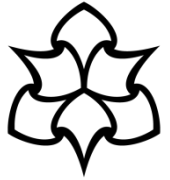


'GENERAL SCHWARZKOPF' OR 'GI JANE': MOVING PAST STEREOTYPE IN GENDERED MILITARY LEADERSHIP

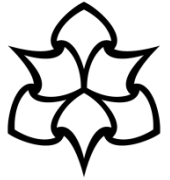


DR KATE LEWIS &
MAJOR AMY BROSINAN



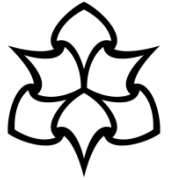
CONTEXT

- Military as a 'work context': hyper-masculine, hetero-normative and prone to protocols & processes that have historically reinforced normative approaches to gender.
- Challenges: the integration of women more deeply into all aspects of the armed forces; women represent a particular retention problem for military organisations; their relative absence from the upper echelons of the hierarchy.
- Theorising is dominated by the 'masculine warrior paradigm'; lack of empirically grounded gendered conceptualisations; confusion around the construct of gender cf. biological sex.
- Research objective: **Explore the leadership experiences of NZ Army's most senior female officers.**



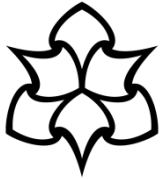
THE DATA

- Sample: Lieutenant Colonel & above, Regular Force.
- 21 interviews: in-depth, phenomenologically oriented interviews by an 'insider' (Brosnan); multi-phase, longitudinal project.
- Recorded & transcribed, data analysis grounded in principles of thematic, content and narrative analysis.
- Sample characteristics: age range, 36-56; years of service, 18-33; minority with civilian partners; majority with children; most with post-graduate qualification gained voluntarily during service; diverse range of roles.
- Key leadership themes: role of legitimacy & power of authenticity.



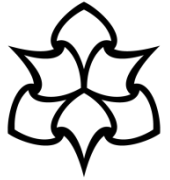
ROLE OF LEGITIMACY

- Multiple dimensions of legitimacy: seniority, function, relationality & style. Gender modifies paths to & mechanisms for legitimacy.
- Extreme ends of the spectrum of femininity & masculinity destabilise credibility.
- Reconciling gender relative to 'fitting in' or 'standing out' as a military leader: voice-visibility nexus.
- Absence of senior female role models to legitimise both ambition & leadership.
- Importance of male colleagues challenging gendered norms & modelling alternative behaviours.
- Power of relativities of experience – what is & isn't recognised (& rewarded) as being 'good' military leadership.
- De-legitimisation of self by self.



POWER OF AUTHENTICITY

- Honouring a way of leading that privileges military & personal values – as well as a positive sense of self (including gender as key dimension of identity).
- Distinctive qualities of gendered leadership: empathy, compassion, collaboration & communication (recognising these need not only be female, but, norms can dictate acceptability).
- Demand for beyond-NZDF examples of gendered senior leadership & mentoring.
- Access to a highly developed leadership development infrastructure – but, outmoded prototypes/stereotypes underpin training, development & assessment.
- Reality-leadership gap perpetuates a sense of achieved ‘in spite of’ rather than ‘because of’.
- Seniority (progression through career arc) critical enabler of authenticity.
- ‘Sameness’ imperative a misleading signifier of efficacy & proxy for ‘success’.



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Construct of gendered military leadership remains unchallenged - exploitation of values synchronicity perpetuates this.
- Need for 'leaders' not 'female leaders' –comparative roots of discourse & measurement need to be made obsolete.
- Examine pathways to leadership & proxies for success ('up or out' mentality; promotion as single proxy; progression barriers).
- Challenge of gaining recognition of exceptions - & embedding new norms. But, not by privileging gender (reconcile institutional architecture-individual experience dissonance?).
- Ongoing identity work to maintain leader authenticity - difference=value calculation.
- Gender neutrality cf. gendering – or neither?

