

Women's Perceptions of Gender and Power in Post-Conflict Timor-Leste:  
Opportunities for Transformative Education around Gender Roles

Alexandra Tamiko Da Dalt  
Teachers College, Columbia University

ABSTRACT

Women in Timor-Leste face a variety of obstacles to full political, social, and financial inclusion. The tension between government initiatives to protect women and the reality of lived experiences is apparent in the high intimate partner violence rate. Slightly less than two-fifths (38%) of women in Timor-Leste report experiencing physical domestic violence by the age of 15 and describe it as a “normal, and sometimes, a daily occurrence” (Timor-Leste National Statistics Directorate, 2010; UN Women, 2015). Though there is strong scholarship in the quantitative-based reporting and analysis of gender and women's rights in post-conflict Timor-Leste (Arunachalam, Boavida dos Santos, Niner, Tilman, & Wigglesworth, 2013; Mason, 2005; Niner 2011), there is a lack of space for Timorese women's voices to directly narrate how they see these issues affecting their lives and their futures. This qualitative study expands on previous findings and attempts to bring Timorese women's voices to the center of the current conversation around gender in Timor-Leste. Findings indicate that rigid post-conflict gender roles (Enloe, 2004) and a strong patriarchal tradition are obstacles to gender equity, despite the apparent numbers of women in Timor-Leste pushing forward and fighting for women's rights. Themes of competition between women, gender-based violence, access to reproductive health and rights, concerns about financial stability and access to education, and women's political representation emerged during the interview process. These trends indicate the possibility for a transformational feminist peace education/critical consciousness education (*conscientização*) program, structured around the needs and concerns of participants (Rich, 1995; hooks, 1984; Freire, 1970).

## Women's Perceptions of Gender and Power in Post-Conflict Timor-Leste: Opportunities for Transformative Education around Gender Roles

Women in the small Southeast Asian island nation of Timor-Leste face a disparity between governmental initiatives for equality and the reality of lived experiences, most notably made visible by high domestic violence rates (Arunachalam, dos Santos, Niner, Tilman, & Wigglesworth, 2013). Slightly less than two-fifths (38%) of women in Timor-Leste report experiencing physical domestic violence (DV) by the age of 15 and describe it as a “normal, and sometimes, a daily occurrence” (Timor-Leste National Statistics Directorate, 2010; UN Women, 2015). These numbers are also most likely low, as men in militarized post-conflict societies have been shown to frequently assert masculinity through control or violence, and DV tends to be under-reported because of the sensitive and personal nature of the issue (Dolan, 2002; WHO, 2001). There have been initiatives within the Timorese government to increase the number of women in National Parliament, as well as a law criminalizing domestic violence, but the lived reality for women and girls often differs from the goals of these projects (UN Women, 2015).

Timor-Leste achieved Independence in 2002, following Portuguese colonial rule and decades-long violent occupation by Indonesia. As one of the world's newest countries, Timor-Leste (often referred to by its former name, “East Timor”) has spent the past thirteen years establishing its place in the international community while grappling with the conflict in its past. The eruption of violence in September 1999 following the referendum vote for Independence resulted in over 1000 deaths, and the displacement of a large portion of the population. As in most violent conflicts, the effects also had a greater impact on particularly vulnerable portions of the population. Many women experienced sexual violence, abuse, and violence during the Indonesian occupation, and following Independence in 2002, the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR, Portuguese acronym) heard accounts from male Timorese survivors of detention and torture that indicated men were more violent following the conflict (CAVR, 2006; Mason, 2005). The events of the past have left an inescapable imprint on Timorese lives, and the road to recovery has been a particularly bumpy one for women. Economic, political, and social hardships in the recovery have fallen harder upon the more vulnerable members of the population, and the rigid gender roles and inequality in Timor-Leste affects the life chances and opportunities available to women.

### **Study Purpose**

This study's purpose is to amplify the voices of Timorese women in order to determine their needs and visions for the future of their country. Opening a safe and inclusive dialogue for women to speak their truth is a critical step towards a deeper feminist understanding of the possibilities for gender equity in Timor-Leste. Research has articulated the valuable knowledge and skills that women bring to post-conflict recovery processes (Sørensen, 1998; Lederach & Jenner, 2002), but has largely neglected to obtain in-depth, personal accounts of how women see themselves in this process and what change they want to be able to enact. Hilary Charlesworth's analysis of Timor-Leste's gender politics asserts that “peace-building in East Timor/Timor-Leste under international auspices did not give adequate attention to the involvement of [East] Timorese women and has produced very limited gains for them” (2008, p. 356). To date, previous scholarship on gender and agency in Timor-Leste and other post-conflict contexts has

focused on formal civic engagement and the important post-conflict peace building/reconstruction roles of women (El-Bushra, 2007; Niner, 2011; Schnabel & Tabyshalieva, 2012; Zelizer & Rubinstein, 2009). My research, using a critical theory/advocacy approach, with a strong feminist lens, seeks to ask women in Timor-Leste how they perceive themselves and their agency in a post-conflict context. The research will also examine their lived experiences, perspectives, and needs. These reflections will hopefully illuminate future possibilities for transformative educational initiatives to address the realities of gender inequality.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- How do women view themselves and their capacity to shape the future in an incredibly dynamic and ever-changing political, economic, and social context?
- What are the ways in which women feel they are most able to contribute existing knowledge and participate in conversations around gender?
- What do they believe are the challenges facing Timorese women, and what would help with these challenges from an educational perspective?

### **Literature Review**

Previous studies on gender in Timor-Leste examine the post-conflict roles of women in Timor-Leste, and argue that the events of the occupation and the subsequent conflict in 1999 that have pushed women into more traditional gender roles (Niner, 2011). Other studies have detailed women's gains in involvement in the democratic process (Wigglesworth, 2012; Wigglesworth, 2013), young women and Timorese civil society (Trembath & Grenfell, 2007; Wigglesworth, 2010), as well as attitudes around gender equity and gender-based violence (Hall, 2009; Taft, Powell, & Watson, 2015; Wigglesworth et al, 2015). These accounts portray the complex and precarious status of gender equity in Timor-Leste, as well as the efforts of civil society and individual feminist activists to make structural gains for women across the country (Ferguson, 2011). Slove et al. (2009), as well as Modvig (2000) chronicle the mental health issues that have arisen in the aftermath of the conflict, including “anger attacks” experienced by a large portion of the population. The primary groups suffering from these anger attacks are male veterans and young unemployed men living in urban areas.

Mason (2005) describes the role of women in the Timorese liberation moment, and in particular the sexual violence perpetrated against women. Rape and sexual assault was used as an interrogation technique, and also to “reward” Indonesian soldiers. Female survivors of sexual violence during the conflict also report being told the purpose of the assaults was to “breed more Indonesians into East Timor” (p. 744). However, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is not unique to Timor-Leste, and Maxwell (2009) chronicles how women often experience different types of violence than men during a conflict. In Yugoslavia and Rwanda, “strategic rape” of “enemy” women was considered a tactic to attack the honor of the community by armed forces. Maxwell also argues that misogyny exists within, and is perpetrated by, military forces around the world. Zawati (2014) advocates for greater accountability for sexual violence in

wartime, citing the recent Syrian crisis and the effects that systematic rape can have both on survivors but also on entire communities.

