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**Centre for Conflict Resolution
Department of Peace Studies**

Working Paper 10

**"All You *Need* Is Love" ... and What About *Gender*?
Engendering Burton's Human Needs Theory**

Cordula Reimann

January 2002



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“[A]re you getting what you need, or just what someone thinks you need?”¹
William R Potapchuk

“We must go back to fundamental assumptions and reexamine them.”²
John W. Burton

1. Introduction

There seems to be some general agreement among conflict resolution scholars that Burton’s human needs theory¹ has had a lasting impact on developing a theory of conflict resolution practice and the practice of problem-solving workshops.² It seems fair to say that due to its analytical simplicity Burton’s theory remains an appealing and popular analytical framework in conflict resolution – despite some harsh critique especially from a culture-sensitive perspective.³ A feminist or gender-specific critique of Burton’s human needs theory has so far been missing – in spite of a rich feminist or gender-sensitive literature on women’s needs, especially in the development context. This paper aims at partly filling this analytical gap.

The underlying assumption is that while gender is *formally* excluded from Burton’s human needs theory, it is nevertheless (omni)present and inherent in its construction and application. While most conflict resolution scholars like Burton do not make their gender-blindness explicit, *all* scholars base their work on particular understanding of gender relations in the private and public sphere and notions of masculinity and femininity. This is to say that gender as social relations is already - albeit implicitly - inherent in mainstream theory and practice and constitutes the ‘secret glossary’⁴ or the ‘tacit frames’.⁵ This makes gender simultaneously *absent* and *present* in human needs theory.

The purpose of *engendering* human needs theory is to bring into the open the hidden and taken-for-granted ‘gender-blind’ and gender-specific ideas, meanings, and perspectives in Burton’s human needs theory. This is a two-fold task. On the one hand, the paper will make the ‘invisible’, ‘gendered’ nature of human needs theory visible. The guiding questions here are: What are its gender-blind or gender-neutral spots? And how far is human needs theory open to discuss *gender*? On the other hand, the paper will introduce possible gender-sensitive entry-points to human needs theory. The guiding question is: What might gender-sensitive perspectives offer a human needs theory *à la* Burton?

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part lays the analytical and conceptual ground: To help tackle the above set of questions, it is crucial to first define gender, human needs theory and to employ

¹ William R. Potapchuk, “Governments’ Responses to Human Needs”, in John W. Burton (ed.) (1990), p. 277.

² John W. Burton, “Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy”, in Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe (eds.) (1993), p. 59.

a gender-sensitive framework that is *gender as analytical category*.⁶ The second part looks at the main underlying assumptions of Burton's human needs theory from a gender-sensitive perspective: It offers a gender-specific critique while revealing the most striking gender-blind spots. At the same time, it puts forward (possible) gender-sensitive entry-points to Burton's human needs theory. The third part will conclude by summarising the most crucial findings.

Before we venture further into the task, there are comments in order for the sake of clarity. First, 'engendering' refers - in varying degrees - to both ongoing projects of feminism, the *deconstruction* of gender-biased knowledge claims (i.e. revealing invisible gender and andocentrism⁷)⁸ and the *reconstruction* of a gender-sensitive theory and practice (i.e. exploring theoretical implications of taking gender seriously).⁹

Second, there is always the danger of creating 'straw men' in any feminist deconstruction and reconstruction of malestream research: While the theory of conflict resolution is gender-insensitive, there is a danger for any research which focuses on *gender as analytical category* of being gender over-sensitive, that is, to treat gender as an all-inclusive explanation for various and complex forms of exclusion and bias. At the same time, the paper does not call into question the historical importance of Burton's human needs approach for conflict theory. In contrast to earlier state-centric approaches, Burton revolutionised conflict theory in so far as he explicitly stressed the individual and his/her rights as key unit of analysis.¹⁰ Therefore, it should be clear from the outset that I offer only *one* possible, tentative gender-sensitive critique or interpretation of Burton's human needs theory. The chosen gender approach does not pretend to be all-inclusive or definite. In fact, given the diversity and variety of feminism, other feminists may offer a different gender-sensitive reading of it and may come to different conclusions. This also means to say that a gender-critique of, for example, Maslow's or Galtung's work on (material and non-material) human needs may come up with rather different results. Given that theorising on 'gender in conflict resolution' is very much in its infancy,¹¹ the paper offers first and foremost some initial provocations for further debate and research.

Third, there are different definitions of 'conflict resolution'. I have in mind a process-oriented and needs-based approach to pro-active conflict handling (like problem-solving workshops) in contrast to more outcome-oriented and interests-based approaches (like bargaining and negotiation). In this paper, I use the term 'conflict management' as umbrella term including all different forms and techniques of pro-active conflict handling (like negotiation, problem-solving workshops, etc.).

2. Setting the Scene: Introducing Gender, Gender as Analytical Category and Human Needs Theory

Before gender and human needs theory meet, both are, of course, very curious and want to know as much as possible about each other. What is gender, where does it come from? And what about human needs theory? Where does it come from and what is so 'special' about it that everybody in conflict resolution has been talking about it for a while? And then of course the most important question is, may gender and human needs theory like each other one day after a lot of talking and listening?

2.1 What is Gender?

Gender should be defined as the social construction of social relations between 'women' and 'men'. (In the following I will use 'men' and 'women' without quotation marks. I do so without posing the 'gender' categories as fixed, permanent and essential. Rather, I consider both terms as socially constructed and manipulated subject statuses that emerge from a politicisation of slightly different anatomies in labour, work, etc.).

As such gender must be seen in terms of

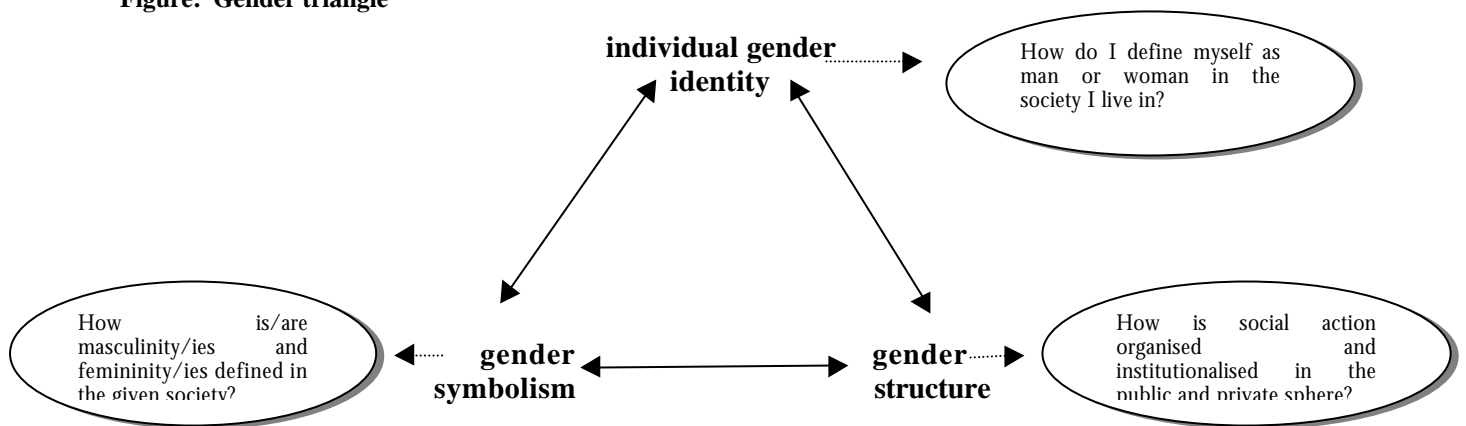
- the *individual gender identity* (social norms and the socially constructed individual identity)
- the *symbolism of gender* (classification of stereotypical gender-dualisms: Stereotypical gender-dualisms are classified by different dichotomies, which have little in common with sexual difference. Masculinity is, for example, associated with objectivity/reason/autonomy/subject/production/culture in contrast to femininity equated with subjectivity/feeling/dependency/object/value/reproduction/nature. To be feminine is to be not masculine), and
- the *structure of gender* (the organisation and institutionalisation of social action in the public and private sphere.)¹²

Gender is no biologically driven inevitable, but a socially constructed process. The individual gender identity is a fluid and transformative construction derived from certain notions of femininity and masculinity (the gender symbolism) which, in turn, are very much based on the distribution of labour in the public and private sphere (the gender structure). The same holds very true with the definition of the gender symbolism and the gender structure: Certain notions of masculinity and femininity are highly dependent on the distribution of labour in the public and private sphere (the gender structure) and the socially expected behaviour and interpretation of social norms (the individual gender identity). Masculinity/ies and femininity/ies are not single, fixed features but rather are dependent on class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and age. The distribution of labour in the public and private sphere, in turn,

profoundly affects both the construction of certain notions of masculinity and femininity (the gender symbolism) and the socially expected behaviour of *a* man or *a* woman (the individual gender identity).

