Positioning Women's Inclusion in Peace Negotiations: The Landmark Case of the Philippines

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Abstract

Women have historically been excluded in formal peace processes. While structural changes have pushed for women's participation in peace negotiations, we locate the shift from women's exclusion to women's inclusion as enacted in the discursive patterns of talk. Using positioning theory as a discursive lens, we looked at how women's inclusion was facilitated in the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that reached the landmark Philippine peace accord of 2014. Positioning theory argues that every utterance is a speech act that ascribes rights and duties, in this case, the right of women to be included in peace negotiations. Each act of positioning is comprised of storylines, identities, rights and duties, and social forces. From interviews with members of the GPH-MILF peace panels, we identified three patterns of positioning: (1) storylines of cultural and religious restrictions resisting women's inclusion, (2) storylines of gender equality, compliance with important statutes, and political will facilitating women's inclusion, and (3) storylines of women's inclusion transforming women's identities in peace negotiations from normative to agentic. Results are discussed in terms of the theoretical and practical contributions of a discursive approach to women's inclusion in peace processes.

Keywords: *women in peace processes, positioning theory, women's inclusion, peace negotiations, discursive approach, gender and peace negotiations, women, peace and security*

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Positioning Women's Inclusion in Peace Negotiations:

The Landmark Case of the Philippines

Josephine P. Perez and Mira Alexis P. Ofreneo

More than a decade after the adoption of UNSCR 1325 making imperative women's participation in all aspects of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, women continue to be the largest group of stakeholders whose voices are not heard in official negotiation processes (Ariño, 2010; UN Women, 2018). Statistics show that of the 31 major peace negotiations in countries doing peace talks from the period of 1992 to 2011, only four percent of the signatories and less than 10% of the negotiators at peace tables were women (UN Women, 2012). Women have historically been positioned outside of formal peace processes. The Philippine experience, however, appears to have finally broken the norm. This paper tells the story of how women were included in the peace negotiations that produced the landmark peace accord between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014.

Past studies have highlighted the barriers to women's participation in peace processes as rooted in the existing dominance of patriarchy, resistance to change, reluctance to share power (Benderly, 2000; O'Reilly, 2015), as well as a strong gender bias (UN Women, 2012). In this study, we take the position that resistance to women's inclusion and this bias or prejudice against women are produced and reproduced in language (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a). Using positioning theory as a discursive lens (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a), we wish to contribute to understanding how women's exclusion was challenged or subverted in talk and how women's inclusion was legitimized or supported in talk. With the peace negotiations as a discursive context, positioning theory is a conceptual frame to understand meaning construction and contestation (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a; Moghaddam & Harré, 2010). Hence, we identify the acts of positioning that facilitated women's inclusion in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations, granting women the right to negotiate, to lead, and to represent women.

In the sociopolitical context of the GPH-MILF peace negotiations where a peace agreement was reached with the inclusion of women in both negotiating teams and compelling provisions for women (Bell & Utley, 2015; Applebaum, 2016), the utility of unpacking how women were positioned in the peace negotiations is made even more significant. Considered a milestone for women's inclusion in peace processes, the 2014 peace accord was sealed with women comprising 25% of the signatories (Nobel Women's Initiative, 2014) and with a woman

panel chair in the government team. It is within the context of this historical breakthrough of women's inclusion in peace negotiations that this paper is written. Adding to the novelty of this paper, the discourses on women's inclusion were derived from interviews with the GPH-MILF peace negotiation teams, including members and chairs of the peace panels that forged the landmark 2014 peace agreement.

Structural Change to Include Women in Peace Processes

The peace table is irrefutably a male-dominated space and women's exclusion continues to be the socially accepted norm (Anderlini, 2004; Ariño, 2010; Oloffsson, 2018; UN Women, 2018). However, this positioning of women as outside of decision-making platforms has been challenged. Assertions have been made that women's absence in peace processes is not because of their lack of experience in conflict resolution or negotiations but due to a lack of effort to integrate them into formal peace processes (UN Women, 2012). Recognizing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and acknowledging the relentless problem of women's exclusion in peace negotiations, the United Nations unanimously passed the ground-breaking resolution on women, peace, and security in 2000, popularly known as UNSCR 1325 (SC/RES/1325/2000). UNSCR 1325 upholds the right of women to participate in peace negotiations. While this international statute now exists, we argue that policies need to be enacted by actors in their own settings and contexts to be of consequence. It is in the discursive that we locate how structural forces such as institutions and policies can be used to position women's inclusion. We contribute to understanding the social processes that facilitate women's inclusion by complementing structural approaches with a discursive approach that understands how structures must be discursively produced or enacted in language to take effect.

Women's Contribution to Peace Negotiations

Subsequent studies have shown that having women in peace negotiations increases peace capital. Women were found to push for more concrete and fundamental reforms (Ellerby, 2016; Paffenholz et al., 2017); bring in matters that directly affect women and children on the ground (Chang et al., 2015); are inclusive and consultative to generate support for the process; and tend to focus on practical issues related to quality of life and human security, rather than control over political power (Anderlini, 2007). Women fundamentally impact the long term (Paffenholz et al., 2016; O'Reilly et al., 2015) leading to more sustainable peace agreements that would likely result in durable peace (Krause et al., 2018; Palmiano, 2014). In this paper, we examine not only

how women were included in the peace negotiations but how women's inclusion likewise shaped the processes and outcomes that lead to a final peace agreement.

Women's Inclusion in the GPH-MILF Peace Negotiations

The Philippines has been beset with two major internal armed conflicts since the 1960s, one of which is the Mindanao conflict with the Muslim secessionist group then known as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MNLF advocated for a Moro homeland (Abinales, 2000; Santos, 2005) with Muslims in Mindanao identifying as Moro and collectively embracing the word *Bangsamoro* (Moro Nation) as separate from the Philippine nation (HURights Osaka, 2008). After decades of armed hostilities between the Philippine Military and the MNLF, a Final Peace Agreement (FPA) was secured with the government in 1996 (Coronel-Ferrer, 2013). However, a faction of the MNLF rejected the FPA (Bayot, 2018) giving birth to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Since the ceasefire agreement of 1997, the GPH and the MILF have been engaged in peace negotiations (Bayot, 2018). It was during the Aquino administration from 2010-2016 that the peace process achieved major breakthroughs (Basman, 2021). The Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro was signed in 2012 (FAB, 2012) and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro was signed in 2014 (CAB, 2014). After 17 years of peace negotiations, the landmark peace agreement placed the Philippines on the global map of successful peace negotiations and successful inclusion of women in the peace negotiations, with women as peace panel members and a woman chair on the government peace panel.

The inclusion of women in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations was shaped by the sociopolitical forces of the time including the adoption of a national action plan on UNSCR1325 by the Philippine government with the active collaboration of civil society (Shadow Report, 2016), and the amplification of the campaign for women's inclusion in peace processes. The GPH negotiating team had always included a woman or two on the peace panel since 1998 when the Philippine government decided to include civilians in its standard panel of peace negotiators from the military (PeaceWomen, 2011; Santiago, 2015). In 2012, the GPH peace panel appointed its first woman chair. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer is recognized as the first and thus far the only woman chief peace negotiator to sign a major peace accord (UN Women, 2018; Council on Foreign Relations, 2019).

