Conditional protection? Sex, gender, and discourse in UN peacekeeping

Kathleen M. Jennings

Oslo Metropolitan University

Abstract

In this article, I analyze how peacekeepers operating in Haiti, Liberia, and the DRC discursively construct the local person, especially local women, and to what effect. Noting that gender is central to peacekeeper discourse, both in terms of its content and the function the discursive events fulfil – situating the peacekeeper outside and superior to the chaotic, dysfunctional, feminized local – I posit a connection between peacekeepers' representations of local people, articulated in discourse, and the gendered, often sexualized interactions and transactions in peacekeeping sites. At the same time, a close reading of peacekeepers' representations of local people disrupts idealized notions of peacekeeper masculinity as protective and benign, which still persist in peacekeeping circles, revealing it as something more vulnerable and brittle. Finally, while allowing that the connection between discourse and (non)performance of peacekeeping duties is neither causal nor straightforward, I argue that peacekeepers' discursive constructions of locals affect how peacekeepers interpret their mandate to protect civilians. Protection is thus made conditional on peacekeepers' perceptions of locals' appearance, affect, behavior, and their ability to act out an idealized role as someone "worth" protecting. The article thus brings new insight to our understandings of gender, masculinities, and protection failures in peacekeeping.

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Introduction

The problem of United Nations peacekeepers sexually exploiting or abusing local women, men and children is longstanding (Higate and Henry 2004; Vandenberg 2002; Whitworth 2004:53-83), but only prompted a concerted institutional response in the wake of a series of scandals in the early 2000s (Gillan and Moszynski 2002). In 2003, the UN adopted a zero-tolerance policy (ZTP) against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers, which among other things prohibits peacekeepers from buying (or exchanging food, other goods, or assistance for) sex in mission areas; forbids sexual contact between a peacekeeper and a minor under 18; and "strongly discourage[s]" any sexual relationships between UN staff and "beneficiaries of assistance" (UN 2003:para.3.2(d)). This was followed in 2005 by the publication of the Zeid report, a comprehensive anti-SEA strategy (UN 2005), which laid the groundwork for numerous institutional changes. Peacekeeper SEA has since featured regularly in the Security Council resolutions and associated reforms organized under the auspices of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Nonetheless, SEA persists across the spectrum of peace operations.[1] This is most clearly to the detriment of local women, men, and children, but also reaps negative consequences for UN missions' effectiveness and credibility (Burke 2014; Westendorf and Searle 2017; Whalan 2017).

Feminist scholars and activists have devoted considerable attention to the imbricating, but not synonymous, issues of peacekeeper-local sexual interactions and SEA. Sexual relationships between peacekeepers and locals are examined as phenomena in their own right, and as springboards for broader arguments relating to the ideologies, spatial and security practices, and political economies of intervention and peacekeeping (Agathangelou and Ling 2003; Higate and Henry 2009; Jennings 2014, 2016b; True 2012; Whitworth 2004). Scholars interrogate the gendered and raced assumptions underpinning the ZTP and its ban on transactional sex (Henry 2012, 2013; Otto 2009; Simic 2012), which also inform attitudes towards local women operating in "markets of intervention" (Oldenburg 2015). They examine SEA in the context of operationalizing the Women, Peace and Security agenda (Gizelis and Olsson 2015); analyze the connection between SEA prevalence and the composition of peacekeeping forces (Karim and Beardsley 2017); and investigate how attempts to increase numbers of women peacekeepers affect SEA (Pruitt 2016). While SEA does

[1] The UN maintains updated statistics about SEA at: https://conduct.unmissions.org/data. Under-reporting is a serious problem in relation to SEA; see for Liberia, Beber, Gilligan, Guardado, and Karim (2017).

not feature as strongly in studies focused on masculinities – with the notable exception of Higate (2007), who posits SEA owes more to "(oppressive) social masculinities (114)" common to military and nonmilitary men than to military masculinities per se – it connects to a larger body of work that challenges and rethinks masculinities in conflict and peacekeeping settings (Belkin 2012; Bevan and MacKenzie 2012; Dietrich Ortega 2012; Eichler 2015; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2009; Henry 2017; Higate 2003, 2012a; Kirby and Henry 2012; Lewis 2014; Mäki-Rahkola and Myrttinen 2014; Mynster Christensen 2016; Myrttinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017; Zalewski and Parpart 2008).

Common to these analyses is a concern for the inter-connected, elusive operation of gender, race, status, wealth, and, ultimately, power in peacekeeping sites. Collectively, this work stakes territory in larger debates connected to the "turns" towards the local (Jabri 2013; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Mac Ginty 2011; Pouligny 2006; Richmond 2011; von Billerbeck 2016), the everyday (Autesserre 2014; Enloe 2011; Pugh 2011; Richmond and Mitchell 2012), and the emotional (Crawford 2000; Fierke 2013; Hutchison 2016) in peacekeeping and peacebuilding scholarship, and in International Relations writ large. It argues for the importance of intimacy, desire, physical contact, and agency – including how these can subvert UN regulations, mission norms, and peacekeeping actors' claims and intentions – in refining our understanding of international interventions.