To stress and understand the complementary nature of all three gender dimensions, I suggest to illustrate the dynamics of gender in the following gender triangle:

Figure: Gender triangle



The gender triangle stresses that the three gender dimensions (individual gender identity, gender symbolism and gender structure) are closely connected and interwoven categories. All three dimensions just make sense together - one dimension like the gender structure in form of the gendered division of labour has little, if any, theoretical and political meaning without taking into account the gender symbolism and the individual gender identity which produce and re-produce the gender structure. By the same token, a change of any of the three dimensions leads to a change of the entire gender triangle: An illustrative example may be here a change in the gender structure like more women entering male-dominated job areas or policy-making institutions. This shift may, for example, slowly but surely alter stereotypical understandings of gender symbolism and socially expected behaviour of a man or a woman in a given society.

At the same time, individual gender identity, gender symbolism and gender structure are interdependent within any particular cultural setting - the manifestation of each category takes different forms in different cultures. As such, the definition and understanding of gender may vary from class to class, from culture to culture, from age group to age group, from peace to wartime, etc. This means it accounts for gender being made up of a complex and shifting conglomerate of social and cultural relations like class, age, culture, etc. Having said that, gender is not universalisable: Meanings of gender are fluid and historically changeable. One cannot speak of a *generic* standpoint of women and men and one, *single* notion of femininity and masculinity in a given society. Rather, one comes across complex and plural forms of femininities and masculinities, which, in turn, are constantly open to (constant) social challenge and change.

Against this analytical background how can *gender as analytical category* make the hidden and invisible gendered ideas and perspectives of Burton's human needs theory visible? A glance through the rather elusive feminist literature on methodology will suffice to show that there is not a feminist method in the form of a single, all-inclusive gender tool to decode male bias and androcentricism in malestream¹³ *theory and practice*. One way of decoding the gender-blindness may be a gender-sensitive methodological tool like gender as analytical category.

2.1.1 What is Gender as Analytical Category?

Having stressed the three-fold definition of gender I argue that *gender as analytical category* (and any gender-sensitive approach!) has to take into account all three gender dimensions.¹⁴ Given the limited space in this paper, I comment briefly on the place of each gender dimension (individual gender identity, gender symbolism and gender structure) in *gender as analytical category*.

First, taking gender as *social construction of identity*, one has to look at different fictions of men/masculinity in contrast to women/femininity (-> *gender symbolism* and *individual gender identity*). How do women and men appear in Burton's human needs theory? What ideas about men and women inform human needs theory? This means to ask for the theorising of *identity* and its *social construction* in Burton's human needs theory.

Second, what *power structures* in the private and public sphere are hidden in the concept of universal 'human needs' that is supposed to be 'gender-neutral' (-> *gender structure*)? The analytical focus here is on the theorising of *hierarchical power structures* and *taken-for-granted power distribution*.

Third, how far is it possible to theorise about gender identities and gender roles based on changing notions of masculinity and femininity and power structures (-> *gender symbolism*)? How does Burton's human needs theory account for the socially and historically influenced and changing gender relations (-> *individual gender identity and gender structure*)? The emphasis here is on the theorising of *social change and historical variability*.

Gender as analytical category offers us some analytical space to discuss the following points: While looking at the individual gender identity and gender symbolism, one is able to focus on theorising identity and its social construction. Moreover, to analyse the individual gender identity also points to the changing nature of identity/ies. To define oneself as a woman in the 1920s is quite different from women's self-image of the 1990s. In other words, the individual gender identity and gender symbolism allows us to ask for the *historical variability* of identity as social construction. Furthermore, the analysis of gender symbolism and gender structure highlight the necessary theorising of *social change*

next to *historical variability*. Gender structure puts centre-stage the theorising of *hierarchical power structures* and *power distribution* and *their taken-for-granted power distribution*. At the same time, and on a more general note, one should not forget that ‘real men’ and ‘real women’ do not necessarily or literally fulfil the gender prescriptions of an analytical category.¹⁵

2.2 What is Human Needs Theory?

There is a rather elusive literature on human needs theory/ies offering different interpretations of material and non-material needs.¹⁶ Burton’s ‘human needs approach’ as generic (in earlier analysis even genetic¹⁷) theory refers to the universal drive to satisfy human needs. According to Burton, human needs are universally applicable and ontologically derived basic needs. These are the needs for response, security, recognition, stimulation, distributive justice, meaning, rationality, control and role defense (the latter defined as ‘the protection of needs once they have been acquired’).¹⁸

Needs theory insists that,

... only by satisfying or creating opportunities for individuals to satisfy their basic needs can there exist the possibility of a fully developed human person, a whole man, and a harmonious, progressive society.¹⁹

This classification points to and is based on three underlying assumptions:

First, human needs theory is embedded in methodological individualism where individual behaviour is essentially rooted in an unchanging and objective nature. As such, human needs theory assumes a generic *human nature* which, in turn, is driven by the satisfaction of human needs.

Second, *human needs* are meant to provide objective, unchangeable and rational criteria for analysing and evaluating (different forms of) conflict situations and conflict escalations. The aim is not to prevent conflict *per se*: In fact,

[c]onflict, like sex, is an essential creative element in human relationships. It is the means to change, the means by which our social values of welfare, security, justice, and opportunities for personal development can be achieved. [...] The existence of a flow of conflict is the only guarantee that the aspirations of society will be attained. Indeed, conflict, like sex, is to be enjoyed.²⁰

In other words, Burton considers (non-violent) conflict as a crucial catalyst for social change. The aim is to prevent and eliminate the *violent* and *destructive* manifestations of conflicts. According to Burton, (violent and non-violent) conflicts arise when needs are denied, frustrated and dissatisfied. The key is to translate conflicting interests and positions of the parties involved into common, underlying needs for identity, security, and participation. Unlike (material) interests, needs are non-negotiable and in unlimited supply. As needs are not considered by nature mutually exclusive, they

may be mutually satisfactorily addressed. In a word, there is an intimate and reciprocal relationship between needs, needs (dis)satisfaction, human development and conflict.

Third, a *harmonious and progressive society* depends heavily on the satisfaction of human needs.

3. Gender Meets Human Needs Theory

As gender meets human needs theory, we need to have a closer look at human needs theory's most crucial features. The following gender-sensitive deconstruction and reconstruction will look at the above three arguments one by one. This will be done *vis-à-vis gender as analytical category* and its focus on the social construction of identity, hierarchical power structures and social change.

3.1 Human Nature

As far as the first assumption on a generic *human nature* is concerned, human needs theory works with a gender-neutral understanding of the 'human being'. As in game theory, the male social character is a 'neutralised' and an interchangeable subject. Yet, in contrast to game theory, the human being is no longer the 'economic' and 'rational man'. The human being driven by needs' satisfaction is now the 'necessitous man'.²¹ His dissatisfied needs are both the primary causes of conflict and the key to its resolution. Once his needs are satisfied, 'the fully developed human person' may become a 'whole man'. The particular experience of men is universalised. Just a few conflict resolution theorists seem to reflect on the rather loose use of the word 'men' in most conflict resolution literature. On a self-critical note, Mitchell is one of them admitting that

I have retained the expression [the man] partly to remain in line with a long (admittedly sexist) tradition in political, social and economic writings that uses phrases like 'economic man' or 'rational man' in place of 'human being' or person [...].²²

Women are considered as gender-neutral recipients of gender-neutral needs rather than 'needs-setters' equal to necessitous men: The universal needs of the necessitous men are the only ones to pursue or strive for. There is the *a-priori* assumption of *sameness and interchangeability of human nature*, experience and needs. Along those lines, women and men have the same (basic) human needs without any gender-specific dimension.

