently demonstrated how the public and private spheres are integrally related with the private - such as women's role as primary caregivers - playing a significant role in sustaining exclusionary and discriminatory practices within the security sector. Women's marginalisation in SJSR for

similar reasons, and its impact upon programmes and outcomes, has not yet been investigated. We argue that those engaged as international actors in SJSR influence how security and justice are conceived and whose security and justice is prioritised. Given those engaged in SJSR are from a narrow demographic – in part, we argue, because of the departure of women when they assume caring responsibilities, which principally occurs when they have children[3] and is compounded by gendered assumptions about security work (Goldstein 2018) and care work (Rai, Hoskyns and Thomas 2014) – the epistemic community and what counts as expertise are similarly narrow. The narrowness of the epistemic community can have a detrimental impact on security and justice outcomes. This is particularly the case for those who are not reflected in the demographic of the epistemic community. During programme development and implementation, when consulting or choosing partners within the national community, external actors engaged in SJSR tend to seek out similar, like-minded counterparts; so, predominantly male, central-level security and governance actors with share views and attitudes (Mobekk 2010; Sedra 2010). Research on the marginalisation of women in SJSR (Naraghi-Anderlini 2008; Salahub and Nerland 2010) has shown how the security and justice needs of those not represented are less likely to feed into SJSR programmes and plans. In turn, this can decrease the likelihood of security sector institutions being responsive to their security and justice needs, which can adversely impact public confidence and trust in the security sector and, consequently, its legitimacy and effectiveness. The prospects of successful SJSR and broader peacebuilding interventions can subsequently be compromised (Gordon 2014), something we learn both from policy and policy guidance (UN 2008; OECD 2007

[3] As suggested by our research participants as well as personnel data of organisations engaged in SJSR which shows a dip in the proportion of female international professional staff members (as compared with men) in the mid-30s age group (the age at which many women in this sector choose to have children) - see, for instance, UN 2018.

and the UNSCRs that comprise the Women, Peace and Security Agenda) and scholarly work (Bastick 2017; Dharmapuri 2011; Mobekk 2010).

While we do not promote essentialist arguments nor assume representation automatically leads to responsiveness (Hudson 2012), we do argue that the marginalisation of those who have or assume care responsibilities is informed by and informs an epistemic community which privileges certain forms of security and certain groups' security above others. Drawing from literature on the costs of care (notably the work of Rai, Hoskyns and Thomas 2014; Goldblatt and Rai 2017) we can see how the harm caused by these dynamics of exclusion extends beyond individuals within the international community who assume caring roles. By framing what we learn from the literature, and what we hear in the narratives below, as 'harm' we recognise the damage and depletion which occurs as well as make a clear statement about the negative effects of normalised work practices and cultures. Through this perspective we can also see how the personal-professional-political nexus operates and how harms at each level intersect.

LIFE STORIES

The Authors

One of the authors of this paper (XX) worked for a decade as a practitioner in peacebuilding, principally working in SJSR, employed with the UN and other international organisations. This

work included building security sector institutions, advising on war crimes prosecutions and ensuring compliance with international obligations, coordinating efforts to improve the rule of law and the protection of human rights, and facilitating the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons - working alongside national counterparts (governmental, security, civil society and community-level, including former combatants, victims and alleged perpetrators of war crimes, families of missing persons, and displaced and stateless people with no safe place to reside) and other international actors (military and civilian) and implementing partners in post-conflict Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Upon assuming caring responsibilities, with the birth of her son, this work was limited to very short and infrequent consultancies, home-based work and, eventually, a return to the academy. The choice she had was to return to a conflict-affected environment with her baby after three months of maternity leave, or leave the UN to find other employment. Given there were few family-based duty stations requiring skills in conflict-related security and justice issues, and competition for headquarter positions was notoriously fierce (and often required frequent travel to insecure environments or 'non-family duty stations'), this further problematised efforts to secure employment in her field. Attitudes towards women with children, and sometimes even women of childbearing age, compounded these difficulties. XX had been asked during an interview, for instance, whether she would have enough time with her caring responsibilities to dedicate to the position in question. When she used to sit on such interview panels herself, where urgent tasks met cumbersome UN bureaucracy, the inclination was to choose someone who could deploy swiftly and would be more likely to remain in the mission for a certain length of time. On these recruitment panels there was also often consideration given to how a candidate would 'fit into a team'. When that team is predominantly male, or at least has no primary or sole-carers, women and particularly those with caring responsibilities can be at a disadvantage.