Following a conflict, Cynthia Enloe (2004) writes that “militarized masculinity” can develop from violence, further entrenching rigid and restrictive gender roles. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, women perceive causes of intimate partner violence to be linked with other challenges in their lives, such as financial dependence and rigid gender expectations (Horn, Puffer, Roesch, & Lehmann, 2014). The study also found that women believed conflict played a key role in normalizing violence for men as a way to respond to frustrations and challenges in their lives. Caprioli (2003) writes that gender inequity following a conflict is not simply an issue of social justice, but indicates a societal tolerance of violence that actually increases the likelihood of a future internal state conflict. Zuckerman & Greenberg (2004) argue that a long-term, sustainable peace requires a “more permanent transformation of social norms relating to violence, gender, & power” (p.79). This shift needs to address trauma, rebuild social capital and trust between communities, and value women's roles and contributions.

Feminist theory on the roles and rights of women in rigid patriarchies will be utilized to analyze the themes of the personal responses of interviewees. The study adopts Copelon's (1993) assessment of gender-based violence as torture, with its impacts being just as damaging as violence in institutions such as prisons or interrogation rooms. Though the work of Adrienne Rich and bell hooks primarily focuses on the American context, both examine the ways in which women are socialized to view other women as threats. This competitive and hostile orientation towards other women undermines the feminist value of solidarity through sisterhood and the ability to support others that are suffering through the effects of living in a patriarchal society, such as domestic and gender-based violence (Rich, 1995; hooks, 1986). “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” argues that women of the “Third World” have been largely overlooked and victimized in their portrayal by Western feminism, and argues that the categorization of women by their “victim” status is problematic (Mohanty, 1988). She pushes for feminist discourses centered in the politics of location, and historicized according to the geographic, political, and cultural context (Mohanty, 1995).

In addition to the previously conducted studies on gender in Timor-Leste and the incorporation of feminist theory, for the educational recommendations component of the paper, I will use Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and studies on previous Freirian literacy campaigns in Timor-Leste (Durnan, 2005; Fernandes, 2010). These texts will illuminate possibilities for a liberatory educational model centered around solidarity-building and consciousness education for Timorese women.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Overview of methodology**

In the present study, data was collected through a series of 15 interviews, all conducted in the capital city of Dili in July and August 2015. The city serves as a hub for many people from all 13 districts of the country, and I spoke with urban women of varying ages, socioeconomic class, ability/disability, and ethnic/language groups. All interviewees were over the age of 18. The study's interpreter was a young Timorese female law student from UNTL, the National

University of Timor-Leste. Her first language is Tetun, though she is fluent in English and Portuguese, and conversational in Indonesian.

Initially, the process for choosing subjects involved posting notices in various women's NGOs; however, after an initial trial, the research team determined that this approach would exclude illiterate women and women that were unable to leave their homes. The adjusted approach consisted of my translator and I approaching individuals in public spaces where women gather, and if she agreed to participate, we proceeded to conduct the interview in a safe, private space of her choosing. The interview process was gender- and conflict- sensitive, and was very open to ensure that the interviewee could narrate her experience and define peace and the critical issues as she conceived of them. Questions included a focus on broader issues for Timorese women, such as, "What do you think are the biggest challenges women face in their communities?", as well as personal questions about individual experiences, such as, "When thinking about the future, do you have any worries? What are those worries?", and "What would make your life more peaceful?" (please see Appendix for full research instrument). Personal questions were included as a potential entry point for women to speak about how key gender-related issues may or may not be playing out in their personal lives, and their thoughts and feelings on these concepts on the individual level.

Following the completion of all interviews, the interviews were transcribed. The researcher then used a dual coding system to identify key concepts and information, then consolidated the final list of codes and applied them to the transcripts a second time. The coding strategy was emergent, as codes were not pre-determined, but rather identified through the process according to the frequency and emphasis that the interviewees put on the topics they brought up. Following the final round of coding, codes were classified into overarching themes in preparation for interpreting the data.

### **Locations**

As previously mentioned, all interviews were conducted in Dili, and all but two women lived in Dili at the time of the interview. The two interviewees were visiting Dili at the time of their interviews for family and professional reasons, respectively (see Appendix A for maps).

### **Researcher Assumptions**

The study accounts for several assumptions in the way that interviewees will participate in the study, despite precautions crafted to try to ensure the comfort, safety, and trust of the participants. The first assumption is that all women will have personally experienced the Indonesian occupation and 1999 conflict and their effects (because of their age and the recentness of the events) in varying levels of intensity and impact, and will therefore experience certain degree of trepidation about sharing their experiences with a stranger who is not Timorese. Additionally, the project will assume that all respondents will have a complex and nuanced set of feelings about their gender identity and experience that will not be able to be fully expressed in one interview. Lastly, the study assumes that some interviewees may edit particularly sensitive information (i.e. personal experiences of gender-based sexual and physical abuse) out of their responses due to trauma and/or concerns about their safety.

**Researcher Perspectives**

As to my position as a researcher, I am currently a graduate student studying International Educational Development with a focus on Peace and Human Rights Education. I consider intersectional and transnational feminism to be the lenses through which I focus my studies and my work. I identify as an upper-middle class, English-speaking, biracial (Italian and Japanese) student. I was born, raised, and have always lived in large, diverse north American cities. My academic interests include gender and sexuality studies and environmental and sustainable development education. My coursework and professional experience includes multiple projects on gender and the ways in which women and girls navigate conflict and post-conflict settings. Prior to the time spent in Timor-Leste for this research project, I had never traveled to the country or the region. I do not speak Tetun and have no personal ties to the context.

**Issues of Trustworthiness**

As mentioned in the “research assumptions” section of the introduction, concerns about women's honesty and openness have been taken into account due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions and potential responses. The research team understands that some interviewee experiences may have been edited, changed, or omitted entirely by the respondents due to worries about safety, privacy, and unfamiliarity of the researcher and interpreter.

**Limitations**

Due to the scale of the study, the findings from these 15 interviews cannot be viewed as conclusive results to be projected onto the larger population of Timorese women. Although there was diversity in the identities of the women respondents, the study was conducted in the capital of Dili and did not include the voices of many women outside of the urban center. The divide between the quality of life between rural and urban women, particularly rural women who are not able to visit the capital city (as some of the interviewees profiled in the research) or communicate outside of their village/district is pronounced in Timor-Leste. Additionally, this study endeavored to examine the experiences of women as a self-identified category. However, due to the conservative nature of Timorese politics around gender and sexuality, gender fluid and transgender individuals are often not as visible in public spaces due to the threat of violence (ISEAN, 2014). All women who participated in this study are cisgender women.

