



# The social well-being of women officers who have left the NZ Army

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# NZ Army Context

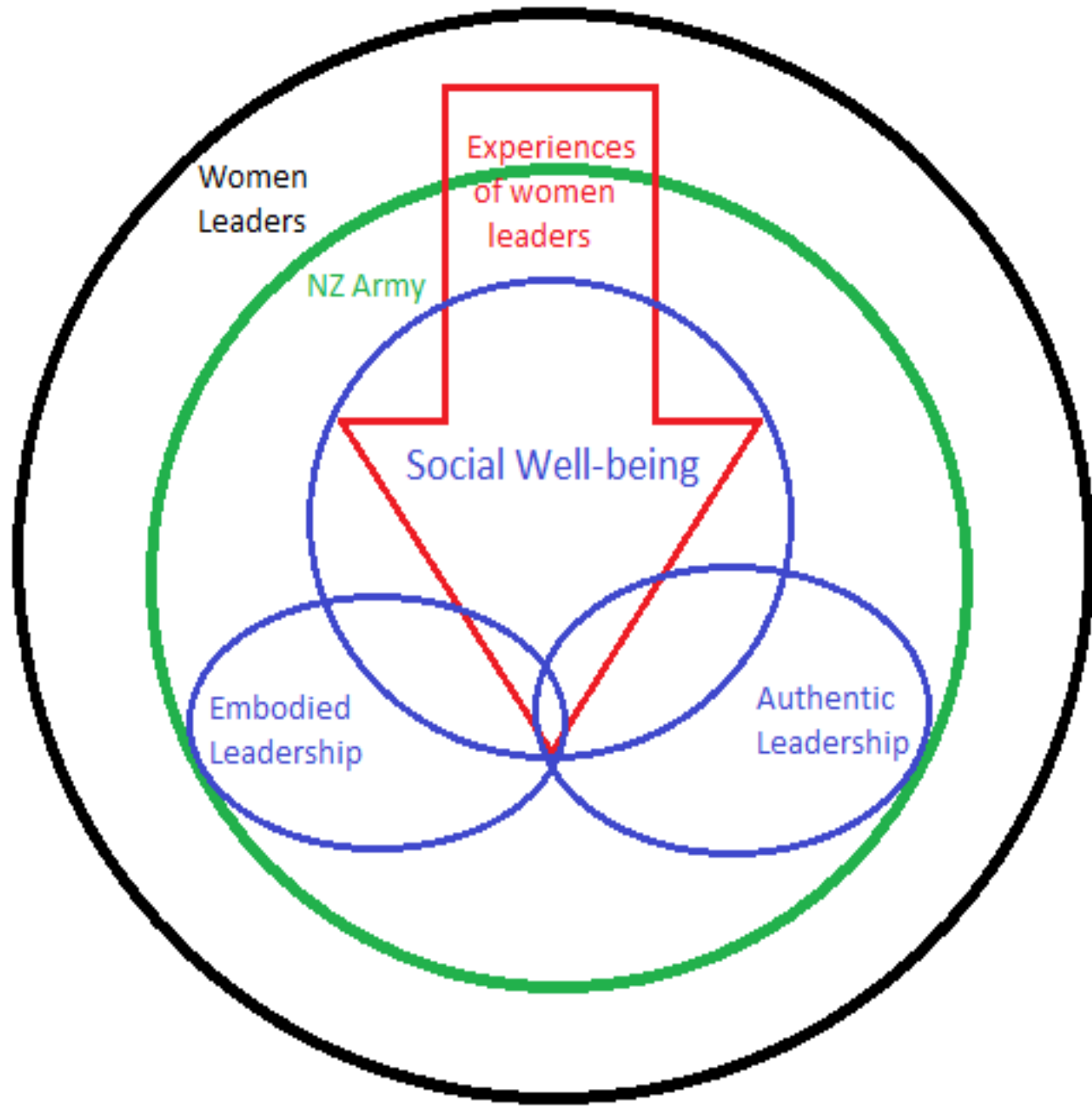
- NZ Army opened all its corps to women in 2000.
- Women make up 13% of the NZ Army: this has been consistent for the past 2 decades.

# Literature

- Social well-being model (Keyes, 1998)
  - Social Integration
  - Social acceptance
  - Social contribution
  - Social actualisation
  - Social coherence