On the other hand, the MILF peace panel has conventionally remained an all-male panel since 1997. In 2006, it was quoted to have expressed that "women have no role in public

decision-making" (Santiago, 2015, p.10). In 2012, it finally appointed women and have had at least two women in its delegation since then. A woman appointee sat as an alternate panel member in the course of peace negotiations (Arguillas, 2014; OPAPP, 2015) and "on some occasions, the chairman called her to speak to give her legal opinion on behalf of the MILF, an unheard of practice in formal negotiations" (Santiago, 2015, p.11). The MILF needed to maneuver "how to engage women without breaking cultural traditions to keep the peace process going forward" (Chang et al., 2015, p. 116).

While sociopolitical forces have changed the landscape for women's inclusion in peace negotiations globally and locally, we contend that government and civil society actors had to engage in a discursive process of negotiating and pushing for women's inclusion. Positioning theory allows us to contribute to understanding women's inclusion as a discursive process of claiming rights for women. And while we recognize the critical role of structural and material forces that shape this process, our paper focuses on the discourses in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations as narrated by the members and chairs of the peace panels themselves. Furthermore, women's inclusion is not a guarantee for an inclusive peace process (Bafo, 2019); a gender-inclusive peace agreement requires women to exert influence at the peace table (O'Reilly et al., 2015). Using positioning theory, we likewise explore how women positioned themselves or were positioned during the peace negotiations to transform the process and outcome of the negotiations. As an example of how women had to position or be positioned, a former woman peace negotiator shared that when women "gain a place at the peace table, they need to demonstrate technical expertise to be regarded as credible negotiators" (O'Reilly et al., 2015, p.22).

Positioning Theory as a Theoretical Framework

In the discursive context of peace negotiations where words are the currency to construct a common ground and arrive at a peace settlement, positioning theory is a conceptual framework to understand "how people use words (and discourse of all types) to locate themselves and others" (Moghaddam & Harré, 2010, p. 2). We argue that peace negotiations are social processes that involve meaning construction and contestation through talk or text. We utilize Slocum-Bradley's (2009) Positioning Theory Diamond which expounds on Harré and van Langenhove's (1999a) Positioning Theory Triangle (See Figure 1). Through this discursive lens, acts of positioning are comprised of four elements: (1) storylines; (2) identities; (3) rights and

4

duties; and (4) social forces. Applied to women's inclusion in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations, we look at acts of positioning that had the consequence or social force of resisting women's inclusion, facilitating women's inclusion, and transforming women's identities in the peace negotiations.

We begin with identifying *storylines*. A storyline reflects the unfolding dynamics of a social episode or conversation (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a) situated in a particular cultural context (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Slocum-Bradley, 2009). Storylines are cultural narratives and discourses or the narrative patterns of conversation or talk. In this paper, we identify the storylines that justified women's exclusion, women's inclusion, and women's transformation in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations.
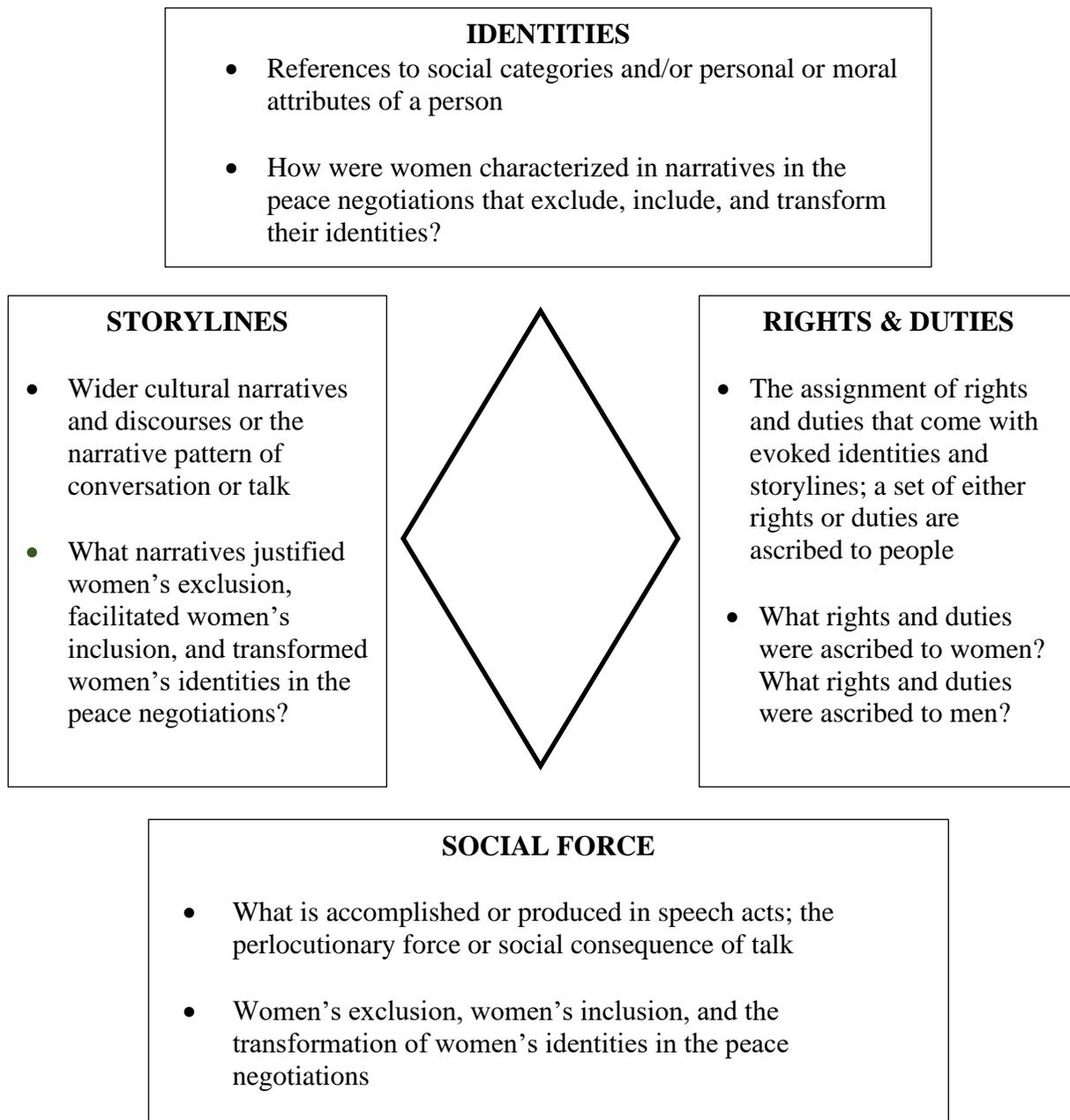
We then identify the evoked *identities* of women in each storyline. Identities are a form of categorization, where boundaries are used to distinguish one domain or social collectivity (us) from others (them) (Slocum-Bradley, 2009). Identities can refer to social categories (e.g., woman, Moro, MILF) as well as personal or moral attributes (e.g., competent, credible, expert). These identities limit or enable; facilitate or constrain what a person can do or say in a social interaction (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a; Slocum-Bradley, 2009). Hence, we looked at how women's identities are characterized and the consequence of these evoked identities.

We subsequently determine the set of *rights and duties* ascribed to women (and men) with each set or cluster of storylines. When a person positions one's self and others in a particular storyline, one is ascribing rights and duties upon the self and others (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999b). Positioning theory believes that "positions are clusters of beliefs about how rights and duties are distributed in the course of an episode of personal interaction and the taken-for-granted practices in which most of these beliefs are concretely realized" (Harré et al., 2009, p.9). It does not assume that everyone in an interaction has equal access to rights and duties to perform any action (Harré, 2012); precisely why there is a need to claim rights (if these are not granted) and to reposition (if rights are denied).