**Analysis & Interpretation of Findings****Timorese Masculinity and Male Behavior**

Interviewees in this study overwhelmingly indicated the many complicated and nuanced aspects of being a woman in Timor-Leste. There was a reported pattern of male control and domination over women that manifested in different areas of their lives and the lives of other women. Situations and stories ranged from an individual man asserting his power to men as the dominant group that control policies and dominate narratives of the country's history. Interviewees shared information about their work and education, bodies and violence, as well as the power imbalance between men and women.

**Work and education**

The relationship between a woman's level of education and the degree of agency over her body

and reproductive choices is well-documented (Jejeebhoy, 1995). Higher education levels also correlate with employment, and therefore, financial independence, which interviewees articulated as a key part of women's empowerment. Of the interviewees that worked, the majority expressed that they were proud to be supporting their families, as well as contributing to the country and its economy. One woman exclaimed, "based on my experience before, I just stayed at home, and I think it wasn't good for me. After I went to work... I am happy because I can make decisions, because I do not depend on my husband."

However, there are obstacles that stand in the way of successful studies or employment. Many interviewees also related stories of men that influence or dictate women's choices or ability to study or work. While speaking about her family, one interviewee paused, and explained, "I am worried about my sister. She wants to study at the university, but the man, her partner, told her that she didn't need to study. That's why I'm worried about her." The interviewee explained that this man wants to marry her sister, though her sister has declined because she believes she is too young. Limiting a woman's education and opportunities to work and socialize outside of the relationship and family is a controlling and isolating behavior indicative of male investment in keeping female partners in line with restrictive gender roles.

Women that do manage to work outside the home often face consequences for investing in their careers. One interviewee explained the frustration of women's disproportionate responsibility for household labor: "we have the same level of education, opportunity for job, but when we go back to the home, women always do the housework. She wants her husband to help her, but it's just a dream. It's difficult in reality." The differing views that men and women can hold on gender and labor can also have more violent effects. A newspaper article titled "Husband Stabs Wife for Not Caring" in the English – Tetum publication *The Dili Weekly* details a recent domestic violence case:

The accused said in his statement to the court that he was angry at his wife for not showing any care for him and for always being busy. "When she gets home she does not care about dinner. She just has a wash then gets her laptop and keeps on working"... The accused said this happened often and that he hurt her to get her attention. (Oliveira, 2015b)

As cited in the interviews, a lack of financial independence and a network outside of family places women in a vulnerable position. One interviewee who works with female survivors of domestic and sexual violence told researchers, "if the women has a job, it's good, but if the women doesn't have a job, it is very difficult. Every day, if she always fights with the husband, she can think she doesn't have dignity, and it's better that she dies than live with the violence." Even if a woman succeeds in leaving her husband, despite financial and often religious obstacles to doing so, it is well-documented that female-headed households are much poorer and vulnerable than their male-headed or two-parent equivalents (Niner, 2011, p. 420).

**"My husband does not want me to work"**

The research team met this interviewee in a low-income neighborhood of Dili near the Comoro River. Her home was constructed of tin siding and cinder blocks, and seemed to have one main room and then two smaller rooms on the inside (we did not enter, as it was her preference to

conduct the interview in the backyard of her home). The immaculately well-kept front yard was swept clean, with beautiful pink flowers on each side of the door. While we sat on the on bench and plastic chairs behind the house, we could hear her children playing with a female family member that was tending to them inside. As an answer to one of the first questions (*Do you work? If so, what is your job?*), the interviewee explained:

My husband does not want me to work. Because if I went to a job, who would take care of the children? Yes, I would like to work. When I was single, I had a job. I was a journalist... and [later worked] with an NGO.

Over the course of the interview, she expressed her concerns about her family's financial situation, and the possibility that money could become a problem in her marriage. She also told us that her older brother makes most of the decisions in the extended family, even for her and her husband. She says she “can't be involved” in decision-making unless her “brother doesn't know” the answer to a problem.

At the end of the interview, she cried as she told us about her husband barring her from employment:

“I am sad, because before I married my husband, I had a job, then after, I was pregnant, and I stopped working. After I gave birth to the baby, after 2 or 3 months, the baby passed away. After my baby passed away, I wanted to work again. I had lots of experience, but my husband didn't let me. Sometimes, the NGO comes to my house, but my husband doesn't want me to work with them. The priest from the Catholic school, he came to call me to teach the children, but my husband doesn't want that. I feel stressed with my husband, I have had a conversation with my husband, asking, but he still said no. I sit and feel stressed, and... I always think about it. I really makes me feel sad, and it really hurts me.”

This woman's lack of freedom to make decisions about her life, particularly following the tragedy of the death of her child, is indicative of the intersection of male dominance and the continued need for better reproductive, maternal, and infant healthcare in Timor-Leste (Rede Feto, 2015).

Additionally, interviewees overwhelmingly mentioned abandonment, or *laen soe*, a term in Timor-Leste that refers to a husband leaving a female partner and any children they may have together. Though the term *laen soe* refers to a husband leaving his wife, abandonment is an issue for unmarried women as well. Interviewees indicated this is a very common and complicated issue that leaves many women in a vulnerable financial position.

### **Female bodies and violence**

Many interviewees explained that Timorese women did not have the option to make educated decisions about, or to seek out reliable and safe services for, their reproductive health. Several women explained the issue of the abandonment of babies born to unwed young women. According to interviewees, the mothers are usually in secondary school, and dispose of the babies in garbage cans or waste sites. There have been 5 cases of abandoned babies in Dili between 2012 – 2015, the latest of which was the discovery of a newborn wrapped in a plastic bag and thrown inside a garbage container. Following this incident, Member of the National Parliament, MP Albina Marcal, was quoted as saying “the infanticide cases shame and affect all women in Timor,” and she additionally “called on the government to keep raising awareness so

that women become stronger and don't resort to abandoning their newborns" (Oliveira, 2015a). The problematic framing of personal "strength" as the solution to this issue, rather than the systematic lack of resources for women trying to prevent or cope with an unwanted pregnancy, is indicative of the state of women's rights over their own bodies in the country. One interviewee described the nature of reproductive rights:

Sometimes women don't know how to make decisions about children, or reproducing... the decision is affected by power and gender. [It is] difficult for them to make decisions. For example, some women, they don't have a plan to make babies, because they only do what their husbands want. If their husbands want to make a baby, they just do what he wants. They don't make decisions for themselves. And sometimes, some women want to get some information about family planning, but their husbands don't allow them.

Multiple women also spoke about unwanted pregnancies being an issue and, as previously mentioned, a catalyst for domestic violence. One woman that had moved to from a small village to Dili in order to attend university explained:

In my community, we have a problem with domestic violence. The woman is pregnant, but the man, he doesn't want to be the father of the baby. It means he doesn't want the responsibility. It is a reason for domestic violence, unwanted pregnancies.

