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Everyday Peacebuilding: The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Lebanon
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The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Lebanon

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Wordcount: 20387
Date: 05-06-2024

Abstract

In formal peace negotiations, women often do not get a seat at the table. However, the growing field of everyday peacebuilding argues that peacebuilding does not only take place at the negotiation table, but also in everyday interactions between "normal" people. In order to find out how everyday peacebuilding works, this research project uses the case study of women in Lebanon to explore in what ways women in Lebanon contribute to peacebuilding in informal and non-organised ways. Hereby this study fills a significant research gap, as no research has yet been done on women and everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. Through carrying out and analysing qualitative interviews with Lebanese women, this study concludes that the women contribute to everyday peacebuilding by avoiding conflicts and expressing unity and solidarity between groups in Lebanese society. The women recognise these actions as important parts of peacebuilding, and do not see a gendered element in their actions.

Keywords: women, Lebanon, everyday peacebuilding, peace & conflict studies

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Introduction: What happens in between?

International relations scholars and practitioners have long overlooked the role women play in peacebuilding. In the academic and grey literature on peacebuilding women are mostly portrayed in one of two ways: firstly, as victims of conflict.[1] In this view, women are not seen as active participants in violent conflict, but as the innocent party that inevitably gets caught in the crossfire. This approach sees women as mothers and caregivers, as inherently peaceful, and therefore argues that women should be given a seat at the peacebuilding table because they would be better at building peace than men.[2] In a counter-trend, other scholars point out women's contribution to violence and suffering and argue that women are no less violent than men.[3] Therefore, their role in peacebuilding ought to be seen in similar terms to men's.[4] Either way, the focus remains almost exclusively on formal peace-processes, and what kind of a role women play in them.[5]

These stereotypes do not capture the full picture. Women cannot all fit into the neat binary of virtuous victims or vicious war criminals. What happens in between these polar opposites? What are "normal", everyday women doing in situations of peace and conflict? As women make up half of the world's population, it would have large implications for our understanding of peacebuilding processes if we better understood how women are contributing to everyday peace.

While there has been very important theoretical work done to explore the innate peacefulness or violence of women, it may be time for a more practical research approach. Instead of focussing on theories about the inherent peacefulness or violence of women, we could instead research what everyday women are actually doing in situations of war and peacebuilding and let that define how we see the role of women in peacebuilding. Khodary puts it nicely when she writes: "The bottom line is not to impose any presumptions about women's needs, priorities, or roles, but to examine the social and overall context in every situation and depict the kind of roles women play and others that need to be advanced."[6]

This research will be looking at the role of women in the everyday, using the case study of Lebanese women and their experiences during and after the civil war in Lebanon. It will focus

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[1] Khodary, Yasmin M. "Women and Peace-Building in Iraq." *Peace Review* 28, no. 4 (2016): 499-507.
[2] Ibid., 500.
[3] Steflja, Izabela, and Jessica Trisko Darden. *Women as War Criminals: Gender, Agency, and Justice.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020; Sjoberg, Laura and Caron E. Gentry. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*. London: Zed Books, 2007.
[4] Charlesworth, Hilary. "Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building." *Feminist Legal Studies* 16, no. 3 (December 2008): 347-362. P 359.
[5] See the literature review for more information.
[6] Khodary, "Women and Peace-Building in Iraq," 501.

on the research question: **In what ways do women in Lebanon contribute to peacebuilding in informal and non-organised ways?**

This research project is important for three main reasons. Firstly, it goes beyond the debate about women's inherent peacefulness or violence and instead takes a practical approach by focussing on the actions of women without presupposing peaceful or violent tendencies. Much of the peacebuilding that is currently carried out is based on previous peacebuilding research but, as discussed further in the literature review, the research has not yet explored the myriad of ways in which women contribute to peacebuilding outside of formal peace processes. If we would better understand the ways in which women contribute to peacebuilding, peacebuilding operations could take these efforts into account and take action to strengthen these avenues of peacebuilding. This could fundamentally change the way in which we structure peacebuilding operations and could lead to them becoming more inclusive and effective. Secondly, this research forms a case study for everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon, especially as it tests the everyday peacebuilding framework as established by Mac Ginty, and expanded by Ware and Ware, Bourhrous and O'Driscoll.[7] The case of Lebanon is especially fitting for this research. Sectarianism and tensions between different sectarian groups have existed in Lebanon for centuries. Between 1975 and 1990, Lebanon experienced a series of wars, between different religious sects, within religious sects and with Syrian and Israeli troops in Lebanon.[8] Since the end of the civil war, sectarianism and sectarian boundaries continue to play a major role in Lebanese society, and are continually reinforced by the politicians, the government, and the system of personal status law.[9] In such an environment, the investigation of the perspectives of people on the ground can provide a valuable insight not just into practices of everyday peacebuilding, but also in the reality of sectarian conflict, and the harshness of sectarian boundaries. Finally, the research will fill a gap in literature, as there has not been research done yet about women and everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon.

The research question will be answered by using a combination of literature and primary data gathering with interviews. Firstly, the literature review will discuss why this research is

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[7] Mac Ginty, Roger. "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies." *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2014): 548–564; O'Driscoll, Dylan. "Everyday peace and conflict: (un)privileged interactions in Kirkuk, Iraq." *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 10 (2021): 2227-2246; Bourhrous, Amal and Dylan O'Driscoll. "Everyday peace in the Ninewa Plains, Iraq: Culture, rituals, and community interactions." *Cooperation and Conflict* 58, no. 4 (2023): 542–560; Ware, Anthony and Vicki-Ann Ware. "Everyday peace: rethinking typologies of social practice and local agency." *Peacebuilding* 10, no. 3 (2022): 222-241.

[8] Hermez, Sami. *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

[9] Deeb, Lara, Tsolin Nalbantian, and Nadya Sbaiti. *Practicing Sectarianism: Archival and Ethnographic Interventions on Lebanon.* Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2022.

relevant. It will outline what has been written about women and peacebuilding before focussing on the literature on women in everyday peacebuilding to demonstrate the research gap. Before outlining the methods and methodology, the conceptual and theoretical framework will shed light on the concepts and theories that form the foundation of this research. Finally, the results of the interviews will be presented and discussed, before the final conclusions about the research will be drawn.

Literature review

This analysis will focus on the academic and grey literature which has been published about the role of women in everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. The section will be zooming in on the topic: first it will discuss the literature about the role of women in the peacebuilding process. Afterwards, the literature relating to the role of women in everyday peacebuilding, and the role of women in everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon will be reviewed.

Women and Peacebuilding

The first thing that usually comes to mind when thinking about the peace process is a table, surrounded by a few men who are drafting a peace agreement, often with the help of a neutral country or the UN. No women in sight. This is no coincidence, as researchers have generally argued that before 2000 most of peacebuilding operations lacked a gender perspective.[10] In other words, the operations did not consider that war and peace are experienced different by men and women. Women were often left out of peace processes, in both deliberate and subtle ways. As women were often not the main belligerents, their presence in the peace process was not deemed necessary.[11] Most of the time, women were not seen as participants in war, but as victims without agency, even though women have played crucial roles in sustaining war and the war economy.[12] This meant that their needs and opinions were often overlooked in the rebuilding of society after a war.[13]

After 2000, the international community and the UN began to see the importance of including women in peacebuilding after persistent activism from a group of feminist and women's NGOS.[14] As the UN, and the UN peacebuilding missions are one of the main actors in formal peacebuilding, the activists especially focussed their efforts on changing UN peacebuilding

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[10] Duncanson, Claire. *Gender and Peacebuilding*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.
[11] Ibid., 28.
[12] Ibid., 23.
[13] Ibid., 29.
[14] Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding*, 32.

policies. They stated a variety of reasons why women should be part of peace processes, ranging from the claim that women are inherently more peaceful than men to the fact that they constitute half the population and therefore should be part of decision-making.[15] Eventually, the UN Security Council responded by implementing resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which urged member states to increase the representation of women in peace processes and to acknowledge the sexual violence which women often experience during and after conflict.[16] After UNSCR 1325, the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) published practical policy recommendations on gender equality and made sure that women were included in their "peacebuilding manuals".[17] In the main principles and guidelines of the DPKO, the following is written: "It is widely recognized that the international community's objectives in countries emerging from conflict will be better served if women and girls are protected and if arrangements are put in place to allow for the full participation of women in the peace process."[18] Besides, the document warns that a peace mission can have different impacts on men and women, and that care needs to be taken to consider these different impacts. As benchmarks for when a peace mission is completed, respect for women's rights is on the top of the list, just as equal rights for men and women to vote and to participate in the political process. The document lacks practical tools for how the inclusion of women into the peace process can be achieved, but these tools can be found in the DPKO women, peace and security guideline.

Although these are big steps for women's rights in the peacebuilding arena, feminist scholars and activists remain critical of the UNSCR 1325 and its implementation.[19] They argue that the resolution separates women into two categories: victims and peacemakers.[20] Because the resolution focusses heavily on sexual violence against women, it exacerbates the notion that women are powerless victims who require protection.[21] This sexist notion is often combined with racist ideas about other cultures oppressing their women. Especially during the War on Terror, this rhetoric was used to endorse military intervention in for example Afghanistan, as

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[15] De Alwis, Malathi, Julie Mertus and Tazreena Sajjad. "Women in Peace Processes." In *Women and Wars*, edited by Carol Cohn. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013; Women4Yemen. "Alternative Report on Yemen." CEDAW (October 5, 2020) https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CEDAW/CSS/YEM/43451&Lang=en
[16] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.
[17] Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding*, 33.
[18] United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, "Principles and Guidelines", 41.
[19] Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding*, 34.
[20] Ibid.
[21] De Alwis et al., "Women in Peace Processes," 177.

"white men are saving brown women from brown men."[22] On the other hand, the notion of women-as-peacemakers pushes forward the idea that women should be part of the peace process because they are inherently more peaceful, more caring and more compromising.[23] This idea is problematic because it plays into harmful stereotypes about men and women and it reduces women to their usefulness as "natural peacemakers".[24]

Another problem with UNSCR 1325 that feminist scholars have observed is that there is a lack of implementation of the resolution in two areas. Firstly, gendered issues and women's experiences of war continue to be ignored. States are not putting enough effort in implementing the resolution, sexual abuse remains undiscussed and peacekeepers on the ground are not receiving the necessary gender-training.[25] Newby and O'Malley note that the two main obstacles to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda are a lack of funding and a lack of data on women, which makes it impossible to adequately evaluate the progress of women in peacebuilding.[26]

There is also a cultural boundary, as it seems that the newfound rhetoric about the inclusion of women is not strong enough to overcome the obstacles which keep women away from the negotiation table. In many parts of the world, a role in formal peacebuilding is not deemed appropriate for women, and the UN and international organisation's insistence on the presence of women is seen as a western attempt to impose their values.[27] When women are allowed to have a seat at the table, it does not necessarily mean that their voices will be heard, as various norms and strategies are often used to minimalise and ignore their input.[28] In 2013, the UN Security Council published resolution 2122, hereby recognising that resolution 1325 had not been adequately implemented and calling for more attention on women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.[29] Together with other resolutions which highlight the role of women in peacebuilding, these resolutions have become known as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.[30]

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[22] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Nelson and Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988.