A gender-sensitive perspective stresses that to adopt and promote universal human needs reinforces the privilege of necessitous men to marginalise and silence other groups like women and 'devalued masculinities' such as the working-class, poor, homosexual and the handicapped.²³ The necessitous man has the privilege and perspective of the 'generalised other' who considers each every individual

as a rational social agent being entitled to the same rights and duties.²⁴ The underlying assumption is that ‘...the other, like ourselves, is a being who has concrete *and the same* needs...’²⁵

By the very failure to recognise and take into account the ‘concrete other’ that is women, the necessitous man remains ‘*disembedded and disembodied*’.²⁶ As the human being via the necessitous man is portrayed as given and non-historical, there is no analytical scope to discuss the individual’s identity and its social construction. In fact, according to Burton, ‘socialization processes [...] do not seem to be able to control’²⁷ the drive for basic needs. Feminists of different persuasions such as Gilligan and Chodorow highlight the importance of emotions and of relatedness for any form of social interaction. Given the idea of disembedded and disembodied human beings in Burton’s theory, there is no space for bodied processes like the need for human reproduction and free expression of emotions associated with femininity/women.²⁸ Feminists of different persuasion have stressed time and again how far dismissing and neglecting the crucial importance of reproduction

... impoverishes our understanding of how sociopolitical relations - especially social identities and legitimating ideologies - are *in fact* reproduced.²⁹

This does not mean to subscribe to the rather essentialist, exclusive equation of ‘women’ or ‘femininity’ with ‘embodiedness’.³⁰ On the contrary, a gender-sensitive perspective stresses that women and men have bodies and hence have multiple experience of embodiedness, especially in violent conflicts. A case in point is that all current protracted-social and international conflicts show how issues of embodiedness and the body become vitally important: The body is constantly confronted with death, physical or psychological pain.³¹ Not only do women and men endure embodiedness in most violent conflicts in physical or psychological pain, but they also experience the body as a marker for ethnic difference. Further, for many women and men the body is not (any longer) an ‘island of security’. One may here just think of the deliberate use of the body or embodiedness in violent conflicts like in former Yugoslavia as predominant site of ethnic violence. International relations and gender scholar Adam Jones speaks of a form of ‘gendercide warfare’ defined - following Mary Anne Warren (1985) - as the deliberate and arbitrary killing of individuals of a particular sex (or gender).³² In Bosnia, for example, the sexual abuse and mass rape of women was part of ethnic cleansing under the guise of national and ethnic supremacy. Liz Kelly stresses that it was in former Yugoslavia where women ‘embodied the failure of the militarised men to ‘protect’ their homeland’.³³ Other forms of gendercide³⁴ like male rape became dramatically evident in the Kosovo War in 1999 where overwhelmingly non-combatant men became the victims of highly systematic and most cruel atrocities.³⁵

In this context, some scholars may stress that

the main point is not whether murders/rapes of women outweighs (sic!) that of men or not, but how these two patterns are linked as part of gendercidal warfare; how patterns, among men and women, are used systematically as means of terror.³⁶

However, it seems safe to say that in violent conflict situations one can observe some kind of 'gendered vulnerability' that is women and men are exposed to different forms of insecurity, threat and danger – which, in turn, are highly dependent on women's and men's different roles in wartime. In most violent conflict situations women and girl-children have to face different, corporeal dangers than men and boy-children and tend to be exposed to a greater vulnerability of being raped or being a victim of domestic violence, getting pregnant by an enemy soldier, etc. In fact, latest reports by women's NGOs and INGOs have an increasingly alarming overtone. In Africa, for example, violence against women in the form of femicides, girl-child slavery, ritual murders, gang rapes, military sexual slavery, acid attacks has been even on the increase for the last couple of years.³⁷ In the Asia-Pacific region a culture of violence against women and the escalating commodification, exploitation and trafficking of women and girl-children is still a predominant social feature,³⁸ while in many Arab countries 'honour killing' still represents one of the most extreme forms of violence against women.³⁹

Additionally, due to social stigmatisation women as victims of violence are blamed for their own gendered vulnerability and victimisation in many countries. And while male rape is (albeit still poorly documented) also a feature of most violent conflicts,⁴⁰ there seems to be a different motivation behind forms of male and female rape. While both forms of rape often aim to humiliate and demoralise the adversary, female rape seems to aim at humiliating and even destroying the community as a whole. Male rape, on the other hand, may rather be a means of humiliation of and between men.⁴¹

What seems to matter most here is that, in terms of human needs, the evidence of NGOs and INGOs working in violent conflicts illustrates that women may tend to put forward different body-related needs than men, due to their different corporeal experience both during war and peacetime like (forced) pregnancy, motherhood, (forced) prostitution, (forced) abortion, rape, and domestic violence. This leads us to the second assumption on the generic nature of human needs.

3.2 Nature of Human Needs

According to Burton, basic needs like the need for security, distributive justice, rationality, and control are universally applicable. Where these needs come from, and why those and not others, remains unknown. How can needs be authoritatively universal and ontologically given? Burton's human needs are first and foremost objective and rational needs. The individual's needs offer '...objectively

determined guides to policy - bases on which goals and policies could be assessed and predictions made...⁴²

Burton portrays human needs as (relatively) static, fixed and, most importantly here, homogeneous. Along those lines, Burton's theory does not lend itself to the conceptualisation of *social change* and *historical variability*. In fact, there is again the *a priori* assumption of sameness and interchangeability – this time in terms of women's and men's needs. Burton's human needs theory works with a gender-neutral understanding of human needs.

First of all, given the generic and universal applicable nature of human needs, Burton's understanding of human needs is a-historical. There is no analytical scope to discuss the *changing and constructed nature of the identity-given human needs* like meaning, stimulation, recognition, response, etc. Given their disembodied and disembedded nature, Burton's needs appeal to abstract needs and rules of rationality and control rather than to the context-sensitive evaluation of particular and specific needs. A gender-sensitive perspective stresses that (non-material) needs and their (material and non-material) satisfiers are highly dependent and constructed by the given social context. This implies that human needs are culturally and gender-specifically constructed and have to be interpreted as such. The need for example for 'meaning' is highly context-specific. It heavily relies on particular circumstances and social agents that are both subject to constant variation and change.⁴³ Feminist (postmodern) literature stresses that meanings are fluid and very often sites of contestation. In fact, the need for meaning becomes a clearly complex process, implying personal experience as well as cultural and social norms.⁴⁴

A gender-sensitive approach stresses that meaning, and the need for it, are socially constructed and constantly re-produced, but, at the same time, may also be subverted and transformed. A case in point here is the fluid and constructed nature of the identity-given meanings men/masculinity or women/femininity which, in turn, are highly dependent on the social context.⁴⁵ The illustrative examples of, for instance, the President Kumaratunge (since October 2000 the only high-profile woman politician in Sri Lanka) and the Bosnian woman who was raped by several enemy soldiers, lost her home and husband (who 'disappeared') and fled the country, tell us two different but equally important stories about women and femininity (both in war and peacetime).

In Burton's idea of human needs, the very social construction and dynamic nature of identity including its diverse expressions are dismissed: It is not able to account for the fluid and changing character of women and men and changing nature/notions of femininity and masculinity in pre- and post-war situations. By the same token, there is little, if any, analytical space to theorise the fluid and shifting identities of masculinity/ies and femininity/ies and their connection with violence in violent conflicts.

Burton's human needs theory is therefore not able to explain why, for example, chauvinistic-masculinistic, ethno-national identity is predominant over other forms of identity in emergent violent conflict,⁴⁶ (is it because Burton's all nine needs are not satisfied?). And even his more recent work like Burton (1996) and (1997)⁴⁷ falls short of the socially constructed *and* contested nature of human identity. A gender-sensitive perspective considers identity as a socially constructed and changeable process rather than as a fixed variable. This requires, for example,

...to bring in new standpoints and create reciprocal relationships of being and knowing through processes of empathetic cooperation.⁴⁸

The postmodernist feminist International Relations scholar Christine Sylvester has introduced the idea of 'empathetic co-operation' defined as a 'process of positional slippage that occurs when...finding in the concerns of others borderlands of one's own concerns and fear'⁴⁹ into the male/mainstream IR discourse. Sylvester's idea of empathetic co-operation is a process and expression of a 'multistandpointed'⁵⁰ identity: It constitutes a research perspective which makes it possible to identify 'strange' slippages, conversations, locations, and perspectives'⁵¹ which defy the 'traditional' and 'official' agenda of international relations and also most conflict situations. Along those lines, postmodern feminists have stressed with different emphases the web/interrelation of socially constructed personal and collective (meaning of) identities. An illustrative example of this kind of empathetic co-operation via a multistandpointed identity is, for example, Jean Elshtain's methodological perspective in her work, *Women and War*. Here Elshtain combines the traditional myths of the (female) 'Beautiful Souls' who are socially assigned to the domain of peace and the (male) 'Just Warriors' who make war stories.⁵² The physical and psychological integrity and responsibility are predominately important for both 'incommensurable subidentities':⁵³ As such, Beautiful Souls as 'good mothers' share some common ground with Just Warriors as 'good soldiers'. This is to say too, that while women may be excluded from 'war talk'⁵⁴ and men from 'baby talk',⁵⁵ they both have in common the need for protecting others and sacrificing themselves for those in need.⁵⁶ This very same need, in turn, is taken away from them once the soldier starts fighting in war and a woman starts battering her child. It reflects 'equality despite the difference' of 'women as mothers' and 'men as soldiers'. In a word, 'lived identities', like the one of the caring mother, are not excluded or written off, but as one part of 'mobile subjectivity'⁵⁷ acknowledged and integrated.