An aspect of the relationship between peacekeepers and local residents that is less explored is peacekeepers' discourse about people living in peacekeeping sites (commonly, "locals").[2] Critical focus on interveners' spatial, economic, cultural, and linguistic separation from local populations (Autesserre 2014; Duffield 2010; Kohl 2015), while compelling, should not obscure the artifacts of proximity. These include not just the physical intimacy referenced above, but also peacekeepers' knowledge claims about locals, grounded in peacekeepers' own experiences and emerging from their belonging in a shared mission culture or peacekeeping "field" (Goetze 2017). The connection between peacekeepers' representations of local people, articulated in discourse, and their (non)performance of peacekeeping duties is neither causal nor straightforward. But as I argue below, nor is it irrelevant to the incidence of SEA or, more generally, to the gendered, often sexualized encounters and modes of interaction between peacekeepers and locals prevalent in peacekeeping

[2] Higate (2007) analyzes how peacekeepers narratively make sense of sexually exploitative behavior committed by themselves or colleagues, which to an extent encompasses peacekeepers' representations of locals, but does not center on these; while Greenburg (2013:95) examines peacekeepers' framings of Haitians to argue that peacekeepers "infantilize Haitians and frame Haitian poverty as a previous moment from their own national histories of development" – a convincing argument but one that does not take a gender perspective.

sites. Further, setting SEA in the context of peacekeepers' core task of protection – that is, conceptualizing SEA as a protection failure – makes explicit a link between discourse and protection.

This article examines UN peacekeepers' representations of local people in peacekeeping sites. Based on fieldwork in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Haiti, I analyze how individual peacekeepers discursively construct the local person.[3] I contend that gender is central to this discourse, both in terms of its content and in the function that the discursive events fulfill, namely to situate the peacekeeper as outside and above the disordered, dysfunctional, and feminized local. This discourse contrasts markedly to idealized narratives about peacekeeping, which build on an idea of peacekeeper masculinity as protective and benign. Conversely, I argue that a close reading of peacekeepers' representations of local people troubles this idealized notion of peacekeeper masculinity, revealing something more vulnerable and brittle. Finally, I consider the interplay between discourse and duty, arguing that peacekeepers' discursive constructions of locals are connected to the way that peacekeepers interpret their mandate to protect civilians. In particular, I maintain that the protection provided by peacekeepers is made conditional on peacekeepers' perceptions of locals' appearance, affect, behavior, and their ability to act out an idealized role as someone "worth" protecting. This makes protection fragile, and adds a new dimension to the discussion on protection failures in peacekeeping. Listening to peacekeepers attentively, taking their words seriously, and noticing the work gender does in this discourse sheds light on the conditions of (im)possibility created for peacekeepers and peacekeeping in contact with local women and men. This facilitates a novel understanding of peacekeeping masculinities and the challenges of protection.

Key concepts and scope

Central to this article is the concept of discourse. I draw on Stuart Hall's understanding of discourses as "ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society (Hall 1997:6, italics in original)." The discursive approach articulated by Hall, following Foucault, is one that is

[3] "Local" is a problematic, obscurantist term. Given space constraints, it is impossible to sufficiently unpack the notion of "local" here. For simplicity, and consistent with peacekeepers' own usage, I equate "local" with nationality and geography: that is, citizens of the host country living proximate to peacekeeping operations.

> concerned with the *effects and consequences* of representation – its 'politics'. It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied. The emphasis in the *discursive* approach is always on the historical specificity of a particular form or 'regime' of representation: not on 'language' as a general concern, but on specific *languages* or meanings, and how they are deployed at particular times, in particular places (Hall 1997:6, italics in original).

The discourse analyzed here circulates among and is (re-)produced by peacekeepers, and primarily concerns peacekeepers' representations of people local to the peacekeeping host country, and especially local women. The texts upon which this analysis builds are the verbal utterances of peacekeepers, expressed in interviews, focus groups, and informal contexts. Because I am concerned only with peacekeepers' representations of locals, this article presents a refracted, distorted, and homogenizing picture of local residents and communities.

The imbrication of discourse, knowledge, power, and conduct underpins my arguments. In a Foucauldian analysis, Zanotti (2011:7) identifies peacekeeping as a "practice of government", where "government refers to diverse modalities of influencing behavior …. mechanisms, practices, *savoirs,* and institutional arrangements." She argues that "[p]ractices of government involve the production of truths with regard to what is governed," which among other things promote certain kinds of identities, create specific forms of visibility, and produce "(often unintended) political effects." In a similar vein, I argue that peacekeepers' discourse points to certain understandings ("truths") both of local citizens and of protection as earned rather than given, in the context of ongoing protection failures in UN peacekeeping. As noted above, however, this is not intended as a causal argument. It hinges on the dual presumptions that one can infer from peacekeepers' discourse how they approach and perform their duties, and that these inferences are transferable to other peacekeepers and missions.[4] This raises the question of scope.

