Engendering (In)security in Peace Support Operations

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This article contributes towards ongoing debates on gender, security and post-conflict studies. Its focus is on the activities of male peacekeepers and their gendered relations with women and girls. Against the backdrop of the peacekeeping economies in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone, we focus on the consequences of male peacekeepers' construction and enactment of masculinity (and masculinities) on the security of local women. We conclude by suggesting that a deeper understanding of gender relations and security in peacekeeping contexts is necessary for any policy intervention in post-conflict settings.

Keywords security • insecurity • gender • peacekeeping • masculinity • femininity • militarization • sexuality

PEACEKEEPING SUPPORT OPERATIONS (PSOs)[1] play a significant role in the promotion of peace and security in post-conflict settings. Such operations embrace a range of activities, one of which being the deployment of peacekeeping troops, almost all of whom are military-trained men.[2] Dominant media accounts of such operations depict peacekeepers in a humanitarian light, privileging images of them distributing food, disarming militias and holding babies (Miller & Moskos, 1995).[3] Paradoxically, however, a growing number of recent reports implicate male peacekeepers in the rape and exploitation of local women and girls (Hughes, 2000; Mackay, 2001; Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002). These reports – alongside academic work examining the growth of commercial sex industries, trafficking rings and sexual slavery camps in militarized environments – expose the gendered effects of military ventures (Sturdevant & Stoltzfus, 1992; Moon, 1997; Enloe, 2000; Cockburn &

[1] In this article, the generic term PSO is used to refer to the broad range of peacekeeping operations.

[2] In recent operations, just 1.7% of military peacekeepers deployed by the UN were female; see http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/degroot.html. Also, while we draw on the well-developed academic and non-academic literature on women as peacekeepers and gender mainstreaming, we limit our empirical focus here to civilian women and male peacekeepers (see Olsson, 1999; Mackay, 2001).

[3] See http://www.un.org/events/ peacekeepers/posters.htm.

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Hubic, 2003; Agathangelou & Ling, 2003). Furthermore, the media and academic accounts suggest that UN peacekeeping missions (along with other military interventions) impact unevenly on civilian populations in post-conflict environments, especially in relation to gender and security. As a result, it is not surprising that gender has become an area of interest within security studies, especially when some research suggests that women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of insecurity in post-conflict societies (Pettman, 1996; Steans, 1998; Tickner, 1997, 2002; Cockburn & Hubic, 2002; Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002; Enloe, 2002).[4]

While scholars have demonstrated the connections between a military presence and the establishment of sex industries, the picture of gender relations between peacekeepers and local women remains under-researched.[5] In post-conflict settings, women are not just victims of the military (or militarized masculinities), as they are positioned in a variety of complex relationships with both local civilians and military personnel. Also, we know less about the positive impact of male peacekeepers: not all of them further women's insecurity through violence and exploitation. For example, in a recent study of women and reconstruction in Bosnia, Cockburn & Hubic (2002: 106) reveal that women felt both secure *and* insecure as a result of the presence of peacekeepers. Because peacekeepers and local women occupy diverse and shifting subject positions, their experiences of insecurity and security are variable and thus worthy of investigation.

The concept of security has been a topic of debate over a number of years, especially within International Relations (IR) theory. Traditional or 'realist' definitions have mostly referred to national security (invoking the state, the military, the police, the judiciary and secret intelligence organizations). In recent years, though, scholars have begun to question conventional definitions by arguing that security should be expanded to include human and environmental dimensions (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1997). In addition, feminist IR scholars have challenged the 'embodied masculinist assumptions' of traditional security studies that overlook 'a range of violences, including those defined as physical' (Tickner, 1997, 2002; Pettman, 1996; Steans, 1998; Hooper, 2001).

Influenced by feminist IR theorists, our consideration of security places gender at the centre of discussion. Here, security is directly linked to the ways in which masculinity is played out in two PSOs, and we draw on empirical data from a recent exploratory study of gender relations and peacekeeping in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).[6] In this article, our focus is on the ways in which peacekeepers construct their

[4] See also the Brahimi Report, available at http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations.