Caring responsibilities, particularly for sole carers, limit and often prohibit work in insecure, conflict-affected environments, particularly for extended periods of time. They also limit opportunities to engage in the field in a research capacity, particularly concerning extensive fieldwork. For the co-author (XX) her career has been based primarily in academia, working at Universities both in the UK and Switzerland, and with some years working for an NGO. At the start of her career she was able to travel frequently to conferences and to spend extended periods of time in the field, but since the birth of her two children she has found herself restricted to shorter visits and to more management roles overseeing international projects while others undertake the more substantive fieldwork. While this has led to positive professional relationships such as writing partnerships with scholars in the case study countries of focus, it has also led to challenges around claiming legitimacy as an 'expert' and around managing questions from colleagues, peers and family as to the possibility of 'leaving' her children during frequent trips overseas. This has reduced a feeling of being able to participate widely in important networking and an occasional sense of marginalisation from communities of experts who are embedded in field contexts and who are more mobile (see Henderson 2018). In her field of expertise, that of transitional justice, XX has found that the preference for "professionalized and internationally mobile knowledge" (Nesiah 2016, 34 cited in McAuliffe 2017, 180) extends also to the scholar.

The Interviewees

In addition to drawing from our own 20-year experience as practitioners and scholars/researchers, and engaging with social media and internet platforms where women and/or carers working in this

sector interact and discuss matters related to navigating the sector with caring responsibilities, we also conducted 6 life story interviews focused on the personal-professional-political nexus. Aiming at breadth rather than statistical generalisability, we selected interviewees using our own professional contacts in order to capture a variety of experience (in terms of geographic, temporal and sectoral experience). The interviews were conducted either in person or remotely by skype or telephone and lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. We also conducted subsequent informal interviews and discussions with respondents over a period of 6 months as our research developed and we collaboratively reflected further on caregivers in this sector. The 6 interviewees capture some salient issues, some of which we focus on in this paper, and some of which certainly require further in-depth research. There were also some key dimensions we might expect to be relevant – sexuality, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status – which were not discussed during the interviews. These silences are not indicative of the lack of importance of these dimensions but were a result of "a collaborative effort between researcher and participant" (Fujii, 2010: 239), meaning that we did not ask the questions and they did not raise them independently. These silences as a form of meta-data (Ibid) are more likely to tell us of the discomfort around discussing these dimensions, particularly in light of the discussion of neo-colonial encounters in the previous section, as they are to tell us that they do not matter. In this paper we highlight the importance of an under-researched topic, encourage further discussion, and identify the most pertinent areas for follow-up work. This is in line with a methodological tradition which highlights the importance of small n, in-depth, studies of individual stories as a way of connecting to broader, more systemic, issues of concern aiming to see a topic differently by moving between the particular and the general (Dwyer and Emerald 2017, 16-21).

The common thread for all our interviewees is that they were, or are, working in SJSR but have taken the decision to change their work environment and engagement due to current or planned caring responsibilities for children. We recognise caring responsibilities are not confined to caring for children (and our arguments about the harm caused by marginalising women once they have children extends to people with other caring responsibilities), and that primary or sole carers are not only women (hence interviewing men also). However, we also acknowledge that the majority of those who disengage from the sector once they assume caring responsibilities are mothers, because they tend to be primary carers in all societies and because there are gendered assumptions about professional competence and commitment once men and women become parents (Burgess 2013).