Finally, we distinguish the *social force* of these storylines, identities, and rights and duties; the perlocutionary force of a speech act or how language is used to "accomplish social tasks" (Slocum-Bradley, 2009, p. 82). What is achieved through talk? Does an utterance legitimize women's exclusion or does it support women's inclusion? What patterns of positioning allow women to be included in peace negotiations?

Figure 1.

Positioning diamond as applied to understanding women's exclusion, inclusion, and transformation in the peace negotiations.

IDENTITIES
- References to social categories and/or personal or moral attributes of a person
- How were women characterized in narratives in the peace negotiations that exclude, include, and transform their identities?

STORYLINES
- Wider cultural narratives and discourses or the narrative pattern of conversation or talk
- What narratives justified women's exclusion, facilitated women's inclusion, and transformed women's identities in the peace negotiations?

RIGHTS & DUTIES
- The assignment of rights and duties that come with evoked identities and storylines; a set of either rights or duties are ascribed to people
- What rights and duties were ascribed to women? What rights and duties were ascribed to men?

SOCIAL FORCE
- What is accomplished or produced in speech acts; the perlocutionary force or social consequence of talk
- Women's exclusion, women's inclusion, and the transformation of women's identities in the peace negotiations

Statement of the Problem

In this study, we seek to identify the acts of positioning that consequently lead to women's exclusion, women's inclusion, and women's transformation in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations. In understanding these acts of positioning, we identify the storylines, the evoked identities of women, and the rights and duties ascribed to women (and men) that produced these consequent social forces. Hence, we ask, What are the acts of positioning that: (1) resisted women's inclusion? (2) facilitated women's inclusion? and, (3) transformed women's identities in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations?

Method

Participants

This qualitative study interviewed nine members of the GPH-MILF peace negotiations that reached the landmark peace agreement in 2014. It would have been ideal to capture actual discourse or talks during the peace negotiations (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a) but such transcripts were considered classified information. Participants were purposively selected from the official list of members of the GPH and MILF peace panels from the period 2010 to 2014. This time period was deliberately chosen as this comprised the negotiating teams that reached the final peace accord. While the subject of this study is women's inclusion, the talk or conversation that positioned women and women's inclusion involved both women and men at the peace table. Thus, discourses from both the women and men who were directly involved in the peace talks informed this paper. Of the nine interviewees, three were members of the MILF peace panel (one female and two males) and six were from the government side (five females and one male). Among the respondents: two were panel chairs; three were panel members; one was a board consultant; one was head of the panel secretariat; one was head of the legal team; and one was a peace adviser. There were five Moro-affiliated respondents (two from the GPH negotiating team) and four non-Moro respondents.

Data Collection and Analysis

Ethical standards were duly observed in the production of this study. An ethics clearance was secured from the Ateneo de Manila University Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed of the intent of the research and the procedures that would be taken during and after the interview. Assurance of confidentiality and anonymity was explained and emphasized. A semi-structured interview was guided by a set of open-ended

questions that asked participants to narrate how women were included, participated, and shaped the peace negotiations. The interviews with the members of the MILF negotiating team were done in Cotabato City, Southern Philippines whereas the interviews with the GPH negotiating team members were done in Metro Manila. All interviews were conducted by the first author. The interview questions were in English, a copy of which was sent to the respondents prior to the interview. The interviewees spoke in English (the country's second language), and sometimes in a mix of Tagalog and English (Taglish). Minimal translation was done as majority of the direct quotes cited in the paper were in English. Direct quotes cited as exemplars in the results section indicate the gender and party affiliation of the respondent.

Data analysis was done in three phases. The first phase was comprised of reading and re-reading the transcripts. All transcripts were read in their entirety. Lines referring to women's inclusion were read several times underscoring key words that the participants used to describe the self, people, situations, and events. Through this process, the first author was able to immerse in the data and to identify what was being described and how it was being described in the context of the conversation. These descriptions formed the initial patterns of positioning. Transcripts were then coded following these initial sets of positioning.

The second phase centered on a discursive analysis of the data using the positioning theory diamond of Slocum-Bradley (2009). A discursive analysis table was produced for each interviewee. Storylines were identified based on the actual utterances. For each storyline, the first author identified the identities evoked, the rights and duties ascribed, and the resulting social forces.

The third phase involved a series of validations of the discursive analysis with the second author. Following an iterative and non-linear process, the researchers mapped the overall patterns of positioning. From this phase, the three overarching social forces were identified. The complete positioning analysis for each social force was produced.

Results

The discourses on women's inclusion in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations tread along three sets of positioning: (1) resisting women's inclusion in the peace negotiations; (2) facilitating women's inclusion in the peace negotiations; and (3) women's inclusion transforming women's identities in the peace negotiations. We discuss each act of positioning following Slocum-Bradley's positioning theory diamond as illustrated in Figures 2, 3, and 4.

8

Resisting Women's Inclusion in the Peace Negotiations

Resisting women's inclusion in the peace negotiations was justified by two storylines. The storyline on religious/cultural restrictions centered on the belief that Moro women were not allowed to travel on their own. It was claimed that Moro women needed a *mahram* or guardian to accompany them. To quote a member of the MILF team:

> That's the decision of the learned in Islam. There was one prescription that women cannot travel alone without a mahram, meaning someone who is close to her. Or if there is no such thing as mahram or guardian, probably a father, a brother or a son, and at least two women must travel with the group. (Man, MILF)

This religious/cultural storyline positioned Moro women as having no right to be independent of men, and even more so, the right to lead men. This position resulted in a social force that maintained Moro women's exclusion in the MILF side of the peace negotiations. Interestingly, a Moro woman in the GPH team shared how her participation in the peace negotiations was likewise questioned:

> During the first meeting that I attended in Malaysia, they were questioning my sincerity in [sic] the table. We were facing each other… one or two in particular from that group alluded about betrayal to the motherland, to your own people. It was directed to me because there was no other Moro woman there except me. Why was it an issue? It was not raised as an issue with the male Bangsamoro [on the GPH team]. Is it because I am a woman? (Woman, GPH)

This storyline resisting women's inclusion uniquely positioned Moro women for being women and Moro. The sample utterance positioned Moro women as having the duty to work only for the MILF peace panel. And while a Moro man was also in the GPH peace panel, the utterance only positioned Moro women as having no right to be part of the peace table. This reflects the unique positioning that resisted Moro women's inclusion in the peace negotiations, whether on the MILF or GPH side.