[5] Gendered relations are defined as interactions between and among women and men that are characterized by negotiation, bargaining and exchange between different actors with different access to economic, political and social power.

[6] This study was carried out by Higate in 2003.

experience and understanding of gendered relations (particularly masculinity) in peacekeeping contexts, and how this impacts the security of the local population, in particular women and girls.[7] First, we briefly review the literature on gender and militarism and suggest that militarized masculinities and femininities are multiple, fragmented and contradictory and thus have a varied impact on gendered experiences of security. In addition, we suggest that a unique peacekeeping economy is established when a peace mission is set up, one in which the realities of economic security for the local people and the peacekeepers are often radically divergent. However, power differentials have not gone unnoticed by the international community, and we outline how the UN's official codes of conduct for peacekeepers influence the actions of foreign personnel. Second, we provide some background to the study, including information about both mission sites and the general methods used. Next, we illustrate some relevant issues through empirical examples from Sierra Leone and the DRC. By drawing on ethnographic work conducted with male peacekeepers, we illustrate the diverse and often problematic constructions of masculinity (and consequently femininity). In the ethnographic accounts, masculinity is naturalized as inherently sexual, while simultaneously fashioned as a performance of self-discipline and restraint. By exploring the contradictions that this involves, we hope to make clear some of the complex ways in which security can be understood for men and women inhabiting peacekeeping spaces.

Theorizing Masculinity

As a concept and experience, masculinity has been significantly problematized by scholars over the past two decades, challenging the idea that it has a 'core' or 'essence' (Brod, 1987; Connell, 1995; Brittan, 1989; Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Hearn, 1996; Macinnes, 1998; Petersen, 2003). Importantly, scholars in the broad field of 'men's studies' have argued that men can be seen to encompass a range of possible positions, identities and performances (i.e. marginal or hegemonic) (Morgan, 1987, 1994; Connell, 2002; Hearn, 1996). Masculinity can refer to a 'set of attitudes and practices culturally deemed appropriate to men' (Buchbinder, 1994: vii), but more broadly could encompass 'a discourse, a power structure, a psychic economy, a history, an ideology, an identity, a behaviour, a value system, or even an aesthetic' (Middleton, 1992: 152). Others have defined masculinity as a process, an identity that is never complete but always in the making and having necessarily to be performed (Morgan, 1992; Butler, 1990). The meanings attributed

[7] While the empirical study included some interviews with local women and consultation with women's organizations, the study does not extensively focus on how local women construct their experiences.

to these performances are shaped by the norms of what it is to be masculine in any given context. However, masculinity cannot be understood in isolation from other influences shaping identity. For example, masculinity also intersects with ethnicity, 'race', disability, religion, age and class; as such, gender may not always be the primary axis of identity (Morgan, 1992; Connell, 1995; Petersen, 2003). Intra-power relations exist between men (masculinities described as marginal or hegemonic), as well as between men and women (Connell, 1995: 65).

Military Masculinities: Peacekeeping

Though the growth of interest in men/masculinities has been significant, it is surprising that many scholars in the field have tended to overlook the military (with a number of exceptions)[8] – the exemplary masculinized institution. This sub-field may help to illuminate an understanding of male peacekeepers, since six out of every seven peacekeepers are military (with the remaining numbers made up of civilian police) and therefore may have been trained in combat – or 'the legitimate discharge of violence' (Betts-Fetherston, 1998). Yet, given their earlier socialization into the hyper-masculine military, what is required of peacekeepers in the field may be fraught with tension (Higate, 2004). For example, peacekeeping operations are argued to require impartiality, sensitivity and empathy, attributes that may have been discouraged by traditional military training;[9] and it could even be argued that such attributes involve the very opposite of the conventional activities of warriors, such as aggression, instrumentality and goal-oriented 'brutality' (Miller & Moskos, 1995). Betts-Fetherston (1998: 159), for example, makes the point that

> there is no switch inside a blue helmet that automatically turns a soldier trained for war fighting into an individual prepared to work non-violently and with cultural sensitivity in a highly militarised environment.