[insert table 1 here]

The interviewees' stories in many ways mirror the authors' autoethnographic vignettes included above. All the interviewees experienced the life event of having children or planning to start a family as a significant factor in professional decisions. Each interviewee experienced navigating these decisions in more or less negative ways, highlighting the complex interplay between life stories and professional decision-making. In the sections which follow we reflect on the harms to individual practitioners and to the sector as a whole, which emerge from the stories of our interviewees. The intention is not to imply that these harms, individual and collective, are neatly distinct. They interact, feed into each other and are intertwined through the professional trajectories

of our interviewees. In addition, the nature of the harm varies between interviewees, with a tension between potential harm and potential opportunity as personal and professional decisions are made.

Negotiations and Compromises: Harm and The Individual Carer

For the individual interviewees it was clear that their professional decisions were a series of negotiations and compromises around varied family responsibilities. The context of constraints and decision-making differs between the interviewees: 2 are single parents (2 female); 3 are co-parents (2 male, 1 female); and 1 is in a relationship and planning to start a family (1 female). However, a red thread between all of the stories was the significance of the decision to start a family, a decision which was framed as a break or disruption in professional life as the interviewees either exited the field or found different ways of engaging with it. In the first instance, interviewees who decided to start a family, or are thinking about starting a family, begin a process of shifting their professional strategies.

While some of our interviewees (Interviewees 1 and 3) moved to academia once they had children, others renegotiated their engagement with the field. This renegotiation or re-engagement often involved moving away from overseas posts in less secure environments to posts at headquarters:

> "Women are so rare in security sector reform; it is a shame if they leave once they have children. I previously would have said that there was no relevance of gender to my career decisions. But as I've got older, and I've met people, people who don't want me to be in danger. It came from my family initially, especially my Dad. They didn't understand my

> job, what exactly it is that I do. I am now in a serious relationship and thinking about children – do I want to bring them up in a place with no health care? It is okay for me, I can cope, but not for a toddler. This is part of the reason why I gave up my work in Central African Republic and moved to Slovenia" (Interviewee 4).

This idea of 'suitable' and 'unsuitable' places to bring up children was a factor in other interviewees' decisions also. One interviewee described a child's health emergency in an African context which precipitated a move back to Europe (Interviewee 5) and it was clear that the lack of support and facilities for family life in the field station was an issue, with a sense sometimes of regretful acceptance: "Unless a conflict area becomes a comfort zone, which is not the nature of the work, then that won't change" (Interviewee 4). Our interviewees also acknowledged that children are brought up in these environments by parents and guardians who have no choice but to stay, a stark difference in the way in which 'harm' is encountered and can be managed by the 'international' or the 'local'.

One interviewee worked for a number of years in Afghanistan and then as a consultant in various countries until she became pregnant. When she became pregnant, she limited the countries where she tried to find work to those without severe security threats, but the biggest constraints she faced in finding work were (1) organisational policies in terms of their insurance companies not accepting liability for pregnant employees, or lack of family duty stations and (2) bias with organisations' "worries that employees will be less productive than someone without kids" (Interviewee 2). This particular interviewee told us that she tested this bias by sometimes declaring her parental status in the opening paragraph of cover letters, and invariably those with such a

declaration did not generate an invitation for interview whereas those without did. And yet, as she asserted: “If I was a man and said I had a wife and family I’d be way more likely to get a job” (Interviewee 2).

This bias comes from the tendency to assume that women with children “cannot work after hours, will take time off when children are sick, will soon have other children [and thus take maternity leave], [and] will not prioritise the needs of the organisation above their children” (Interviewee 2). Within organisations there is an understandable “need for reliability, a need for a return in investment, a need to work long hours” (Interviewee 2) and the need to hire swiftly. This logic fails to make sense however when we take into account the high attrition rate among employees, the burdensome bureaucracy that means posts (especially in the UN) are left unfilled for months, and the fact that the long hours worked in international development are not always productive (Bauman 2016; CEB 2018).