[23] Fukuyama, Francis. "Women and the evolution of world politics." *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (1998): 24-40.

[24] Charlesworth, Hilary. "Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building." *Feminist Legal Studies* 16, no. 3 (December 2008): 347-362.

[25] Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding*, 37.

[26] Newby, Vanessa F. and Alanna O'Malley. "Introduction: WPS 20 Years On: Where Are the Women Now?" *Global Studies Quarterly* 1 (2021): 1–13. P 2.

[27] De Alwis et al., "Women in Peace Processes," 174.

[28] Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding*, 39.

[29] United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122.

[30] Adjei, Maxwell. "Women's participation in peace processes: a review of literature." *Journal of Peace Education* 16, no. 2(2019): 133-154. P 134.

Besides all the criticism, there are positives as well. The UNSCR 1325 put women on the agenda and constitutes a legitimate document which reasons why women should be part of the peacebuilding process, which feminists can refer to. Almost all major peacebuilding organisations now focus on including women in the peacebuilding process.[31] These organisations work with, or are working on gender-sensitive practices, which assess the gendered impact of their peacebuilding projects. Feminist scholars have also noted that the resolution 1325 did help with increasing the number of women in parliaments in post-conflict countries.[32]

In recent years, feminist scholars have relocated their focus and broadened their understanding of peace and peacebuilding, influencing the entire field of peace and conflict studies along the way. Peace no longer only means the absence of war, but also the presence of (economic) security and opportunities, stable government, and the rule of law.[33] It is not enough for women to be part of the end to violent conflict, women must be included in the long-term reconstruction of society as well. The UN now focusses more on the economic empowerment of women as part of peacebuilding, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women also highlights the crucial function of women's social and economic rights in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations.[34] There has also been more attention for the widespread occurrence of sexual violence during conflict, mainly through the efforts of NGOs, writers, and activists.[35]

Most of the research and NGO efforts on women and peacebuilding have focussed on the presence or absence of women in formal peace processes. The researchers rarely acknowledge that peacebuilding can also take place farther away from the official negotiation table and NGOs usually focus their efforts on amplifying the work of grassroots women's organisations and getting women included in formal peace processes. However, this tradition is being challenged in the newer literature on the role of women in everyday peacebuilding.

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[31] See International Alert, Saferworld, Oxfam Novib, Conciliation Resources, the Global Peace Foundation, International Crisis Group and Search for Common Ground.

[32] Duncanson, *Gender and Peacebuilding*, 39.

[33] Ibid., 130.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Lamb, Christina. *Our Bodies, Their Battlefields: War Through the Lives of Women*. New York: Scribner, 2020; Bigio, Jamille and Rachel Vogelstein. "Countering Sexual Violence in Conflict." *Council on Foreign Relations* (September 2017); See also the work of organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Women and Everyday Peacebuilding

So far, this literature review has established that despite efforts from the UN and civil society, women are still being excluded from formal peacebuilding processes. However, this research will consider the possibility that peacebuilding does not only happen at the peacebuilding table, but that it is also happening in the everyday sphere: in the words and actions of "normal" people, in how they relate to others within and outside their group or community. Realistically, the majority of people are not actively involved in peacebuilding, they are just trying to get by. But by getting by, they could be making vital contributions to the peacebuilding process. This could have major implications for our understanding of the peace process (for a more detailed explanation of the ideas behind everyday peacebuilding, see the theoretical framework). The next section will assess what has been written about everyday peacebuilding and the role of women.

When looking at the research about women and informal everyday peacebuilding, there are several research projects that draw noteworthy conclusions. Bukari, Bukari and Ametefe, have focussed on the marketplace as a site for everyday peacebuilding, specifically for women.[36] They observe that women in the marketplace can contribute to peacebuilding through their social capital: their networks and ties to others, within their own group and across sectarian divides.[37] Women's networks can bridge across different groups, normalise relations and eventually build peace. The women in their study, which was set in southern Ghana, explained that the women in their community were wary of violent conflict, since they had been bearing the brunt of violence in the past.[38] In the marketplace, interactions between groups were normalised and often necessary, and women connected with women from other groups over the experience of being women and traders.[39] This, in turn, built trust, social solidarity and unity in the community. The women in the study recognised their actions as everyday peacebuilding and mentioned their daily interactions and mutual respect as a fundamental part of peace.[40] When violence broke out in 2012, the association of market women rallied to talk to the two factions in order to end the fighting.[41] Keeping in mind the difference in cultures between Ghana and Lebanon, Bukari et al.'s observations shed light on a possible site for women's everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. This leads to the following hypothesis: "Women

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[36] Bukari, Shaibu, Kaderi Noagah Bukari & Richard Ametefe. "Market women's informal peacebuilding efforts in Ekumfi-Narkwa, Ghana*." Canadian Journal of African Studies* 56, no. 2 (2022): 341-361.
[37] Ibid., 345.
[38] Ibid., 350.
[39] Ibid., 351.
[40] Ibid., 353.
[41] Bukari et al., "Market women's informal peacebuilding efforts in Ekumfi-Narkwa, Ghana*,"* 352.

contribute to peacebuilding by establishing networks with other women across sectarian boundaries in spaces such as the marketplace."

The market women's peacebuilding was not only limited to the public sphere, as the women also convinced their spouses to choose dialogue over violence.[42] This everyday peacebuilding behind closed doors is an essential part of women's contribution to everyday peacebuilding. Apart from the marketplace, women are often less in the public eye than men. Instead, they are working behind the scenes, convincing their husbands or other family members to treat women or children better, or to commit to the peace process.[43] Anderlini, who interviewed women across the world about their actions in the early stages of conflicts, notes that many of her interviewees were exerting influence on the men around them to prevent conflict escalation.[44] She gives the example of mothers in Palestine, many of whom take measures to prevent their children from getting involved in violence.[45] During fieldwork in East-Africa, Anderlini found that after a conflict had ended women were oftentimes more invested in the peace process than men, and were convincing men around them to sustain and nurture the newfound peace.[46] In the context of Lebanon, where most of the fighting happened between militias, often aligned to a political party, the most likely way for women to keep their family safe would be to convince them not to join militias. Alternatively, women could have exercised influence on the men in their family to commit to the peace process and not engage in violence again after the signing of the Ta'if accord. This leads us to another hypothesis: "Women were trying to keep their immediate family safe, for example by persuading them not to join militias and commit to the peace process."

Another study, based on fieldwork in Myanmar, shows that women contribute to everyday peacebuilding through silence.[47] Women often stay quiet about the things that happened during the war, because relaying their experiences of (sexual) violence could upset the fragile post-war security.[48] This makes silence a form of everyday peacebuilding. It can be a coping strategy or a way to protect themselves or their family, but it can also be an effect of trauma, a denial of their experiences, and, as a result, a way in which their experiences are erased from popular

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[42] Ibid., 354.

[43] Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi. *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022.

[44] Ibid., 34.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 103.

[47] Blomqvist, Linnéa, Elisabeth Olivius & Jenny Hedström. "Care and silence in women's everyday peacebuilding in Myanmar." *Conflict, Security & Development* 21, no. 3 (2021): 223-244.

[48] Blomqvist et al.,"Care and silence in women's everyday peacebuilding in Myanmar," 233.

memory.[49] This leads us to a third hypothesis: "Women stayed silent about their experiences of (sexual) violence in order to keep the peace."

In conclusion, everyday peacebuilding can come in many different forms, and women can play a specific role in this. Especially when women are not included in formal peace negotiations, this informal peace-making is vital for women to contribute to the peace process. Research on the role of women in everyday, informal peacebuilding has been done, but only in very recent years and with a handful of case studies. The researchers have come up with observations about the role of women, but these observations have not been tested in more case studies. Meanwhile, NGOs are not engaging with the role of women in everyday peacebuilding either, as most of them are instead focussing on amplifying the work of grassroots women's organisations and on getting women included in the formal peacebuilding process.[50] A better understanding of informal peace processes is necessary, because this understanding, combined with our knowledge of formal peace processes, will help us to better understand peace processes as a whole. In turn, a better understanding of the peace process could help peace builders across the world in their efforts to build a sustainable peace. More knowledge of the values, effects and limitations of informal peace building can also help us to integrate formal and informal peace building better, so that the two processes can build on each other. The next part will assess what has been written on the everyday role of women in peacebuilding in Lebanon.

Women and Everyday Peacebuilding in Lebanon

There has not been research done directly about women and everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. Some work touches on the topic, such as Shehadeh's research on the role of women during and after the Lebanese civil war.[51] Without calling it everyday peacebuilding, her work discusses some of the acts of everyday peacebuilding, although her focus is more on the emancipation of women after the war. More specifically about peacebuilding, Abu Saba discusses the peacebuilding work Lebanese women are doing, but from the perspectives of NGOs.[52] Joseph has written on pre-war informal heterogenous women's networks in Beirut, which were carrying out intrasectarian social services and creating conditions for a diverse

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[49] Ibid., 235.

[50] See for example: Saferworld. "Building inclusive peace: Gender at the heart of conflict analysis." (December 2017).

[51] Shehadeh, Lamia Rustum. *Women and War in Lebanon*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999.

[52] Abu-Saba, Mary Bentley. "Human Needs and Women Peacebuilding in Lebanon." *Peace and conflict* 5, no. 1 (1999): 37–51.

community.[53] Although she studies the broader political significance of these groups, her work nevertheless reveals how these women's networks created conditions for positive peace. The women in the study fostered economic and social relationships by visiting each other on occasions of deaths, weddings, and births, exchanging goods, services and emotional support. With these actions they created a cross-sectarian social network which provided social cohesion and control. Joseph's research therefore strengthens the first hypothesis on the everyday peacebuilding potential of women's networks. However, the networks were disbanded when the Christian right-wing parties began a campaign to reorganise the Beirut neighbourhoods along sectarian lines in the run-up to the civil war, extinguishing any effect the networks might have had on the course of the war.

There is a clear research gap regarding the role of women in everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. What is missing is a preliminary analysis that explores which acts of everyday peacebuilding women in Lebanon are taking. Research about everyday peacebuilding is especially necessary in the case of Lebanon, where the formal peace process has ended but sectarian tensions have never been fully resolved.[54] Everyday peacebuilding thus remains, together with the work of peacebuilding NGOs, as the avenues to create a sustainable peace in Lebanon. This study will help to further understand what everyday peacebuilding looks like in the case of Lebanon. Literature on women and everyday peacebuilding has provided a myriad of ways in which women could contribute to everyday peacebuilding: this research will explore whether women in Lebanon have carried out and identify with these actions. After this preliminary research has established potential ways in which women can contribute to everyday peacebuilding, further research could then be carried out to comparatively examine the effects of different forms of everyday peacebuilding (individually or collectively, deliberately or inadvertently) across different case studies, in order to assess conditions for impact.

Research Question

This research will be based on the following research question: In what ways do women in Lebanon contribute to peacebuilding in informal and non-organised ways? This question revolves around the following sub-questions:

1. How did Lebanese women interact with people from other groups after the civil war?

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[53] Joseph, Suad. "Working-Class Women's Networks in a Sectarian State: A Political Paradox." *American Ethnologist* 10, no. 1 (1983): 1–22.

[54] Nucho, Joanne Randa. *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

- Were they carrying out antagonising actions, acts of conflict management or actions related to everyday diplomacy?