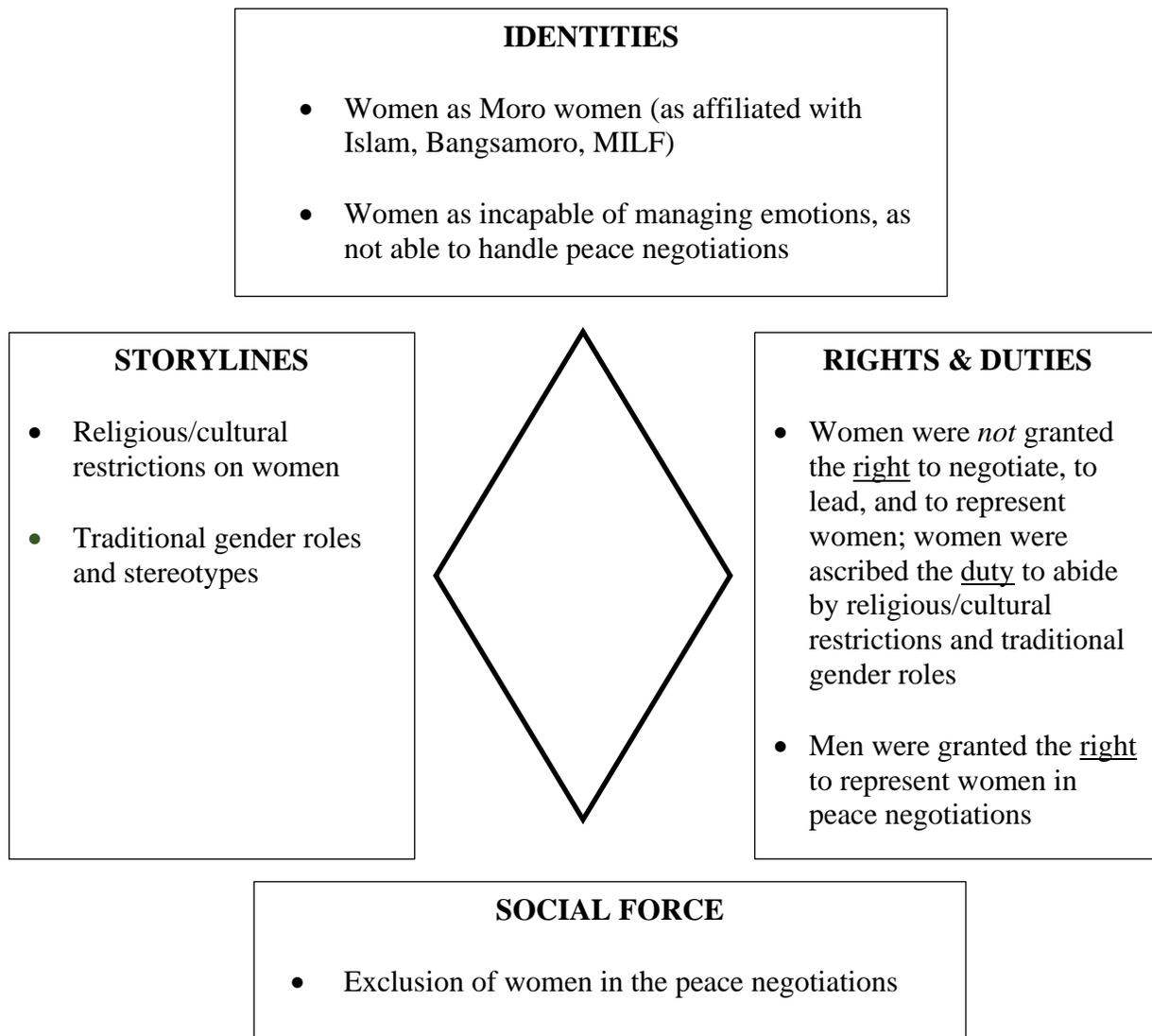Another storyline resisting women's inclusion derived from a cultural narrative of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This storyline positioned men as natural leaders and women as having difficulty taking the lead. As shared by a respondent in the MILF panel:

> By nature or generally speaking, men are supposed to be the leaders, they are the natural leaders… emotionally, physically and physiologically. In terms of

intelligence, they are equal. Suppose a woman is the Head of State and that State

is at war and that woman is pregnant, how could she lead the State in war?.... So,

it's natural that in Islam, men are generally the leader. (Man, MILF)

Figure 2.

Positioning analysis of resisting women's inclusion in the peace negotiations.

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│                   IDENTITIES                    │
│                                                 │
│   •  Women as Moro women (as affiliated with    │
│      Islam, Bangsamoro, MILF)                   │
│                                                 │
│   •  Women as incapable of managing emotions, as│
│      not able to handle peace negotiations      │
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STORYLINES

- Religious/cultural restrictions on women

- Traditional gender roles and stereotypes

RIGHTS & DUTIES

- Women were *not* granted the <u>right</u> to negotiate, to lead, and to represent women; women were ascribed the <u>duty</u> to abide by religious/cultural restrictions and traditional gender roles

- Men were granted the <u>right</u> to represent women in peace negotiations

SOCIAL FORCE

- Exclusion of women in the peace negotiations

The above utterance underscored the belief that women cannot lead by virtue of their

gender. It also implied that being in a peace negotiation is a demonstration of leadership. With

the men positioned as the natural leaders, men were granted the right to represent women and to sit at the peace table whereas women were ascribed the duty to conform to their traditional gender roles. This consequently denied women the right to lead and be at the peace table, sustaining the social force of excluding women.

Reinforcing this storyline on traditional gender roles was the stereotype that women were emotional and therefore incapable of managing their emotions. As a respondent in the MILF panel recounted:

Many people will disagree with us but negotiations require management of emotion. Women are more emotional than men. That is one consideration. That [is why]… there are mostly men in our negotiating team, because women are more emotional. (Man, MILF)

As shown in the sample, women were positioned as having no right to be a peace negotiator as their perceived emotionality was considered detrimental to negotiations. This consequently strengthened the bias against women and maintained the social force of excluding women from the GPH-MILF peace negotiations.

Facilitating Women's Inclusion in the Peace Negotiations

Women's inclusion in the peace negotiations was facilitated by several storylines as summarized in Figure 3. The first storyline was anchored on the discourse of gender equality. By positioning men and women as equal, women were granted the same right as men to be part of the peace table. As supported by a member of the MILF panel, "in terms of intelligence they [women] are equal with men" (Man, MILF).

The second storyline was based on positive stereotypes of women. This positioned women as having unique attributes that men did not possess; attributes that were valuable to peace negotiations. Examples of these were positioning women as meticulous at reviewing the agreement and as relational, hence, changing the dynamics at the peace table:

The most dangerous part of the negotiation is when you are about to sign an agreement. That is where the danger lies because of last minute riders from either of the two parties, just like what happened in the Tripoli Agreement of 1975…. The women are great at reviewing the documentation. They are meticulous. (Man, MILF)

11

Women bring a different dynamics [sic]…. They could talk about other things, they could talk about family. She [referring to the GPH woman panel chair] knows about the life of those she talks to, their personal problems in the family, who is ill. It's not just direct issues. She said that she was very conscious to ask people how they are. (Woman, GPH)

With these positive stereotypes attributed to women, women were granted the right to be at the peace table and men were ascribed the duty to include them. As attested by a member of the GPH team and a member of the MILF team, women made a unique contribution to the peace negotiations:

And when the negotiation gets rough, the women can pull the situation. They become our messenger [to the other party]. Negotiation to me will never be complete unless women participate.... They have a definite role that is distinct that men cannot do. (Man, MILF)