Against this background, the unreflected definition in traditional theories of international relations of politically relevant masculinity as fighting ability/capacity on the one hand, and the apolitical femininity as caring motherhood on the other hand, is no longer convincing and tenable.⁵⁸ Apart from anything else, empathetic cooperation suggests the interrelation of personal and collective identity: The understanding that individuals constitute unitary, rational actors and static identities becomes untenable

and is dissolved in favour of multiple and mobile meanings of identities. And yet if one takes this line of argumentation a step further and applies it to the study of most current conflicts, the highly gendered nature of these changing and mobile meanings of femininity and masculinity becomes apparent. Surely, the equations of *women as mothers* and *men as soldiers* portray and reflect current and dominant roles and tasks of many women and men in many current and past conflicts. Yet, it falls short of the fact that *women* may become *fighters* but, at the same time, are socially and culturally expected to be caring and sacrificing *mothers* (and *carers* for the elderly or in-mates). *Men*, however, are very often expected to be sacrificing *fighters* but not necessarily expected to be caring and sacrificing *fathers* – or at least are not socio-culturally portrayed as such. This is to say, too, that while women's roles outside the private sphere, especially in times of conflict, may radically change, men's (stereotypical) roles inside the private sphere may change rather little.⁵⁹ A case in point is that women as single breadwinners, widows, divorced women, etc. have the double burden to work in the public and the private sphere in many violent conflicts, while many male family members are rather reluctant to support families' struggles for income.⁶⁰

Not only does Burton's human needs theory dismiss the social construction of needs, but also sidelines the consideration that men and women may have a different conception of needs and needs' hierarchies – especially in times of conflict. In fact, it is taken to mean that women's and men's needs can be simultaneously and equally satisfied. This implies that the satisfaction of women's needs does not cause any tension within the male-dominated framework of needs. Or, to put it the other way round, men's needs are not necessarily satisfied at the expense of women's needs. Yet a gender-sensitive perspective may stress that in most protracted, social conflicts men have the patriarchal 'power of definition' of what counts as human need and what does not. This is to say, too, that while Burton's conception of needs is not to be understood as hierarchical (in contrast to, for example, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs⁶¹) it remains normatively exclusive: It legitimises the dominant position of 'higher non-material' needs such as meaning, recognition, stimulation, response, etc. over 'lower material' needs such as food, shelter, health care, etc. Many feminists may argue therefore that what is lurking behind this assumption is a 'man-over-nature' dimension of needs.

In contrast to Burton's concept of non-material needs, material needs are subject to scarcity and limited supply, particularly in most protracted, violent conflicts where there are often material shortages. Given their roles and tasks in most protracted or deep-rooted social conflicts, many women have (no other option than) to prioritise the satisfaction of material over non-material needs. Most women as providers, food caretakers and carers are responsible for the basic needs satisfaction and hence are mainly concerned about their own and their families' basic and primary, material needs like food, water, shelter and health care.

While feminist theory says more about possible gendered differences of moral reasoning than needs,⁶² feminist encounters with development studies (including humanitarian aid and development assistance) have brought into the open the gender dimensions of needs and their satisfaction in (violent) conflict situations and peace-building.⁶³ In the past, women's specific needs in most violent conflicts remained 'hidden' and 'invisible'. Yet, different development agencies and international organisations in conflict situations like Oxfam, WHO and UNHCR, etc. have made the gender-specific dimensions of women's specific needs (including the needs of disabled, refugee, poor and old women particularly) in times of war and emergencies, visible.⁶⁴ An illustrative example of this is women's health needs in terms of family planning, abortion, motherhood, female genital mutilation, etc.⁶⁵ Dependent on their social status, women as social group have different needs: Refugee women, for example, have special needs in terms health, shelter, legal advice, inheritance and land rights.⁶⁶

In most violent conflicts, women clearly constitute the vast majority of clients of health services and are particularly vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Yet, given men's preferential access to health care, women's health needs tend to be marginalised with the effect of possible malnutrition, physical illnesses and bacterial infections, etc.⁶⁷ In fact, in some parts of the world like Afghanistan, gender-stereotypical gender roles prevent women from seeking health care like reproductive health care. At the same time, certain stereotypical notions of masculinity keep men away from health care services.⁶⁸

As a result, women's health status is considered usually poorer than that of men mainly due to high workload and lacking psychological and reproductive health care in most violent conflict situations. The very neglect of the gender-specific dimensions of needs has had (and still continues to have) long-term implications and strong repercussions on the physical and psychological wellbeing of women, girl children and their role, which may go far beyond the post-settlement peace-building phase. Having said that, the analytical focus on material needs in most gender-sensitive literature and research in development studies should not come as a surprise. A gender-sensitive approach (similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) stresses that the satisfaction of non-material needs like meaning, response, stimulation, justice, security, etc. is heavily *dependent on* the satisfaction of basic, material needs: An illustrative example may here be Longwe's hierarchy of needs starting with well-being, and then turning to access to resources, conscientisation, participation in decision-making to control over resources.⁶⁹ While there is not the space here to engage in an in-depth critique of Longwe's model,⁷⁰ the most crucial aspect is the link of the provision of basic human needs and strategies of women's empowerment.⁷¹ Feminist Kabeer, for example, stresses that the provision of basic human needs in the form of a welfare service is a first important strategic entry point to overturn the status quo. The reason being that as 'practical needs' of women and their families are not met, women may not act upon their 'strategic needs' like ending the oppression and suppression they suffer specifically as

women. The distinction between practical and strategic gender needs was introduced by development expert Caroline Moser, (1989) (based on Maxine Molyneux's idea of practical and strategic interests⁷²): Practical gender needs define the needs characterised by the *concrete conditions* of women within the existing gender division of labour like health care, food and water provision. These are the concrete and particular needs that do emerge out of the complex and multiple roles women play.⁷³ Strategic gender needs are dependent on *women's subordination to men*. Those are the needs dependent on/linked to the access of resources like the abolition of the sexual division of labour and domestic violence, establishment of political and economic equality, etc. Her distinction does not mean to say that women in one country have necessarily common or the same practical and strategic gender needs. In fact, in most violent conflict situations common practical and strategic women's needs may be overshadowed or sidelined by ethnic strife and competition over scarce resources. The difference or the sameness of practical and strategic needs among women in a conflict situation is clearly highly dependent on the different or similar women's roles and experience prior and during the conflict escalation. A gender-sensitive perspective points to the fact that women's (and men's) needs have their own historicity and context-specificity and cannot be lumped together under 'generic, human needs'. Putting aside the well-founded critique of Moser's distinction,⁷⁴ my reading of Moser's model leads us to the idea of multiple, overlapping, but also conflicting needs among women as a social group and among women and men.

The idea of men having practical and strategic gender needs which often may be clearly opposed to those of women both in war and peacetime, refers to the more fundamental question of what feminist political theorist Fraser defined as 'needs discourse': It is

... a site of struggle where groups with unequal [...] resources compete to establish as hegemonic their respective interpretations of legitimate social needs. *Dominant groups* articulate need interpretations intended to *exclude, defuse, and/or co-opt* counter-interpretations. *Subordinate, or oppositional groups*, on the other hand, articulate need interpretations intended to *challenge, displace and/or modify* dominant ones.⁷⁵

Fraser's idea of needs discourses stresses how far we are necessarily and constantly involved in political debates about the very meanings of needs and the connection of these meanings with possible, desired political effects and outcomes. In terms of *gender as analytical category* this means asking how far are Burton's (non-material) needs - far from being gender-free or gender-neutral - (highly) gendered concepts and build on certain hidden gender arrangements?

At first glance and on a positive note, one may stress the point that a needs approach *à la* Burton like *gender as analytical category* implies we *unpack and open up* given social structures: In contrast to the interest-based approaches like negotiation, Burton's human needs theory clearly prioritises the

underlying concerns of the parties involved such as needs, grievances and fears. Does this gender-friendly reading of Burton's overall theory stand up to closer scrutiny? With which visible or 'invisible' gendered connotation of needs does Burton work?