2. How deliberate were their actions? Did they call it peace building?
3. Is there a gendered element in their actions?

Hypotheses

Women in Lebanon contribute to everyday peacebuilding in the following ways:

1. Women contribute to peacebuilding by establishing networks with other women across sectarian boundaries in spaces such as the marketplace.
2. Women were trying to keep their immediate family safe, for example by persuading them not to join militias.
3. Women stayed silent about their experiences of (sexual) violence in order to keep the peace.
4. Women's acts of everyday peacebuilding are distinctly gendered: they are carrying out actions that men are not carrying out.

Conceptual Framework

Before assessing the theories behind everyday peacebuilding, it is important to first establish a conceptual framework of the key terms and concepts relating to this research. This conceptual framework will focus on the everyday turn in IR, the concept of peacebuilding and on sectarianism in Lebanon.

The Everyday Turn in IR

The everyday turn in IR is a move away from conventional IR, which focusses on global structures and systems and aims to come up with grand theories that explain patterns and logic in the international state system.[55] Instead, the everyday approach focusses on the everyday lives of people and studies how the international is experienced by people in all sorts of places and in all levels of society.[56] It is thus not merely an approach of study, but it can also be a political act: to move away from the IR establishment and to give voice to the voiceless. The everyday approach focusses on the small things: individuals, families, places, stories and emotions, or anything else which is dismissed as unremarkable or mundane in conventional

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[55] Solomon, Ty and Brent J. Steele. "Micro-moves in International Relations theory." *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 2 (2017): 267–291.
[56] Solomon and Steele, "Micro-moves in International Relations theory," 268.

IR.[57] There is no list of specific sites or persons which constitute the everyday. Any practice which aims to find the meaning behind lived lives is "doing the everyday".[58]

The everyday and the big processes of the international arena may seem far removed, but the everyday approach can teach us about macropolitics in two main ways. Firstly, our focus on the everyday can help us understand how macropolitics get enacted, embodied, and embedded in the lives of people.[59] In other words, how macropolitics affect the everyday lives of people. On the other hand, the power, identity and change that people exercise in their daily lives can create or influence macropolitical trends, so our understanding of the everyday can help us comprehend or even predict big political processes.[60] "To make sense of international politics" Cynthia Enloe argues, "we have to read power backward and forward."[61] We have to make the (inter)national personal, and the personal (inter)national. Because even if an individual action does not directly spark a big protest, it still holds meaning that can teach us more about the agency of individuals and groups, and the power they wield in the greater scheme of things. As Enloe has framed it, power is deeply at work where it is least apparent.[62] This shows us that the everyday approach can bring to light the hidden structures of power and agency in our societies which have been previously ignored.

To go one step further, Guillaume and Huysmans argue that the everyday approach is not just a move which favours micro- over macropolitics, but that it abolishes the distinction between macro- and micropolitics.[63] They state that big political processes such as globalisation and sovereignty only exist insofar as they are enacted in daily practices and relations.[64] Looking at it this way, the everyday seems to be the only meaningful way to study international relations. The everyday is a very broad approach. Even high politics can be studied from an everyday perspective, and therefore it is necessary to define what is meant with the "everyday". The everyday can focus on the embodied, mundane, local, non-elite, or informal, and it can be a combination or none of these things. This research will be focussing on the everyday as the unorganised and informal: as taking place within families and close circles. It uses this approach to separate unorganised and informal peacebuilding from organised peacebuilding in

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[57] Crane-Seeber, "Everyday counterinsurgency," 450; Enloe, "The Mundane Matters," 447.
[58] Guillaume and Huysmans, "The concept of 'the everyday': Ephemeral politics and the abundance of life," 279.
[59] Solomon and Steele, "Micro-moves in International Relations theory," 270.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
[62] Enloe, Cynthia. "The Mundane Matters." *International political sociology* 5, no. 4 (2011): 447-450.
[63] Guillaume, Xavier and Jef Huysmans. "The concept of 'the everyday': Ephemeral politics and the abundance of life." *Cooperation and Conflict* 54, no. 2 (2019): 278–296.
[64] Ibid., 283.

settings such as NGOs, since it specifically wants to focus on the former. This might seem an impractical approach: why focus on household peacebuilding when larger, community-wide action is needed to create an inclusive and lasting peace? The answer is that community-wide peacebuilding has to start somewhere. Those community projects are based on actions which people are already taking within their close circles of family and friends. Understanding these actions first can help us better understand what makes community peace initiatives a success.

Peacebuilding

As defined by the UN, peacebuilding "aims to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development."[65] It therefore goes beyond the negative peace which peacekeeping operations aim to establish, and instead focusses on creating a positive peace by addressing structural issues and reducing the chance that violent conflict will erupt again in the future.[66] Peacebuilding is generally defined as an external intervention, but in the literature on everyday peacebuilding it is seen as something that may come in a bottom-up way from society itself.[67]

Sectarianism, War and Remembrance in Lebanon

Sectarianism has long existed in Lebanon in varied ways, especially after it got strengthened by the policies of the Ottomans and the French.[68] Sectarianism, as it exists in Lebanon refers to three practices. Firstly, sectarianism describes the way in which the government in Lebanon is structured, in which all political positions are allocated by sect, including a set quota for the number of positions reserved for Christians and Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.[69] Secondly, sectarianism is used to explain the Lebanese system of personal status law, which assigns you a specific set of personal status laws based on your sect.[70] Finally, sectarianism signifies the ways in which people in Lebanon treat each other based on their sect, ranging from discrimination to favouritism.[71] In reality, the three forms of sectarianism are often hard to

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[65] United Nations Peacekeeping. "Terminology". https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology. Accessed on 4 November 2023.

[66] UN Secretary-General (UN SG). *An Agenda for Peace*. New York: UN Department of Public Information, 1992. P 32.

[67] Barnett, Michael, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O'Donnell, and Laura Sitea. "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?" *Global Governance* 13 (2007): 35–58. P 36.

[68] Makdisi, Ussama Samir. *Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

[69] Deeb et al., *Practicing Sectarianism: Archival and Ethnographic Interventions on Lebanon*, 2.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

distinguish because they are very intertwined. Deeb, Nalbantian and Sbaiti define sectarianism as the lived practice which shapes the, sometimes contradictory, way in which Lebanese society is organised.[72] Since sectarianism is a lived practice, it is not a given, static thing, but something constructed and subject to change. Sectarianism is both a bottom-up and a top-down practice, and it is heavily politicised by the political parties and the religious institutions to divide people in order to maintain power.[73]

Together with other factors, the politicisation of sect has led to a number of conflicts in Lebanon's past. In 1975, conflict broke out between left-wing movements supported by the PLO and right-wing Christian factions, leading to a fifteen-year period of violent conflict between factions, within factions and with Syrian and Israeli troops in Lebanon.[74] According to Eggert, the war tends to be remembered as one started and fought by men, but women were involved in all the main militias during the war.[75] In 1990, the conflict officially ended with the signing of the Ta'if accord. The wars in Lebanon perpetuated the idea of "No Victor, no Vanquished", meaning that after the civil war, there was no clear winner and no clear loser.[76] Instead, coexistence and national unity were preached, and it was restated that Lebanon is a tolerant place where diverse religions coexisted amongst each other.[77] The state needed this rhetoric of unity in order to quickly rebuild its formal institutions, especially the security sector, which were in shambles after the war.[78] Many of the people who had actively participated in the war afterwards joined the political sector and began mentioning the war as little as possible in order to avoid conflict and form coalitions.[79] The sectarian system from before the war was reinstated, although now with equal numbers of positions of power for Christians and Muslims.[80] With the General Amnesty Law, the government pardoned all crimes committed against the Lebanese population during the civil war, and hereby took away another opportunity for reconciliation.[81] The government placed its focus on creating a short term absence of war, and neglected to create the foundations for a long-term sustainable peace.[82]

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[72] Ibid., 3.
[73] Joseph, Suad. 1975. "The Politicization of Religious Sects in Borj Hammoud, Lebanon."
[74] Hermez, *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon,* 50.
[75] Eggert, Jennifer. "Revisiting Women's Roles in Conflict and Peace: Female Fighters During the Lebanese Civil War." *Al-Raida* 47, no.1 (2023): 105-115.
[76] Hermez, *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon,* 6.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Barak, Oren. ""Don't Mention the War?" The Politics of Remembrance and Forgetfulness in Postwar Lebanon." *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 1 (2007): 49-70.
[79] Ibid., 54.
[80] Ghosn, Faten and Amal Khoury. "Lebanon after the Civil War: Peace or the Illusion of Peace?" *The Middle East Journal* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 381-397.
[81] Ibid., 390.
[82] Ibid., 382.

This also meant that there has been no reconciliation, and the grievances which had caused the war were never fully addressed. The continuing economic and social inequality in Lebanon is seen as the "price that needs to be paid" for peace.[83] Hanf has argued that civil wars can only be solved through compromise between the warring parties, but that a compromise is only possible on one condition: when each and every side feels that its respective existence is no longer threatened.[84] This is the crux of the problem in Lebanon: the different groups still feel threatened, perpetually afraid of becoming a minority and losing their political power.[85] The failure of the government to effectively deal with Lebanon's violent past has created an instability in the country, which has the potential to lead to further violent conflict.[86]

Theoretical Framework: Everyday Peacebuilding

This following section will outline the existing theories behind everyday peacebuilding, drawing specifically from the original framework of everyday peacebuilding as established by Mac Ginty, and expanded by Ware and Ware and Bourhrous and O'Driscoll.[87]

In the last decades, the literature on peacebuilding has witnessed a local turn. Instead of large, top-down international peacebuilding projects, scholars are advocating the benefits of local peacebuilding initiatives.[88] These initiatives are set up by local people, who know what their community needs in order to achieve peace, instead of imposed through international organisations. This results in a sense of ownership and increases the chances for a more inclusive, lasting peace.[89] The local turn has been a most needed addition to peacebuilding literature, but this turn needs to be taken one step further. The local turn has been focussing on community initiatives and NGOs, but before these projects exist, we are in the realm of unorganised, informal peacebuilding. Outside of formal peace processes and the spaces of NGOs and community initiatives, people on the ground are also taking steps within their community to minimise conflict and ensure the safety of their family, friends and neighbours.

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[83] Ibid., 7.
[84] Hanf, Theodor. *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*. Cambridge: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1993.
[85] Hermez, *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon,* 118.
[86] Ghosn and Khoury, "Lebanon after the Civil War: Peace or the Illusion of Peace?" 381.
[87] Mac Ginty, "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies."; O'Driscoll, "Everyday peace and conflict: (un)privileged interactions in Kirkuk, Iraq."; Bourhrous and O'Driscoll, "Everyday peace in the Ninewa Plains, Iraq: Culture, rituals, and community interactions."; Ware and Ware, "Everyday peace: rethinking typologies of social practice and local agency."
[88] Connaughton, Stacey L., and Jessica Berns. *Locally Led Peacebuilding: Global Case Studies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.
[89] Leonardsson, Hanna, and Gustav Rudd. "The 'local Turn' in Peacebuilding: A Literature Review of Effective and Emancipatory Local Peacebuilding." *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 5 (2015): 825–39.