Military cultures are varied and evolve out of the specific social and historical contexts of domestic and international politics (Cohn, 1993; Bourke, 1999; Enloe, 2000; Higate, 2003). When masculinity is understood as diverse and complex, male peacekeepers – as military men – can no longer be seen as a homogeneous group. As such, military masculine subcultures create and shape a complex and nuanced range of soldier/peacekeeper identities and practices (Miller & Moskos, 1995; de Leeuw, 2002; Higate, 2003). Therefore, even when male peacekeepers have in common some aspects of masculinity,

[8] See, for example, Hockey (1986), Barratt (1996), Morgan (1987, 1994), Enloe (2000), Goldstein (2001), Bourke (1999), Higate (2003).

[9] However, it is important to recognize that military masculine culture also accommodates responses that may be deemed feminine, such as compassion for injured or fallen comrades (Morgan, 1994; Goldstein, 2001).

differences in religious, class, and military and ethnic backgrounds can shape the ways in which they promote, experience and construct masculinity in a multitude of ways (Higate, 2004). For example, one important factor that shapes and influences peacekeeping masculinities is the power of national ideologies (Razack, 2004; Whitworth, 1998, 2004).

The Political Economy of Peacekeeping

A peace mission has a pronounced economic, cultural and social impact on its host communities. In particular, the arrival of the UN provides opportunities for income generation for a variety of different individuals and groups. As reconstruction begins, military and humanitarian organizations often enlist the support of local populations, providing opportunities for small businesses to provide supplies to peacekeeping troops. Unfortunately, in response to the presence of exceptionally well-remunerated UN staff, local suppliers of food and accommodation may raise their prices to levels that are out of the reach of local people. And the economic security of those employed by the wealthy incoming institutions is limited, because missions are finite. Paradoxically, economic security may be contingent on the continued instability of the environment in which the intervention takes place, requiring an extended presence for the mission and its resources. The inconsistent nature of the income-generating possibilities offered by peace missions means that local women and men may have to seek out work in both the informal and the formal economies. Through this, many women (and men and children) become involved within the informal – and thus less regulated – elements of the peacekeeping economy.

Peacekeepers are differentiated according to rank, role and salary. They are either military observers (commissioned officers), working in small teams on the ground involved in patrolling and intelligence gathering, or contingent personnel (usually non-commissioned officers) who guard UN assets and are involved in reconstruction. The more obvious distinction between observers and contingent personnel is the financial allowances each attracts while deployed to particular PSOs. Thus, an observer working as part of MONUC in the DRC receives approximately US$138 per day in Mission Support Allowance (in addition to his or her military salary), while a member of the contingent receives considerably less (perhaps a few hundred US dollars a month). In both cases, though, such personnel are likely to be financially secure while in mission. Observers in the DRC receive between 500 and 1,000 times the average per capita income of the Congolese population, and the situation is similar for UNAMSIL mission staff in Sierra Leone. The level of potential disposable income for observers, and to a lesser extent

for members of the contingent, provide these personnel with considerable spending power in contexts where even the most basic of items – including food – may be in short supply for local people.

Despite the differences in salary between multinational peacekeepers, we would largely agree with the statement by Agathangelou & Ling (2003:135) that 'to stabilize a conflict-ridden area, UN peacekeepers arrive with ample resources, prestige and institutional power'. The resources available for peacekeepers ensure that they have access to food, accommodation and transportation – unlike many local people or internally displaced persons. The typical status of peacekeepers equips them to intervene positively in PSO contexts. However, potential interventions are shaped by the ideologies and social backgrounds that peacekeepers bring with them (Miller & Moskos, 1995; Agathangelou & Ling, 2003; Sion, 2003).

Femininity and Militarization

Scholars have theorized femininity and women's experiences of militarization for some time (Moon, 1997; Enloe, 1989, 2000; Cockburn & Hubic, 2002). Many studies have focused on the experiences of civilian women – 'camp followers' (Enloe, 2000; Harrell, 2001). This work has shown that civilian women living and working in and around military bases are positioned in a multitude of ways vis-à-vis military men. Their gendered subjectivities and identities are shaped by ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion and occupation. Likewise, women who work in the formal/informal peacekeeping economy will experience a range of gendered relations with peacekeepers. One issue that has gained significant attention in recent years has been the involvement of local women in prostitution during peace missions (Enloe, 2000; Cockburn & Hubic, 2002).