While Burton leaves it somehow open if some needs like the 'need for response' are more important than others like the 'need for meaning' and if there is hierarchy among different needs, he defines the 'need for control' as the most fundamental need of a human being: It is the need '...to attempt to control his environment in order to meet his end'.⁷⁶ The 'need for control over the environment' portrays the environment as a 'disembodied scenario' where resources and human beings are controlled. Not only does the need for control imply the notion of self-control and control over others, it also sidelines, if not denies, (different) forms of physical and psychological vulnerability like forms of gendered vulnerability discussed earlier. Feminist encounters with development studies and the human rights discourse both stress forms of gendered vulnerability in terms of women's specific needs and women's human rights. And, at the same time, feminists and men's studies have also started unpacking the vulnerability of the male body and called into question the 'phallic majesty'.⁷⁷ Along those lines one may argue that Burton's need to control his environment, combined with the need for rationality echoes the idea of '*masculine ethic*' of *rationality* underlying Western science.

Some feminists have shown how Western science is first and foremost genderised

...through a belief system that equates *objectivity* with *masculinity* and a set of cultural values that simultaneously (and conjointly) elevates what is defined as *scientific* and what is defined as *masculine*.⁷⁸

This is to say, too, that the '...gender hierarchy is not coincidental to but in a significant sense constitutive of Western philosophy's objectivist metaphysics'.⁷⁹ To invent and impose knowledge it was hence built on and associated with controlling and subordinating of nature which was metaphorically associated with the female/feminine.

As in most game theory and negotiation literature '... 'irrational' behaviour is behaviour not understood or not approved by others'⁸⁰ in Burton's human needs theory. Non-rational behaviour in conflict resolution becomes some kind of abnormal behaviour of actors who have not yet learned the socially expected, adequate responses. How parties or disputants cope with irrational aspect of conflict and their own irrational behaviour (within the actual third party intervention) is not extensively documented in Burton's work. Irrationality or non-rational behaviour, in turn, has been metaphorically associated with women/female/feminine.

Many feminists have argued time and again that the need for control over the environment and the need for rationality are derived from the perspective of the powerful party or the party in power. One could argue that in Burton's needs theory the need for rationality and the need for control legitimise domination practices

fending off the unpredictability or instability of nature *traditionally associated with women* by imposing predictability and order through the power of classificatory systems....⁸¹

Less surprisingly, women in the private sphere and their gender-specific reproductive needs are not taken into account, as they do not correspond with the notion of 'instrumental rationality' and forms of self-centredness and control over. In this context, one may take into account and elaborate on the work of Carol Gilligan (1983) and Chodorow (1978) on feminine forms of reasoning. To elaborate on Gilligan's work makes one think along two different lines: On the one hand, a gender-sensitive perspective stresses that for some women (and men) the 'need to define oneself *vis-à-vis* one's social environment' and the 'need to be socially embedded in that very environment' may become more predominant or equally important than the need for control over one's environment. This also includes the 'need for emotionality' and the free expression of emotions. A gender-sensitive perspective may then stress the social connectedness of human needs dependent on a particular, localised agency.⁸² I suggest calling this gender-sensitive approach a 'need for otherness'. A need for otherness may be best understood as an invitation of 'the other' and the 'othering' as some kind of appreciation of the other whose views are as important as our own. This way of thinking has been largely and sadly missing in (most) past mainstream International Relations theorising, but is crucial to most conflict management practice. In fact, to be able to put oneself into the shoes of others is crucial to all conflict management practice – irrespective of whether we talk about negotiation, bargaining or problem-solving workshops. It is also desperately needed in an increasingly interdependent and global world where acknowledging and appreciating cultural diversity and recognising the increasing interdependence made the exclusionary thinking fostered by the nation-state anachronistic and even obsolete.

On the other hand, following the idea of a need for otherness, a gender-sensitive perspective may stress that by stripping rationality of its pure *cognitive superiority*, one may look at the need for rationality as pragmatic and adaptive response. By stripping control of its political and social *superiority*, a gender-sensitive approach points to the need of control as adaptive response which empowers women (and men) to gain 'both *self-protection* and whatever *power* they do legitimately have available *within their subordinated situation*'.⁸³ This interpretation points to different and multiple understandings of control such as 'control to', 'control of', 'under control', 'control with', 'control for'. Given the many unwritten stories of women, especially refugee women, in war zones

reflecting the general experience of being ‘under constant control’⁸⁴ and ‘to be controlled’,⁸⁵ ‘taking control of’ may be novel for some women – especially in times of violent conflict.⁸⁶ It seems safe to say that in many violent conflicts women sacrifice their own bodily needs for rest, recreation and nutrition to meet the needs of their children and husbands. And in many war zones women are expected to do the ‘emotional work’ and to look after the emotional needs for comfort, protection, empathy, understanding of their children, husbands, and in-mates. Yet, at the same time, one may argue that many women in war zones, such as Sri Lanka, have learned how to be in control of a ‘culture of violence’ on an everyday level. They have done so by taking up new roles and tasks as female headed-households and/or as LTTE fighters or army personnel.

Apart from anything else, the above way of thinking points to the idea of a more personal account of control and power than the public or official form of power over:⁸⁷ In fact, multiple forms of control coexist in which women and men do experience control in their everyday life in conflict situations – despite a culture of violence.

Putting aside the need for control and rationality, what about Burton’s other needs and their underlying hidden gender arrangements? Again, in a gender-friendly reading of Burton’s work, one may argue that some of Burton’s needs are more conducive to theorise about gender-specific issues than others for example ‘the need for distributive justice’ and ‘need for security’. The reason being that given the high levels of personal insecurity and different forms of gender inequality in war and peace time, the need for security and for justice matter a great deal to most women in everyday life. Yet, Burton’s notion of ‘distributive justice’ is - implicitly - based on the assumption that men will be in charge of the distribution of public justice while women will stay in the private sphere caring for their children, the elderly, etc. One has to ask, whose justice are we talking about anyway? As mentioned above, human needs theory takes the human being that is the necessitous man as analytical starting-point: The distributive justice of necessitous men turns out to be a rather exclusive form of social justice. As women and their gender-specific needs are (implicitly) denied agency, men as main social agents are the only primary ‘needs-setters’ in the public sphere. The public/private split remains hidden and is taken for granted. Along those lines, multiple and different forms of direct and structural violence like domestic violence, culturally ‘justified’ sexism in the private and public sphere reflect a rather normal snapshot of women’s life experience both in peace and wartime. A gender-sensitive perspective shows in how far the ‘public talk’ of a need for distributive justice takes the injustice in the private sphere as rather given. Yet, as long as the need for justice - albeit implicitly - refers to the public sphere *only*, it has to remain a rather one-sided and partial form of justice. In fact, one could argue that for many women the discourse on the need for distributive justice in the public sphere is clearly deceptive, if not disempowering, as it clearly hides or disguises the social injustice in the private sphere. Many women experience, for example, different forms of gender-specific violence like

domestic violence, rape and sexual assault on an everyday scale particularly predominant during wartime. The need for distributive justice in the public sphere may here turn out to be an important corollary to the need for control of the public and private sphere by men. As Enloe stresses, men 'have used their *public power* to construct *private relationships* in ways that bolstered their masculinized *political control*'.⁸⁸ Along those lines, a gender-sensitive perspective of human needs points to the intimate and related relationship of the need for rationality, control and power over and social injustice (like gender inequality). At the same time, a gender-sensitive perspective stresses that women (and men) may experience the 'private sphere' that is the family and household as a place of emotional comfort, belonging and emotional and social empowerment. In many violent conflicts the family is the only safe haven from different forms of social and cultural discrimination and public terror in a culture of violence. Not only do the family and household constitute a crucial, social-psychological refuge from ongoing fighting and social turmoil in the public, the family is also the place where forms of 'justice' and the need for it are socialised and learned.⁸⁹

Similar to the 'need for justice', the 'need for security' seems, at first sight, equally important to men and women in both war and peacetime. A certain need for security is always based on a particular (real, perceived or misperceived) threat. A gender-sensitive perspective may ask whose security are we talking about when Burton speaks of a generic, universal need for security? And what kind of (personal or collective) security does he refer to?