This can be done through everyday activities, such as walking, speaking, interacting, consuming or simply moving through space.[90] Mac Ginty has called these actions "an invisible enabler of more formal attempts to build peace".[91] Everyday peaceful acts are meaningful, because they form the basis of local peacebuilding. According to Watson, looking at families and households and the relations within and between them, is incremental in understanding how the rest of a society works, and how, if it is required, stability may be brought to it.[92] Therefore, in order to establish successful peacebuilding organisations, these everyday acts of peace are the actions that need to be supported and enhanced.

Everyday peacebuilding can thus be defined as the practices people engage in which contribute to building and sustaining peace as well as minimising violence.[93] But what are these peaceful practices, how do we define them and how do we separate them from other, conflict-perpetuating, practices? The problem is that there is no black and white difference between peaceful and conflict-perpetuating actions, but that they instead exist on a spectrum.[94] Firstly, there are acts of everyday conflict, which overtly display otherness and are used to antagonise the other group.[95] These are not included in the everyday peacebuilding framework of Mac Ginty and Ware and Ware, but are an important addition to a framework of everyday peace because they help to demonstrate the full spectrum and the differences between acts of everyday peace and acts of everyday conflict. Then there are many actions which people take to minimise risks and protect themselves in the short term, such as avoiding contentious topics of conversation or high-risk places, categorising others into distinct groups, concealing signifiers of belonging to a specific group or scapegoating.[96] These are a way of creating negative peace: the absence of violence. People use these tactics as ways to manage the conflict and as strategies for survival. However, these are also the actions which perpetuate a sectarian culture and help sustain long-term conflict.[97] Finally, there are everyday diplomatic actions, which challenge the conflict and sectarian division and attempt to establish positive peace, including contact and connection between groups. These actions are often driven by the same desires as the actions in the second category: people carry out individual acts of peacebuilding

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[90] De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1984. Xii.

[91] Mac Ginty, "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies," 561.

[92] Watson, Alison M. S. "Agency and the Everyday Activist." In *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, edited by Richmond, Oliver P. and Audra Mitchell. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012: 42.

[93] Blomqvist et al., "Care and silence in women's everyday peacebuilding in Myanmar," 227.

[94] Mac Ginty, "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies," 557.

[95] O'Driscoll, "Everyday peace and conflict: (un)privileged interactions in Kirkuk, Iraq," 2232.

[96] Mac Ginty, "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies," 556.

[97] Ibid., 557.

because of their connection to others and because they want to protect their family and children in the long run.[98] In ascending order of building solidarity and peace are the actions of civility, reciprocity, affinity, and solidarity.[99] With civility is meant the ritualised politeness between members of different groups in public spaces.[100] Reciprocity is the act of doing favours for one another and affinity is an active engagement with another in the attempt of getting to know, understand and participate in what is important for the other's community.[101] Affinity is usually shown in relation to culture, religion, traditions and celebrations.[102] The final goal of everyday peacebuilding is reaching compromise, through dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution on a local level by non-elites.[103] For compromise and peace to be achieved, there often needs to be a surrender of power from one of the parties.[104]

There seems to be a continuum of everyday peace and conflict, with antagonising actions on the one side, conflict-perpetuating "survival" strategies in the middle and everyday diplomacy between groups on the other side.[105]
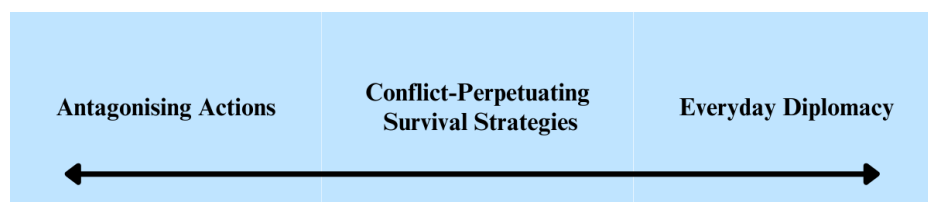

Figure 1

There are no rules for which action lies in which category, this is driven by context, space, time and individuals.[106] O'Driscoll explains that the intention behind an action can help us determine where on the continuum it lies: maybe someone only goes to shops run by people from the same ethnic group to avoid conflict, but it can also be a more antagonising act if someone does so because they only want to financially support people from their own group.[107]

He also notes that intersectionality plays a large role in these interactions.[108] The privilege one gets from belonging to a certain ethnic group, having a certain gender or social class impacts

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[98] Moix, Bridget. *Choosing Peace: Agency and Action in the Midst of War*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, 133.
[99] Bourhrous and O'Driscoll, "Everyday peace in the Ninewa Plains, Iraq: Culture, rituals, and community interactions," 547.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 548.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ware and Ware, "Everyday peace: rethinking typologies of social practice and local agency," 237.
[104] Ibid., 238.
[105] Mac Ginty, Roger. "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies," 560.
[106] O'Driscoll, "Everyday peace and conflict: (un)privileged interactions in Kirkuk, Iraq" 2232.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 2234.

the everyday actions of peace or conflict one can take. There are less repercussions for everyday acts of conflict if one has more privilege in society, whilst people with a lower social standing are often forced to act more peacefully to avoid conflict.[109]

Antagonising actions	Blaming the other group Joining militias Fights or arguments with people from other groups Using harmful stereotypes or hate-speech about the "other" at home Reproducing othering by highlighting your own group - *wearing ethno-sectarian identity signifiers*

Conflict management[110]	Avoidance
	  - *contentious topics of conversation (silence)*
	  - *offensive displays*
	  - *high-risk people and places*
	  - *escapism into subcultures*
	  - *not drawing attention to oneself*
	  - *living in the present*
	Reading
	  - *sectarian informed identification and social ordering*
	  - *alertness to avoid others or engage without provocation*
	Ambiguity
	  - *concealing signifiers of identity*
	  - *non-observance or 'not seeing'*
	  - *dissembling in speech and actions*
	Shielding:
	  - *keeping more volatile and aggressive people away from confrontations*
	  - *more peaceful dealing with confrontations themselves*
	Blame deferring
	  - *shifting blame to outsiders to appear more socially acceptable*

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[109] Ibid., 2233.
[110] Mac Ginty, "Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies," 556; Ware and Ware, "Everyday peace: rethinking typologies of social practice and local agency," 230.

	Normalcy - *going back to school or work to create a sense of normalcy*
Everyday Diplomacy/Conflict resolution[111]	In-group actions: Positive parenting and mentoring • *the teaching of restraint and non-violence to children* • *moderating harmful stereotypes or hate-speech about the "other" at home* Using influence • *convincing men to adhere to the peace process* Intragroup actions: Civility • *ritualised politeness* • *system of manners* • *economic transactions* Reciprocity • *doing favours* • *borrowing things* Affinity • *celebrating each other's holidays and other traditions* Solidarity • *intercommunal networking around everyday issues* • *imagined community* Compromise • *sustained dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution*

Methodology

Research question

In what ways do women in Lebanon contribute to peacebuilding in informal and non-organised ways?

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[111] Bourhrous and O'Driscoll, "Everyday peace in the Ninewa Plains, Iraq: Culture, rituals, and community interactions," 548; Autesserre, Severine. *The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2021, 36.

Timeframe and Participant Selection

The timeframe of this research is 1975-2024. Following the understanding that peacebuilding does not only happen after a conflict but also during it, the civil war years are also included in the timeframe.

This research looks at women as its focus group. It does not attempt to identify a gender difference between men and women, as no men were interviewed. Instead, it simply focusses on the acts of everyday peacebuilding which women carry out. Nevertheless, the participants were asked if they saw their actions as gendered, and whether there was a difference in the way men and women acted after the war. As for participants, the interviews (n=4) were conducted with Lebanese women, of which three currently live in the Netherlands and one in Lebanon, but who all grew up during the civil war in Lebanon and experienced and remember both the war and the post-war period. The participants were gathered through snowballing: through a Lebanese family friend I got into contact with her friends, and eventually friends of her friends. The interviewees were all roughly the same age, in their forties and fifties. This means that they were born around the beginning of the war and grew up during it. None of the participants remembered the time before the war, but they did remember the war and the time afterwards. The participants together represent different groups in Lebanese society, as they and their families were all associated with different parties at the time. The participants also reflect different levels of political involvement: from one participant whose entire family was heavily involved in the Kataeb party to another participant whose family tried to stay out of the war as much as possible and refused to pick sides in order to keep their cross-sectarian business going. Lastly, the interviewees also come from different social classes, ranging from upper middle class to working class families.

Methodological approach

This exploratory research used data gathered through semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of the ways in which women contribute to everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. Firstly, the literature on women and everyday peacebuilders elucidated a myriad of ways in which women could contribute to peacebuilding. Afterwards, the interviews centred around the question of whether or not the women identify themselves in the distinctly gendered contributions which women can make to peacebuilding. Have they carried out these actions in their lives, or seen other women carry them out? Do they call these actions peacebuilding? Keeping in mind that there is no universal experience of "the Lebanese woman" in the process

of peacebuilding, something can still be learned about Lebanese women, and about peacebuilding, by looking closely at the particular experiences of these four women.

The interviews were mostly conducted in person, while one interview was carried out via Zoom, and lasted around an hour. The interviews were semi-structured, as this allowed for the adaptation of questions based on the participant's answers. As the experiences of the participants varied widely, some questions were more relevant with certain participants than with others. The order of questions was also varied, depending on the topics that were brought up in the conversation. The interviews started with a conversational entry, after which open questions were asked.

This research aims to discover plausible ways in which women may contribute to peacebuilding. The literature has already identified many ways in which women can contribute to everyday peacebuilding. However, these hypotheses are based on theories or on small-scale case studies. Interviews are the fittest methodology to test if women recognise themselves in the everyday peacebuilding actions, as interviews provide the researcher with the tools to find the answers directly from the analysed actor. This research does not go so far as to analyse the effects of everyday peacebuilding, by investigating whether or not the women's acts of everyday peacebuilding actually led to peace. Instead, the interviews focussed on assessing possible ways in which women may contribute to peacebuilding, and on the intent behind these actions. In other words: whether women were aware of the peacebuilding potential of their actions and were carrying them out for that reason.

Data analysis

After the interviews were conducted, the data was organised by colour coding the various forms of everyday peacebuilding highlighted in the theoretical framework, using ATLAS.ti coding software. This provided insight into what kinds of peacebuilding activities the interviewees mentioned, and where on the spectrum of antagonising actions, survival strategies, and everyday peacebuilding the actions can be placed. A qualitative analysis was used, as this kind of analysis allows the researcher to consider not just the peacebuilding actions that were mentioned, but also how they were mentioned and the peacebuilding activities that were not recognised by the interviewees.[112]

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[112] Flick, Uwe. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Sixth edition. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2019. 161.

Limitations to the research design

This research is an exploratory analysis: it does not aim to find hard data on the impact of women on the peace process in Lebanon. Instead, it attempts to discover plausible ways in which women may contribute to peacebuilding, and tests these hypotheses on a small group of women. Because of the small group of participants, the interview findings are only a representation of this small group. The external validity of the findings is low, and the findings are not generalisable. Because snowballing was used as a tactic to gather participants, the sample is limited. Three out of the four participants decided (and were able to) move to the Netherlands after the war, which makes their lived experience very particular, and not representative of the experiences of the wider population of Lebanon, insofar as a "general experience of the wider population of Lebanon" exists.