However, within the literature focusing on women and the military, rather less attention has been paid to the ways in which women creatively negotiate, challenge and resist militarized and masculine forms of domination (Roseneil, 1999; Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002). Consequently, there is an important need to learn about how local women construct their identities and their experiences of liaisons with peacekeepers.[10] Furthermore, there is a necessity to understand the connections between women's security and their relations with peacekeepers.

[10] The empirical data drawn on in this article do not include interviews with a significant number of women. However, in our current project, we intend to explore the experiences of both local men and women during three PSOs.

The Politics of Codes of Conduct

The activities of UN peacekeeping troops in respect of their involvement with prostitution and trafficking have attracted criticism over a number of years.[11] In responding to questions related to a perceived neglect of the broader gender issue, the United Nations, like other agencies, has attempted to 'mainstream' gender. In passing UN Resolution 1325, the UN appeared to take seriously the gender dimensions of its work. The UN's interventions into the activities of peacekeepers that continue to impact negatively on local women and girls – as well as damage the organization's reputation – include the 'Blue Helmet Codes of Conduct'.[12] This code of conduct has been used as a template for individual missions and has been developed to reflect local conditions. For example, to ensure that peacekeepers are in no way unsure of their responsibilities, the code of conduct for the DRC stresses that while the age of consent in that country is 14 years, UN peacekeepers are strictly prohibited from having a sexual relationship with any person under 18 years of age and are warned against the 'sexual exploitation of local women'.[13] In this way, there is an attempt to shape and regulate peacekeeper masculinity in terms of sexual expression (or aggression) and its potential impact on members of the local population.

Background to Exploratory Study

This article draws on findings from a study carried out in 2003 in the DRC and Sierra Leone (Higate, 2004). The UN missions in these two countries were both established in 1999, and it is widely recognized that living conditions in both countries are poor. The DRC and Sierra Leone have long histories of war and social, cultural and economic instability, especially since gaining independence in 1960 and 1961, respectively. Both countries continue to grapple with the challenges of 'post'-colonialism. The DRC and Sierra Leone have been involved in internal conflicts, as well as conflicts with neighbouring countries. The majority of these conflicts have been influenced by the international trade in minerals and diamonds, and have involved

[11] In the UNHCR (1995: 4) report *Sexual Violence Against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response*, it is argued that 'experience shows that there is need for a Code of Conduct. Cases in which humanitarian workers have failed to treat refugees with the respect and dignity to which they are entitled have been reported. Allegations of asylum fraud and the involvement of UN peacekeepers in SGBV-related [sexual and gender-based violence-related] crimes have also been made. Clearly, one of the biggest challenges facing the UN today is preventing behaviours, through self-policing, that bring any of its member agencies into disrepute.'

[12] See www.genderandpeacekeeping.org/ resources/5_UN_Codes_of_Conduct.pdf.

[13] See http://www.monuc.org/Gender/monuc_code_of_ conduct.aspx (accessed 12 August 2004).

gender-specific forms of violence and torture. The situation in the two countries is severe: in the DRC, the average annual income per capita is US$80, while life expectancy is 41 years for men and 43 for women;[14] in Sierra Leone, the average annual income is US$140 per year, but life expectancy is considerably lower at 33 years for men and 35 for women. Here, the conflict has affected between 215,000 and 257,000 women and girls, many of whom have been raped and tortured during the conflict (Ministry of Gender Affairs, Sierra Leone, 1996). Both PSOs are characterized by a severe dislocation and traumatization of the civilian population. As civilian women and children form the majority of the casualties and victims of war, they are most affected by the gender initiatives put in place by UN mandates.[15]