Due to the different roles women and men play in most violent conflicts, the personal and collective threats for women and men turn out to be different, but also may vary among women and men as social groups. As mentioned earlier, in most violent conflicts, women tend to be more vulnerable to economic, political and sexual exploitation. Given that in many violent conflicts most women as female headed-households, mothers, carers are at home looking after the children, the elderly, etc., their needs for security are clearly different from those of men as 'traditional' breadwinners or fighters. In this context, the empirical evidence put forward by development agencies and international organisations highlights women's specific needs for physical, psychological and food security.⁹⁰ Most of this evidence stresses particularly that security has a lot to do with personal mobility as key factor in personal survival.⁹¹ Adopting a gender-sensitive perspective on security suggests that the degree to which women and men feel, or actually are threatened, varies according to their economic, political, social or personal circumstances in violent conflict situation.

The above gender critique of Burton's needs points to the idea of 'true' and 'false' needs as discussed by Critical Theory and here particularly by Herbert Marcuse (1964). Needs are false if they work in the interests of the powerful social group and against the true interests of the working class. Powerful groups promote 'false consciousness' among the mass of the population.⁹² As a result, less powerful

groups aim at satisfying false needs as they ‘...internalize need interpretations that work to their own disadvantage’.⁹³ Once the individuals, especially the less powerful groups, are not any longer indoctrinated and manipulated by the powerful groups, they are then able to identify their true needs.⁹⁴ This leads to the question ‘are you getting what you need, or just what someone thinks you need?’⁹⁵ One can ask the same question in terms of gender and needs: Are women and ‘devalued masculinities’ getting what they want or just what (privileged) men think they need?

The idea of Moser’s earlier discussed strategic gender needs and Marcuse’s idea of true needs, leads us nicely to the aspect of structural inequalities as cause for conflict which are neglected by human needs theory *à la* Burton. This is to say, too, that Burton’s human needs theory turns the focus on the ‘needy man’ or (in a gender-neutral vein) on the ‘needy woman’ and neglects the structural origins and effects of conflict like open and hidden power inequalities, like the very lack or shortage of material resources. One may argue that Burton’s idea of conflict *provention* defined as ‘structural changes required to remove an environment of conflict’⁹⁶ addresses open *power structures* as conflict’s origin. Yet I would argue the overemphasis in Burton’s theory on the dissatisfaction of needs as conflict’s origin suggests that once (non-material) needs are satisfied, no conflict will arise. At its best, the satisfaction of needs is here narrowed down to the satisfaction of Moser’s practical gender needs and Marcuse’s false needs. Most importantly here, there is no analytical room in Burton’s theory to discuss Moser’s strategic gender needs and Marcuse’s true needs which both point to the more structural features of conflict(’s origin) like *hierarchical power structures*. Following Critical Theory on the point of true needs, a gender-sensitive perspective stresses that to identify true needs requires the prior commitment to ‘emancipation’. This is to say, too, that ‘only under conditions of adequate knowledge and undistorted communication’ men’s and women’s true needs can be known.⁹⁷ In a friendly reading of Burton, one has to emphasise that Burton’s problem-solving approach has some *prima facie* purchase on Critical Theory exactly on the very point of ‘conditions of adequate knowledge and undistorted communication’. According to Burton’s problem-solving approach,

...the solution is not the final end-product. It is in itself another set of relationships that contains its own set of problems...[P]roblem-solving frequently requires a *new synthesis of knowledge* or techniques and a change in theoretical structure...[T]he system of interactions is an *open one*, i.e. the parts are subject not merely to interaction among themselves (...) but to interaction with a wider environment over which there can be *no control*.⁹⁸

As such, Burton’s problem-solving workshop comes very close to Juergen Habermas’ ‘ideal speech situation’. According to Habermas’ ideal speech situation all participants have an equal opportunity to participate, to bring up a question. This is to say, too, that the starting-point in Critical Theory *and* in Burton’s approach is the problematisation of the origin of given framework of institutions and social

relations. Like Burton's problem-solving approach, Critical Theory aims at clarifying possible alternatives for social change and suggesting ways how to transform the dominant social and political system.⁹⁹ And similar to Burton, Max Horkheimer, for example, stresses that knowledge is not simply a reflection of a concrete historical situation, but has to be understood as a social force to generate social change as well.¹⁰⁰

However, Burton's anti-positivist line of argumentation somehow clashes with his wider emphasis on a positivist approach to the scientific study of conflict in general and to his concept of human needs in particular. Burton's concept of human needs is defined and understood as value-free or value-neutral one. Yet, I would argue with Richard Little that

[i]n a world of competing values, the merits of any particular model, therefore, are not self-evident. No model is free from ideology. Since John Burton wishes to change the world, he has no alternative but to make the argument for change in ideological terms. It is counter-productive to dress one's values in natural sciences garb. A non-ideological model of social order is a chimera which it is a mistake to claim or pursue.¹⁰¹

Feminist political theorist Iris Young, among others, stresses that dominant groups give and legitimise authority to themselves through claims to universal knowledge in the name of neutrality.¹⁰² Neutrality and rationality give '... the gender-neutral stance ... authority, ... appearance of accounting for and accurately reflecting reality'.¹⁰³ And many feminists, like political theorist Nancy Fraser, argue that decisions about needs are highly normative 'value preferences'.¹⁰⁴ This seems of crucial importance for many violent conflict situations where everyday behaviour is highly characterised by a large scale of violence, brutality and terror. In fact, a culture of violence destroys normal meanings of needs and knowledge that define and guide normal, everyday life.¹⁰⁵ And given that satisfiers of material needs like the needs for food, shelter, health care may be in short supply and their (dis)satisfaction may decide about death or life, the satisfaction of non-material needs like Burton's needs for role defense, stimulation, response and meaning, turn into some kind of luxury which has little in common with the everyday survival struggle of ordinary men and women.

Against this analytical background, a gender-sensitive perspective stresses that in the face of power asymmetry neutrality perpetuates the status quo and reproduces power inequalities.¹⁰⁶ It asks who does interpret needs, from what perspective, and in the light of what interests?¹⁰⁷ Who has the authority to interpret needs? A gender-sensitive approach stresses that,

[o]nly when *women* as the less powerful groups attain power and expand their view of how their needs should be satisfied will *men as* powerful groups and societies be challenged to satisfy their needs in ways that do not express, coerce, or cause structural violence to less powerful groups.¹⁰⁸

The logical extension of the argument is that the ‘myth of equals’ in Burton’s concept of human needs actually fosters ‘false consciousness’ among disadvantaged groups like women and ‘devalued masculinities’. And, in fact, Burton’s human needs theory somehow neglects the role of the society (in the development of the individual) and its role in creating false needs among individuals. This is nicely reflected in Burton’s claim that socialisation processes do not have an impact on human needs.¹⁰⁹

A gender-sensitive approach may come in here and help us to distinguish between true and false needs, that is, to take ‘... the *emancipatory* from the *repressive* possibilities of needs...’¹¹⁰ by asking who is excluded and who is included. Who is benefiting and who is not? Along those lines, gender-sensitive research may help to identify and elaborate the tension between empowering (true) and disempowering (false) needs in dealing with conflict. *Gender as analytical category* points to hierarchical power structures and their taken-for-granted distribution as possible reason(s) for social conflict. It brings into the open the role of power relations in general and forms of power inequality in particular in Burton’s human needs theory. In Burton’s theory power is very much a non-variable and less surprisingly power imbalances are not given analytical priority.¹¹¹

Apart from anything else, Fraser’s idea of ‘needs discourses’ or ‘politics of need interpretation’ points to the following aspects of a gender-sensitive perspective of human needs. The interpretation and satisfaction of material and non-material needs are rather open, constructed and politically debated: Needs are far from being neutral or non-conflict promoting.¹¹² The underlying assumption here is that even if one assumes that values such as meaning or response are (gender-) neutral, one cannot deny that the very goals of needs fulfilment such as peace, justice, better communication, etc. are inescapably highly loaded and normative. Along those lines, gender as analytical category asks what (moral or political) justification exists to assume that needs, by their very nature (irrespective of being in unlimited or limited supply), do not themselves promote or create conflicts?¹¹³ What is the conflict-promoting potential of needs? The idea of gendered needs point us to the fact that, for example, Burton’s need for recognition, stimulation and security can easily lead to a need for dominance, control over and arrogance (and hence to the need for an out- and in-group).¹¹⁴ In this context, and on a more general note, one may refer to Vamik Volkan’s idea that human beings have a basic need for having enemies as well as allies.¹¹⁵ If human beings are driven by the need for dominance (as a form of security, recognition, and meaning), then one cannot think of needs as fundamentally neutral or conflict inhibiting. Rather, from a gender-sensitive perspective ‘universally, ontological human needs’ have to be discussed as conflict promoting.¹¹⁶ Far from being value-neutral, a need becomes ‘a political instrument, meticulously prepared, calculated, and used’.¹¹⁷

This leads us nicely to the third assumption of a *harmonious and progressive society* mentioned at the very beginning.