There was evidence of loving and equal partnerships and strong models of positive masculinity in the interviews. One woman that had been married to her husband for over 25 years told the research team, "I live in peace because my husband and I always listen to each other speak when we have a problem at home." However, many more women mentioned personal or anecdotal stories of women in their lives that faced emotional, physical, sexual abuse, and/or patterns of manipulative or controlling behavior (for instance, "abandonment" of wives and children, which interviewees often articulated as a fluctuating decision that rested on the "best option" for the man at any given moment). A study by Wigglesworth et al. (2015) on young Timorese men's attitudes around gender found that 61% of men aged 22 -24 agreed with the statement "women should tolerate violence to keep the family together," and 60% of men from all age groups surveyed (ages 15 – 24) believed "if a husband does not hurt her [his wife] too much, it is okay to slap or push her" (p. 323). Marriage seems to increase women's vulnerability to gender-based violence, most likely due to the gendered nature of relationship dynamics. Women are socialized to pride themselves on the ability to sustain relationships, and quietly suffering through hardships for the good of a marriage or the family is often framed as a "woman's duty" (Copelon, 1993, p. 347). In contrast to the national average of 38% of all women, 53% of divorced, separated or widowed women and 42% of women who were married or living with their partner reported experiencing physical violence (National Statistics Directorate, 2010). A study by Taft, Powell, & Watson found that women who had experienced either physical or combined forms of violence were three to four times more likely to have an STI or its symptoms (2015, p. 178).

One interviewee said, "... if we are talking about gender equity, the most unfair is domestic violence. Because everywhere, always, men are powerful." The Timorese context is complicated by historical events and cultural norms that have established and perpetuated patterns of gender-based and domestic violence. The country's time as a Portuguese colony and the following Indonesian occupation saw the implementation of rigid gender roles and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Following the conflict in 1999, as argued by Sara Niner, Timorese

society is still shaped by men that have been engaged in war for most of their lives, and have suffered the dire and damaging consequences that accompany such a conflict, which has led to a society “heavily influenced by military thinking and behaviors” (2011, p. 429). Cynthia Enloe (2004) describes that, in a post-conflict context such as Timor-Leste, “persistent militarization in a postwar society serves to re-entrench the privileging of masculinity – in both public and private life” (Enloe, 2004, p. 218). Although Timorese women also fought and suffered through disturbing acts of war (to be discussed in the following section), violence and war continues to be the norm for men, and therefore the society they control. Multiple interviewees mentioned “martial arts gangs,” groups of young men that publicly fight, drink, and commit acts of vandalism and intimidation. One woman said that they rode around her neighborhood on motorbikes, and whipped rocks onto the tin roofing of many houses. She said it “scared and traumatized” her and her children. Silove et al. (2009) studied “explosive anger attacks” that 38% of the population experience at least once a month due to the trauma of the Indonesian conflict, with the two main groups identified being male veterans and young unemployed men living in urban areas.

Post-Independence, the Timorese government passed the Law Against Domestic Violence in 2010. The law dictates that victims of domestic violence are eligible to receive rehabilitative services, including shelter access, legal representation, medical and psychological assistance, and emergency maintenance provisions. Police officers must investigate domestic violence cases, submit the case details to the legal system, and keep them informed of the case status (Ferguson 2011). However, there is a notable disconnect between the introduction of this law and its implementation around the country. A woman visiting Dili from a rural area of a distant district explained, “In my district, many women are victims of domestic violence. When they go to justice or the police there is no solution from the police, they don't want to resolve or investigate. They are not interested in women's problems.”

### **On power**

When asked what is the biggest challenge facing women in Timor-Leste, one young interviewee explained:

People always put women in a second position, and women don't have the same opportunities as men. We know that always men have the opportunity to organize something, even though women should too. Women should also have the same rights as men-- the right to express their opinion.

Currently, 38% of Timor-Leste's National Parliament is made up of women, though President of Timor-Leste's Parliamentary Women Group, MP Josefa Alvares Pereira Soares, said it often is “a long process” for women “to gain trust from the government and parliament to assume positions of responsibility” (Quintao, 2015b). The push towards deeper, more meaningful representation is an ongoing process that may take much more time, and civil society organizations are focusing efforts on preparing women to run in upcoming *sucos* elections (village-level elections), where men hold 98% of the chief positions (UN Women, 2014, p. 88).

The Timorese Resistance against Indonesian occupation is valorized in the country today, and many of the male leaders of the movement went on to become Presidents and influential

members of the government. However, though many women struggled, fought, and died in the battle for Timorese Independence, there is a systematic lack of recognition of women's contributions, and the narratives around their involvement usually hinge on their status as passive victims (Niner, 2011). The gendered nature of the conflict can still be found today in its aftermath. Two interviewees shared their experiences trying to unsuccessfully receive the government's benefits for the children of veterans that died in the conflict. One woman said her brother received the benefits and recognition, but that she had trouble because of her gender. Additionally, the violence women experienced during this conflict is not often spoken about, since the rape or sexual abuse of Timorese women at the hands of the Indonesian military or their militias is seen as shameful and generally is not spoken of (Hall, 2009; Niner, 2011; Silove et al., 2009). Overall, interviewees responded that they believed the government should actively protect women's rights, and ensure that law enforcement and the justice system treats women's concerns as equal and just as pressing of those as Timorese men.

### **“Some Women”: Timorese Women and Horizontal Hostility**

There was an overwhelming emphasis on competition between women in interviews, whether mentioned by name as a phenomenon or directly invoked through criticism of other women and their choices. This hostility was present in multiple interviews, particularly with younger respondents, in phrases such as “women not respecting themselves,” “women don't want to work hard or help themselves,” or “women are focused on the wrong things.” One interviewee explained:

Some women, they sometimes can't think about their life or decisions. Because some women, they influence some other women in bad ways, not good ways. But I have courage, I just pray and use my conscience to think and think, so that I can't go the bad way or fall into temptation... Some women hide their real attitude. They are bad, but when they come with us, they hide it. But most men, they think the same about the rest of us girls, they think we are the same as her, *bikan tinan kiik* [bitches]... they wear short clothes, where they go, with men, [to] bars and clubs. Just... because, here, some women have 2 or 3... or 10 boyfriends.

The phrase “some women” began multiple statements about female behavior and subsequent judgements or commentary about other women's choices. Criticisms of “some women” in interviews spanned a variety of topics, including dress, socializing with men, sexual behavior, the decision to work, how other women raised their children, how they behaved in a professional environment, among others. This pervasive attitude of hostility towards other women is not unique to the Timorese context, and is a socialized effect of women living in a patriarchal environment where women are systematically taught to view each other as the enemy. In the essay “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women,” American feminist scholar bell hooks writes:

Between women, male supremacist values are expressed through suspicious, defensive, competitive behavior. It is sexism that leads women to feel threatened by one another without cause. Sexism teaches women woman-hating, and both consciously and unconsciously we act out this hatred in our daily contact with each other. (1987, p. 129)

Though bell hooks is an American feminist whose work primarily focuses on the intersections of

sexism, racism, and classism within the U.S. context, her writing on the way women are threatened by each other is echoed in interviewees' responses. The idea that women hide their innate "badness," and, as a consequence, men then believe damaging things about other women, implies that a number of women are to blame for men's inappropriate and/or abusive behavior towards all women. The suggestion that "some women" can "have 2 or 3... or 10 boyfriends" is indicative of an androcentric, shame-based approach to women's sexuality. A number of interviewees revealed that male politicians and other older, married men in positions of power frequently had sexual relations with young women. The same interviewee did not criticize the older, married men for pursuing girls in secondary school, but rather blamed the young women and the men's wives. She explained, "some women, they are teenagers and they go with other girls to find other people's husbands, *astuka* [rich married men, "sugar daddies"]... then wives go and physically fight, punch and fight, and use bad words against the girls."