The small-scale, exploratory study discussed here was designed to elicit in-depth, information-rich data from fieldwork sites in the PSOs in the DRC (MONUC) and Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), and was conducted by one of the authors in 2003. The main aim of the empirical study was to understand the ways in which peacekeepers constructed their masculinity in relation to local women. The focus was not exclusively on prostitution, but rather aimed at exploring the peacekeepers' perceptions of gender and gender relations in the field. A total of 45 interviews were held with military observers, UN civilians, NGO staff and members of civil society in the two fieldwork sites. These comprised a mix of face-to-face, in-depth and group interviews at PSO headquarters in Kinshasa and Freetown, and at sector and team sites in various parts of the two countries. Semi-structured interviews with military observers focused on interpretations of the concept 'gender', awareness of issues facing women in the post-conflict environment, reflections on gender-training strategies, and issues related to prostitution and sexual relations. Interviews with UN civilians and members of the respective civil societies focused on the dynamics between observers/contingent personnel and local women, together with thoughts on the overall impact of the UN on the local communities. A significant number of informal discussions and ethnographic observations (recorded in a fieldwork diary) were gathered from the leisure sites frequented by peacekeepers and UN civilian workers, including bars, hotels and clubs. Wherever possible, Higate spent time with military observers in their place of work (normally a portable cabin equipped with landlines and computers linked to the web), discussing issues linked to the research. Though the findings from this study cannot be generalized more widely, the focus on peacekeepers' accounts and experiences of gender and gender relations nevertheless contributes to a better understanding of the nature of peacekeeping masculinities. Although this study is small-scale, it will inform a more comprehensive study currently being carried out by the authors.

[14] See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm.
[15] For a critical view on gender-based violence, see Jones (2004).

Findings and Discussion

The empirical study reveals a number of important points about peacekeeping masculinities and militarized cultures. The main theme emerging from the ethnographic study reinforces the well-established links between masculinity and sexuality (Connell, 1995; Barratt, 1996). The subject of sexual liaisons between peacekeepers and local women was consistently raised by peacekeepers, demonstrating the centrality of sexual relations to their identity as men. Their accounts provide insights into the production of masculine subject positions – something that must be considered in any attempt to understand the security (or insecurity) of local women in PSOs.

The ways in which peacekeepers constructed their identities in relation to local women (and especially in relation to sexual interactions) varied significantly. The discourses that peacekeepers used relied upon different conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity. As such, peacekeepers constructed themselves in one of three ways: as 'natural' men who were legitimately involved with local women, as victims of the predatory advances of local women, and/or as disciplined men who were attempting to avoid a multitude of sexualized 'temptations'. In fashioning their masculinities, they had necessarily to configure their perceptions of local femininities.

The Nature of Sexual Relations in a 'Foreign' Context

Some of the peacekeepers openly discussed the issue of sexual relations. Most focused on the presence and perceived behaviour of local women over the age of 18. In the minds of many of the peacekeepers, 18 seemed to be a crucial age at which to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual relations. If women having sexual relations with peacekeepers were 18 or older, they were seen as agents rather than victims. However, the openness with which some discussed sex with underage girls was generally atypical in this study, and most tended to be extremely guarded about discussing such activities. The following extract reveals one peacekeeper's perceptions and attitudes about sex with girls under 18:

Peacekeeper: 'These guys want to see what it is like.'
Interviewer: 'What "it" is like?'
Peacekeeper: 'Sex with young girls . . . to see if it is different.'
Interviewer: 'Erm . . . right.'
Peacekeeper: 'Some of them have daughters who are the same age, 14 or 15, and they want to know . . . they can have more than one at a time, it's an adventure . . . but the guys might turn them down . . . but the girls are persistent and then it becomes a challenge for them [the girls] to get [sleep with] him.'

Within a 'foreign' and 'othered' context within which conventional understandings of 'acceptable' sexuality are reconfigured, the participant here suggests that, for a number of peacekeepers, deployment to the DRC offered an opportunity to partake in activities that they would never attempt in their home country (in relation to sex tourism, see O'Connell Davidson & Sanchez-Taylor, 1996). Colonial stereotypes of hypersexualized 'African' women and girls appear to shape the identity work of this particular masculinity.

It is not only male peacekeepers who participate in constructing masculinity. A female civilian UN worker in the DRC spoke of peacekeepers competing with colleagues by keeping a tally of the number of women or girls with whom they had had sex. She mentioned how she had seen older male colleagues who were 'fat and balding' with 'plenty of young girls around them', and suggested that the local women had a particular 'scent' that foreign personnel found attractive. She added that she preferred to work with a man who had a 'sexual outlet', as he was more likely to be 'controlled' in the office environment.