Women had to be on the peace table. They were going to bring something that was somehow lacking in the peace process. (Woman, GPH)
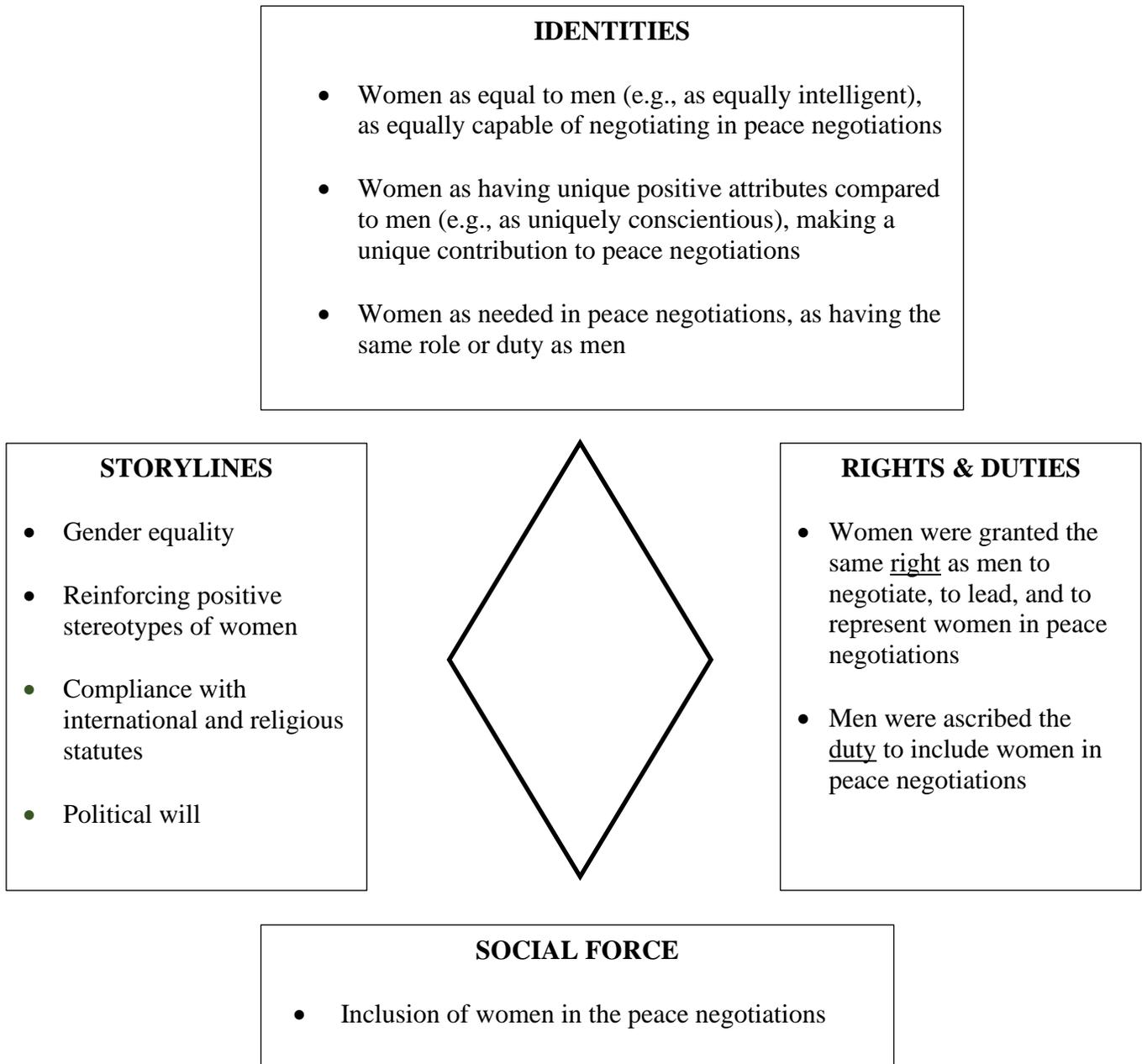
Another storyline that facilitated women's inclusion centered around compliance with important statutes: One was an international standard and the other was a religious edict. The key international statute that was cited to impel women's inclusion was the UNSCR 1325. As articulated by the women respondents of the GPH and MILF teams:

The UN Security Council resolution… the MILF is very conscious [of it], that it needs to show itself as being up to standard with international standards. (Woman, GPH)

It wasn't just the women who were discussing that issue, even the men. I think the reason why it was being discussed was the pressure from outside asking the MILF why there were no women in their panel. The international community, the women's sector, mostly from outside the Bangsamoro [were asking], probably because of 1325. There are standards. So they were being asked. (Woman, MILF)

12

Figure 3.

Positioning analysis of facilitating women's inclusion in the peace negotiations.

IDENTITIES

- Women as equal to men (e.g., as equally intelligent), as equally capable of negotiating in peace negotiations

- Women as having unique positive attributes compared to men (e.g., as uniquely conscientious), making a unique contribution to peace negotiations

- Women as needed in peace negotiations, as having the same role or duty as men

STORYLINES

- Gender equality

- Reinforcing positive stereotypes of women

- Compliance with international and religious statutes

- Political will

RIGHTS & DUTIES

- Women were granted the same <u>right</u> as men to negotiate, to lead, and to represent women in peace negotiations

- Men were ascribed the <u>duty</u> to include women in peace negotiations

SOCIAL FORCE

- Inclusion of women in the peace negotiations

On the other hand, a respondent from the MILF panel spoke of women's inclusion as part of the collective Islamic struggle for peace or *jihad*. In this storyline, both men and women were obliged to follow the jihad. He said:

Our struggle is not a struggle of males only…. In terms of Islamic prescription,
the struggle which we call jihad is prescribed for men and women. No exception.
So the obligation really to undertake that struggle is obligatory. And certainly,
men and women are under obligation to undertake that. (Man, MILF)

Using the storyline of compliance with the international statutes such as the UNSCR
1325 and obedience to the religious edicts of Islam, women were positioned to have the right to
be included in the peace negotiations. Remarkably, the Islamic struggle or jihad was
meaningfully and radically framed to support women's participation in the peace process. The
same identities of being a woman, Moro, and of Islamic faith, which were earlier utilized to
exclude women, were now used to include women. The storyline of compliance with statutes
significantly strengthened the social force of women's inclusion.

A final storyline that facilitated women's inclusion in the peace negotiations was political
will. Inclusion was a purposive and strategic act as shown by these sample utterances: there was
a "conscious effort to get them because they were competent women" (Woman, GPH); it was
"made purposeful for women to be part of the process" (Woman, GPH); it was crucial to "have
women in leadership and decision-making positions because they would bring in more women"
(Woman, GPH). These utterances were indicative of assertion and intentionality, positioning
women's inclusion as imperative. As a female member of the GPH team narrated, "part of my
own work was being in [sic] good terms with my cabinet colleagues so that I could get them to
support these appointments as well" (Woman, GPH) and "how to make sure that whoever else is
needed to approve and endorse were on board" (Woman, GPH). This ensured women's inclusion
in the peace negotiations.

Across these storylines, women were granted the same right as men to be at the peace
table whereas men in the peace panel were ascribed the duty to include women in the peace
negotiation teams. Despite the uniqueness of each storyline (i.e., gender equality, gender
stereotypes, compliance, duty) and how each positioned women differently (i.e., as an equal, as
relational, as needed, as duty-bound), they all ascribed the same set of rights and duties on
women and men. Ultimately, these acts of positioning evoked the social force of intentionally
and strategically including women in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations.