Feminist scholar Adrienne Rich uses the term "horizontal hostility" to describe the "contempt" and "fear and mistrust" of other women as normalized in sexist contexts. She describes the phenomenon as a way that women "destroy ourselves," as "other women *are* ourselves," and the sense that "we become our own worst enemies when we allow our inculcated self-hatred to turn such shallow projections on each other" (1995, p. 122). These projections, in interviews, did seem to be shallow and full of contradictions – the majority of the hostility towards other women was peppered among hopes for a brighter future for Timorese women. Many of the women that criticized other women's choices also wanted to be more involved in promoting women's rights, indicating a disconnect between the way they think about women as a broader social category and the way they view and treat individual women in their lives.

#### **"Here, it's between women and women"**

The research team met the youngest interviewee in the Pantai Kelapa area of Dili. Located behind the beach road Avenida de Portugal, this is a very modest part of the neighborhood, with thin roads and limited formal housing. A group of women were cleaning and partitioning *kanko/kang kong* (water spinach) into small bundles as we approached them. This was the interviewee's family working to prepare the vegetables they sell. Once the interviewee agreed to participate, she led us into her home. The building had one main room with no furniture and a television, and five doors off of this main room. Some of the doors were painted, one with death metal symbols and a "keep out!" sign (her teenage brother's room). The interviewee led us into her room, which had a bed covered in a mosquito net, as dengue fever and other mosquito-borne illnesses are endemic in Dili. Her schoolbooks rested on top of the sheets. She sat in a small chair while the research team leaned against the footboard of the bed. Her most pressing concerns, not uncommon among teenage girls around the world, was the possibility of not financing and finishing her secondary education, as well as growing apart from a friend. She explained that her family sold the *kanko* vegetable, and that she had to help them with this business in addition to attending school so that they would have enough money to eat. In terms of gender, it seemed that she was either hesitant or uninterested in the questions we asked about the subject. The interviewee denied that women faced inequality and challenges (with italics to indicate the researcher's voice):

*What do you think are the biggest challenges women face in their communities?*

None.

*There's nothing in your life that you think wouldn't be different if you were a boy?*

Nothing (pauses). Here, it's between women and women. Gossip. Not domestic violence between men and women... It's not about domestic violence. About the styles. Some women here, they go to discotheques... they wear short pants. It isn't good for people, it's not a good example for other women. They don't care about themselves or their body. They want to show off.

She explained that the leader of the area, voted into his position, “calls them [the women that behave improperly], and [they] sit together, and motivates the women and tells them not to behave that way.” However, despite her uncertainty and demonstration of horizontal hostility in the interview, she answered that she would like to be more involved in promoting women's rights in Timor-Leste, but she was unsure of how to do so.

In interviews, the concept of competition between women did not align along class or ethnic lines. It seemed that younger interviewees were more likely to demonstrate women-hating behavior, whereas older interviewees more often recognized the issue and articulated that it was a problem. However, in experiences related by interviewees, it seemed that older women of all ages had just as many horizontally hostile behavior as their younger counterparts. For example, one young woman explained the way that old women (*tia*) spoke about them:

Sometimes, when teenagers want to hang out, they're not bad women, they're good women, but *tia* always want to make up gossip about those teenagers. When they are sitting together, if there are no more stories to tell, they make up stories about young women and girls... We, as teenagers, we are the future, so we have to tell those *tia*, tell them to not say those things. And we have to just ignore those *tia* in our lives.

Many middle-aged working women articulated that competition and jealousy between women in the workplace was very common, and often had serious effects on how businesses and offices functioned for women. One interviewee who worked in a government agency explained:

Many women don't have a job, some have but some do not, and that's [one reason] why they are jealous of each other. In my office, some women work hard, but some don't. Some women that work in my office, they are fancy... then they are jealous of each other.

There appears to be conflicts over whether women are employed or not, how hard women are perceived to work, as well as clothing choices in the office. In addition, it seems that many female business owners believe a masculine model of leadership and intense competition is necessary for financial success. The *tais* business of weaving and selling traditional Timorese textiles is primarily operated by women. Two interviewees own businesses where they weave *tais* from their own districts, trade *tais* from other districts, and sell to both Timorese and *malae* (foreigners). One of these interviewees explained:

Some women don't want me to live better, they have “social jealousy” because my husband is not here [living and working abroad], but I still have the courage to continue my business. Other people tried to stop me through bad words and tried to bring me down. Finally, because of this, I had to close my business, but asked for some bank credit, then I opened again.

A few interviewees claimed that women are very critical of female parliamentarians and

politicians. This lack of support of a female candidate because of their gender hampers the representation of women in positions of power. One interviewee said:

The victims in Timor-Leste, I think big egos are more dominant. And always, if we have a big event or elections, some dominant women don't support each other. If there is a woman candidate, for the President or Parliamentary candidate, sometimes the women don't support other women to get good positions.

The dominant theme of competition between women was clear throughout the interview process. As articulated by one interviewee, horizontal hostility between women is a major detriment to achieving gender equity in Timor-Leste:

There is not any support for women. There is competition between women. In style, working position, and/or education. Sometimes women, if one woman has a good skill, sometimes the other women don't like that. There is a lot of competition. Very bad attitude. It is a challenge to increase women's participation, women's skills, this should be in all sectors. Because they do not support each other.

In the struggle for women's rights in Timor-Leste, it is critical to address both oppression by men, the dominant group, but also to tackle internalized oppression that women enact on each other. Women and their relationships should be viewed as an essential resource in fighting sexism and empowering women to reach full social, economic, and political inclusion.

### **Implications for a Peace Education Program**

#### **"I have a lot of stories. I want to tell a story...."**

The experiences shared by interviewees provide rich and nuanced insight into how a small group of women in Timor-Leste perceive pressing issues related to gender in the country, as well as how they see themselves and other women. In addition, how these stories were told, as well as what remained unspoken, remains as important as the experiences related to the research team. Interviewees expressed or displayed a variety of emotional reactions to participating in the interview process, ranging from nervousness to excitement. At the end of one interview, the respondent apologized, "I don't have anything else to say. I want to say sorry if something I said doesn't match with the questions." Several women remained silent or replied "I don't know" to questions about their personal lives, such as "*What would make your life more peaceful?*". However, there was also a good deal of excitement to share stories and experiences. When one woman was asked if she had anything else to add at the end of the interview, she replied, "I have a lot of stories. I want to tell a story...." and shared several cases of abandonment and verbal abuse that women in her life had experienced. A number of interviews went far over the allotted 45 minutes, with interviewees sharing much more than the interview protocol asked for. Both silences and the excitement to speak could indicate a lack of safe spaces to share experiences and have them be heard and responded to in a way that validates their significance.

