

Table 7. Professional women as percentage of UN Mission staff as of 31 May, 1995 a/

LEVEL	per cent of UN mission staff
D2 to USG	0%
P5/D1	14.0%
P3/P4	20.3%
P1/P2	34.5%
Total	23%

Source: Statistics compiled from UN personnel statistics as of 31 May, 1995.

a/ Includes UN staff members on fixed-term contracts of limited duration (less than 12 months).

Some scholars subscribe to a feminist theoretical perspective on conflict resolution. This school of thought asserts that women are socially conditioned to be more peaceful and peace-loving and less violent than men. They attribute the more pacifist orientation of females to the roles that women play as mothers responsible for giving birth to and nurturing future generations and as conciliators within the family and in their local communities. They argue that women, as a result of their intermediary role within the household and community, have well-developed negotiating skills which could and should be extended into conflict resolution and negotiations in national and international arenas.

It has also been contended that the presence of women contributes to differences in decision-making in terms of content, priorities, management style, organizational culture and group dynamics.<sup>35</sup> Women's leadership is likely to bring less militarily inclined peace-keeping. There is a minimum level of representation required to enable any minority to influence the culture of a task-oriented group. It has therefore been argued that where women have joined organizations or decision-making bodies in sufficient numbers, they have created a more collaborative atmosphere, characterized by mutual respect, and sought consensus rather than a winner-take-all (zero sum game) solution. According to this perspective, women tend to focus more on resolving rather than simply discussing problems,<sup>36</sup> a characteristic important in dealing with peace and security matters, preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, peacemaking and peace-building.

Existing evidence on UN peace-keeping operations, although fragmentary, seems to confirm the "critical mass" theory and the hypothesis that women's participation brings new elements, values and perspectives to such operations. Discussions with a number of former participants in recent UN peace-keeping missions suggest that the participation of women, although they have been few in number, has contributed a new dimension to these missions.

#### Conclusions

Gender bias by the United Nations, even if unintended, has apparently been a factor contributing to the low representation of women in UN peace-keeping operations, especially in top-level positions. This may change if a recent proposal is implemented to extend ". . . the target of 50 per cent women and men in posts subject to geographical distribution by the year 2000, as set by the General Assembly in resolution 49/167, to all other categories of posts; namely to posts with special language requirements as well as field missions and mission replacement posts, irrespective of the type or duration of the appointment, or of the series of Staff Rules under which an appointment is made. The percentage should apply both overall and within each category".<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, in its recommendations on women and armed conflict, called for actions to be taken ". . . to promote equal participation of women and equal opportunities for women to participate in all forums and peace activities at