These views helped to perpetuate the belief of men as vulnerable to their own biology by implicitly drawing on the widely used discourse 'boys will be boys'. In naturalizing their sexual relations with local women and girls, she reinforced the men's behaviour as quintessentially masculine – as 'red-blooded' soldiers who were fulfilling basic needs and desires. Discussions of women's security did not feature in these accounts. Rather, some peacekeepers subtly suggested that their own security and well-being was enhanced by their ability to fulfil their 'natural' urges.

Peacekeepers: Constructing Femininities

In many of the accounts by peacekeepers, local women were seen as actively choosing prostitution and other types of sexual exchange. In these accounts, there was little reflection on the social, economic and historical contexts of women's lives. However, a small number of peacekeepers recognized that many of the local women had suffered gender-based violence during the conflict. Overall, peacekeepers tended not to recognize the power inequalities that shaped their relations with local women. The 'normalization' of their relations with local women were central to their masculinities and served to obscure the power they exercised in their gendered relations.

A consensus emerged from across the diverse sample of male peacekeepers that local women played an active role in their sexualized liaisons. In this way, a commonly volunteered sentiment turned on women being 'enthusiastic' in attracting peacekeepers. A female UN civilian reinforced this point by referring to the ways that local women who were 'after peacekeepers'

would lift up their skirts to passing UN vehicles to 'show them what they had'. The following excerpt from a military police officer captures the ways in which some local women were constructed as sexual predators:[16]

> We were in a bar one night in [the local town]. It was full of girls, dancing and drinking . . . all over us. [A named peacekeeper] paid one of the women to keep the others away from him, they were hassling [him] so much.

Other accounts – again from both male and female civilian and military participants – drew on this discourse, in which peacekeepers' masculinity was (re)presented as vulnerable to the advances of local women intent on 'getting to know them better'. The following account, relayed by a local male participant working for an NGO in Sierra Leone, frames the women as 'doing all the running':

> Just as soon as the [peacekeepers] are rotated, the women are straight up to Lunghi [the international airport in Freetown] to meet the new ones [replacement troops]. You see, they're having relationships, and all in love, and crying and waving them off [the returning troops] . . . next thing, they're picking out the ones [the new peacekeepers] they like, just after they've landed!

This participant went on to speak of the 'relationships' between the peacekeepers and some local women, during which he portrayed the peacekeepers as 'playboys' who were real 'ladies' men', able to provide well for 'their women'. Any notions of the profound inequalities in power and privilege were absent from his account, which spoke more of affluence and carefree sexual and romantic liaisons.

The most dominant sentiment conveyed to explain the activities of male peacekeepers by themselves and others (including NGO workers) drew on a discourse of contradictory femininity. Implicit in this discourse is the notion that non-passive women are secure, independent and far from coerced in their approaches towards peacekeepers. Ironically, the peacekeepers suggested that their involvement went beyond enabling women to be secure – it was not unusual to hear male peacekeepers saying that giving money to local women in exchange for sex was actually a benevolent act.

Using Prostitutes 'Discreetly'

Despite the common discourse of the 'naturalness' of sexual relations with local women and the construction of local women as predatory, peacekeepers still felt a need to keep their relations relatively invisible. Although many battalion personnel from a northern region of Africa deployed in one of the eastern sectors in the DRC were routinely observed with local members of the female community in bars, hotels and clubs, one NGO participant

[16] In contrast to the construction of women as passive, coy and acquiescent.

suggested that they were not strictly allowed to have anything to do with prostitutes, but 'a blind eye was turned' to many of their activities. Commanders did, however, make some concessions to local opinion by declaring certain bars 'out of bounds' to peacekeeping personnel. Several peacekeepers responded by parking their UN vehicles away from the bars and clubs in question, spending a limited period on the premises to link up with local woman. Peacekeepers in both PSOs also employed other strategies to make their activities less obvious. These included providing women with mobile phones so that they could be contacted more discreetly, and referring to the women they accompanied in hotels and other public spaces as 'translators'.