With the recognition that there are a variety of interventions that need to take place in order to realize gender equality in Timor-Leste, I propose a locally-generated peace education program for Timorese women to share their experiences with each other and to build solidarity. Brazilian educational scholar Paulo Freire (1970) introduced the concept of *conscientização*, or

consciousness-raising education, as a process in which students become aware and reflect on their reality. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* addressed the effects of class-based oppression on poor and illiterate communities in Brazil, and identified self-deprecation and horizontal hostility towards people of the same identity group as symptoms of this condition. Freire advocated for dialogue and a journey of reflection and identification of oppressive societal forces in order to liberate people from internalized oppression. This program would use Freirian pedagogy to create alliances between women that may have shared the same experiences, or to create linkages with other women that experience gender in a different way. Through dialogue and reflection, there is the possibility for transformative experiences that will allow women to see the circumstances surrounding them more clearly, and to support and find support in other women (Pheterson, 1986).

This model of education was used in Timor-Leste by the FRETILIN leftist resistance movement in 1975 for a literacy campaign “to mobilize people to struggle for independence,” and has seen a resurgence in the country in recent years to address illiteracy once more (Durnan, 2005; Fernandes, 2010). However, the model need not be relegated to use for literacy education--dialogue about key issues affecting day-to-day life could be the first step in mobilizing a group to think differently about itself and its power. This process allows for marginalized voices to narrate their subjectivities and reclaim power in the way they see themselves in their context (Foucault, 1980).

There has been some pushback in Timor-Leste around feminist ideas, as opponents aim to paint discourse around gender equity as a foreign import (Niner, 2011). However, this is far from the truth, as Timorese feminists have been working long before international norms of gender power were introduced into the country. Within the structure of a rich civil society, many dedicated Timorese feminists have won many victories for the women of the country, including access to healthcare, education, the establishment of International Women's Day in Timor-Leste, and disrupting norms around domestic violence (Durnan, 2005; Hall, 2009; Trembath & Grenfell, 2007; Wigglesworth, 2010). The *Rede Feto* network of women's organizations serves as an umbrella for efforts around gender empowerment to be synergized and information to be shared. One of these organizations, *Movimentu Feto Foinsa'e* (Young Women's Movement), is committed to creating “friendly spaces” for women, and the coordinator of the program spoke to the importance of this program, explaining “many young women commit suicide because they have nowhere they can turn to support” (Quintao, 2015a). There is clearly a strong network of passionate women's rights activists that have made enormous gains in the country; this proposal seeks to build on this impressive work and provide suggestions for more locally-driven initiatives for women's empowerment.

**“It is a challenge for women to live with their rights”**

At a gathering of women's organizations for an intergroup meeting, I met a woman that worked for a prominent gender rights organization in Timor-Leste and asked if she might be available for an interview. She said that she did not want to participate, but referred us to her coworker, a woman that had been working with the same women's organization for years. We spoke in an outdoor meeting space the following week, where she sat across a picnic table covered in colorful *tais*. When asked what brought her happiness in her life, the interviewee replied:

In our life, we have sadness and happiness. When I want to live in happiness, before that, I have to know how to live in the sadness, because through the sadness it brings us the awareness, and it will teach us how to be wise people.

She then proceeded to tell the story of her life and career. She and her Indonesian husband had committed to each other through the traditional *barlake* ceremony before Independence, but separated in 1999:

My husband was in the Indonesian military. Because we had different ideas, that's why he chose to leave Timor and live in Indonesia, and I chose to live in Suai with my children and my sister... It was difficult for me to make decisions in the moment of the conflict, because I had to decide, do I want to go with my family or my husband. And I was pregnant, so it was difficult for me.

She explained that she has not seen him since, but that he speaks to her and the children on the phone. Since 1999, she has adopted another child, a boy, in addition to her three daughters. She was an agricultural worker and farmed corn and rice on a hectare of land singlehandedly, including while pregnant, then participated in an Oxfam program that paid her to develop her professional skills. She said, "I was excited because the payment was more than my husband's pay! I was proud of myself." Over time, she learned Tetum (she had previously only spoken a dialect of the Bobonaro district and Indonesian), and now is employed as a coordinator to educate women about their rights. She travels through rural areas of the country and lives in Suai, a city in the Cova Lima district. When asked what obstacles to equality women face, she said "access to information" was a huge issue in reaching women, particularly women in rural, isolated areas of the country:

It is a challenge for women to live with their rights. To show or promote their rights. It is an obstacle for women, a struggle for their rights. There is a difference between women in Dili and in rural areas, because in rural areas, some women, even though they have already done their university, it is difficult for them to make decisions.

She said she believes education for women in Timor-Leste will help them understand and realize their rights. Lastly, when asked about her hopes for the future, she told us:

I hope that in one day, because I know agriculture, I want to plant in Suai, and I want to create a main organization to teach people, children, how to take care of and prepare their environment. I already have land. It is difficult for me, because I want to realize it, but I worry that if one day, I will not be here.

### **Building Solitary Through a Feminist Consciousness**

This intervention would differ from existing initiatives in involving a diverse group of women to share their truths in a supportive setting with the aim of dialogue and self-discovery without dictating the material or content to be taught. As theorized by bell hooks:

"before we can resist male domination, we must break our attachment to sexism; we must work to transform female consciousness. Working together to expose, examine, and eliminate sexist socialization within ourselves, women would strengthen and affirm one another and build a solid foundation for developing political solidarity. (1986, p. 129)

It appears that women are willing and eager to share experiences and support with others. In interviews, women were interested in helping others realize their full potential. One woman explained, "In my neighborhood, if girls just stay at home, I will ask why. So I maybe support

them by encouraging them to sometimes participate or attend some courses for their future... not just give up because they are women.” Eleven women said that they would like to help further women's rights in the future, though of those women, many explained they did not know how to do so. In interviews, there were also notable differences between the attitudes of younger women vs. older women, rather than between women of different class status or ethnic/language group. This indicates that there would be value in sharing different experiences across identities, and bonding could take place between women that face disparate challenges in their experiences as women.