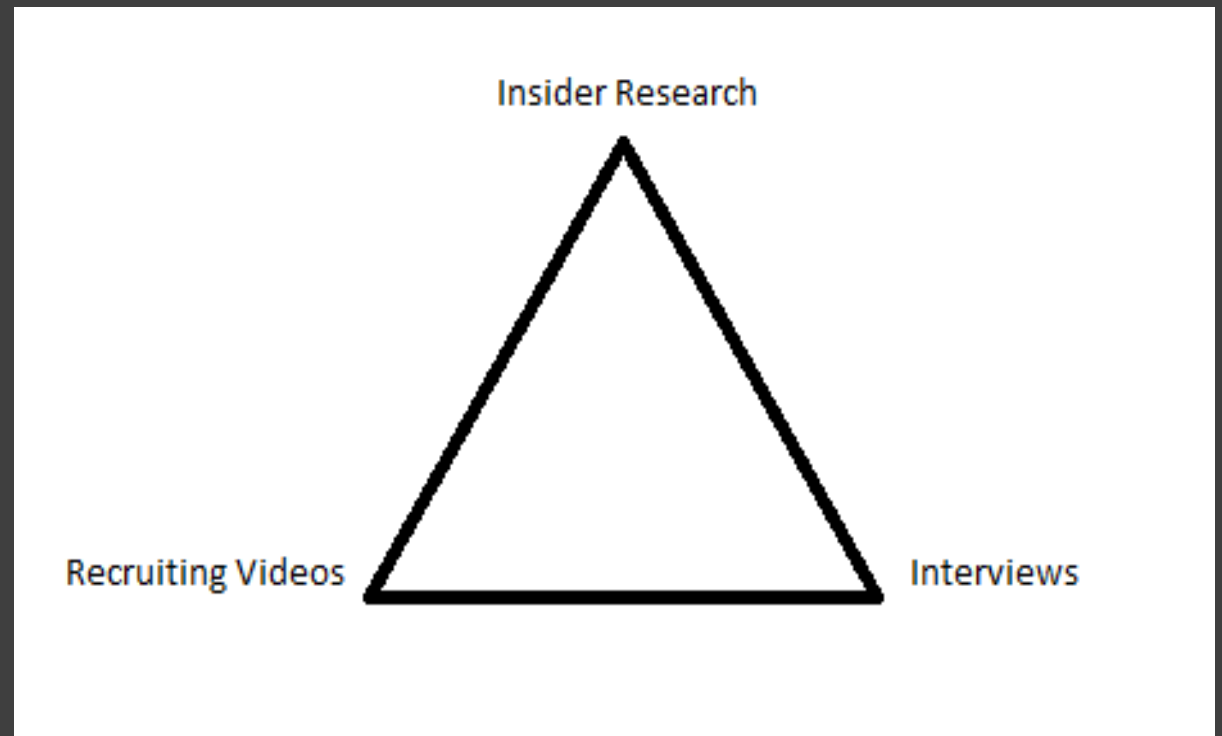
# Further Literature

- Experiences of women leaders
- Experiences of women & women leaders the military
- Authentic leadership
- Embodied leadership



# Methodology

- Nominalism / interpretivism / qualitative
- Case study: 3 sources of data



# FINDINGS.

## No Visibility

- Lack of women depicted in NZ Army recruiting material, overall: only 8% (women make up 13% of the population)
- Women were only depicted conducting sedentary / administrative type tasks (not in combat, physical or leadership tasks)
- Even before they have joined, young girls and boys are receiving messaging from the NZ Army that it is primarily a career for men

# FINDINGS

## No Voice:

## Sexual harassment & assault

- Repeated and enduring experiences of sexual harassment, and some shared experiences of sexual assault, including rape
- Risks to reporting incidents: bullying and isolation, or be treated as liars
- “I think women were very conscious that if they rocked the boat then that could be the end of their career.”
- “They [men] start bragging... and I just felt it was a culture of disrespect for females and that the leadership didn’t do anything to stop it from happening. They would be just as much a part of it... A senior male officer was frequently telling stories about plying females with alcohol so that he could have sex with them and I pointed out to him that that’s illegal. He would say things like, ‘well, if that’s illegal, then everyone is a rapist’. It was just those kinds of attitudes, it just felt like they were everywhere.”

# FINDINGS

## No Voice:

## Gender discrimination

- Many women shared experiences of gender-based discrimination.
- The women felt there were a number of men who did not believe that women should be in the Army.
- “I sometimes thought maybe this idea I have that maybe, if I came in and carried my pack as well as any guy, and I could do the things physically and I could do my job really well, that that would automatically earn you a place. And sometimes I felt like it might be impossible, just with the sort of ideas they [men] had about females.”



# FINDINGS.

## No Voice: Double standards for mistakes

- “Blokes could do dumb stuff to a reasonable extent and they could make mistakes to a reasonable extent. But if they were a good bloke and you know, therefore considered to be a good leader, they [mistakes] would be ignored really and they would still progress on their path. I think with women, you only have to make one mistake really and that has a consequence and everybody talked about it and everybody knows about it.”

# FINDINGS.

## No Voice: Double standards for sexual choices

- Numerous examples of women being interrogated, chastised, shamed and even disciplined, because of their sexual choices.
- In some cases, this occurred based purely on people's perceptions about her sexual choices.
- “Not only do females end up with names, it then impacts on their credibility, like, how people perceive them in the workplace. So basically your reputation matters and people seem to go from your personal life, or how you run your personal life as a female... It then impacts on how much respect you get given... I don't think it's fair that females get labelled where guys don't... but it's under scrutiny who females have relationships with and how many, if they have multiple relationships and sequentially or whatever. Whereas guys don't have that level of scrutiny over who they have a relationship with... It [getting a reputation for sexual exploits] might end up affecting their career in a way it wouldn't necessarily outside the Army... There isn't a correlation between the number of relationships you have and how effective you are at your job. So that's sort of uncovering an assumption within the military of those two being correlated but actually they're not.”

