

Winning Hearts & Minds? Discourses of Masculinity in the New Zealand Army/Ngati Tumatauenga



Kiri Stevens

kiri.stevens@gmail.com

Candidate for Masters in Development Studies

05 December 2012

Hi. I want to start by thanking you all for taking the time to come and listen to me speak. Because presentations are limited to 5mins I have chosen to focus only on one aspect of my research.

What can we learn from looking at New Zealand soldiers acting as peacekeepers in the development space?



The question I would like to explore today is: What can **we learn** from looking at New Zealand soldiers **acting as peacekeepers in the development space?**

And I think Ms Kothari's opening address really spoke to this when she talked about the burring and expanding of the boundaries of thing we call 'development'. Who is involved and what situated knowledges do they bring?

If you look at these two images here, what questions about development does this raise for you? What feelings do these image evoke?

My research has sought to explore this by using a gendered analysis to focus on what is happening for **individual soldiers on the ground** in the Solomon Islands.

Theoretical Framework

1. The merging of development and security

2. Feminists analysis of peacekeeping

I have fitted my research into two schools of thought, which are linked by their shared interest in **concepts of security in the post –conflict development spaces.**

First is the merging of security and development. The security challenges faced in countries emerging from conflict has resulted in the increasing use of military forces to engage in peacekeeping and peacebuilding to contribute to the creation of the **'conditions' for state reform.** In the Pacific region, this security-development nexus has manifested itself with the military and police components of the RAMSI mission in the Solomon Islands.

The second area of research I am using is feminist analyses of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Increasingly the gendered practices and gendering processes of the military have been a theme for feminists studying questions of security and military involvement in PSOs. Feminists such as Whitworth, Higate and Henry have highlighted the increase in prostitution, trafficking, sexual harassment and violence present in post-conflict countries where there are PSOs. And they argue that the particular form of militarized masculinity valued and produced

in militaries make them unsuitable for peacekeeping operations and thus not conducive to creating lasting peace.

I believe that the New Zealand Army's role in peacekeeping and peace building **is particularly interesting to examine in this context**, as the criticism's levelled by feminist scholars against military operations, **do not fit obviously with the dominant image of New Zealand forces** held by the majority of the New Zealand public, nor internationally.

This is particularly apparent when thought of in comparison to the militaries of larger nations such as the United States or the United Kingdom, whom appear to be more prone to war than peace, and whose society is far more militarized.

Men, masculinities and soldiering

Militarized Masculinities



Non-violent masculinities



If we understand gender as relational, how we understand, embody and value masculinities have a relational affect on femininities. We know that gender equality is important in post-conflict development policy and this has most often translated in a focus on the inclusion of women. This has meant that men are most often monolithically understood as ‘The perpetrators’ of violence. This is regardless of the fact that looking at the men around us today, and thinking of those we have worked and interacted with in development contexts, that this is not the always case.

In doing so, we are failing to recognise, value and support non-violent masculinities that are important to the creation of long-term peace, and important for the support of women’s equality.

There is commonly a ‘ideal’ masculinity and men don’t necessarily fit that ideal – it is more something which men are **expected to aspire to**. So if we look at this first picture of SAS soldier Willie Apiata we can see a **representation of the traditional warrior soldier** where value is placed with an individuals ability to endure hardships, having the capacity for controlled violence, exultation of the bonds between fellow soldiers

over all others, commitment to completion of assigned tasks without complaint, and rationality. This different from what is happening in the second picture where effective soldiering is linked to qualities such as being empathetic, being not being inclined to use violence to solve problems and seeing the importance of building friendships buy perhaps - drinking coffee and having chat with locals.

So what I have been exploring in my research is the question: that with the increasing shift towards peacekeeping are there are skills that are deemed useful for peacekeeping that are resulting in alternative non-violent masculinities being valued in the New Zealand Army? Or even better – are skills that have traditionally seen as feminine, being seen as useful by soldiers?

I have used qualitative methods to interview ten individuals. I interviewed two New Zealand TF soldiers – both based in South Island regiments. I also interviewed five Solomon Islanders in the Solomon Islands. However today I am focussing on the data from the interviews with the two TF soldiers.

What have I found out so far?

Kiri: ... "like you'd send women to speak to [local] women...?"

NZA2: "Yeah um, usually the women that was, I mean it was our plan at the start. It turned out our females weren't all that great unfortunately (laughs) which I mean... I don't mean to sound sexist but they really sucked (laughs).

Kiri: In what way did they suck?"

NZA2: "Um, in all sorts of ways. Like for starters they weren't particularly good soldiers I mean, when you're in the army that's kind of..."

Kiri: "In what sense do you mean not do you mean not very good soldiers?"

NZA2: "Um not particularly good with weapons systems, carrying packs, getting by without any sleep, one of them was much better than the other one but she sort of withdrew into herself and stopped interacting with the section and that kind played with the dynamics. Yeah and the other one got really homesick and stopped eating and things – it was quite worrying."

"[A]nother guy I worked with in the field of intelligence – he was senior NCO he was just hard out war-y, like he'd been to Afghanistan and seconded to the marines to train American marines in Afghanistan, he'd been a sniper, a recon soldier, and an intelligence operator and was just, he just had, he oozed that military confidence. But that would be more beneficial in a conventional warfare environment – but that confidence oozed out of him, but on peacekeeping he could really get on the front foot and get shit done."

"the training was be polite, be friendly, be open, be engaging, don't be aggressive, don't eat in front of them cause I mean they don't have food, they like, they're hungry some of the time so chowing down on army food is pretty rough cause they don't have that much food."

What have I found out so far?