However, some concern had been expressed in the local town over the outcomes of several of these sexual exchanges that had culminated in pregnancy and 'peace' babies, leading to controversial paternity disputes. In these instances, women's insecurity was significantly exacerbated, because the women not only had to contend with the stigma of pregnancy outside marriage, but now also faced the challenge of financially supporting a child. These interactions also caused friction between local men and peacekeepers, and in so doing further damaged the reputation of the UN. Issues of paternity, the fathers' obligations towards these children and the ways in which babies of mixed race might be treated in their local communities further undermined the long-term security of members of the local population.[17]

Another consequence of sexual liaisons is the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. One NGO representative suggested that HIV/AIDS should be recognized by the UN as involving the transmission of HIV *from* peacekeepers *to* local women. In any case, condoms were distributed by the UN in both the DRC and Sierra Leone, revealing that although sexual relations may be formally discouraged, some sense of the reality of peacekeepers' sexual activities is simultaneously acknowledged.

By contrast, in Sierra Leone the legacy of the UNHCR/Save the Children UK report detailing exploitation of refugees by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone appeared to have influenced the extent to which peacekeepers were open about their use of prostitutes.[18] For example, at various bars and clubs renowned as 'pickup' sites, peacekeeping personnel refrained from wearing uniform (unlike in the DRC fieldwork site) and tended to be low-key in their activities. Thus, while at times peacekeepers were open about their liaisons and suggested that women actively enticed them into exchanges, at other times it appeared that

[17] The impact of 'peace babies' on a local community is complex and contradictory. It may include the social and cultural stigmatization of women and children; an elevation in the social status of a mixed-race child, who may be seen to be 'racially' superior; and diminished economic security and kin support for the mother and her children.

[18] See http://www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/references/protsexexpPoARep.pdf.

they took calculated actions to meet up with local women. In light of the discretion used by many peacekeepers, it is difficult to assess the extent to which women's security is being transformed.

Peacekeepers: Constructing Masculinities

Tamara Duffey (2000: 146–147) has warned that the cultural differences of peacekeepers may 'give rise to barriers to interaction, misunderstandings, prejudices, and unknowingly offensive behaviour that may reduce the chances for constructive activity'. However, peacekeeping can also give rise to 'positive' militarized masculinities, when constructed on notions of faith, restraint and discipline.

For example, pride is institutionalized through discipline and the structures of units to which individual soldiers can feel loyal; in the military context, it is also masculinized, circulating within discourses of peacekeepers as 'saviours of the war-torn citizenry'. In such a context, it is inevitably women that require men's 'protection'. The dichotomy of 'protected' and 'protector' assumed a particular significance when it was embedded within a masculinity expressed by peacekeepers from the Indian subcontinent deployed to Sierra Leone. An example of this concerned one officer explaining how local women in the villages no longer 'showed their breasts'. He explained how he had held discussions with 'paramount chiefs',[19] who had been asked by this particular battalion to ensure that women in their villages 'cover up', as many of the peacekeepers found the display of their breasts to be 'inappropriate'. Several women had replied that they did not have sufficient clothing to meet the demands of the peacekeepers, and members of the battalion then set about distributing clothing. The problematic rationale behind this effort was to 'save' local people from their own 'primitiveness' and to protect peacekeeping men from 'temptation'. In this context, masculinity was framed as both weak and strong in the face of femininity. The security of both men and women was shaped here through the peacekeepers' adherence to a particular masculinized and militarized disciplinary code.

While religion was discussed mainly within the context of the local population, who were said to hold 'both Christian and Islamic views', the two battalions from the Indian subcontinent in Sierra Leone stressed the centrality of the mosque and Islam within their camp. Not only did their regular worship serve to structure the temporal and spatial configuration of barracks life, it also provided them with a ready discourse with which to respond to any suggestion that their troops could be involved in exploitative gendered

[19] These high-status individuals – interestingly, not all men – have a political-legislative role over large numbers of people (up to 20,000) within agreed territories.

relations. In these terms, the assumption that peacekeepers could be involved in damaging gendered relations was considered to be misplaced, since the commitment to religious practice served to distract them from the temptations of 'everyday' masculinity.