As I discuss in the next section, my sources and material are wide-ranging and diverse. Yet they are also limited and unrepresentative. My focus on multi-dimensional peacekeeping missions in one Caribbean and two African countries omits older and more limited-mandate missions (such as

[4] See Duncanson (2013:52) for a similar approach, which uses a feminist discourse analysis of soldiers' personal narratives to explore British military masculinities and, connectedly, the "everyday practices of soldiers in order to assess their contribution to peace and security"; relatedly Shepherd (2017), who connects the discursive practices of the UN Peacebuilding Commission to peacebuilding implementation.

Cyprus, Kosovo, or the military observer group in India and Pakistan), and missions in Muslim-majority countries such as Lebanon or the UN assistance mission in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the cases do not provide the basis for making universal statements about how UN peacekeepers across missions think or behave. Thus, the argument is necessarily partial and, to the extent that generalities are made, speculative.

That said, the many similarities in peacekeepers' representations of local people across the three missions indicate that these discursive events belong to the same discursive formation – wherein discursive events "refer to the same object, share the same style and … support a strategy … a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern (Cousins and Hussain 1984: 84-5, cited in Hall 1997: 44)." It suggests that these representations may be "traveling models" internal to or emerging from within the UN peacekeeping organization and manifesting across different contexts.[5] Again cognizant of the limitations of my empirical material, it is nonetheless germane that scholars such as Goetze (2017), Autesserre (2010, 2014), Smirl (2008, 2015), Pouligny (2006), and Denksus (2014) variously conceptualize a cohesive, shared culture of peacebuilding or peacekeeping: what Goetze (following Bourdieu) calls the "peacebuilding field," Autesserre names "Peaceland," and Denksus (after Mosse 2011) refers to as "Aidland." As Goetze (2017:218) writes, referring to civilian interveners, "the evolution of peacebuilding not only represents the making of a profession but also the creation of a specific culture and habitus with its own codes, references, discourses, norms, and rules." Autesserre (2014:249), meanwhile, postulates that international interveners share sets of standard practices, personal and social habits, and dominant narratives that cumulatively enable them to function in these environments, but also "generate unintended results that decrease the effectiveness of international peace efforts." Institutions are central to the development and perpetuation of a shared culture and practices. Kronsell and Svedberg (2012:4), focusing on military organizations, stress the "institutional aspects of making war and making gender," many of which are common across national militaries, military alliances, and multi-national peacekeeping forces.

My data provide further empirical support to these arguments. Peacekeepers' discourse evidences a characteristic mode of thinking about local people, and there is often an institutional connection to, or basis for, for the representation. These institutional links include mission initiation training related to SEA and HIV/AIDS; peacekeeping "urban legends" recycled in both formal (institutional) and informal fora (Bliesemann de Guevara and Kühn 2015); and mission regulations related to security and to permissible social contact with locals, the latter of which is predominantly couched in terms of non-fraternization regulations. Thus, while I do not claim that the discourse

[5] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for the formulation of "travelling models."

analyzed here is necessarily inseparable from or "indigenous" to UN peacekeeping, neither can it be understood as independent of its culture(s), institutions, and practices. Peacekeepers' representations of local people will vary in specifics over time and space. They will be affected by the context and demographics of the peacekeeping mission and peacekeeping site, perhaps particularly in terms of the dominant race(s) and religion(s) of the "peace-kept" (Jennings and Bøås 2015). But discourse is also affected by, and in turn affects, the structures, norms, and rules that comprise and regulate peacekeeping, giving my arguments wider applicability.

Finally, two notes on usage. First, "peacekeeper" is used to refer to military, civilian, and police peacekeepers, reflecting the variation among my sources, but the material focusing on protection primarily concerns military peacekeepers. Secondly, the discussion on the masculinities performed by peacekeepers are not limited to enactment by men/ male bodies; I do not exclude the performance of masculinity/-ies by women/ female bodies.

Cases, material, and methods

This paper builds on multiple fieldworks in Haiti, Liberia, and the DRC conducted in 2007 and 2011-12. The 2007 fieldworks in Haiti and Liberia focused narrowly on the issue of SEA in peacekeeping, specifically peacekeepers' perceptions of the zero-tolerance policy and its implementation in, respectively, MINUSTAH in Haiti and UNMIL in Liberia. The 2011-12 fieldworks in Liberia and the DRC (Kinshasa and Goma; mission name, MONUSCO) were more broadly concerned with the political economies of peacekeeping. The material upon which this article is based has thus informed numerous publications, but with a different focus and without specific emphasis on peacekeeper discourse. Accordingly, case selection was made on the basis of criteria specific to those projects. For the SEA project, Liberia and Haiti were selected as missions similarly dogged by SEA complaints, but where the mission responses were dissimilar, providing for interesting cross-case comparison; while for the peacekeeping economies project, "most likely" cases were selected to enable theory development.