Additionally, the language in which the interviews were carried out comes with some limitations, as three of the interviews were carried out in Dutch, and one interview in English. These are not the participants' native languages, and not the language they were using while they went through the lived experience which the interviews discuss. The translation of their experiences into Dutch or English likely resulted in a certain loss of nuance, which would have been present had the interviews been carried out in Lebanese colloquial Arabic or French.

Another problem is that interviewees might have not felt comfortable to share certain details. The interview questions were often quite personal, touching on family relations and things that were discussed within the family, and even though an effort was made to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible, it is likely that they did not share some personal details. Finally, although the interview questions covered an array of everyday peacebuilding actions which were identified in the literature, it is likely that the participants engaged in other peacebuilding actions which were not defined in the literature and did not come up in the interview.

Positionality

As someone who has always lived in the Netherlands, I have no experience with (sectarian) conflict. My background could put me at a disadvantage because I may misunderstand or misinterpret situations which my participants describe, because I lack the experience with these kinds of situations. However, because I have no lived experience in conflict, this could also allow me to see certain actions as meaningful, while the participants may discard these actions as mundane and without meaning.

Ethical issues

As this research includes primary data collection on human subjects, care was taken to address ethical concerns in the research and an informed consent form was drafted which was signed by the participants.[113] To respect the privacy of the participants, all interview data was de-identified, except for the informed consent forms which were stored in a password-protected separate folder. To ensure confidentiality, research data will not be shared with anyone except the project's supervisor.

Because the interviewees have experienced war, there is the possibility that interview questions could bring up feelings of stress or distress when participants are remembering and discussing their past experiences. While acknowledging that talking about war and post-war always comes with the possibility of reactivating traumatic memories, the interview questions were not designed to bring up specific traumatic memories, but rather to talk about family dynamics and contact with people from other groups in society. Furthermore, extensive care was taken to ensure that interviewees were comfortable and did not feel pressured to answer questions. Aside from the signing of the informed consent form, the content of the form was also further explained at the beginning of the interviews. Participants were reminded that they could stop the interview at any time and even retract their participation after the interview was completed.

Results

The following section will present the findings of the research, following the order from the sub-questions of the research, focussing first on the everyday peacebuilding actions that were mentioned in the interview, then on the self-identification of these acts as peacebuilding, and finally on the gender aspect of these actions. The final part of the section will discuss the hypotheses and their results.

The coding of the interview data presents an overview of the different types of actions on the antagonising actions-everyday diplomacy continuum, and how often they were mentioned by the interviewees.[114] Most of the actions in the everyday peacebuilding framework were mentioned, with the exception of reproducing othering by highlighting your own group, ambiguity, shielding, using influence, reciprocity, and compromise. Mostly, the interviewees mentioned acts of everyday diplomacy (n=21), followed by actions of conflict management (n=18) and finally antagonising actions (n=12). The actions that were mentioned the most were

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[113] See appendix B.
[114] See appendix C.

avoidance (n=10) and solidarity (n=11). The avoidance presented itself mostly in the way in which the topic of the war was avoided after it ended. All four participants stated that they never talked about the war, for fear of starting conflicts. One participant explained that when the topic of conversation would veer towards a contentious subject, the conversation would either stop or they would shift to a more peaceful topic. Another type of avoidant act came to light in the neighbourhoods and places which people visited. Most of the interviewees stated that right after the war, they mostly stayed in their own neighbourhood even when the borders had opened. These were the comfortable places which they knew, and so they preferred to stay in their own area instead of going to neighbourhoods dominated by other religious groups. However, the participants also stressed the solidarity between different religious groups and how the Lebanese people became one imagined community after the end of the war. The interviewees explained that the people of Lebanon came to realise that the people in the other groups are human too, and that they all want what is best for Lebanon. Besides avoidance and solidarity, other acts that were mentioned multiple times were affinity, the celebration of each other's culture and traditions, and reading, the mental categorising of places and people along sectarian lines. Affinity was mentioned as an important aspect of the friendships that the women developed with people from other religions: it showed their unity and respect for each other.

"*But okay, that Muslim colleague was much more open […] to our culture, so I went to invite her to Christmas, she came to eat with us, you know, and she came to church with me once.*"[115]

"*Back in the day, we were in a Christian school. And my teacher, all the names were Christian. And I've never thought of being Christian, Muslim, ever. Because, we live together, we accept that teacher, it was a really fun time. And we went to church, my parents allowed us.*
Maud: With school?
Interviewee: Yes, every Friday, going to church, no problem."[116]

Reading was demonstrated when two participants explained that after the war, the first question people asked each other when they first met was "Where are you from?". This question was not just a simple enquiry of where you were from, the other person wanted to know in which

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[115] Interview 1.
[116] Interview 2.

area of Lebanon or which neighbourhood in Beirut your family lived, so they knew the religious majority of that area, and to which religion you likely belonged.

Especially the acts of normalcy, affinity and solidarity were seen by the participants as peacebuilding. An important part of the peace was the return to normal life, including going out to restaurants, bars, and the seaside. Interviewees who had friends from different religions described the affinity that they experienced after the war ended: they would visit each other's hometowns and celebrate each other's religious holidays. The participants described these actions as an important part of peacebuilding, because they showed that there was no longer animosity between the religious groups but that they now respected each other and their traditions.

None of the participants mentioned a gender difference, described their own acts of everyday peacebuilding as gendered or agreed that the acts were gendered when asked this directly. All interviewees stated there was no difference between men or women in regard to the way they acted after the war ended.

To answer the research question, Lebanese women contribute to everyday peacebuilding by performing acts of avoidance and solidarity. By avoiding discussions about the war and imagining the Lebanese people as one united community, they attempt to avoid another outbreak of sectarian conflict. However, these actions might not be unique to women.

Before the interviews were carried out, the literature review had resulted in the following hypotheses:

Women in Lebanon contribute to everyday peacebuilding in the following ways:
1. Women contribute to peacebuilding by establishing networks with other women across sectarian boundaries in spaces such as the marketplace.
2. Women were trying to keep their immediate family safe, for example by persuading them not to join militias.
3. Women stayed silent about their experiences of (sexual) violence in order to keep the peace.
4. Women's acts of everyday peacebuilding are distinctly gendered: they are carrying out actions that men are not.

The first hypothesis was partly proven to be correct. Women did create ties with other women across sectarian boundaries, but not necessarily through women's networks and more often in the form of friendships. One participant mentioned the friendships she formed with people from other sects at her university, and how they learned about each other's religion and traditions

through their friendship. Another participant mentioned the friendship that developed between her and a Muslim co-worker, who she had never worked with during the war but with whom she became close friends after.

The second hypothesis has conflicting answers. One participant mentioned that her mother would pretend to faint during arguments at home, where fights broke out often since her brothers were all part of different militias. At a certain point her mother took their entire family away from the heavy fighting in Beirut and they moved for a while to southern Lebanon. This confirms the hypothesis, but another interviewee talked about how her mother was an active member of the Kataeb, one of the Christian political parties which was heavily involved in the fighting during the war. The interviewee herself went to military training camps organised by the party, and her older sister would sometimes come along to party meetings. The involvement of her mother and the whole family in the party disproved the hypothesis that women were trying to keep their immediate families away from the fighting.

The third hypothesis was proven to be correct. However, the participants in my study did not only stay silent about their experiences of violence, but about all aspects of the war, both to their immediate family and people from their own religious group, as well as to people from other religious groups.

The last hypothesis did not prove to be correct, as none of the women mentioned a gender difference in their acts of everyday peacebuilding.

Discussion

This discussion will open with some general reflections about the findings of this research in relation to the literature review and the field of study, before highlighting the most noteworthy themes that arose in the results.

The findings from the interviews answer the research question, as they present ways in which Lebanese women contribute to everyday peacebuilding: primarily through acts of avoidance and solidarity. These results differ from the findings of the literature review, because the acts of avoidance and solidarity, or similar actions, are not mentioned in the literature as ways in which women contribute to everyday peacebuilding. The literature instead focusses on the peacebuilding potential of (economic) women's networks, which are based on actions of civility and reciprocity, but not necessarily lead to solidarity. The solidarity which the women expressed, in the form of an imagined community across sectarian lines, is not mentioned in the literature on women and everyday peacebuilding. Another form of everyday peacebuilding highlighted in the literature is silence about experiences of (sexual) violence, but the avoidance that came up in the interviews was much more all-encompassing than women's experiences of

(sexual violence). It was not only their experiences which were not discussed, but the war in general became a forbidden topic.

"Maud: Yes. And were there things you didn't talk about after the war?

Interviewee: Not necessarily, no.

Maud: Were you talking about the war with people, or not?

Interviewee: I've never, actually, no, talked to people about the war, never.

Maud: Why not?

Interviewee: I never thought: I'm going to talk about the war. I came to the Netherlands; I want to move on with my life.

Maud: I get that.

Interviewee: I never talked about the war. I don't know why. But it hasn't happened that someone wants to talk to me about the war, ever.

Maud: And in Lebanon, when the borders reopened and maybe you met other people?

Interviewee: Also no.[117]

"Maud: So, when you came back, you didn't talk about the war? About what happened then?

Interviewee: No, we never talked about it."[118]

The findings of this research therefore present an important addition to the literature on women and everyday peacebuilding, as it shows two new ways in which women contribute to everyday peacebuilding.

It is also necessary to reflect on the results in relation to the field of everyday peacebuilding more generally. Because of the use of the everyday peacebuilding framework to interpret the data, we can see where on the antagonising actions-everyday diplomacy continuum the women's actions lie. As the women mostly mentioned acts of conflict management and everyday diplomacy, we can conclude that the women's actions are forms of everyday peace. The everyday peacebuilding framework as established in the theoretical framework proved to be quite all-encompassing, as no actions were mentioned that do not fall under one of the categories in the framework. The research thus provides a valuable case study for the field of everyday peacebuilding, and a good testing ground for the everyday peacebuilding framework.

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[117] Interview 2.
[118] Interview 4.

This next section of the discussion will consider the three most noteworthy themes that arose in the results. Firstly, the relation between the two main actions of everyday peacebuilding that were mentioned: avoidance and solidarity. Secondly, the lack of a gender dimension in the answers of the interviewees, and finally, the class difference in Lebanon in relation to everyday peacebuilding.

Avoidance and performed solidarity

One of the main themes which kept coming back during the interviews was avoidance. All the participants stated that after the war had ended, they avoided talking about what happened during the war or about other topics which might lead to conflict.