Women's Inclusion Transforming the Peace Negotiations

With women made members of both the GPH and MILF peace negotiation teams, women's inclusion was positioned as transforming the wider peace process and Philippine society at large (see Figure 4). The first storyline centered on women as instrumental in pushing for the women's agenda in the peace agreement. As narrated by the women members of both the GPH and MILF teams:

> Having women in the room makes it easier to push the agenda for women. You don't forget about it. It will not be left behind unlike when it's just all men. It took them a while before they realized why we need to talk about women. There were women on [sic] the table who can bring forth the agenda. (Woman, GPH)

> As I see it, the agenda for women would not be there if the women did not push for it. (Woman, MILF)

The above utterances attest to how women in the peace negotiations represented the agenda of women and ensured their inclusion in the peace agreement. The sample utterance below illustrates how the conversations inside the peace negotiation itself shifted to include women's issues:
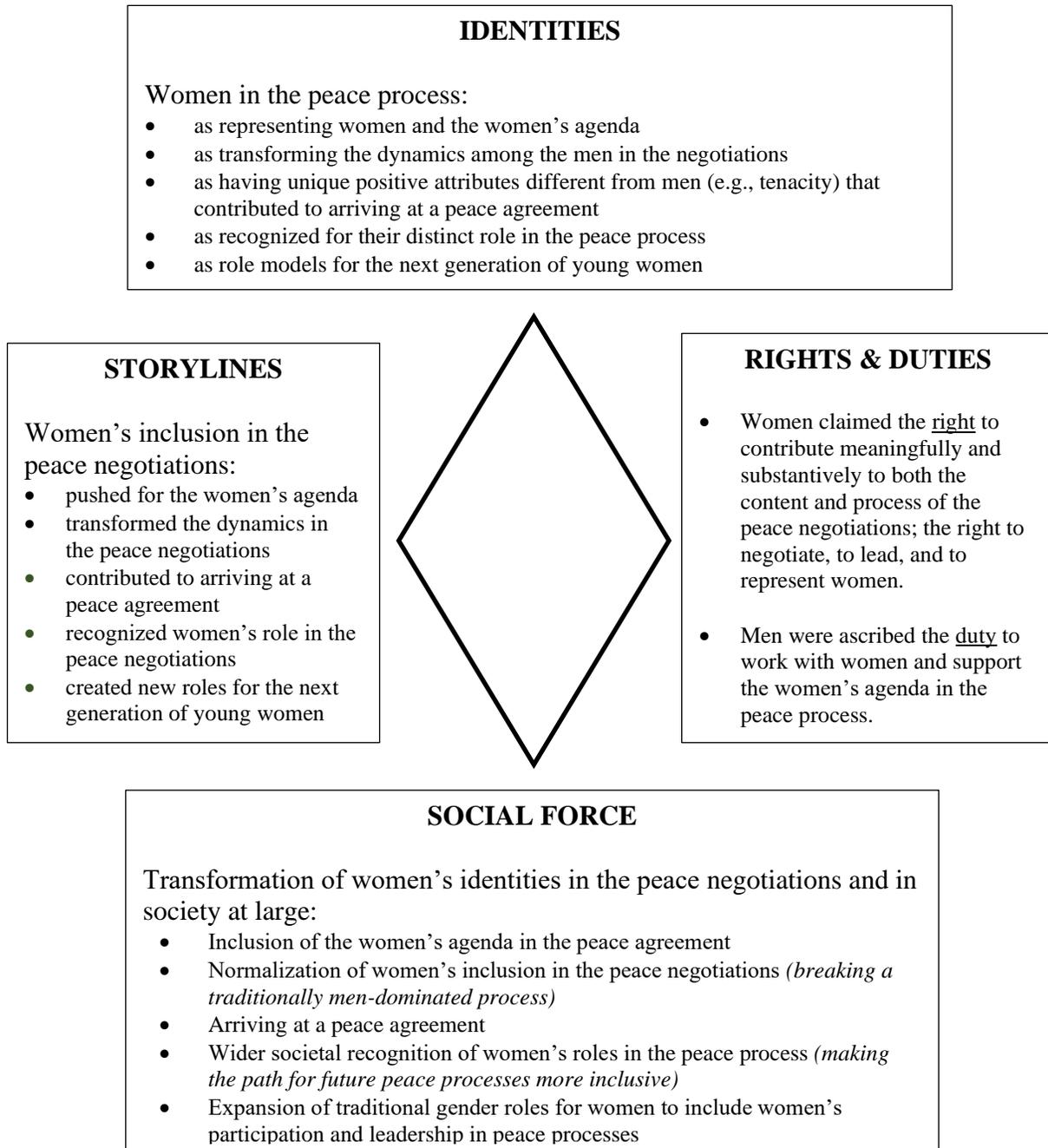
> Security normally would focus on combatants.… It is not brought up as a top priority like the issue of widows, how to take care of them… if it is not visible to you. Oh yes, the women, where are they in this document? So, I think that's one thing that the presence of women brings, the constant reminder that oh, we need to think about women in all of these. So, the consciousness that it's not always a case of [the] same experience... [the] needs of men and women. In fact, it's never the case. So, it normalized and mainstreamed that kind of conversation. (Woman, GPH)

Referred to as mainstreaming gender (PCW, n.d.), conversations around women's needs and concerns were normalized. As the sample utterance showed, discussions on hard issues such as security which often revolve around the combatants—usually men—shifted to include the women and their families. Women were positioned as shaping and shifting the conversation. As one of the GPH members described, "women will articulate things that some men do not

necessarily find important, like concerns of widows, orphans, PWDs, livelihood that normally fall into the cracks." (Woman, GPH)

Figure 4.

Positioning analysis of how women's inclusion transformed the peace negotiations.

IDENTITIES

Women in the peace process:
- as representing women and the women's agenda
- as transforming the dynamics among the men in the negotiations
- as having unique positive attributes different from men (e.g., tenacity) that contributed to arriving at a peace agreement
- as recognized for their distinct role in the peace process
- as role models for the next generation of young women

STORYLINES

Women's inclusion in the peace negotiations:
- pushed for the women's agenda
- transformed the dynamics in the peace negotiations
- contributed to arriving at a peace agreement
- recognized women's role in the peace negotiations
- created new roles for the next generation of young women

RIGHTS & DUTIES

- Women claimed the right to contribute meaningfully and substantively to both the content and process of the peace negotiations; the right to negotiate, to lead, and to represent women.

- Men were ascribed the duty to work with women and support the women's agenda in the peace process.

SOCIAL FORCE

Transformation of women's identities in the peace negotiations and in society at large:
- Inclusion of the women's agenda in the peace agreement
- Normalization of women's inclusion in the peace negotiations *(breaking a traditionally men-dominated process)*
- Arriving at a peace agreement
- Wider societal recognition of women's roles in the peace process *(making the path for future peace processes more inclusive)*
- Expansion of traditional gender roles for women to include women's participation and leadership in peace processes

The second storyline adhered to how the dynamics at the peace table transformed with the presence of women. As the content of the peace negotiations shifted with women, so did the process. In this storyline, men were positioned as having the duty to not only include women but also to work with women. This consequently normalized women's inclusion in the peace negotiations, a traditionally men-dominated process. As shared by a woman member of the GPH team, the experience of working with women was a resocialization for men:

> I think their own experience of working with women was constructive. Well, … sometimes it's your belief, your attitude has to do with the fact that this was your socialization. When they were socialized into working with women at the technical level, at the political level, it normalized that kind of work environment… that it's actually not threatening [to work with women]. (Woman, GPH)

Women respondents further shared how women's inclusion changed the negotiation process by normalizing taking on multiple positions and multiple perspectives:

> We develop respect and understanding of… the other position beyond what's happening on the table. That, I don't think men do as well. (Woman, GPH)

> I think, it normalized the conversation of having multiple perspectives in a discussion that is traditionally male-dominated. (Woman, GPH)

Men respondents also shared how their conduct during the negotiation process changed with the presence of women. From both the GPH and MILF teams, the work dynamics among men shifted to be more careful and respectful as shown in the sample utterances below:

> The conduct in a way restrained the men from doing something disrespectful to women. It had that effect. And it would be kind of shameful actually… it would be freewheeling if all were men. You can start bullying. You'd feel you don't do that to women. (Man, GPH)

> Shouting is part of negotiation. Probably, part of tactics. But I did not do that… I always hold my emotions. Because it is not just part of our culture but it's part of our belief that women should be respected, especially in public. And then there is

a maxim among the Moro people to never argue with women in public. (Man,

MILF)