Each fieldwork featured interviews with uniformed and civilian peacekeepers, including international civilian UN mission personnel encompassing gender, procurement, mission administration, mission security, civil affairs, political affairs, human rights, and justice; military personnel at contingent and headquarters level (staff officers); and UN police personnel (UNPOL). International UN agency and non-governmental organization (NGO) employees were also interviewed in all field sites. I also interviewed a diverse range of local actors, including national UN

professional staff; national UN administrative and support staff; national staff of international NGOs; local civil society groups; domestic workers; security guards and supervisors; drivers; owners, managers, and staff of entertainment establishments; local and expatriate businesspeople; student leaders; landlords and property managers; sex workers;[6] local girlfriends of international interveners; municipal and national-level government officials; and local military and police personnel. Cumulatively, the 2007 and 2011-12 fieldworks comprise over 150 interviews; 15 focus groups; participant observation (including joining military patrols, participating in mission workshops on SEA, and accompanying a nighttime security patrol in Port-au-Prince); and dozens of informal discussions over meals, during coffee breaks, at bars and nightspots, and at other social gatherings. In these discussions, I always informed people early in the conversation that I am a researcher, and the topic of my research. Information gleaned in informal discussions is primarily used as context. As a rule, informal conversations were not taped, although contemporaneous notes were sometimes taken. Extensive notes summarizing the discussions were always written as soon as possible afterwards.

My approach to fieldwork was as open and unstructured as possible, in order to follow different leads and connections and allow space for the kinds of encounters Fujii (2015) conceptualizes as "accidental ethnography." However, I ensured continuity in interviewing particular groups of individuals in each site, in order to compare where experiences converged or differed. Interviewing many of the same "type" of informant in the multiple fieldworks (in terms of the informants' positions, rank, livelihood, sex/ personal characteristics, or relationship to the mission) thus helped ensure data reliability and validity. In particular, I found a great deal of consistency across both local and international informants regarding particular aspects of mission life and how different groups interacted. Interviews were loosely structured and open-ended, with the average interview lasting between one to two hours.

The peacekeepers interviewed originated from both the global North and the global South. Contingent military personnel were overwhelmingly from the global South, while military staff officers, UNPOL, and civilian peacekeepers were geographically more evenly mixed. The majority of my peacekeeping sources, whether uniformed or civilian, were men – as is the case in peacekeeping globally, where men comprise the overwhelming majority of military and police peacekeepers, and are also over-represented among civilian peacekeepers – though the sex balance was less lopsided among the civilians I interviewed. However, I took care to interview women civilian, military, and police peacekeepers in each fieldwork. In terms of the (re)production of the discourse analyzed

[6] I refer to "sex work" and "sex workers" because this is most reflective of how my sources involved in selling sex represented themselves and what they do, while acknowledging that this terminology is contested.

below, I did not observe any systematic difference between groups of peacekeepers, according to distinctions such as uniformed/civilian, "North"/"South", African/ non-African, man/woman, or in terms of nationality, race, or religion.[7] Not all peacekeeper sources replicated this discourse, but it was used by peacekeepers in and across all of these axes of identity. This lends support to the contention above concerning a link between discourse and the culture(s), institutions, and practices of UN peacekeeping.

Finally, gender and race are entangled in the discourse examined here. The collection of cases means that the representations I analyze necessarily involve blackness and black African femininities, masculinities, and sexualities. Drawing on historical and contemporary sources, Tamale (2011:15) demonstrates how "ethnocentric and racist construction of African sexualities" depict these sexualities as "primitive, exotic and bordering on nymphomania, but also . . . immoral, bestial and lascivious (Tamale 2011:15)." These tendencies are also evident in peacekeepers' discourse about locals, as is evident in the empirical material that follows. My focus on gender should not occlude the extent to which the discourse is racialized, nor should it suggest that gender and race are separable and extricable categories in the discourse.

Talking to peacekeepers about sex

That the 2007 fieldworks focused specifically on the issues of SEA and the ZTP undoubtedly affected the discourse I was privy to. Asking peacekeepers' opinions about the UN's policy that forbids the buying of sex in-mission – and presumes that any sex between peacekeepers and locals is exploitative – foregrounded and made explicit topics often confined to innuendo and gossip. Initially I worried about being met with reticence and embarrassment, given that the questions were being put by an early-career, cis, white woman from the Global North.

As it happened, my sources were eager to talk about how SEA was handled in their mission. This was a policy about which most had strong feelings. Sources often formulated these feelings in abstract terms – relating to employers' encroachment on employees' private lives, or to ideas about what constitutes "consent" or "exploitation" – rather than in practical or personal terms, which could implicate them in the activities under discussion. However, once the topic of SEA was raised, it was

[7] Peacekeeping missions are heteronormative spaces where, based on my observations, queerness (or suspicions of queerness) can result in ridicule, harassment, and shunning. Because none of my informants openly identified as queer, I cannot speculate as to the relationship(s) between sexual identity and the discourse analyzed here.

often a short leap to rumors and speculation about the intramural activities of colleagues, particular contingents, and entire categories of peacekeepers. I let these discussions play out with relatively little input, and with judgment withheld. My interest was not to harvest the most incriminating anecdotes, but to see how the larger topic of sex in mission sites was discussed: what kinds of value judgments and justifications were made, and what sorts of concerns arose and recurred.