"We didn't dare to talk about it, because yes, how do you say that? We were afraid to argue, weren't we? And you know, to have conflict at work, so we didn't. We didn't."[119]

This avoidance is shown in the women who were interviewed, but even more in the women who were not interviewed. Three more women had agreed to do the interview, but when they learned that the interview was to be about the war and the post-war period, they withdrew their participation, stating that they did not want to be interviewed about topics of war, religion, or social issues. While it is to be expected that people are hesitant to speak with a stranger about such heavy topics as war, the withdrawals are still worth mentioning, as they reflect the reluctance among Lebanese people to speak about the war: the same reluctance that was talked about in the interviews. Avoidance was also shown in the interviews in a different way through reading. Although reading forms a separate category in the everyday peacebuilding framework, the interviewees described reading as a necessary precursor to avoidance. They explained how new acquaintances try to figure out each other's religious backgrounds, and this likely stems from a place of avoidance too. The interviewees said that they were constantly afraid to say the wrong thing and to start conflicts. Figuring out to which group someone belongs made them more at ease, because they knew what they could and could not say, and which topics to avoid:

"And that's so funny, because if you meet a Lebanese and from the name you can't know is it a Catholic or Muslim then directly, you're going to ask them "hey, where are you from in Lebanon?" Because if they name a region, then you know who is Muslim, immediately. So that's the first question, here as well. When I got to know her (a friend) she immediately asked: "where

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[119] Interview 1.

are you from, which region?" I said Achrafieh, Achrafieh is really the city of Catholic resistance. Achrafieh then you know Catholic, Christian and then you know we were shooting at each other. So immediately "Achrafieh, oh no we are from the other side.""[120]

The observation that reading and avoidance overlap and depend on each other shows that although the everyday peacebuilding framework is helpful, sometimes it is impossible to make a clear distinction between different acts of everyday peacebuilding.

Besides avoidance, another act of everyday peacebuilding that came up often was solidarity. The participants stressed the solidarity and unity between the Lebanese people after the war ended: *"Then just, over, the groups. The people back, as if the groups were never there."[121]* They highlighted that after the war, the people realised that everyone wants the same: *"everyone wants peace"[122]* or *"everyone wants what's best for the country."[123]* Interestingly, the participants mentioned this repeatedly, but none of the participants mentioned any acts of compromise, such as sustained dialogue, negotiation, or conflict resolution. The war and the grievances that caused it were not to be solved, they were just over. This reflects the theory of no victor, no vanquished, or in other words the idea that not one political group in Lebanon can eliminate the other groups, and that the people therefore have to coexist and preserve national unity.[124] People are required to give up hopes of justice and reconciliation, as these processes would shift the unstable peace that has been created and potentially lead to another war.[125] This lack of compromise, but instead strong expressions of solidarity, is not just something that is carried out by politicians. As the interviews show, the interviewees echo this idea as well, since they mentioned many different acts of avoidance and solidarity but not of compromise. Therefore, it seems as if the solidarity expressed by the participants is in a way a type of avoidance. To avoid reconciling with the war, the participants emphasised the unity of the Lebanese people. It begs the question to what extent this solidarity is genuine, or whether it is a kind of performed solidarity. Unfortunately, the interview data is not in-depth enough to analyse the deeper layers behind these expressions of solidarity. A great opportunity for further research therefore lies in the investigation of this relation between (performed) solidarity and avoidance.

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[120] Interview 1.
[121] Interview 4.
[122] Interview 3.
[123] Interview 1.
[124] Hermez, *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon,* 6.
[125] Ibid., 7.

The uneasy relation between avoidance and solidarity is a crucial addition to the everyday peacebuilding framework because it shows that actions do not necessarily fall into one category, and instead can be placed in different places on the antagonising actions-everyday diplomacy spectrum. Actions that may appear to be forms of everyday diplomacy may stem from a place of conflict management. However, this does not necessarily have to change their effect, as these actions could still have the potential to create everyday diplomacy.

Gender and the role of mothers
The literature discussed in the literature review highlighted the unique role that women can play in everyday peacebuilding, based on their position in society which is often different from men. This research was not meant to identify a difference between men and women in their acts of everyday peacebuilding, as no men were interviewed. However, the interviewees were still asked whether they saw a gendered element in their acts of everyday peacebuilding, something specific to women which men did not do. The interviewees did not confirm this unique role for women, as they did not recognise that they played a different role from men during and after the war. This could be due to a few different reasons. Firstly, perhaps there is no difference between the everyday peacebuilding acts of men and women in the case of Lebanon. They might be carrying out the same actions in the same way. Alternatively, there might be a difference between men and women, but women could have grown so used to it that they do not register this difference as noteworthy. As a third option, women might be aware of the difference but hesitant to mention it during the interview. When the interviewees were asked about this gender difference, the answers were always brief:

"Maud: No, I see. And was the contact with men different from that with women after the war?
Interviewee: No for me no trouble actually. Women, men: the same."[126]

"Maud: Okay. And then after the war, if you had contact with Muslims, was it different with men or with women?
Interviewee: Well, no. No, not for me. Because the women and men I had contact with were on the educated side, and then it doesn't matter. You know, who you talked to or something. So that was basically the same thing, how can I say that, same background or something? No,

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[126] Interview 2.

those people, I didn't have a problem with them, I didn't have it at all. So I could be with women, as I was with men."[127]

Whichever the reason, the fact remains that there is a discrepancy between the interview data and the literature review. Because the women mentioned no specific gender dimension to their acts of everyday peacebuilding, a potential future research project could interview men as well as women, to identify whether there is really no difference in the answers of men and women. Something which came up in the interviews a few times but which the questions did not cover extensively was the role of mothers during and after the war. None of the women which I interviewed had children during the war, but two of them mentioned the role of their mother in the household. One of the participants mentioned that her mother would pretend to faint to stop her brothers from fighting about the war. This corresponds with the more traditional perspective which sees mothers as inherent peacemakers, like the mothers of Plaza de Mayo, the Sabine women, or countless other examples.[128] However, another participant's mother was an active member of a political and militant party, which corresponds with Eggert's findings, who noted that Lebanese women joined militias just like men and often for the same reasons, and were also involved in armed combat.[129]

These are just two of the infinite number of roles which mothers can play during a war. Because the participants are all in the same age range and did not have children during the war, the mother's perspective could not be further explored in this research. Therefore, a possibility for future research lies in investigating the role of mothers during the Lebanese civil war.

Class differences

Less prevalent in the interview data, but an important perspective nevertheless, is the relation between class and everyday peacebuilding. Two of the participants, both belonging to the upper-middle class in Beirut and university-educated, mentioned the difference between educated and non-educated people in regard to their contact with other communities. One participant explained that highly educated people especially were in contact with other

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[127] Interview 1.
[128] DeLaure, Marilyn Bordwell. "Peace Profile: The San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace." *Peace review: A Journal of Social Justice* 23, no. 3 (2011): 404-409; Karaman, Emine Rezzan. "Remember, S/He Was Here Once: Mothers Call for Justice and Peace in Turkey." *Journal of Middle East women's studies* 12, no. 3 (2016): 382-410.
[129] Eggert, "Revisiting Women's Roles in Conflict and Peace: Female Fighters During the Lebanese Civil War," 108.

communities and were building bonds between each other. Another participant said that she was able to become friends with people from other communities because they were highly educated, which made them more open and understanding of each other. The other interviewees, from middle- and working-class backgrounds, did not go to university. They did not mention education as a necessity for solidarity, and they mentioned just as many actions of solidarity as the other two participants. Since attending university in Lebanon is expensive, especially the more prestigious American universities, the issue of education inevitably becomes an issue of class as well. It is noteworthy that these two participants mentioned that university-educated people are more likely to be open and tolerant and to stick to the peace process, while the data from the interviews does not show this. This observation corresponds to other research which has been carried out about class and "anti-sectarianism" in Lebanon. In interviews that Deeb carried out regarding intersectarian marriage, several of the interlocutors attributed someone's openness to mixed marriage to their level of education.[130] This serves as a reminder of the impossibility of isolating sect as a distinct analytical category. In reality, sect makes up only a part of people's understanding of social identity and difference.[131] Other factors that play a role in this are education level, class, gender and location. In order to gain a better understanding of the intersectionality of these factors and their effect on everyday peacebuilding, the beliefs about education level and/or class in relation to practices of everyday peacebuilding could be a promising subject for further studies.

Conclusion

This preliminary research has attempted to explore how women are acting in situations of war and peacebuilding, whilst setting aside presumed ideas about the inherent peacefulness or violence of women. This research has explored in what ways women in Lebanon contribute to peacebuilding in informal and non-organised ways. It found that women contribute to everyday peacebuilding through acts of avoidance, solidarity and affinity. After the war, women formed friendships with people from other religions and started to learn about each other's traditions, as they left the animosity of the war behind and began to see the Lebanese people as one united group. Meanwhile, conversations about the war were cautiously avoided in order to not start conflict. The hypotheses which were established based on the literature were partly proven to

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[130] Deeb, Nalbantian and Sbaiti, *Practicing Sectarianism: Archival and Ethnographic Interventions on Lebanon,* 170.
[131] Deeb, Lara. "Beyond sectarianism: Intermarriage and social difference in Lebanon." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52 (2020): 215–228.

be correct. The participants did not exactly form networks with other women, but they did form friendships with people from other religious groups. Some women were trying to keep their families safe by moving away from especially dangerous places, or by breaking up fights at home, but other women joined militias and brought their families into political parties. Women did stay silent in order to keep the peace, not just about their war experiences but about the war in general. Only the last hypothesis proved to be wrong, as none of the women saw a gendered element in their actions. The participants stated that men and women were not acting differently after the war. This creates an interesting contrast with the literature on women in peacebuilding, which places a strong emphasis on the special role that women can play in peacebuilding. Additionally, countless NGOs are currently working hard to advocate for a gender sensitive approach in peacebuilding, and for the presence of women in conflict-prevention and peacebuilding processes.[132] The gendered element of (everyday) peacebuilding is brought up time and time again, but when asked about this, the women in the interviews were quick to dismiss this. They reported no difference in their contact between men or women after the war and stated that men and women did not behave differently after the war. Because of their brief dismissals of the gendered element in everyday peacebuilding, this begs the question why they were so quick to reject this idea. Possibly, it could be due to their aversion towards identity politics in Lebanon in general. The women continuously explained the need for unity and solidarity in Lebanon, and how group-thinking was undermining this unity. Perhaps the suggestion of a difference between men and women felt too much like a new form of group-thinking. Perhaps they did not want to be put in yet another group, this time gender-based instead of sect-based, and this is why they rejected the gender difference between men and women in peacebuilding. As previously stated, it is curious that NGOs are putting so much emphasis on the role of women in peacebuilding, while this special role was rejected by the women on the ground. These results show that this research approach is fruitful, because it contradicts literature even with its small sample size. However, further research will be necessary to explain this discrepancy between the literature and the interview data.

This research adds to the literature which has focussed on women and everyday peacebuilding, as it is the first study to be done about women and everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. Because of this new case study, some new additions to the literature have been presented. The literature on women and everyday peacebuilding discussed in the literature review is not based on the everyday peacebuilding framework as presented in the theoretical framework, and therefore

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[132] See the work of International Alert, Saferworld, Conciliation Resources, the Global Peace Foundation, International Crisis Group, Search for Common Ground, and activists such as Kawkab al-Thaibani.

this research has created a bridge between the wider field of everyday peacebuilding and the field of women and everyday peacebuilding in Lebanon. The actions of affinity, avoidance and solidarity had not yet been observed in the literature on women and everyday peacebuilding, while this study has highlighted those actions as the main avenues for everyday peacebuilding for the Lebanese women that were interviewed.

It is also a valuable case study for the wider field of everyday peacebuilding, as it tests the everyday peacebuilding framework as established by Mac Ginty and expanded by Ware and Ware and Bourhrous and O'Driscoll for the case of Lebanon. The research and its analysis showed that the everyday peacebuilding framework is a useful tool with which to analyse the interviews, because it provides insight into where on the antagonising actions-everyday diplomacy continuum the participants' actions lie. However, sometimes it is impossible to make a clear distinction between different acts of everyday peacebuilding because the acts sometimes overlap and co-create each other.