I am finding there were significant contradictions in the narratives that the soldiers told about their identity, tasks and values as a TF soldiers in a peacebuilding context. This would indicate that the masculinities that soldiers value and aspire towards are in a process of change in response to the skills required of peacekeeping. So analysis indicates that soldiers value and understand the need for skills that are most effective for bringing about peace in the Solomon Island context, but at the same time they still value more masculine aspects of the military.

I have some quotes which I would like to share:

In this first quote I was asking this soldier about gender training:

NZA2: “Um, in all sorts of ways. Like for starters they weren’t particularly good soldiers I mean, when you’re in the army that’s kind of...”

Kiri: “In what sense do you mean not do you mean not very good soldiers?”

NZA2: “Um not particularly good with weapons systems, carrying packs, getting by without any sleep, one of them was much better than the other one but she sort of withdrew into herself and stopped interacting with the section and that kind played with the dynamics. Yeah and the other one got really homesick and stopped eating and things – it was quite worrying. “

So this first example shows that this soldier equates being a good soldier with traditional militarized masculinities. Further, within the context of the entire interview, there is an undertone that suggests this soldier is not whole convinced women can contribute to a effective defence force.

2. In this second quote we were talking about other soldiers that were considered role models:

“A]nother guy I worked with in the field of intelligence – he was senior NCO he was just hard out war-y, like he’d been to Afghanistan and seconded to the marines to train American marines in Afghanistan, he’d been a sniper, a recon soldier, and an intelligence operator and was just, he just had, he oozed that military confidence. But that would be more beneficial in a conventional warfare environment – but that confidence oozed out of him, but on peacekeeping he could really get on the front foot and get shit done.”

I think this second quote is really interesting as it demonstrates a admiration for another soldier who embodied aspects of masculinities associated with militarized violent masculinities, yet the soldier also recognises that this is not necessarily appropriate for the success of the mission in the Solomon Islands context. So you can a sense of the contradictions these soldiers face - in this quote.

3. In this third quote this soldier explains the ‘hearts and minds’ approach that underpins peacekeeping. This quote is important to pay

attention to as this soldier is demonstrating empathy to Solomon Islanders and as well as valuing non-violent ways to engage with the mission.

“the training was be polite, be friendly, be open, be engaging, don’t be aggressive, don’t eat in front of them cause I mean they don’t have food, they like, they’re hungry some of the time so chowing down on army food is pretty rough cause they don’t have that much food.”

I believe these quote are showing the tensions that’s exists in the military and with peacekeeping operations and the intersections this has with gender.

Final thoughts



From my research it is apparent that as more New Zealand soldiers get involved in post-conflict development spaces as peacekeepers - there are questions that should be asked as to what role they have in this space and how questions of gender affect this. I believe that this is something we need to look into much further.

Thank you for taking time to listen me today. If you have anything you would like to share or ask more about I welcome questions from you now or come and talk to me after the session.

References

- Abrahamsen, R. (2004). A Breeding Ground for Terrorists? Africa and Britain's War on Terrorism. *Review of African Political Economy*, 31(102), 677–684.
- Aroussi, S. (2009). Women, Peace, and Security: Moving beyond Feminist Pacifism. *Destablising gender in conflict, peacemaking and care*. Presented at the PSA Annual Conference, University of Ulster.
- Carpenter, C. (2001). *Innocent Women and Children: Gender in Discourse of Justified Intervention*. American Political Science Association.
- Carpenter, C. (2002). Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Nonfeminist Standpoint? *International Studies Review*, 4(3), 153–165.
- Carreiras, H. (2010). Gendered Culture in Peacekeeping Operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 17(4), 471–485. doi:10.1080/13533312.2010.516655
- Charlesworth, H. (2008). Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 16(3), 347–361. doi:10.1007/s10691-008-9101-6
- Cockburn, C., & Zarkov, D. (2002). *The postwar moment : militaries, masculinities and international peacekeeping, Bosnia and the Netherlands*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Duffield, M. R. (2001). *Global governance and the new wars : the merging of development and security*. London; New York; New York: Zed Books ; Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave.
- Duncanson, C. (2008). Forces for Good? British Military Masculinities on Peace Support Operations.
- Enloe, C. H. (1990). *Bananas, beaches and bases : making feminist sense of international politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Haaland, T. L. (2012). Friendly War-Fighters and Invisible Women: Perceptions of Gender and Masculinities in the Norwegian Armed Forces on Missions Abroad. *Making gender, making war : violence, military and peacekeeping practices* (pp. 63–75). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Higate, P. (2004). Engendering (In)security in Peace Support Operations. *Security Dialogue*, 35(4), 481–498. doi:10.1177/0967010604049529
- Higate, P. R., & Henry, M. (2009). *Insecure spaces peacekeeping In Liberia, Kosovo and Haiti*. London; New York: Zed Books.
- Kronsell, A., & Svedberg, E. (2012). *Making gender, making war : violence, military and peacekeeping practices*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Otto, D. (2006). A sign of "weakness"? Disrupting gender uncertainties in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. *Michigan Journal International Law*, 13, 113–175.
- Whitworth, S. (2004). *Men, militarism, and UN peacekeeping : a gendered analysis*. Boulder (Colo.): Lynne Rienner.
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. (n.d.). Security Council Resolution 1325 - General Women, Peace and Security - Themes - PeaceWomen. Retrieved October 25, 2012, from http://www.peacewomen.org/themes_theme.php?id=15&subtheme=true
- Thank you to those who listened to my practice presentation and my supervisors Sara Kindon and Carol Harrington
- Contact: kiri.stevens@gmail.com