The question of the ‘healthiness’ of the work environment and the state of personal relationships was a common thread in the interviews. The narratives often articulated judgements about choices and contexts individuals find themselves in. For example, “one of the reasons why I left the UN [was] because you see so many individuals who sacrifice everything for their careers. But end up sad. Move up, move up, but become nasty and lonely” (Interviewee 6), or “it should be questioned whether those who have healthy relationships are likely to cause more harm in such environments than those without strong social ties” (Interviewee 2). Indeed, this interviewee considered it ironic that there is so much concern among employers with regards to family time taking away from work time when there are other “more serious issues for an organisation to worry about”: indeed,

"being bitter, having unhealthy relationships can be a liability that warrants much more concern by organisations" (Interviewee 2).

Even if it was the case that women with children work fewer hours than others, as one interviewee has said "[Time] is no substitute for the transformation that you experience when you become a parent. There's this stuff that's not valued by both management or society; when you cultivate a maternal instinct or when you raise a child… you [build] resilience, a multi-faceted perspective and a degree of empathy that will gift an organisation rather than detract from it" (Interviewee 2). Feminist care and peace theorists have also often argued that "practices of care give rise to distinct moral and political thinking, which derives from the existential fact of human vulnerability and relatedness, and the capacity to recognise and respond to the needs of others" (Vaittinen, Donahoe, Kunz, Ómarsdóttir and Roohi 2019, 197; see also Ruddick 1990; Confortini and Ruane 2014). This is echoed in the tendency of our interviewees to make sense of their (restricted) choices through critique of the choices of others – those who do not seek 'healthy' relationships do well professionally but lack something important in terms of character or experience. This was intertwined with another important theme, that of what counts as 'success' in the sector.

Interviewee 2 observed that "those who've had children have dropped off the radar, and those who haven't had children have raised to the ranks of director-level" (Interviewee 2). This issue of the culture generated by the profile of 'successful' people was echoed across all of the interviews: "I must admit there are very few women I know who do this kind of work in the field. They are 30-40, single, with a temporary partner" (Interviewee 4) and in the field of SSR the military men are "divorced or with a wife who follows" (Interviewee 5). And so when decisions are being taken as

to whether one 'fits' with the profile of the field many interviewees made the assessment that the choice was either exit or be incorporated into a negative culture of successful professional lives at the cost of personal lives: "I have a nagging feeling that the ones who are really successful in their careers are the ones who neglect their families or have a partner who neglects their career" (Interviewee 6). Young, Pakenham and Norwood (2018) also found loneliness and separation from families to be a considerable stressor for many of the 218 aid workers they surveyed, and talking with friends and families the most common effective coping strategy.

It is not the intention of this discussion to suggest that all employees with caring responsibilities are more empathetic or that employees with no caring responsibilities or who are successful professionally are "nasty and lonely" (Interviewee 6). Rather, we note that the consistency among the interviewees of the belief that their caring responsibilities are a significant factor in blocking them from professional success, is important. The interviewees, once they had children or started thinking about a family, felt they had to find different ways of engaging with the field. One interviewee who described himself as responsible for many of the practical aspects of day-to-day childcare "school runs, paying expenses, making decisions about sleepovers" (Interviewee 6) told us that his "decision to be self-employed [is] a conscious one of wanting to be with my family" going on to say that he wouldn't have left the international world if not for the "wonderful reasons of family and wife." It is nonetheless clear though that "This has been frustrating on a professional level. Sometimes I feel I have given up a lot and have not developed professionally" (Interviewee 6). Another interviewee described a shift between prioritising his career and then his wife's in turn over a number of years. At the time of interview he was not accepting missions in order to be at home more while his wife completes professional training, but on the understanding that he can

later move into a period of travel which is required by the job (Interviewee 5). While some interviewees mentioned better or worse employers, the general picture is one of lack of support: "I haven't ever had an employer, during my consultancy... that has ever asked me about my family. So, I have never been offered any benefits as a self-employed person [which I am for family reasons]" (Interviewee 6).