# FINDINGS.

No Voice:

Needing to  
constantly  
prove yourself

- “I think a woman leader still, when I was there, still had to be twice as good to be half as good.”

# FINDINGS. No Voice: Children

- Significant challenges balancing family and Army demands
- “I think it’s really hard in the Defence Force to say ‘no’ and people don’t really respect or fundamentally value people saying ‘no, I can’t do that because of my children.’ It’s still not actually at base, an acceptable excuse for lots of things that it should be.”

# FINDINGS.

## No Voice: Summary

- Sexual harassment & assault
- Gender discrimination
  - Women not valued as equal
  - Women held to different standards
- Constantly proving yourself
- Disproportionate impact of children

# FINDINGS. Leadership Clash: a spectrum of leadership approaches

<b>Masculine</b>			<b>Feminine</b>		
Competitive	Control		Caring	Participatory	
Task Focus	Directive		Relationships	Soft	
Dominant	Strength		Democratic	Collaborative	
Autocratic	Aggression		Empathy	Emotional	
Confidence	Decisive		Inclusive	Compassion	

# FINDINGS. Leadership Clash

- “How do they teach us to be leaders?... It’s very masculine – there’s no doubt about that”
- NZ Army taught and enforced a leadership approach in line with the masculine end of the spectrum
- Yet 18 of the 20 woman (plus me) had a leadership approach in line with the feminine end of the spectrum

# FINDINGS. Leadership Clash: Authentic Leadership

- Women were constantly criticised for exhibiting feminine approach to leadership
- “See, this is it. I’m a friendly person. The masculine world of leadership. I do think it’s really interesting that the military as a whole does suppress that whole bubbly, that whole empathy, that natural, that is a huge gift, it is a huge skill set. And yet, in the Army, it’s genderised to be a negative. ‘Oh, she’s emotional’, yeah.”
- “I actually got in trouble quite a lot. I had a lot of reports written about me... I basically got told I cared too much, and well, a leader shouldn’t care as much. I should just be there, in and out, you know, black and white, that’s that.”



# FINDINGS. Leadership Clash: Authentic Leadership

- Woman would either:
  - (a) Change to be more masculine, but get worn down being someone they were not
    - “I didn’t want to have one mask for someone and one mask for someone else... When I recognised that I didn’t want to be two different people, I was like, well, that probably means that you are going to have to leave [the Army].”
  - (b) Stay authentic, but get worn down with the constant criticism

# FINDINGS.

## The Wrong Body: Physical Appearance

- Women experienced judgement and scrutiny for the way their body looked
- “Every single woman, no matter what your shape or size, has a tight shirt across your hips that makes you look less tidy than the men do”

# FINDINGS.

## The Wrong Body: Physical Performance

- Woman felt that physical performance was judged as the most important attribute for an officer
  - Difficult following an injury
  - Difficult following childbirth
- “Look, the easiest way, by far, to have credibility in the Army is just to be able to run far and carry lots of stuff.”

# FINDINGS.

## The Wrong Body: Physical Performance

- “I didn’t lose the baby weight and my body is a bit poked after trying to carry those bloody 40kg packs up and down those bloody huge mountains in Waiouru, and I don’t move well. And so I really struggled to pass my fitness tests and things like that... I think there must be, and this is anecdotally, there are women definitely who recover very easily post-birth and they crack on and do everything. But I think there is a group of us, like myself. I’ve got a neighbour who is in the same boat, who, the actual pregnancy and giving birth thing. It’s not an easy thing to just jump back into a job that demands you to meet all those physical criteria. And it’s very interesting because I was a good professional and good at my job but I never felt like I was worthy because I couldn’t pass a goddam 2.4km run... I think it probably weighed on me more towards the end. It probably grew with a sense of inadequacy. Like, I’m not as good because I can’t run as fast.”

# Summary of Findings

- Lack of women in NZ Army recruiting material
- Sexual harassment & assault
- Gender discrimination, including double standards for mistakes and sexual choices
- Challenges with balancing children & Army
- Criticism for adopting a feminine approach to leadership / pressure to be inauthentic
- Judgement for their physical appearance
- Judgement for their physical performance

# Recommendations

- Include women in the recruiting adverts
  - And portray them doing the same, active tasks, as the men
- Implement better and safer channels for personnel to complain about unfair or discriminatory treatment
- Enforce a zero-tolerance policy around sexual harassment and assault
- Create more effective policies for families, providing them with better flexibility
- Conduct a review and potential overhaul of the leadership training within the NZ Army
- Design and issue, a flattering and well-fitted uniform for women
- Develop some significantly better policies, including rehabilitation training, regarding physical training requirements and maternity

# The NZ Army is listening

- I have presented these findings, plus some subsequent research, to the AMB and ALB throughout 2019
- Plus briefed at the CA's wananga earlier this year
- The CA and his team are really committed to addressing these issues
- There have already been some positive changes:
  - improved policies for personnel having children
  - Commitment to address many of the other challenges