In so doing, I discovered that these discussions were a pathway to hearing what sources had to say about "locals" in terms that were more personal and value-laden than I anticipated. While peacekeepers' perceptions of local residents were not an initial focus of my SEA research, they followed naturally from many of the discussions, initiated by the sources themselves. It is nevertheless important to acknowledge that, given the sex-centric focus of the SEA fieldworks, the comments and discourse were more openly sexualized than they might otherwise have been. That said, my fieldworks in 2011-12 were more broadly focused, yet the same discourse recurred, if sometimes using less overtly sexualized language.

Constructing locals

Turning now to the discourse, a common thread is the overriding preoccupation with local "difference," usually constructed in ways that were patronizing, if not derogatory, to locals, while implicitly valorizing the peacekeepers themselves. The centrality of difference is not surprising, given the foreignness to peacekeepers of the mission environment, exacerbated by the prevailing separation and segregation between peacekeepers and locals.[8] But the gendered and raced forms that local difference takes are revealing. In particular, local women – their sexuality and their bodies – are pathologized as alternately (sometimes simultaneously) available, desirable, predatory, and dirty, making local women objects of indignation, lust, fear, pity, and scorn. Meanwhile, local men, insofar as they featured, are constructed as ignorant, highly sexed, and unable to care for "their" women: that is, as macho yet incapable (not real) men. As a group, "locals" are constructed as untrustworthy, opportunistic, and duplicitous – attributes with misogynistic connotations. As noted above, this discourse was not limited only to white, European, or male peacekeepers, but was also iterated by peacekeepers of color hailing from the Global South, and by female peacekeepers.

[8] See for example Autesserre (2014), Higate and Henry (2009), Jennings (2016a, 2016b); relatedly Smirl (2008, 2015), Fechter and Hindmann (2011), Duffield (2010).

The dominant strand of discourse in the SEA fieldworks, also noticeable in modified form in the 2011-12 fieldworks, is that locals "think differently"[9] about sex, in ways suggesting that locals are both more sexually available and sexualized than people elsewhere. This "thinking differently" was variously attributed to "the culture"; to poverty and material deprivation that made sex more of a transactional than emotional act; to child-rearing practices; to indigenous conflict resolution or traditional justice practices; to the failings of the local legal system; and to the legacy of war. One East African source observed of Liberians that their (in his eyes) unfortunate difference from other Africans – in terms of Liberians having children outside of marriage, and engaging in indecent public displays of affection – can be attributed to their American heritage.[10] A South American source attributed Haitians' "different" attitudes towards sex to the "fact" that they start sexual life very early because they are exposed to their parents having sex, because they all live in the same room; in order to understand Haitians' "promiscuity" it was important to understand this context.[11] In a similar vein, one senior African peacekeeper in UNMIL asked, "Are there really families in Liberia?," going on to muse that Liberian women and men will have five children from five different people, and concluding that there is "no fiber of the family."[12] Regardless of the reason(s) for locals' different attitude towards sex, the result was that, as one UNMIL peacekeeper explained, locals do not see sexual relations with internationals – including transactional sex – as exploitation or abuse.[13] Indeed, similar claims of locals not perceiving sex with peacekeepers as exploitative recurred multiple times in Haiti and Liberia. As one UNMIL peacekeeper clarified, Liberians see sex in wholly transactional terms: "At the end of the day, Liberians say, 'no money, no sex'."[14]

While these comments were not always aimed specifically at local women, it was clear from the larger discussions that women's sexuality – encompassing their behavior, their (perceived) availability and willingness, and their dress and manners – was at stake in a way that local men's sexuality was not. Conversely, some comments were targeted directly at local women. One MINUSTAH peacekeeper confided the feeling among international staff that "Haitian women are easy."[15] At a MINUSTAH-convened anti-SEA workshop, another peacekeeper asserted that Haitian mothers "push" their daughters at MINUSTAH because, among the poor, it is a good opportunity for

[9] Several sources used this exact phrasing, while many others used different phrasing to express the same idea.

[10] Interview with an official of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Monrovia, 28 November 2007.

[11] Interview with senior military peacekeeper, MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 8 October 2007.

[12] Interview with senior military peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 28 November 2007.

[13] Interview with military peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 21 November 2007.

[14] Interview with civilian peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 6 December 2011.