A peace education program that aims to address the systematic oppression of women in Timor-Leste would also be locally based and run by Timorese women. The specific Timorese context and history is a key piece of understanding the current state of gender equity in the country. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, transnational and postcolonial feminist scholar, writes:

“the experience of the self, which is often discontinuous and fragmented, must be historicized before it can be generalized into a collective vision. In other words, experience must be historically interpreted and theorized if it is to become the basis of feminist solidarity and struggle, and it is at this moment that an understanding of the politics of location proves crucial.” (1988, p. 82)

The shared recognition and experience of the past is necessary. Therefore, this program should also be crafted with the recognition that Western forms of feminism cannot address the experiences of all women around the world (Mohanty 1995). Mohanty also writes, “male violence must be theorized and interpreted within specific societies, in order to understand it better, as well as in order to effectively organize to challenge it” (p. 339). Non-Timorese women or actors should not be dictating the dialogue nor solidarity-building processes for the women in these safe, collaborative spaces, as the collaborative discovery of priorities and validation of experiences is key. Interviews also provided unique insights into drivers behind domestic violence and other important issues in different locations around the country, indicating that assumptive or generalized content that does not address the specificity of location would miss critical opportunities for action. The dialogue process and space in which to interact with other women in an uncompetitive environment with the goal of developing solidarity could establish bonds over strengths and experiences. Freirian *conscientização* education could create spaces conducive to achieving the bond of sisterhood that bell hooks imagines:

Women who are exploited and oppressed daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control, however relative, over their lives. They cannot afford to see themselves solely as 'victims' because their survival depends on continued exercise of whatever personal powers they possess. It would be psychologically demoralizing for these women to bond with other women on the basis of shared victimization. They bond with other women on the basis of shared strengths and resources. This is the women-bonding the feminist movement should encourage. It is this type of bonding that is the essence of Sisterhood (1986, p. 128).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Placing Timorese women's voices at the center of this study is an effort to shift the way in which issues of gender in Timor-Leste have been discussed. This study prioritizes and shares the

experiences and perspectives of the women in Timor-Leste in order to hear their views on gender, agency, and power. A main theme that emerged from the interviews was women's competition and hostility towards other women. The lack of support and solidarity between women, accompanied by the suspicion of other women's behaviors and motives, is indicative of the male-dominated nature of Timorese society and the rigidity of gender roles in the country. Women criticized others on their dress, socializing with men, sexual behavior, the decision to work, how other women raised their children, as well as how they behaved in a professional environment. Another key theme was control by men over different areas of women's lives, including work and education, violence and female bodies, and power. Women reported decisions made on their behalf, or a silencing of their voices, by either individual men in their lives, or by a system and society that privileges male power.

While recognizing the commonality of struggles with women around the world, this study emphasizes the specificity of the Timorese context and the need for locally-based, community-generated dialogue on key issues determined by Timorese women. Interviewees in this study overwhelmingly displayed generosity and trust in sharing their stories and experiences, and provide a nuanced and personal perspective on many of the issues affecting their lives. These results indicate that a transformative peace education program, grounded in a Freirian dialogue, could build solidarity and support between women and provide a structured safe space to address societal gender inequality, the two main themes that were touched upon most often in interviews. Such an initiative would also be locally based and run by Timorese women, in order to ensure that the space reflects the context and needs of the participating women. An intervention that refrains from prescriptive approaches to gender equity and instead places the power in the hands of affected women has the potential to develop sustainable change around gender roles in Timor-Leste.

Possible directions for future studies include incorporating more voices in a larger and more expansive study, such as addressing the divide between rural and urban Timorese women. Interviews and other studies have indicated that women living in isolated rural *sucos* face distinct challenges in accessing services and obtaining information (Wigglesworth, 2012). Additionally, since a significant amount of the Timorese population is young, with over 40% of the population under the age of 15 (UN Women, 2014, p. 2), it would be interesting to examine how young women and girls under the age of 18 see themselves and gender in the future of Timor-Leste.

## References

- Alldén, S. (2007). Internalising the Culture of Human Rights: Securing Women's Rights in Post-conflict East Timor. *Asia-Pacific Journal On Human Rights & The Law*, 8(1), 1-23. doi:10.1163/157181507782200240
- Caprioli, M. (2003). *Gender Equality and Civil Wars*. Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, Social Development Department, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network, World Bank.
- CAVR (Commission for Truth, Reception, and Reconciliation). 2006. 'Final Report 'Chenga!.' Available at <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/en/chegaReport.htm> (accessed July 2015).
- Charlesworth, H. (2008). Are women peaceful? reflections on the role of women in peacebuilding. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 16(3), 347-361. doi:10.1007/s10691-008-9101-6
- Copelon, R. (1993). Recognizing the egregious in the everyday: Domestic violence as torture. *Colum. Hum. Rts. L. Rev.*, 25, 291.
- Durnan, D. (2005). Popular education and peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. *Development Bulletin*, 68, 108.
- El-Bushra, J. (2007). Feminism, gender, and women's peace activism. *Development and Change*, 38(1), 131-147.
- Enloe, C. H. (2004). *The curious feminist: Searching for women in a new age of empire*. Univ of California Press.
- Ferguson, P. (2011). Progress in legislating domestic violence and gender based violence in Timor-Leste. *Malaysia Journal of Society and Space*, 7, 53-64.
- Fernandes, Z. (2010). The significance of using the Cuban method in Literacy Learning. *Hatene kona ba Compreender Understanding Mengerti*, 278.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Hall, N. (2009). East Timorese women challenge domestic violence. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 44(2), 309-325.
- hooks, b. (1986). Sisterhood: Political solidarity between women. *Feminist review*, 125-138.
- Horn, R., Puffer, E. S., Roesch, E., & Lehmann, H. (2014). Women's perceptions of effects of war on intimate partner violence and gender roles in two post-conflict West African Countries: consequences and unexpected opportunities. *Conflict and health*, 8(1), 12.
- ISEAN. (2014). *Being transgender in Timor-Leste*. Jakarta: Romaity.
- Jejeebhoy, S. J. (1995). *Women's education, autonomy, and reproductive behaviour: Experience from developing countries*. OUP Catalogue.
- Mason, C. (2005). Women, violence and nonviolent resistance in East Timor. *Journal of Peace Research*, 42(6), 737-749.
- Maxwell, C. (2009). Moving Beyond Rape as a "Weapon of War": An Exploration of Militarized Masculinity and its Consequences. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 28(1), 108.
- Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview on transformative learning. *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts*, 24-38.
- Modvig, J., Pagaduan-Lopez, J., Rodenburg, J., Salud, C. M. D., Cabigon, R. V., & Panelo, C. I.