The third storyline was about women's significant contribution to arriving at a peace agreement. While women were previously positioned as possessing attributes (e.g., meticulous) that made unique contributions to the peace negotiations, women were now positioned for their tenacity and grit in ensuring that the peace negotiations produced the desired outcome. As the women of the GPH and MILF teams narrated:

That tenacity, and people would be surprised even during that time in between the Annexes, people tend to forget that there are people who kept their eye on the ball all the time. Never let it go. This is what I know of women. When we work on something, it's not seasonal. It's not when it is sexy. It's not when anyone is looking. And we do it because that's what we are. We do housekeeping if the bed has to be made every day whether people look at it, at the end of the day, you have to go to a bed where you can sleep. (Woman, GPH)

There was a time, only the women were there on the GPH side. At times, negotiations would drag, so you don't really know how many days you would stay. Eventually, the men left already. So those who remained, almost all were women. The work was still there and women do not give up. Even when we all felt like going home too. It's kind of frustrating during those times, especially towards the end. We were all feeling exhausted. (Woman, MILF)

And while the women spoke of working even when the men had left, or when everyone was exhausted, or when no one was looking, the men likewise positioned women as getting things done when things get rough: "And when the negotiation gets rough, the role of women, they can pull the situation" (Man, MILF).

These acts of positioning transformed the identities of women to recognize their definite and distinct role in the peace process. From previously being excluded, women were not only included in the peace negotiations; they went on to transform the content and process of this peace accord. The fourth storyline radically delegitimized the earlier storylines on resistance to women's inclusion and paved the way for gender inclusivity in men-dominated spaces such as the peace negotiations. As shared by members of the MILF team:

When the notion was broken regarding women [as] not supposed to be there, I think they became open to having more women and [to] look at [the] competence of women as basis. (Woman, MILF)

Negotiation to me will never be complete unless women participate. They have a definite role that is distinct that men cannot do. (Man, MILF)

From women's inclusion to women's transformation, women were repositioned as having a vital role to play in the peace process. This expansion of women's identities leads to the fifth and final storyline that positioned women's inclusion in the peace negotiations as generating inspiration and new possibilities for the next generation of young women. As shared by a Moro woman member of the GPH team, women's presence in the peace negotiations paved the way for societal recognition of the role of women in the public sphere, especially among young women:

When we go to communities where the residents underwent war, there were children, students, school-aged children, university-aged. I would be sent by the office to talk about the peace process. There was one who told me, "I never thought that I would meet you." I realized that they see me, because this a very public process and I was there and I played a role. It was like you are not just token women in the process. Because it was obvious, there were many women, and I'm one of the youngest members of the delegation usually. Then I wear a hijab so it's obvious that I'm Muslim…. The realization that you make it seem possible for other young girls… to get into this kind of work. Someone said, "I want to be like you someday"… and perhaps they feel it's not possible. So… your mere presence in that picture opens possibilities for others. (Woman, GPH)

Another woman member of the GPH team recounted that the achievement of the women who were part of the GPH-MILF peace agreement positioned all women as having a rightful place in the peace process:

That picture of five women on the signing of the CAB… it says something for every young girl in the country. Don't ever let anyone tell you, you don't belong there. Don't forget the sisterhood. There's a sisterhood. And that can mean different things and that can mean different ways. Even when you are the only woman there, there's a sisterhood. (Woman, GPH)

The five transformative storylines positioned women's inclusion in the peace negotiations as shifting women's identities into their more substantive roles that departed from their traditional gender roles. The set of storylines transformed women's normative identities into agentic identities; positioning women as playing a vital role in pushing for the women's agenda, arriving at a peace agreement, and generating change for the next generation of women. These agentic identities enabled women to claim their right to transform the content and process of the peace negotiations and women's role in society at large. With women positioned as having a rightful place in the peace negotiations, women's inclusion in the peace process was normalized, consequently breaking a traditionally men-dominated process. This carried the social force of recognizing the leadership role of women in the peace process moving forward.

Discussion

In understanding the discursive patterns of positioning women in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations, the study documented three shifts in positioning: women's exclusion; women's inclusion; and women's transformation. The first pattern of positioning resisted women's inclusion using storylines anchored on traditional gender roles and cultural and religious restrictions. Positioning women through their normative and intersectional identities (i.e., as women affiliated with Islam, Bangsamoro, MILF) did not grant women the right to participate in the peace negotiations. This resistance to women's inclusion in the peace negotiations was eventually contested and delegitimized. With a shift in storylines to gender equality, compliance with international and religious statutes, and political will, women were repositioned as equal to men, evoking the same right for women to participate in the peace negotiations. The final pattern of positioning repositioned women's identities from their normative roles into agentic positions, evoking a new set of rights for women in the peace negotiations and society at large.

We discuss these results in terms of a shift in identities, a shift in rights, and shifts in social forces from exclusion to inclusion to meaningful participation. These shifts in positioning revealed how identities can be repositioned, how rights and duties can be evoked, and how the social force of talk or conversation can make a lasting impact towards arriving at a peace agreement with the inclusion of the agenda of women to peace.

Shift in Identities from Normative to Agentic

This study showed that women's identities had to be repositioned to grant women the right to participate in the peace negotiations, as women's normative identities anchored on

traditional gender roles did not grant women the same rights granted to men. Using positioning theory, we were able to show how this gender bias (UN Women, 2012) made inherent in the normative identities of women and men are enacted, and how patriarchy and resistance to change (Benderly, 2000; O'Reilly, 2015) are discursively produced. What counters patriarchy and gender bias are storylines of gender equality. That is, the intentional repositioning of women as equal to men. Positioning women as having unique attributes as women also granted women the right to participate in the peace negotiations, consequently essentializing women's attributes while granting women the right to be included for their unique contributions to peace.

This confirmed Palmiano's (2014) findings that women used several approaches to be included in the peace negotiations, at times utilizing socially accepted and entrenched identities for the right to a seat at the peace table. The results likewise aligned with Slocum-Bradley's (2008) perspective that identities can be invoked in different ways, either inciting conflict or promoting peace. In this study, identity discourses were evoked to produce a positioning of women in promoting durable peace. One salient contribution of this paper was that normative identities could give women entry to the peace table, but agentic identities could make them stay and impel a difference. It was through the repositioning of women as agentic—as competent, and as capable of non-normative roles as leaders and decision-makers—that women were able to claim rights for women. These agentic identities made women equal to men, and persons of their own accord. The shift from normative identities to agentic identities legitimized women's agency in shaping the outcomes of the peace process (see Figure 5).

Results also showed that the multiple normative identities pre-imposed on women based on gender, religious belief, ethnic and/or cultural affiliation, and ideology intersected in resisting women's inclusion. This result finds resonance with the theory on intersectionality which claims that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression such as gender, race, class, religion, and other identity markers (Crenshaw, 1989). It likewise supports the argument that the category "woman" should be perceived as a heterogeneous category if we wish to understand the gender norms and power dynamics inherent in peace processes (Sachs et al., 2007). These intersecting normative identities defined what women could or could not do at the onset of the peace negotiations before women's identities were eventually repositioned.

Figure 5.