In addition, most of these peacekeepers avoided local bars and nightclubs, especially since alcohol was forbidden by both their military and their religious codes. On top of this, many of the men spent the evenings playing sports within the camp grounds. These sporting activities served not only to distract them from local 'temptations', but also to discipline their bodies and to encourage intra-group relations. These peacekeepers were able to make themselves distinct and respectable by constructing themselves as 'good', 'honest' and 'pious', against a dominant image of 'peacekeepers behaving badly'. By focusing on activities within the camp, such as praying, eating together and playing sports, they helped to sustain a collective, 'principled' masculine identity. By focusing on prayers and sports, they were able to avoid adopting a masculinity that might typically be expressed through sexual relations with local women.

Conclusion

Peacekeepers tend to occupy positions of privilege and relative security in relation to local women in PSOs. Their status as military men serving overseas shapes the ways in which they construct masculinities: these are constituted relationally to the perceived femininities of local women. Gendered relations turning on prostitution have and will continue to remain a common feature of PSOs. However, when these activities involve rape and sexual harassment,[20] questions around the long-term political, economic and cultural security of post-conflict societies will continue to be raised. There are also many negative consequences for women's security when prostitution becomes commercially dependent on a select market (i.e. sex tourists and/or peacekeepers). Debates on the security of regions that have endured protracted periods of militarization – whether involving NATO, the UN or national military forces – has necessarily to reflect critically on the legacies of a military-masculine culture in which women are systematically 'othered' in ways that undermine their personhood both materially and symbolically.

In this article, we have set out to contribute to the developing debates around security. Our focus has been on gendered relations between male

[20] Recently, a UN investigation allegedly found that a South African colonel in Goma had sexually molested his young male interpreter. It also emerged he had requested young male interpreters under the age of 18 since the start of his mission. See http://www.pretorianews.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=270&fArticleId=2146380.

peacekeepers and local women and girls in two PSOs in the DRC and Sierra Leone. One way in which to understand the actions of the peacekeepers is through the discourses they draw on to frame their masculinity.

The empirical elements of the article have been used to contribute towards furthering understanding of the interplay of masculinities, femininities and security (and perhaps securities). However, the limited nature of the study meant that it was not possible to argue that the variables of class, religion or culture gave rise to any one pattern of gendered relations with local women. Further, in the absence of data illuminating the everyday experiences of local women/men and their gendered relations with male peacekeepers, it is not possible to comment with any confidence on the experience of local women's security, even for those involved in prostitution. Yet, it is clear that a significant number of unequal gendered relations are ongoing, particularly involving young girls. This is unlikely to change until it is understood that male peacekeepers are in possession of more than a biologically driven 'impulsive' agency. They are deployed to create and sustain, rather than to damage the security of the post-conflict populace. However, meanings and experiences of security are highly varied and subjective. In this sense, it is important to recognize that it is only through a more sophisticated understanding of gendered experiences of security and sexual relations that more effective policies and practices can be initiated.

Another concept that we have implicitly unpacked is that of impartiality. Here, we have shown how a number of peacekeepers acted in ways that had a direct influence on members of the local population. Even though they framed their masculinized activities as benign, it is clear that the legacies of their interactions were far-reaching (e.g. paternity issues). Peacekeepers – like any other external presence – will always have some impact on local women and local men. In this way, notions of a 'true impartiality' should be considered critically. It is not whether peacekeepers can act impartially, but rather what the repercussions of their social practices are in the local community that needs greater consideration.

International organizations and institutions create a complex and shifting series of impacts that both increase and decrease individual and collective security. Security, for both peacekeepers and civilian populations, is dependent upon the social, cultural and economic environments of local reconstruction efforts, 'on the ground' factors that are linked to the ordering of global governance or global 'culture' (Paris, 2003). Recent commentary around the emergence of a neoliberal world order that has co-opted discourses of humanitarianism to great effect represents the broader context for these debates (Chomsky, 1999). Themes of domination, gendered power, the legacy of colonialism and the extent to which individuals are able to express their experiences of security remain under-theorized. Through our focus on gendered identity work, we hope to make a modest contribution to current

understandings of the everyday social practices of male peacekeepers and the communities that host them.

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