The interviewees placed in opposition the healthy/unsuccessful choices they have made or are thinking of making and the unhealthy/successful choices of others. This imbues the narratives with a sense of defensiveness and judgment while attempting to strategise, justify and process restricted choices. The two male interviewees discussed juggling their professional priorities with those of their female partners and co-parents, mobilising different strategies including taking it in turns to travel (Interviewee 5), or reducing professional expectations (Interviewee 6). A sense of frustration accompanied all narratives, with harmful impacts for individuals having to juggle caring responsibilities, exit from frontline work, or face feelings of frustration that they do not fit the profile of the 'successful' employee in the sector. A lack of attention to these effects in the literature is concerning, not least because of the potential damage to individuals but also because of a loss to the sector as a whole. With this in mind we now move on to reflecting on the harmful impacts of these dynamics for SJSR in general.

Other Harms and the Effects on Peacebuilding

The preceding section outlined the harms caused at the individual level to those who assume caring responsibilities and are no longer able to pursue their career in SJSR and the broader security and

justice sectors in international development. Beyond these individual harms, there is an impact on the type of security and justice being built in conflict-affected environments. This is due to a number of factors, not least the restricted demographic of those engaged in such work. What we know from the literature on the boundaries of 'aidland' is that they operate as if those within them were 'unencumbered' and we can see this in our interviewees' descriptions of the archetypical profile of the 'successful' SJSR employee. This is relevant for the individual and for the sector as those producing the 'regimes of truth', i.e. giving meaning to 'security' and 'justice', are a narrow and relatively homogenous set of actors not representative of the expertise and knowledge which is available.

As a result of a lack of systems, processes and policies in place to enable carers to have both a family life and a career in this field, missions tend to be male-dominated and, at least among women, young or, in some contexts, retired. As one interviewee said, a number of women in the sector are near/post retirement age who have returned to work after their children become adults albeit in much less senior roles than they had previously - often as volunteers (Interviewee 3). As XX has said elsewhere (Philips 2017, n.p.) "I would often be the only woman at the table among 10-20 representatives of different organisations, offices and departments in the mission". The consequences are that a diversity of knowledge, experience and skills is often missing from such missions. Moreover, such missions are likely to be "even more removed [from] the demographic, norms and values of that country than might otherwise be the case" (Gordon in Philips 2017, n.p.). As one interviewee described it "[Whether a man or woman is present] totally changes it… from the planning of a mission… you need a gender lens… but also [when planning] how to undertake interviews with locals, how they are carried out when you have a man in uniform or a civilian

woman present" (Interviewee 4). There are many examples of SJSR programmes being led by male external actors who partner almost exclusively with those who are perceived to share similar views and have similar backgrounds, i.e. male leadership in security and political structures (Sedra 2010; Gordon 2014; Interviewees 1 - 3).

The implications of this are likely to be policies, programmes and interventions which are less responsive to the needs of a broader demographic and, thus, less likely to enjoy broad-based public confidence, trust and legitimacy (Gordon 2014; Jaye 2006). As a result, they are less likely to be effective. This is not to suggest that only women can understand and respond to the security needs of women, but we do argue that the composition of a group informs the development of an epistemic community which, in our case, informs how security and justice are conceived and responded to. Research has shown that institutions become ineffective or rejected if they don't resonate with the needs of those people they ostensibly serve, which is likely to happen if they are not engaged or their needs don't find expression in the SJSR planning stages (Nathan 2007; Oosterveld and Galand 2012; Smith-Höhn 2010; Scheye and Peake 2005). SJSR being male-dominated tends to result in the marginalisation of the security and justice needs of women (Sedra 2010; Gordon 2014) or an acceptance that gender issues 'can wait' (Gordon, Welch and Roos 2015).

Moreover, if security and justice sector institutions are ineffective, this will do little to contribute to the establishment of sustainable, comprehensive and meaningful peace (Gordon 2014). Particularly where gender inequalities and gendered power relations remain intact, gendered insecurities and will remain (Cohn 2012). Given unequal power relations breed insecurity and

private and public violence are deeply connected, the likelihood of a sustainable peace is undermined where peacebuilding efforts neglect gender. Further, research has demonstrated the links between gender inequality, violence against women and the propensity to armed conflict (Cohn 2012; Enloe 2004; Melander 2005; Puechguirbal 2012). Moreover, neglecting gender as part of peacebuilding efforts in SJSR will do little to deconstruct militarised masculinities which feed conflict dynamics (Cockburn 2010).