- A. (2000). Torture and trauma in post-conflict East Timor. *The Lancet*, 356(9243), 1763.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1995). Feminist encounters: locating the politics of experience. *Social postmodernism: Beyond identity politics*, 68-86.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1988). Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Feminist review*, 61-88.
- Niner, S. (2011). Hakat klot, narrow steps: negotiating gender in post-conflict Timor-Leste. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13(3), 413.  
doi:10.1080/14616742.2011.587371
- Oliveira, V. (2015a, June 29). CIS Investigates another Case of Infanticide. *The Dili Weekly*, pp. 9.
- Oliveira, V. (2015b, June 29). FB stabs MB for not caring. *The Dili Weekly*, pp. 9.
- Pheterson, G. (1986). Alliances between women: Overcoming internalized oppression and internalized domination. *Signs*, 146-160.
- Quintao, P. (2015a, June 8). Friendly centres are important for young women. *The Dili Weekly*, pp. 8.
- Quintao, P. (2015b, June 8). Women continue lacking a voice in decision making in Timor-Leste. *The Dili Weekly*, pp. 1.
- Rede Feto, *NGO Shadow Report: Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Timor-Leste*. (Dili: Rede Feto), available from [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Share%20Documents/TLS/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_TLS\\_21963\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Share%20Documents/TLS/INT_CEDAW_NGO_TLS_21963_E.pdf)
- Rich, A. (1995). On lies, secrets, and silence: Selected prose 1966-1978. WW Norton & Company.
- Schnabel, A. & Tabyshalieva, A. (2012). *Defying victimhood: Women and post-conflict peacebuilding*. New York: United Nations University Press.
- Silove, D., Brooks, R., Steel, C. R. B., Steel, Z., Hewage, K., Rodger, J., & Soosay, I. (2009). Explosive anger as a response to human rights violations in post-conflict Timor-Leste. *Social Science & Medicine*, 69(5), 670-677.
- Sørensen, B. R. (1998). *Women and post-conflict reconstruction: Issues and sources (No. 3)*. DIANE Publishing.
- Taft, A. J., Powell, R. L., & Watson, L. F. (2015). The impact of violence against women on reproductive health and child mortality in Timor-Leste. *Australian and New Zealand journal of public health*, 39(2), 177-181.
- Timor-Leste National Statistics Directorate/Ministry of Finance, *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009-10* (Dili: ICF Macro), available from <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR235/FR235.pdf>
- Trembath, A., & Grenfell, D. (2007). Mapping the pursuit of gender equality. Globalism Institute, RMIT University.
- UN Security Council, *resolution 1325, S/RES/1325* (31 October 2000), retrieved from [dny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement](http://dny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement).
- UN Women, *Timor-Leste Country Gender Assessment 2014* (Manila: Asian Development Bank), available from <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional->

- document/84126/timor-leste-country-gender-assessment.pdf
- Wigglesworth, A. (2013). Community leadership and gender equality: Experiences of representation in local governance in Timor-Leste. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 5(4), 567-584. doi:10.1111/aspp.12067
- Wigglesworth, A. (2012). Dreaming of a Different Life: Steps Towards Democracy and Equality in Timor-Leste. *Journal of American Portuguese Studies Association*, 10.
- Wigglesworth, A. (2010). Young Women and gender dimensions of change in Timorese civil society. *Hatene kona ba Compreender Understanding Mengerti*, 242.
- Wigglesworth, A.; Niner, S.; Arunachalam, Dharmalingam; dos Santos, Abel Boavida; and Tilman, Mateus (2015). Attitudes and Perceptions of Young Men towards Gender Equality and Violence in Timor-Leste. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 16(2), 312-329. Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol16/iss2/20>
- Wandita, G.; Campbell-Nelson, K.; Leong Pereira, M. (2006). Learning to engender reparations in Timor-Leste: reaching out to female victims. Ruth Rubio-Marín (Ed.), *What Happened to the Women?: Gender and Reparations for Human Rights Violations* (284-334). New York, NY: Social Science Research Council.
- WHO, Department of Gender and Women's Health. (2001). *Putting women first: ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women*. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/gender/violence/womenfirtseng.pdf>
- Zawati, H. M. (2014). 'Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War in the Ongoing Syrian Conflict: Testimony of Hilmi M. Zawati Before the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development of the House of Commons, the Parliament of Canada, Ottawa. *Zawati Before the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development of the House of Commons, the Parliament of Canada, Ottawa (May 1, 2014)*.
- Zelizer, C. & Rubinstein, R. (2009). *Building Peace: Practical Reflections from the Field*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.
- Zuckerman, E., & Greenberg, M. (2004). The gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction: an analytical framework for policymakers. *Gender & Development*, 12(3), 70-82.

**APPENDIX A: Map of Interviewee Origins & Interview Locations**



Figure 1: map of origins of interviewees [Note: home of interviewee that immigrated from Indonesia not included in map]



Figure 2: map of interview locations around Dili

**APPENDIX B: Demographic data**

Table 1: Summary overview of interviewee marital status, children, occupation, district of origin, and current home (Interviews, July &amp; August 2015, n = 15)

| Interviewee # | Married | Children | Occupation                  | District: origin           | District: current home |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1             | No      | No       | Student                     | Ermera                     | Dili                   |
| 2             | Yes     | Yes      | Tais weaver/seller          | Ermera                     | Dili                   |
| 3             | Yes     | Yes      | Government Employee         | Los Palos                  | Dili                   |
| 4             | Yes*    | Yes      | Homemaker                   | Ermera                     | Dili                   |
| 5             | Yes     | Yes      | Government Employee         | Same                       | Dili                   |
| 6             | No      | No       | Student/vegetable seller    | Dili                       | Dili                   |
| 7             | No      | No       | Agricultural worker         | Oecussi                    | Oecussi                |
| 8             | Yes     | Yes**    | Homemaker                   | Atauro Island <sup>o</sup> | Dili                   |
| 9             | No      | No       | Student                     | Dili                       | Dili                   |
| 10            | Yes     | Yes      | Tais weaver/seller          | Ermera                     | Dili                   |
| 11            | Yes     | Yes      | NGO                         | Indonesia†                 | Dili                   |
| 12            | Yes     | Yes      | NGO                         | Bobonaro                   | Suai                   |
| 13            | Yes*    | Yes      | Homemaker/vegetable seller  | Baucau                     | Dili                   |
| 14            | Yes     | Yes**    | Homemaker                   | Suai                       | Dili                   |
| 15            | Yes*    | Yes      | Midwife/program coordinator | Manatuto                   | Dili                   |

Source: Interviews, July & August 2015

\* Husband has passed away

\*\* One or more child has passed away

<sup>o</sup> Atauro Island is legally a part of the Dili subdistrict, but for the purposes of the study, I have notated it as separate, as the way of life and concerns vocalized by the interviewee are particular to the island location.

† One woman interviewed in this study was born in Indonesia, but immigrated to Timor-Leste after meeting and marrying a Timorese man. She is now a Timorese citizen.

**APPENDIX C: Research Instrument****Background:**

1. Where were you born?
2. Where is your home now? If you moved from where you were born, why?
3. Do you work? If so, what is your job?
4. Are you married?
  - a) If so, what is his job?
5. Do you have children?

**Perspectives on Peace, Agency, and Power:**

1. What brings you the greatest joy in your life?
2. What are some recent happy moments?
3. Are there times that you need to make difficult decisions about safety of you or your family?
  - a) What situations have you faced, and how do you handle them?
4. Do you feel that your needs are met? For example, for food, water, shelter, or healthcare when you get sick?
5. What do you worry about the most, day-to-day?
6. If there is a disagreement between people in the community, what happens? Who gets involved?
7. What do you think are the biggest challenges women face in their communities?
  - a) What would help women with these concerns?

**Thoughts on the Future:**

1. When thinking about the future, do you have any worries? What are those worries?
2. When thinking about the future, do you have hopes? What are your hopes?

**Needs and Perspectives on Programming:**

1. What would make your life more peaceful?
2. What government programs or NGO activities do you think would make a difference in the lives of women?
3. Would you like to be more involved in promoting women's rights in Timor-Leste?
  - a) What would you like to do?
  - b) What difficulties are preventing you from doing this today?

**Closure:**

1. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not already talked about?
2. Are there certain individuals or organizations you recommend I should speak to learn more about the situation of women in Timor-Leste?