3.3 Harmonious and Progressive Society

Burton's political aim is the 'stability and progress of societies'.¹¹⁸ As such

[t]he behavioural interest in human needs is not in making the individual happier [...]. It is in determining the conditions necessary for social organisations to survive harmoniously.¹¹⁹

Along those lines, the very satisfaction of human needs is a means to an end: It is vital for any functioning of social institutions and any social harmony and progress. This seems a fair and sound argument.

Yet, the supposedly value-neutral 'harmonious and progressive society' hides the clearly male-dominated social order and social institutions. A gender-sensitive approach asks whose harmonious and progressive society are we talking about anyway? Whose needs are at stake? Gender as analytical category decodes the gender-neutral notion of the individuals in the public sphere as deceptive. It points to the gendered nature of decision-making institutions reflected in the domination of men as decision-makers in the public sphere. In fact, it is the gendered structure that confines and subscribes women to the private sphere (both in war and peacetime). A gender-sensitive perspective highlights that the gender-neutral understanding of a harmonious and progressive society disguises the gender-specific hurdles and 'access barriers' for many women (not only in times of conflict) to *participate* in, for example, political and economic decision-making. In many social conflicts, for many women the main concern is to get access to the main political and economic institutions in the first place, since they are far from having equal access to economic and political institutions.¹²⁰ In many violent conflicts women's roles and tasks remain confined to the private sphere. While the number of women in decision-making positions world-wide has increased for the last decades or so, in the South and many CEE countries, women are still clearly under-represented in the official decision-making bodies.¹²¹ And it is safe to say that in most protracted social conflicts the economic deterioration next to the 're-invention of tradition',¹²² or 'retraditionalization of society'¹²³ fostered the exclusion of women from the public and political life.

Feminists have shown, time and again, how far the entitlement and the right of men to political participation in the public sphere went in tandem with the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Along those lines, a gender-sensitive perspective stresses how far a harmonious and progressive society is highly dependent on and heavily reliant on women's roles and tasks in the private sphere. This points to the idea that in and outside most violent conflicts, women lay the ground in the private sphere for men pursuing their needs in the public sphere.

Against this background, a gender-sensitive perspective may hence call into question how far ‘the primacy of human needs’ constitutes ‘...a threat to the status quo’.¹²⁴ Without doubt, the primacy of human needs calls into question traditional, mainstream thinking in International Relations and may indeed constitute a threat to the (neo-) realist power politics.¹²⁵ However, one may raise some doubts how far Burton’s human needs theory does in fact constitute a threat to the gendered *status quo*. Earlier analyses stressed, for example, that

[i]f a theory of needs becomes the dominant paradigm, it follows that coercive policies used to maintain social order would be changed in favour of policies aimed at fulfilling the needs of the individual. Such an approach would inevitably involve *reducing concentrations of power*.¹²⁶

This seems highly questionable from a gender-sensitive perspective. A gender-blind, or at its best, gender-neutral theory of human needs, like Burton’s, is based on the public-private split and remains inconducive to theorising *hierarchical power structure and power distribution and their disguise*. As such, gendered power inequalities remain intact: The ‘concentration of gendered power’ like in the form of the public-private split is not reduced, but is rather produced and re-produced. In fact, the implicit commitment to the public-private split renders the private sphere and, women at its centre, non-political and invisible. As a result, the gendered, somehow natural features of violent conflicts, like the increase in domestic violence, rape, changes of family structures and social structure are made invisible as allegedly ‘non-political’ in Burton’s theory.

4 Gender Leaves Human Needs Theory ... and Where Does It Leave Us?

Gender leaves human needs theory with rather mixed feelings. The above analysis showed how far Burton's human needs theory remains in the end unable to theorise about gender. The main reasons may be summarised as follows:-

First, Burton's work on human needs suggests a gender-neutral understanding of both human beings and human needs. The male social character and his needs are neutralised, and irrespective of location and circumstances (of violent conflicts), all human beings have the same needs. As human needs are portrayed as rather given and fixed features, there remains very little ontological space to theorise *identity as social construction*.

Second, Burton's theory works with an universal concept of non-material identified needs. As a result, his allegedly universalisable and gender-neutralised human needs make women's more material and body-specific needs 'invisible'. The idea of generic and universal non-material needs, in turn, clearly reflects a highly *a-historical understanding of human needs*. As such, it is not able to theorise social change and historical variability on the one hand, and hierarchical power structures and their disguise as conflict origin on the other.

Third, *the a-historical perspective*, in turn, goes hand in hand with Burton's emphasis on the value-neutral character of his theory. It is this idea of value-neutrality based on a positivist approach to science which disguises the possible conflict-promoting character of human needs. As such, it has to remain intolerant of the value-loaded and conflict-promoting nature of human needs.

It is clear that a gender-sensitive approach questions single, monolithic understanding of needs and social actors. It stresses plurality and social embeddedness of both needs and actors. This also implies the need to recognise the inherently interrelated and reciprocal nature of (material and non-material) needs and their (dis)satisfaction.

This does not mean to say that there are not some *truly* universal material human needs like food, shelter, health, etc. and non-material needs like response, stimulation and, of course, love. What seems to matter most is that the satisfaction of distinctly social individual and collective human needs is far more contestable. The reason being that it is socially and culturally constructed, legitimised and sanctioned¹²⁷ – and most often in a highly gendered fashion.

Notes

- 1 See John W. Burton (1979) and John W. Burton (ed.) (1990). John Burton's human needs theory is based on the work of Paul Sites (1973).
- 2 See Christopher Mitchell (ed.) (2001).
- 3 See for example Kevin Avruch and Peter W. Black (1987) and Joseph A. Scimecca, 'Freedom and self-reflexivity as basic human needs', in John W. Burton (ed.) (1990), pp. 205-218 and most recently Tarja Vayrynen (2001).
- 4 Eva Kreisky and Birgit Sauer (eds.) (1997).
- 5 Carol Lee Bacchi (1999), p. 30.
- 6 In other words, the following analysis works with a two-fold definition of gender, on the one hand, gender as the social construction of social relations between women and men and on the other hand as *analytical category* to make 'invisible' gender-blind spots, categories and perspectives 'visible'.
- 7 Androcentrism shall be defined as 'male-centredness'.
- 8 V. Spike Peterson, 'Introduction', in V. Spike Peterson (ed.), (1992), p. 6. (Emphasis there) and p. 2.
- 9 Ibid., p. 2. The feminist *reconstruction* is based on the results of the *deconstruction* project. At their best, feminist *deconstruction* and *reconstruction* shall be best understood as complementary and interrelated.
- 10 Having said that, Burton's theory has to be read and understood in its historical setting especially the legacy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and its explicit commitment to universal and individual human rights.¹¹ See Cordula Reimann (1999) and (2001a).
- 12 Sandra Harding (1986), pp. 16-17. For a more extended discussion on 'gender' see Linda Nicholson (1994).
- 13 'Malestream' need not necessarily be mainstream (think of e.g. gender-blindness of Critical Theory) and vice versa (think of e.g. female scholars doing mainstream and gender-blind research).
- 14 For a rather similar but differently developed discussion of *gender as analytical category* in the context of IR see Sandra Whitworth (1994), pp. 41-42.
- 15 See Joan Scott (1986).
- 16 See K. Lederer (ed.) with Johan Galtung and David Antal (1980), Paul Sites (1973), Abraham H. Maslow (1954), Stephen Box (1971) and Edwin O. Wilson (1975).
- 17 For a discussion in how far that implies biological reductionism see Kevin Avruch and Peter W. Black (1987) and John W. Burton and J.D. Sandole (1987).
- 18 John W. Burton (1979), p. 73. Burton adds the last need (role defense) to the eight other needs taken from Paul Sites. See Paul Sites (1973).
- 19 Ramashray Roy, 'Social Conflicts and Needs Theories', in John Burton (ed.) (1990), p. 129.
- 20 John Burton (1972), pp. 137-138.
- 21 Christopher Mitchell, 'Necessitous Man and Conflict Resolution', in John Burton (ed.) (1990), p. 153.
- 22 Ibid., p. 173.
- 23 See also Iris Young (1990).
- 24 Seyla Benhabib (1987), p. 87.
- 25 Ibid. (Emphasis added C.R.).
- 26 Ibid., p. 81.
- 27 John W. Burton (1987), p. 23.
- 28 See also Anna Yeatman (1984), p. 157.
- 29 V. Spike Peterson, 'Security and Sovereign States: What Is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously', in V. Spike Peterson (ed.) (1992), p. 37 (Emphasis there) see also Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (eds.) (1991).
- 30 See also Jane Flax (1987), p. 638.
- 31 See also R. Emerson Dobash and Russell P. Dobash (eds.) (1998).
- 32 Adam Jones (2000), pp. 3-6.
- 33 Liz Kelly, 'Wars Against Women: Sexual Violence, Sexual Politics and the Militarised State', in Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson and Jennifer Marchbank (eds.) (2000), p. 53
- 34 Adam Jones (2000).
- 35 See Adam Jones (2000).
- 36 Ibid., pp. 36-37, footnote 73.
- 37 See also WomenAction (2000), p. 8. WomenAction is a global internet and communication network that helps NGOs to actively engage in the 'Beijing+5' review process with the long-term aim of women's empowerment.
- 38 See also *ibid.*, p. 28.
- 39 See also *ibid.*, p. 49.