It is not simply that international actors engaged in SJSR and the broader security and justice sectors are predominantly male and that this can undermine responsiveness, effectiveness and legitimacy of engagements and outcomes. Myopic HR policies lead to an unhealthy environment in which, after a certain time in conflict-affected environments, the only ones left "are men in perpetual cycles of PTSD… those unable to perform well" (Interviewee 2). Or as another interviewee said, "traumatised people stay on the circuit going from one conflict zone to another" (Interviewee 3) – it becomes their norm, their home. Other interviewees referred to the loneliness and the sacrifice of meaningful personal relationships - and the harm this can have on the work at hand. The consequences of such an environment can be harmful to peacebuilding efforts and ostensible beneficiaries of peacebuilding programmes, as well as the individual practitioners themselves.

We have seen in recent years many sexual misconduct cases involving Oxfam and "many humanitarian and development organisations", according to the research team of the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change established by Oxfam International (Oxfam 2019; House of Commons 2019), and sector-based probes into the cases of

suicide among over worked staff which tell a small part of the story of what our interviewees describe as the pressures of the "cowboy saviours" and "mission junkies" (Interviewee 4) who cannot "look after themselves…[and so]…make bad decisions" (Interviewee 1) (see Cain, Postlewait and Thomson 2006; see also James 2010). This toxic work environment is fed and sustained by a permissive culture and a narrow range of individuals who are able and willing to work in such a way. Those who remain in these environments are more likely to be those without children or those with "video relationships with their children" (Interviewee 3):

> "When I look at the kind of people that remain in very senior leadership roles in these organisations… they're getting more and more distant from societal norms. They've been away from watching the typical rites of passage where all your mates have kids and you go through that as a bit of a group… there'll always be a couple of people that don't have kids, but at least you're surrounded by people with kids so you have a bit of interface" (Interviewee 2).

Being physically removed from their home country societal networks and structures, and the usual audiences which might encourage norm adherence and sanction norm violators (see Morris, Hong, Chiu and Liu 2015) can harm the individual and shape the types of behaviours and attitudes in their work. As Smirl (2012) describes, the liminal space occupied by aid workers is one of exceptionalism where permissiveness can result, because of perceived freedoms and the transitory nature of 'aidland'. Beyond this, there can be a missed opportunity to connect with those in conflict-affected environments, which is often absent where 'locals' and 'internationals' live often separate lives, distrustful of each other (see, Autesserre 2014):

> "Kids are the source of joy and universal language needed to traverse these ethnic and class and cross-cultural barriers. If we can sit as parents or get policy makers in the room and say we're thinking about the next generation. I've got a child, you've got a child. This isn't about us right now, this is about what happens in their life-time. Everybody will get a longer-term, less selfish perspective" (Interviewee 2).

This is not to argue that people without children cannot be empathetic or, as the feminist literature on care would suggest, that people without formal caring responsibilities cannot be caring or engage in care practices (see Vaittinen, Donahoe, Kunz, Ómarsdóttir and Roohi 2019). We are arguing, however, that care work (or 'maternal practice') can give rise to different ways of thinking and being (Ruddick 1990), and also that these different ways of thinking and being can positively contribute to peacebuilding (Confortini and Ruane 2014; Vaittinen, Donahoe, Kunz, Ómarsdóttir and Roohi 2019). We also argue that organisations which do not 'care' for their employees by supporting their reproductive work and enabling them to continue working once they have children, contribute to the divide between internationals and locals (Autesserre 2014), simultaneously reaffirming their differences and sending a message about what the organisation values and does not value. This ultimately has an adverse impact on peacebuilding, recognising that successful peacebuilding is about attending to the 'everyday' as much as it is about building or reforming institutions, processes and policies (see Mac Ginty 2014; Berents 2015).