This research has created an interesting insight in the potential for everyday peacebuilding. The sentiments of solidarity which the women expressed were very strong, and the women mentioned that these feelings of solidarity are particularly prevalent under the general public, while the political elite continues to perpetuate sectarianism for political gains.[133] This shows the potential of everyday peacebuilding because it shows the peacebuilding potential of "normal people", a potential which is largely ignored by the literature on peacebuilding in Lebanon. As a next step, research should be done to better understand the extent of this solidarity in Lebanon, and how it relates to the avoidance which was also shown in the interviews. Once we have a better grasp of this notion of solidarity, it could help us understand how this solidarity gets created and reproduced, what its limits are, and, if it turns out to be as strong as it seems from the interviews, where the remaining sectarian tensions in Lebanon are coming from. These are essential questions if we want to understand the social dynamics in Lebanon and the future of sectarianism in the country. This is a powerful way of looking at social relations in a country, as it shows the bottom-up way in which everyday people shape their own society. In our current day and age, full of insecurities and political unrest, it is a comforting thought that we as a people might hold much more power than we think.

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[133] Interview 3; See also Salloukh, Bassel F. et al. *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*. London: Pluto Press, 2015.

In much of the literature on everyday peacebuilding, it is hailed as the next promising step in peacebuilding.[134] This research has shown that everyday peacebuilding indeed holds much potential for the peace process in Lebanon, and possibly for many other places too.

To conclude, this study has attempted to break free from the debate on women's inherent peacefulness or violence by exploring what actions Lebanese women are taking in times of peacebuilding. Especially in a country such as Lebanon, where sectarian boundaries are continually reinforced by the politicians, the government, and the system of personal status law, the investigation of the perspectives of people on the ground can provide a valuable insight in the reality of sectarian conflict, and the harshness of sectarian boundaries. This research has thus added to the literature on women and everyday peacebuilding by creating an un-biased exploratory analysis on the actions of everyday peace and conflict that women are taking in Lebanon.

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[134] Randazzo, Elisa. "The paradoxes of the 'everyday': scrutinising the local turn in peace building." *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 8 (2016): 1351–70.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

1. Beginning remarks:
   - Do I have your permission to record the interview?;
   - Your real name will not be used in writing anywhere;
   - You are free to stop the interview at any time;
   - You can withdraw your participation at any time, even after the interview has finished;
   - You do not have to answer questions you do not want to answer;
   - If you do not like a question or a specific topic, please tell me so.

2. Background questions
   - Where in Lebanon are you from? Which community?
   - How old were you when the war started?
   - How old were you when the war ended?
   - (When did you leave Lebanon and how did you get to the Netherlands?)
   - (What are your present links back to the community? Do you go back often? Do you still have family there? Do you follow the news about your community? Do you live in a Lebanese community here?)
   - What was your place within your community? Socio-economic background, family situation, employment, social status. How much of that is still the case?

3. Experiences of the war
   - What was your life like before and after the war?
   - What do you remember your family telling you about the war after 1975?
   - Did you discuss the war at home?
   - If so: what language was used to talk about other groups?
   - Were there topics you avoided in order to "keep the peace"?
   - Did people in your family join armed groups?
   - If so: was this encouraged at home or not?

4. Social cohesion
   - Did you have contact with people from other communities before the war? What was that like?
   - Did you have contact with people from other communities during and after the war? Did the contact change?
   - Were there topics you did not discuss with other groups?
   - Did you learn about the other group's religion/culture after the war?
   - Did you go to new places and shops after the war?
   - Was the contact with men from different groups different than the contact with women?

5. Peacebuilding
   - Do you see these actions as peacebuilding?
   - When you think of your community back home, how would you hope to see that community someday? What does everyday peace mean to them?

6. Gender
   - Do you see these actions as gendered?
   - Did other women do this too?
   - Did men do this as well?
   - Did men and women behave differently after the war?

7. Finishing remarks

- Do you have any friends/family members who would be willing to be interviewed?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form
Statement of Consent for Participation in Research

I hereby accept to participate in a research project by being interviewed. The interview will be conducted by Maud Weis, from Leiden University, the Netherlands. The project is supervised by Dr. Noa Schonmann from the same University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about women and everyday peacebuilding, and is part of the thesis for the MA degree in Middle Eastern Studies.

1. My participation in the project involves being interviewed. My participation in this is likely to require approximately 1 hour.
2. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid or in any way remunerated for my participation.
3. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time. If I decline to participate at the outset, or withdraw during or after the interview, the researcher will not share the information I provided up until that point with anyone.
4. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I have the right to decline to answer any question, or to end the interview.
5. The interviewer will take notes during the interview. She may also ask for my consent to having the interview recorded; if I provide such consent, the interview will be recorded.

Recording of interview.
The participant is kindly asked to tick one of the following boxes:
☐ I accept to be recorded during the interview.
☐ I accept to be interviewed on the condition that the interview will not be recorded.

Confidentiality.
6. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in this research and its resulting written work, including possible publication(s). The use of records and data will protect the privacy of me as an individual and of institutions with which I am associated.
7. I understand, however, that the student's supervisor may have access to notes, a possible recording or a transcript from the interview, in order to assist the student in the analysis. Beyond this, no other person will have access to the notes, recording or transcript.
8. I understand that the finished thesis will by default become available publicly online through the University Library.
9. I understand that the plans for this study have been reviewed by the student's supervisor in Leiden University.
10. I understand that should I have any questions subsequent to the interview regarding the research or the uses to which my statements will be put, I can contact the student and/or the supervisor. Their contact details are given at the bottom of this form.
11. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____

S2122529

Signature of Participant   Date

_____ _____
Printed Name of Participant   Signature of the Student

For further information subsequent to participating, the participant may contact the student and/or her supervisor. Their contact details are given below.

Maud Weis
maudweis00@gmail.com

Noa Schonmann
n.schonmann@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Appendix C: Results

	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4	Total
Blaming	1	0	0	0	1
Joining militias	0	0	1	2	3
Fights or arguments	5	0	0	0	5
Hateful speech	3	0	0	0	3
Avoidance	4	2	2	2	10
Reading	5	1	0	0	6
Normalcy	0	1	0	1	2
Positive parenting and mentoring	0	0	0	1	1
Civility	2	1	0	0	3
Affinity	3	1	2	0	6
Solidarity	2	6	1	2	11
Total	25	12	6	8	51

Appendix D: Transcripts

In order to keep this thesis relatively brief and condensed, this appendix contains only an abbreviated version of the first interview, to demonstrate the interview style and the questions that were asked.

Transcript Interview 1
10 March 2024, 02:00pm
[Recording starts]

[…]

Maud: And what role did your family play in the war? Because your parents were members of the Kataeb, right?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely right. So my father was a member of the Kataeb. That was a Christian party, and he had a high position. And my mother, who started in that same party, in the social side, you know, because a party always has ammunition, the weapon side, and then you have the social side, because then we had to keep the region where the party dominated had to remain good, economically speaking. But it is also good for the party to also have social... Everyone loved and supported the party. So my mother worked on the social side of the party. And both my parents were a very big fan of Bashir Ismail, you know him? The president and he was the son of the leader of the Kataeb.

Maud: Yes

Interviewee: Yes, and at one point, he asked his dad to do armed militia, and that was the Lebanese Forces. And actually, it wasn't separate from each other, but it was the weapons department actually. My father stayed, with the Kataeb actually, stayed with the police. But they were all very close that [...]

Maud: And did you have family who were in that armed party?

Interviewee: No, not family but acquaintances, who went to fight. I also once went to, you know, you started brainwashing as a little kid huh, and you're in a region that was Catholic, just Catholic or Christian or something. And yes, to bring people into the party, then they start doing camps. Bit of fun for kids first, fun going camping and stuff. But yes, I was 16, I once thought: yes, I'm looking forward to it, with my friends. Girls, we also went to camp there and then we learned how to shoot and with weapons and is a lot of fun, and then you learn how to camouflage. And then they wake you up at two o'clock in the morning and "now we have a mission" and then we had to camouflage.

Maud: But that was just fun, a fun activity?
Interviewee: Yes. Has to do with that party with a kind of brainwash, do you know that? If there is ever another war, we have to rely on you, you know? Such things, but it was [...] [laughs]

Maud: And how did your life change after the war? Because at first it was very separate, right? Then you lived very much in your own group. How did that change after the war?

Interviewee: It's been a long time coming. First, the borders opened. And during the war, I didn't realize how close we were to the enemies. That's from here to Flora (shopping mall) you can imagine. I didn't realize it and I was 22. Can you imagine, all I knew was: you shouldn't

touch that line, because there are snipers there. But for the rest, I didn't know that on the other side were those enemies. It was surreal actually. From one day to the next, you know, that's one thing. Two: I was working at a bank at at the time and we had a branch on the Muslim side and a branch, so where I worked, on the Catholic side. And all of a sudden, we could see each other again, you know. So that was my first friend or colleague who was Muslim, who worked in the bank. That was my first time I knew someone who had a Muslim background.

Maud: Because before all the borders opened, you didn't work with that other bank.

Interviewee: No, I knew them by names and I knew we had a branch on the other side, but no, no, that was a different world and we didn't dare go to that other side, you know. So that was very strange, that was really strange. That all of a sudden, which was strange, one day you hate each other, and you wished that the other one died and the other side you started to discover that the other one is also a human being like you and that other also wants the best for your country, so that was... But Maud remained, that kind of fanaticism remained. Last time I told you about that distrust. But sometimes I said things to my colleagues, Muslim and afterwards I thought "oh my god what did I say now?" Or my other colleague said, "What are you saying?" You know, so, yes, it was really, really weird, really strange to realise that. Yes, yes.

Maud: But what was that like... For example, did you talk about the war with that colleague or not?

Interviewee: No, not at all, we didn't dare to talk about it, because yes, how do you say that? We were afraid to argue, weren't we? And you know the conflict at work, so we didn't. We didn't.

But okay, that Muslim colleague was much more open because she was a girl and highly educated too. She was more open to our culture so I went to invite her to Christmas, she came to eat with us, you know, and she came to church with me once. You know so she was very curious about and definitely women, you know, because with them, women are lower. Not her, but her family, oppressed, you know more than with the Catholic, Muslim, and so she was really very open. She didn't think her religion was that great, you know, so she wanted to see, how are the others? Yes.

Maud: And did you also go to things from her religion?

Interview: No.

Maud: Only she came to you, you didn't go to iftar and stuff.

Interviewee: Yes because, you hear that all the time, don't you, before you oppress the women there like this: Why do I have to go there? She was more open than I was. I wasn't at all curious about their faith or.... And that's also maybe because in my house, they were maybe a little bit more fanatical than others, you know, because that's to do with the party. And maybe because of what I had been through, you know and my family...

Maud: How were Muslims talked about at home then?

Interviewee: That they didn't like Lebanon and they just wanted Lebanon... They're treaters, you know, treaters. Because the beginning of the war started with the Palestinians, so they're Muslim, Sunni, and they wanted to change Lebanon. And the Muslim, Sunni of Lebanon, they were okay with it. So that's how it all started. And, because everything started that way and

that the Lebanese Muslim Sunni have supported the Palestinians, yes that was, you can't forgive something anymore, you know, so that was... That's how I grew up. And that ... It was more the treaters.