[15] Interview with special investigator, MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 11 October 2007.

them. These relationships can also result in a lighter-skinned baby, which this peacekeeper represented as a status boost and an investment in the future, even lacking financial support from the peacekeeper father.[16] The phenomenon of mothers pimping out their daughters to internationals was also specifically invoked by an UNMIL peacekeeper.[17] (Relatedly, an UNMIL-sponsored public information campaign with the tagline, "no sex for help, no help for sex" also featured a pimping mother, although there to a Liberian man.) The perceived impropriety of Liberian women also featured in one focus group's disparaging assessment that Liberian girls that are unmarried and have children at a young age are "proud" of their actions, and subsequent elaboration that marriage is only a monetary rather than permanent contract to Liberian women. In the same focus group, a soldier noted that Liberian women invite sexualized scrutiny and solicitation by how they present themselves: "their dress attracts."[18] In a different focus group, peacekeepers agreed that it was difficult to distinguish between a prostitute and a "normal" Liberian, because Liberian women dress "so short and promiscuously."[19]

Even more disturbing were representations of local women as predatory, unrelenting, and almost animalistic in their pursuit of international men (see relatedly Higate 2004, 2007; Higate and Henry 2004; Martin 2005). One UNMIL peacekeeper warned that if a local woman asks you to buy her a drink, it is a trap: afterwards it is very difficult to "shake her loose," and she'll always recognize you.[20] A MINUSTAH peacekeeper used language reminiscent of swarming animals in referring to sex workers in Pétionville, a neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. When the women see a UN vehicle, they come running up "immediately," "very aggressive," trying to "grab" peacekeepers' arms and force their way into the vehicle.[21] Other discourses constructed local people – often, although not only, local women – as filthy and disease-ridden (see also Henry 2015). On one military patrol in the north of Haiti, a peacekeeper from a Latin American country pointed to Haitian women doing washing along the side of the road, and asked how I could think he would want to have sex with them:

[16] Comments of a MINUSTAH peacekeeper at a mission-sponsored workshop for preparing the anti-SEA campaign for MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 9 October 2007.

[17] Interview with military peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 21 November 2007.

[18] Focus group comprising six female contingent military peacekeepers, UNMIL, Monrovia, 22 November 2007.

[19] Focus group comprising eight male contingent military peacekeepers, UNMIL, Monrovia, 25 November 2007

[20] Interview with UNPOL peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 20 November 2007. A similar remark about being targeted over and over was made by an UNMIL civilian peacekeeper, Monrovia, 8 December 2011, and variously by other sources in MINUSTAH and MONUSCO.

[21] Interview with special investigator, MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 11 October 2007.

"they're dirty."[22] He went on to contrast the Haitian women to the "beautiful" women in his country.[23] On the same patrol, I asked an officer why Haitian boys were wearing t-shirts that had clearly belonged to that battalion. He replied that it was their practice to leave behind their t-shirts and other usable clothes when a battalion rotated home, elaborating that there is no point taking them since everything that they take home with them (of clothing) is burned "because of the diseases" in Haiti. They cannot risk taking home those germs and those diseases to their wives and families, he said.[24]

While extreme, this comment fits with a propensity in both UNMIL and MINUSTAH to link locals with disease, and especially with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), despite research demonstrating that the vectors of HIV/AIDS are often peacekeepers themselves (Tripodi and Patel 2002). Indeed, the tendency to link local people with infection and disease is institutionally encouraged through the three missions' HIV/AIDS training. These use the specter of STDs and high (if dubious) local prevalence rates to scare peacekeepers from having sex with locals (see also Tallberg 2007). One UNPOL peacekeeper in UNMIL, describing the HIV training he received in initiation, said the prevalence rates they presented were utterly implausible and seemed designed to scare peacekeepers and stigmatize locals.[25] Similarly, several MINUSTAH peacekeepers separately claimed they were told in their HIV training that over 70 percent of all Haitians were HIV-positive. I later determined that this was most likely a misunderstanding of a figure that was presented in the course of their training, in which it was estimated (with unclear attribution) that 70 percent of Haitian sex workers have HIV or a different STD. Yet especially in terms of HIV, even this latter estimate is extraordinarily high. Informing peacekeepers about the higher incidence of HIV and STDs among sex workers is an appropriate topic for HIV training. More questionable is the dissemination of what appears to be highly inflated, speculative prevalence rates of a still stigmatized disease.

Local men also occasionally featured in peacekeepers' discourse, although to a lesser extent than local women or "locals" as an undifferentiated group. In MINUSTAH, one peacekeeper working on justice issues insisted that local men do not have any notion of consent (and therefore rape), as a

[22] Similar remarks specifically evoking the dirtiness of Liberians were made by a focus group of eight male contingent military peacekeepers in UNMIL, Monrovia, 25 November 2007.

[23] Discussion (on patrol) with contingent military peacekeeper, MINUSTAH, Cap-Haïtien, 17 October 2007. Race was not explicitly mentioned, but the attribution of dirtiness to people of color is a racially loaded trope.

[24] Discussion (on patrol) with contingent military peacekeeper (officer), MINUSTAH, Cap-Haïtien, 17 October 2007.

[25] Interview with UNPOL peacekeeper, Monrovia, 16 November 2007.

way to illustrate the difficulties of his job.[26] A European UNMIL peacekeeper said that African men, by which he specified both Liberians and his African UNMIL colleagues, boast having greater sexual needs and prowess than Europeans – boasts which he represented as both credible and off-putting.[27] The assertion (by non-African peacekeepers) that African men are more sexually driven than non-Africans was repeated by several sources in Haiti and Liberia, and builds on racialized and gendered assumptions about African sexualities (Tamale 2011). Multiple peacekeepers also reflected that local men do not know how to treat "their" women. That these peacekeepers came to the defense of local women while still situating them primarily as the possession of others, i.e. local men, is itself revealing of a specific understanding of gender relations.