In effect we see multiple levels of harm at the individual, institutional and structural levels, where harm is both directed inwards and outwards. It is ironic when those organisations engaged in

rebuilding societal institutions, norms, and processes after conflict don't recognise that children are a central part of life. There is also irony in the fact that many of these organisations promote gender equality in the countries in which they work and yet do not adhere to policies and practices internally which promote gender equality and are gender responsive (see Duncanson 2018). This compromises legitimacy, which can have a significant detrimental effect on the extent to which organisations are trusted, their programmes successful and, ultimately, whether they contribute to building security and peace. But of course, even if some of the hurdles, obstacles and biases are removed, there is still a work culture which has been described as a male dominated, insular, privileged, unaccountable and abusive, and which we are only slowly starting to understand. There is more need for work which connects the ethics of peacebuilding with the profiles of those with epistemic privilege and the policy outcomes which follow.

CARING FOR THE CARERS: INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURES FOR CARE AND PEACE

The work environment in SJSR puts off many parents, especially sole or primary carers, from wanting or being able to combine family life with work life, as noted by many of the interviewees. Undoubtedly, it also deters many of those with other types of caring responsibilities. However, these environments are not going to dramatically improve until such people do join missions and the demographic moves away from "freedom from the constraints of stable relationships, personal and professional" (Heathershaw 2016, 81). There is a vicious circle whereby the boundaries of the epistemic community cannot change until those within that community change, which won't happen until the culture changes - all the while harms both to the individual and the sector are

being sustained. Moreover, such changes won't be possible until the sector addresses the documented difficulties of naming and discussing "widely prevalent, yet deeply personal concerns" (Snelling 2018, 9).

We would like to emphasise here that our intention has been to highlight how our choices (the personal) have an impact on policy and practice (the professional), and inform how knowledge is created, circulated, legitimised and becomes expert knowledge (the political). This personal-professional-political nexus takes shape in SJSR in a particular way with particular effects because of the assumption of 'unencumbered' staff working in the liminal spaces of 'aidland'. This false assumption has marginalised those with caring responsibilities leading to individual, sectoral and societal harms. We believe this has been overlooked despite individual literatures which emphasise the relevance of the individual practitioner in this sector, the boundaries of 'aidland', and the gendered nature of the sector. We bring these ideas together in our analysis of illustrative personal stories from individuals who have worked in, left, or renegotiated their place in SJSR and broader security and justice work in conflict-affected environments.

By encouraging further recognition of the harms caused when international organisations do not accommodate the specific needs of those with caring responsibilities, we do not suggest that these harms outweigh the harms resulting from the sustained marginalisation of 'local' voices and expertise in SJSR despite its core principle of local ownership, and we recognise the privileged position that international staff members have compared with their national counterparts (Nathan 2007; Gordon 2014), which will of course include racialized patterns of care labour by local staff for the children of internationals. Nor do we suggest that these harms outweigh those caused by

ignoring the care economy within countries affected by conflict and other development challenges. In these environments, there is a need to recognise the value of unpaid care work and the overwhelming burden of care that women and girls shoulder. For 'internationals', while options are limited for those in international development once they have children, they are lucky enough oftentimes to have choice. They may also be lucky enough to have opportunities to return home and live in relatively peaceful environments, to have a support network, to find other employment opportunities even if not directly in an area they would have chosen or at a level they were previously. Even 'locals' working for international organisations – for whom 'the field' is their home – are ill-afforded these opportunities and are unlikely to receive the same support as 'internationals' to provide for or visit those they care for (Houldey 2017). Nor is the intention to suggest that the harms suffered by men and women who continue working in this sector and leave their children in the care of others are not significant and painful (see also Pantuliano 2015). There are also harms suffered by those women and men who choose not to have children because of the work they do (see Secret Aid Worker 2016). We also wish to remain attentive to the incredible variety of experiences of carers in these settings including whether they work for international organisations or have more secure contracts which of course determine choices available to them.

We have argued in this paper that the effects of constraining the epistemic community to a narrow demographic has severe repercussions for security and peace, and so should be squarely within the purview of organisations. There needs to be investment in infrastructures for care, commitment by these organisations to address the marginalisation and disempowerment of those with caring responsibilities who wish to work in the sector, and further research on the ways in which existing barriers can be removed.

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