Maud: And then after the war, people talked differently about Muslims at home?

Interviewee: Yes, and certainly my father. Because I didn't know that he also had Muslim colleagues. And then all of a sudden, he started calling his Muslim colleagues on Ramadan to say "congratulations on Ramadan and stuff." You know, what am I hearing now? "Yes, that's my great friend Ahmed, blah blah blah."
And the other day when I was in Lebanon, I had heard something from my father that I didn't know. I don't know, I'll tell you last time? So Dad was high up in that Catholic party, and he worked in Lebanon's energy company. That belongs to the state. That belonged to the state. And during the war, it wasn't very bad then, so it had only begun. They call it Black Saturday. And so the Catholics, militia, military, so...

Maud: Oh, I think you did tell me that they came for the Muslim colleagues, and then your father said no.

Interviewee: Yes, I told you that. So I didn't know that, I heard all that afterwards. Because what I belonged to was those bad guys, they don't want the best for Lebanon. But my dad had Muslim friends, so yes.

Maud: Because he didn't want to tell me that or something like that after the war?

Interviewee: I think more, the discussion was more focused on the bad guy. Maybe between them were some good People, but that the big part was more focused on the bad guy, they want to destroy Lebanon, you know, and then you really don't get it or maybe not, But I heard that with my sisters, I don't know Maud but, it was how I grew, you know, that was during the war. What was your question anyway?

Maud: Yes how it was talked about at home, but yes...

Interviewee: Yes, and certainly, so the Muslims were the enemies. Syria was also an enemy. You know, and also we thought that the Muslims want to get Syria into Lebanon, so treaters as well. But this is not so, this was not so, but we did not know that.

Maud: Yes, that's what you're hearing now.

Interviewee: Then you hear, that's how it was sold.

[…]

Maud: And were there any topics that you didn't talk about at home? That you were like "oh, I'm not going to say that."

Interviewee: During the war or after the war?

Maud: Yes, or during: both.

Interviewee: Yes, we had at one point, that gets even more complicated. So, in 91 there was a war in the Catholic region between the army of Lebanon, so the Catholic side of the army, and

my father's party, so that started in 91. And at this time, a new leader in that party had come from my father, a new leader in that party. And dad is very political, so he didn't say anything to him, but we felt that, he's not with him. So, in the beginning, my father was with the Lebanese army, General Aoun, he is still alive. And we all ended up in basement for two years actually, because that was really the most intense of the war.

Maud: In 91?

Interviewee: In 91, to 93.

Maud: Yes.

Interviewee: And in the basement there were two sides, so the one pro General Aoun and the one pro-Kataeb, so pro-others. And we sat together in the basement. And it's so crazy because we were bombed actually, where I was sitting, I was bombed by the army that I loved, so you know. That was, back then it really wasn't that much fun, y'know.

Maud: But what was it like in that basement? Because then you're sitting there with people of the other party's sorts.

Interviewee: Yes Maud, there were situations. We wanted to avoid conflict, but everyone knew who everyone was with. So it was maybe stinging, and we sometimes had fights together, yes, we, we had fights. We sometimes went hard against hard in the basement. You know, "mine is the best, he knows what he's doing." Those others, say, "Hey, he's bombing us, he's killing us, what are you talking about?" You know.

Maud: Who was arguing the most? Was it then, the men were going to argue or the women or both, or does it not matter?

Interviewee: Most of the youth were arguing, those were older people, we knew who they were with, but they really didn't want to have a conflict in the basement. So the adults were mature, and where did it get hot? That was us, we were 18, 20 and went hard against hard, hard against hard. yes, and at one point, so the Syrian army expelled General Aoun, so they came in and kicked General Aoun out. We lost, the pro-Aoun lost. And I remember those neighbors of ours who were against Aoun. They went out partying in the streets, you know, so that. You see, we've won, and Syria is in and we were like, you guys had fought against Syria in 1978 to take Syria out. Now you are celebrating, because Syria is in and they have destroyed that Catholic leader. This is real, you can't think that, is unthinkable, unthinkable. How they are manipulated, manipulation, is not normal.
And so far, actually, now politics is still pro-Aoun and is still those other, Lebanese forces. Then we can argue, that...

Maud: Still?

Interviewee: Yes [laughs]. Yes, there are people who don't talk to me anymore because I'm pro-Aoun, well.

Maud: And when the borders reopened, did you also go to the Muslim side of the city, or did you stay mainly on your own side?

Interviewee: Okay in the war, so 93 at some point it was no longer liveable where we were in Beirut and my uncle who came to us and my aunt who had a house outside Beirut which was

better, so it was safer. Then you didn't have a bombing raid so my uncle wanted to go to his daughter who lived next door to my aunt and she came to us and he said to my father, I'm going to bring your children with me and then we'll take them to their aunt and we'll go with my family to my daughter. So that's how it was, huh? So you emigrate to a safer place in your own country. And we couldn't flee through the Catholic region, because there were barricades in the Catholic region. So we had to flee through the Muslim region and so you see that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, right? So the Muslim region was open to us, so it was suddenly safe to go through the Muslim region to the Catholic region. And that was for me the first time I've seen the Muslim region. So that was the first time and then the borders have opened. I didn't know that, I was scared, I didn't know where to drive? To get lost [...] Well, every now and then I went to my colleague, in the west of Beirut. Or occasionally to a restaurant, I know [her husband's name], that was in 97, 98, got to know [her husband's name] we went to restaurant for the first time on that other side you know, on the seafront. That wasn't me saying "hey, shall we go, to Hamra," you know, that was really hard for me. And so far, so far, I don't know the region very well, so if you say to me you have to... I can't go through small streets alone or something.

Maud: Yes, and did other people have that too, that everyone especially more in the region where they...

Interviewee: yes, I think so, yes, most. We went out as kids and stuff in our region. yes, it's just like yes I don't know, what you know? Yes. Since I left, it's one Lebanon now, and then you can go anywhere and stuff. And still, I feel more comfortable in my region, still. Yes, yes, yes.

Maud: So most of the contact with Muslims after the war was through your work?

Interviewee: Um, yes, yes.

Maud: And apart from work?

Interviewee: No, not at all, not at all. How many Muslim friends do I have?... None [laughs]. No, I have here, I have to be honest, I got to know someone here, Lebanese woman, who is super nice, who is super super nice. She is a Muslim […] But that's the only one, and that colleague of mine I haven't seen or spoken to her anymore and so we lost touch. So no, I don't have any Muslim friends. Just that woman here.

Maud: But she's also Lebanese, moved here too?

Interviewee: Yes, during the war as well. And, that's so funny, because if you meet a Lebanese and from the name you can't know is it a Catholic or Muslim then directly, you're going to ask the "hey, where are you from in Lebanon?" Because if they name a region, then you know who are Muslim, directly. So that's the first question, here as well. When I got to know her she immediately asked: "where are you from, which region?" I said Achrafieh, Achrafieh is really the city of Catholic resistance. Achrafieh then you know catholic, Christian and then you know we were shooting at each other. So immediately Achrafieh, oh no we are from the other side. That's so awesome.

Maud: And is that different, if someone, if you meet someone and someone who turns out to be Muslim or Christian, is that different?

Interviewee: Yes.

Maud: How?

Interviewee: Yes for me again is the distrust, but also culture. There is a real cultural difference, a real cultural difference. The way of life is different, the way of thinking is different. Also there are things, I didn't know them, you know so they use different spices than we do in a... One dish, in other words. That was so funny, because she wanted, one time I went to Lebanon and she wanted to get spices, she said do you want to get that for me? Well, I went to my aunt and said, "Auntie, do you know those spices?" Oh she said, those Muslim shahid, they use these kinds of spices, you know. There is also a big difference with the recipes how you make. So everything is different, the way of thinking about girls and boys, about that, also that they live here and her old son is 28, he had to get married now, because he is very old. I said, how old, you know? Or... And here you can see the differences. She thinks, she says, she's a little more open. She says, "Yes, but he has to leave the house now. 28, he's still at home." And her husband says, "What?! Do you want to send him out of the house?" You know, things like that, that's very different, very different Maud. So it's, because we didn't grow up together, because my parents' generation they knew a lot of Muslim and they lived together, so they knew each other. But we, didn't grow up together, so for me every time it's a discovery: what's it like on the other side? How they think, that difference of culture is not normal. And, what is important, friends of mine who went to study in AUB. So, they went to study in American University. And they taught a lot of Muslim students, who were younger than me, because I was out of college when the war... But they are younger than I am and they now said, "We really found out that we all want the same thing for this country." Just with, you know, that's when their eyes started to open about, "okay, well, we can talk to each other to have the best for the country, you know." So that was back in the day, so that's a testimony of theirs, of huh, well actually we want the same thing.

Maud: Okay. And then after the war the contact was with, if you had contact with Muslims, was it different with men or with women?

Interviewee: Yes, no. No, not for me. Because the women and men I had contact with were on the educated side, and then it doesn't matter. You know, who you talked to or something. So that was basically the same thing, how do I say that, same background or something? No, those people, I didn't have a problem with them, I didn't have them at all. So I could be with women, as I was with men. I don't know, on their side how it was, how was it. But, no. But it remains the case, there were taboos, which you could not discuss. And there were things that sometimes, I said, you left out, because it started conflicts.

Maud: Such as?

Interviewee: Like were invited once, with my Muslim colleague, to another colleague, and there were also people who didn't know us you know, and they were all Catholic except for that Muslim colleague. And we were sitting there, and it was the discussion about everything, and all of a sudden somebody says, "yes, I had a Muslim neighbor, and she was, yes, her house was dirty" or something, you know, so that. And then all hell would have broken loose, because that other Muslim was sitting there, and someone said so [poke] to him, but she saw it and then all hell broke loose. "yes, racist" you know, and "what's that," she was right actually. You know, you don't know where you are and who you're talking to anymore. But in the past you came from, that everyone is Catholic, they are Catholic here. So that's what you thought, that everyone is Catholic, so those conflicts didn't exist. But when it was open and we started mixing with each other, more conflicts were like this, or once actually said.

[…]

Maud: And then, after the war, when you have more contact with Muslims, did you see that as part of the peace process or were you not involved in that at all?

Interviewee: Yes, actually, actually. yes, at first it was a shock, so for me "hey, those are the enemies, but they are people like me and they want the best for my country." So that was first, wasn't it? Why are they enemies? And two was: "hey, but we can live together, there's nothing to worry about. You know, if we respect each other, we can get along with each other." And three, yes, it's part of a peaceful process because I really don't want another war like that, because it's really pointless, you know, so.

Maud: But even then, when that colleague went with me to church or to Christmas, for example...

Interviewee: Yes, I thought that was great, yes I thought that was great. And that was part of the peace, you know, then I was like "wow, great". Yes, that's peaceful, that's peaceful. That I'm doing something for Lebanon too, that we're friends, we can get along, that's good for Lebanon, and that was part of my action for my country, you know, that's great, yes, yes.

[…]

Maud: Great, those were my questions.

Interviewee: Oh, easy, easy. I hope you've got something from it.

Maud: I'm sure of it.

[End of recording]