A particular topic that solicited and distilled peacekeepers' understandings of the local person – again, particularly the local woman – was that of false allegations of SEA. Interestingly, much of the discourse around false allegations removed sex from the picture entirely, presenting an unambiguous dichotomy of local scheming and peacekeeper rectitude. The basic scenario (in multiple variations) revolved around a local woman threatening to report a peacekeeper for SEA on specious premises, then extorting money to not follow through.[28] One version I heard in both Liberia and Haiti referred to a peacekeeper who, driving at night, spotted women in distress at the side of the road; when he stopped to help them, they jumped in the car, grabbed his UN badge, and threatened to report him for SEA unless he paid them. Occasionally in these tellings it was a man doing the extorting, not on his own account – the international woman/ local man scenario rarely surfaced as a topic, and male-male sexual relationships were utterly taboo – but rather on behalf of a female relation who would then lodge the false allegation. Irrespective of the details, the stories hinge on locals using peacekeepers' good intentions against them.

Significantly, however, all of my discussions with peacekeepers about false allegations referred to incidents that were second- or third-hand or hypothetical. When asked, peacekeepers recounting stories of false allegations admitted that they heard the stories from a colleague, mission lore, or in the SEA training they got when joining the mission. According to many informants, and as with the HIV training, SEA training sessions were a space where the information disseminated about

[26] Interview with civilian peacekeeper working in the justice section, MINUSTAH, Cap-Haïtien, 18 October 2007.

[27] Interview with UNPOL peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 16 November 2007.

[28] This alleged practice preceded the effort by missions to compensate victims of peacekeeper SEA. More recent stories of false SEA allegations center on local "victims" being coached by local NGOs to lodge false SEA claims, in an attempt to gain official compensation; see Cocks, Nichols and Pennetier (2016). While false allegations undoubtedly occur, the specter of them is also used to pre-emptively discredit and delegitimize locals' claims of SEA.

local people seemed primarily intended to stigmatize them and scare peacekeepers. The threat of false allegations was nevertheless treated as an unpreventable aspect of peacekeeping life, and a constraining factor on peacekeeper-local relations.

Locals as mercenary

The preoccupation with false allegations, and specifically with peacekeepers' conviction that locals will take any opportunity to extort peacekeepers, shades into a broader expression of the "thinking differently" discourse. This was articulated in terms of (what peacekeepers represented as) local attitudes towards what is acceptable and expected behavior in personal or business relations, including those not sexual in nature.

The more spacious variant of the "thinking differently" discourse was prevalent in both the 2007 and (especially) 2011-12 sets of field visits. A unifying topic, repeated often and unprompted by peacekeepers in all field sites, concerned locals' essentially opportunistic and transactional approach to any interactions with internationals, which shades into deception, manipulation, corruption, and taking advantage. It was thus impossible to trust locals in any interpersonal contact, particularly in social or informal settings. In most cases, these comments were made about "locals" as a group. They were not about particular people against whom the peacekeeper had a grievance, nor were they backed up by any evidence of wrongdoing. For example, one contractor attached to MONUSCO claimed that Congolese always had their "begging bowl" out and that, while some were reduced by poverty and desperation, many others relied on MONUSCO to do things they themselves were too lazy, corrupt, or greedy to do.[29]

However, this discourse was also prevalent in peacekeepers' discussions of specific groups: their local domestic staff; their local professional counterparts (such as national police forces being trained by UNPOL); and even, albeit less often, their local colleagues.[30] One senior-level peacekeeper in MONUSCO opined that local UN staff know "they can't be touched," and use this as dispensation to engage in petty corruption, theft, loan sharking, and other misbehavior.[31] The implication was that, in the absence of externally-enforced restrictions or punishments, locals will naturally revert to corrupt or criminal behavior so long as it advantages them. This gets to a key function of the "thinking differently" discourse, which is that the perceived attributes of "the local" are presented as

[29] Discussion with a civilian contractor attached to MONUSCO, Goma, 27 March 2012.

[30] Interview with civilian peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 13 December 2011.

[31] Interview with senior civilian peacekeeper, MONUSCO, Goma, 21 March 2012.

simple and uncontroversial statements of fact. These are fundamentally immutable characteristics of the local person, always in relation (and in contrast) to the peacekeeping international.

The construction of locals as "thinking differently" did not necessarily spring from malice. Even when the sentiments expressed were negative, patronizing, and judgmental, they did not always seem to strike the peacekeeper saying them that way. Instead, in many cases these constructions were simply means of communicating to me, an outsider, about the "reality" in the host country. Yet this had the function of situating the peacekeeper as outside, perceptive of, and – most importantly – above their surroundings.