Women's transformed identities in the peace negotiations.
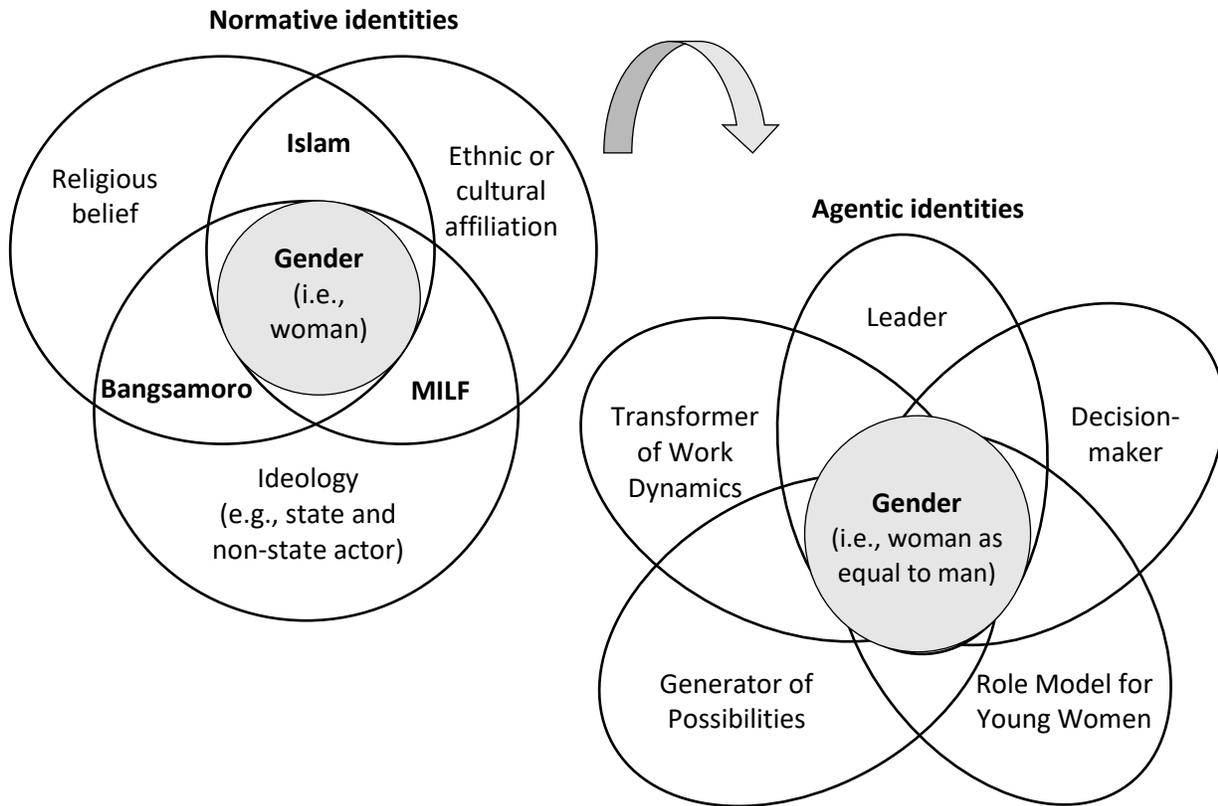
Shift in Rights from Rights-Receivers to Rights-Bearers

Intimately intertwined with identity are the asserted rights and ascribed duties. As Harré (2012) reiterated, not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties. In this study, the discourse of rights and duties commenced with men granting women the right to be included in the peace negotiations. However, when the women were already at the peace table, they activated their agentic identities, shifting their position as receivers of rights to owners of rights. In the process, women transitioned from being rights-receivers to rights-bearers. In so doing, they re-constructed the moral order (Slocum-Bradley, 2008) inside the peace negotiations from not having the right to be included into having the right to influence decisions and to shape meaningful outcomes. This consequently altered the dynamics of the peace negotiations. The results imply that the right to inclusion may commence as a grant (or an ascribed right from or by

others); but with women's agency (or with women positioned as agentic), the right to inclusion becomes a transformative right that bears power to influence and shape outcomes.

Shift in Social Forces from Resistance to Inclusion to Meaningful Participation

As positions shifted, so did the asserted rights and assigned duties that concomitantly shaped the evoked social forces. Resistance to women's inclusion was the social force evident at the onset of the peace negotiations. This was not surprising as literature has shown evidence on the systematic exclusion of women in peace processes (Ariño, 2010; Bell, 2015; CfR, 2019; Palmiano, 2014; UN Women, 2012). A shift in positioning eventually facilitated women's inclusion as part of the discourse of gender equality, as a matter of compliance with international statutes (i.e., UNSCR 1325), and an act of political will. Notable here is the role of UNSCR 1325. Eventually, women's inclusion produced several outcomes that marked women's meaningful participation in the GPF-MILF peace negotiations.

First, at the level of the peace agenda, women were able to push for women's provisions and consequently influenced the crafting of a more substantive and holistic peace agreement. This upholds the findings of other studies that vouch for the positive link between the presence of women in negotiations and the chances of reaching an agreement (Maoz, 2009; Krause et al., 2018). Second, at the level of work dynamics, women's presence and participation transformed the patterns of relating between men and women at and beyond the peace table. Third, at the level of output and outcome, women ensured that the work was done and done well. Fourth, at the level of the durability of peace, women enabled, broadened, and amplified inclusivity within the peace process. Finally, at the level of societal impact, women's inclusion and participation have inspired a new generation of young women. Ultimately, all these social forces have distinctly defined the remarkable value of women's inclusion in the GPH-MILF peace negotiations.

Implications

This study offers several theoretical and practical implications. First, women's participation in the peace negotiations fortifies the chances of reaching a final peace agreement and advancing the women's agenda. Women's right to inclusion may commence as a grant. But with women's agency, this right transforms into a claim right that bears power to positively influence both the process and outcome of peace negotiations. The women eventually showed that they were equal to men and have a rightful place at the peace table. Hence, positioning

women as agentic duly benefits peace negotiations and peace processes.

Second, resistance to women's inclusion can be countered in various ways, one of which is through language that legitimizes women's inclusion. We can surmise from the results that women's inclusion can be achieved without necessarily carrying the storyline of gender equality. Social movements may need to consider that insisting on the storyline of equality as the sole path to women's inclusion may not always be effective. However, we maintain that a gender equality storyline is critical for the eventual social force of transforming gender relations in society.

Third, the UNSCR 1325 was critical in swaying non-state actors to include women. Equally influential was the framing of the jihad as another duty of women, favoring women's inclusion in peace processes as part of their collective struggle for peace. Hence, religious and cultural edicts have to be unpacked to ensure that they are supportive of, and not against, women in taking on decision-making and leadership roles in the public sphere.

Fourth, women's inclusion has to be strategically purposive and supported by strong political will as restrictive social, cultural, political, and ideological discourses remain intact. Storylines that ensure women's inclusion and active participation in peace processes must be sustained until women's inclusion becomes part of the norm.

Lastly, continued research can be done on women's inclusion and meaningful participation in post-negotiation spaces, such as in the current structures and processes of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) which is the result of the final peace agreement.

Limitations

We recognize the significant role of structural and socio-political forces that were influential to the forging of the 2014 peace accord. Such forces include the commitment of the Aquino administration to see the peace process through, civil society's role in pushing for women's participation in the peace talks, and the role of the international community. However, the scope of this paper is limited to the role of language in positioning women in the peace talks. We hope that this study can complement structural approaches to women's inclusion and enhance the existing policy and practice of having women in peace negotiations.

To conclude, this paper discursively analyzed the phenomenon of women's inclusion and participation in a national-level peace talk focusing on the GPH-MILF peace negotiations. Through shifting acts of positioning, women were ascribed the right to participate in the peace

negotiations and eventually the right to transform its processes and outcomes. It is through positioning women as agentic that women are not only ascribed rights but are able to claim rights to meaningfully participate as leaders and as peace negotiators.

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