40 If male rape occurs less frequent then female rape is still open to some controversy among feminists and
 non-feminists.

41 See Judy El-Bushra (1998), p. 10, footnote 1.

42 John W. Burton (1982), p. 36.

43 See also D. Cameron (1985).

44 And it was also poststructuralist Foucault who showed in how far the ‘regulation of the production of
 meaning’ is always closely intertwined and linked with the ‘regulation of behaviour’. See Michel Foucault
 (1978) and (1979).

45 See also Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson, ‘Women’s Interests’, in Michelle Barrett and Anne Philips
 (eds.) (1992), p. 65.

46 See Vivienne Jabri (1996), p. 123.

47 See also John W. Burton, ‘Peace Begins at Home’, in Christopher Mitchell (ed.) (2001), pp. 3-10; John W.
 Burton, ‘Conflict Provention as a Political System’, in *ibid.*, pp. 23-31; John W. Burton, ‘Introducing the
 Person into Thinking about Social Policies’, in *ibid.*, pp. pp. 45-49 and John W. Burton, ‘Where Do We Go
 from Here?’, in *ibid.*, pp. 69-73. .

48 Christine Sylvester (1994a), p. 96.

49 Christine Sylvester (1994b), p. 317.

50 See Jane Flax (1987), p. 640f.

51 Christine Sylvester (1994b), p. 317 (Emphasis there).

52 See Jean Bethke Elshtain (1987).

53 See *Ibid.*, p. 222.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

55 *Ibid.*

56 See also Brigit Brock-Utne (1985).

57 Christine Sylvester (1994a), p. 57. See also Kathy Ferguson (1993), p. 154.

58 See Gayarti C. Spivak (1988).

59 See also *Gender Policy Review* (2001), pp. 9-10.

60 WomenAction (2000), p. 60.

61 See A.H. Maslow (1954).

62 One may think here just of Carol Gilligan (1982) and Elisabeth J. Porter (1991) *among others*.

63 See for example Cordula Reimann (2001b).

64 See also Judy El Bushra and Eugenia Piza Lopez (1993), WHO (1998) and Elisabeth King and Andrew
 Mason (2001). For latest figures see www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2001/pdfs/tab13.pdf .

65 See also WomenAction (2000), p. 7, p. 16, pp. 31-32, pp. 48-49 and pp. 63-66. For latest figures on
 reproductive health see http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2001/pdfs/tab2_17pdf .

66 See also selected bibliography on refugee women <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/refbib/biblio/needs.htm> .

67 See also Bridget Byrne (1996), pp. 34-35.

68 See again WHO (1998).

69 Sara Hlupekile Longwe (1991). Longwe now prefers speaking of a ‘Women’s Empowerment Framework’.
 See also Sara Hlupekile Longwe (1997).

70 One may for example criticize Longwe’s rather static hierarchy for being rather un-conducive to capture the
 changing and fluid power structures and identities in conflict situations.

71 Naila Kabeer (1992) and see also Naila Kabeer (1994).

72 Maxine Molyneux (1985).

73 Moser speaks of the triple roles of women that are their reproductive, productive and community
 management roles. See Caroline Moser (1989).

74 See for example Saskia Wieringa (1994) and Ina Kerner (1999).

75 Nancy Fraser (1989), p. 166 (Emphasis C.R.).

76 John W. Burton (1982), p. 35. The crucial importance of the need for control becomes also apparent in the
 work of other human needs theorists like Paul Sites. See the very title of Paul Sites’ book *Control. The
 Basis of Social Order* and Paul Sites (1973), p. 1.

77 Susan Bordo (1993), p. 697.

78 Evelyn Fox Keller (1985), p. 89 (Emphasis C.R.).

79 V. Spike Peterson, ‘Introduction’ in V. Spike Peterson (ed.) (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 13.

80 John W. Burton (1972), p. 8.

81 V. Spike Peterson, ‘Security and Sovereign States: What Is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously’, in *op.*
cit., p. 37 (Emphasis added C.R.).

82 See also Richard Rorty (1989).

83 Pam Oliver (1991), p. 352 (Emphasis C.R.).

84 Interview with internally displaced female population, Puttalam/Sri Lanka, 10-11.4.2000.

85 Ibid.
86 Elisabeth J. Porter (1991), p. 181.
87 See also P. Johnson (1976).
88 Cynthia Enloe (1990), p. 195 (Emphasis C.R.).
89 See also Elisabeth J. Porter (1991), p. 162.
90 See for example Ruth K. Oniang'o, 'African Women's Strategies to Advance Household Food Security', in
Jennifer Turpin and Lois Ann Lorentzen (eds.) (1996), pp. 163-193.
91 See for example Judith El-Bushra and Eugenia Piza Lopez (1993), p. 20.
92 See Herbert Marcuse (1964), pp. 4-9.
93 Nancy Fraser (1989), p. 169.
94 See Herbert Marcuse (1964), pp. 5-7.
95 William R. Potapchuk, 'Governments' Responses to Human Needs', in op. cit., p. 277.
96 John W. Burton, and Frank Dukes (eds.) (1990), p. 2.
97 Kai Neilsen (1977), p. 156.
98 See John Burton (1979), p. 5.
99 See Robert Cox (1981), pp. 129-130 (Emphasis C.R.).
100 Max Horkheimer (1972), p. 215.
101 Richard Little (1984), p. 95.
102 See also Terrell A. Northrup (n.d.), p.7.
103 Joan Acker (1989), p. 73.
104 See Nancy Fraser (1989), chapter 8.
105 See Carolyn Nordstrom (1992), p. 269.
106 Ibid., pp. 14-15 and see also E. Franklin Dukes (1996), p. 175.
107 See Nancy Fraser (1989), p. 164.
108 William R. Potapchuk, 'Governments' Responses to Human Needs', in op. cit., p. 276. (Emphasis added)
109 See John W. Burton (1987), p. 23.
110 Nancy Fraser (1989), p. 183.
111 See John W. Burton (1990). See also John W. Burton (1965), p. 147, John W. Burton (1987) and John W.
Burton (ed.) 1990. By contrast, Paul Sites explicitly discusses unequal distribution of power.
112 See also Christopher Mitchell, 'Necessitous Man and Conflict Resolution', in op. cit., pp. 154-155. See for
example John W. Burton (1988), p. 196.
113 See also Christopher Mitchell, 'Necessitous Man and Conflict Resolution', in op. cit., p. 154.
114 Ibid., p. 156.
115 Ibid.. See also Vamik Volkan (1985).
116 Christopher Mitchell, 'Necessitous Man and Conflict Resolution', in op. cit., p. 156.
117 Michel Foucault (1979), p. 1, cited in Nancy Fraser (1989), p. 161.
118 John W. Burton (1979), p. 81.
119 Ibid., p. 79.
120 See also Barbara Nelson and Najma Chowdhury (eds.) (1994) and Merilee Karl (1995).
121 Latest figures Human Development Index/Report 2000/1 and ILO reports
122 Donna Pankhurst on the 30/6/2000 at an international conference entitled 'Common Ground or Mutual
Exclusion? Women's Movements in International Relations' (29/6/-1/7/200) in Frankfurt/Germany.
123 WomenAction (2000), p. 42.
124 A. Betts Fetherston (1991), p. 255.
125 See ibid., p. 255.
126 Ibid.
127 See also Victoria Radler, 'Human Needs and the Modernization of Poverty', in John W. Burton (ed.) (1990),
pp. 232-233.

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