It had the further function of justifying, explaining, and excusing problematic behavior on the part of peacekeepers. Mission life has been described by sources (and witnessed by myself) as prone to excess. One UNMIL source characterized mission life as "oversexualized."[32] The social aspect of missions – what peacekeepers do in the off-hours – is marked by extremes: peacekeepers either have no life outside of the office, or they engage in more risky behavior than they would at home.[33] A MINUSTAH source referred to the phenomenon of "passing single" or "single for the mission," describing a mentality among married or partnered peacekeepers that being unfaithful during a long deployment is accepted and expected.[34] Heavy drinking is also a staple of many social functions involving peacekeeping (Henry 2015), despite the threat of punishment should peacekeepers be caught driving drunk. In other words, while peacekeepers are attuned to the "difference" of local residents, they themselves may be acting in ways incommensurate to the rules and norms that constrain them at home, using as their excuse the exceptional circumstances of peacekeeping.

The way peacekeepers use the "thinking differently" discourse both to characterize local people and to justify their own or colleagues' problematic behavior was particularly evident in the case of the ZTP.[35] The majority of peacekeeper sources denigrated the policy as unrealistic and unwarranted overkill in light of the local "reality," and of how "they" think about sex, morals, and what is acceptable. Even peacekeepers proclaiming that they themselves would never have sex with locals claimed that the ZTP was ridiculous considering the sexual culture of the host country,

[32] Interview with civilian peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 13 December 2011. See also Mäki-Rahkola and Myrttinen (2014:8,14).

[33] Interview with civilian peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 8 December 2011; see also Cain, Postlewait and Thomson (2006).

[34] "Passing single" and "single for the mission" referred primarily to the opportunity for extramarital sex that being in a mission provided, but also to freedom from the responsibilities of family life.

[35] See also Higate (2007) (note 2 above).

especially when this permissive culture combined with the acute material needs of its citizens. By this logic, peacekeeper colleagues engaging in prohibited sexual activity were excused by virtue of the preposterousness of the prohibition.

Some peacekeepers also turned the tables, posing peacekeepers as more likely to be exploited by locals than to exploit locals, where it was economic exploitation – being cheated, extorted, or taken advantage of – that most preoccupied peacekeepers. Separate from the issue of false allegations – which, as noted above, tends to remove sex from the picture – this discourse acknowledges sexual interactions between peacekeepers and locals, but flips that standard assumption that peacekeepers have the power in these transactions while locals are powerless. Such flipped thinking was expressed by a MINUSTAH peacekeeper who, in lamenting the potential negative consequences for peacekeepers of the ZTP, stressed that local women are not "allies" or "victims" because they "have interests" in sex with peacekeepers. This, he strongly implied, makes consent irrelevant, eradicating the possibility of locals ever being exploited or sexually abused, and automatically casting suspicion on any allegations they make.[36] Similarly, one peacekeeper arguing that locals do not experience sex with peacekeepers as exploitative further explained that, as a result, locals only report SEA to take advantage of peacekeepers, not because they are really suffering.[37] Indeed, multiple sources in all field sites voiced comparable sentiments about how peacekeepers, not locals, were most likely to be taken advantage of and exploited when it came to sexual – as well as non-sexual, service-based – relations between peacekeepers and locals. For example, one MINUSTAH peacekeeper complained that locals get into relationships with peacekeepers and "suck them dry," and asked: "Who is the victim there?"[38] Another explained that locals expect to benefit out of any contact with internationals, and get angry and offended if internationals pull back.[39] He added that the UN does not always see the "exploitative possibilities" (of how locals can exploit peacekeepers), but locals "will always look for loopholes."[40] This argument about locals as exploiters of peacekeepers combines two assertions identified above: that local people do not experience sex as exploitative; and that they are mercenary, thinking of a relationship only in terms of what it can do for them. To peacekeepers who subscribe to these views, therefore,

[36] Opinions expressed during a mission-sponsored workshop on SEA prevention, Port-au-Prince, 9 October 2007.

[37] Interview with military peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 21 November 2007.

[38] Interview with UNPOL peacekeeper, MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 11 October 2007.

[39] Very similar remarks were made by a focus group of eight male UNMIL contingent military peacekeepers in the 2007 fieldwork (Monrovia, 25 November 2007).

[40] Interview with military peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 21 November 2007.

locals – and again, where sex is at stake, peacekeepers are mostly preoccupied with local women – are both resistant to suffering exploitation, and well suited to exploit others.

Idealized narratives and the troubling of protective masculinity

Peacekeepers' own representations of the local person indicate a rupture between what peacekeepers think about locals, and what they are supposed to think. This is evident in comparing the discourse examined above to an idealized narrative of peacekeepers, locals, and the relationship between them.[41] This idealized narrative is directly and indirectly communicated to peacekeepers via codes of conduct, training regimes, public rhetoric, and internal communications concerning what peacekeepers "are" and what is expected of them. It is communicated to a wider audience via the UN's public relations and branding efforts, in the form of informational videos and other material, and official speeches and statements.[42] This idealized narrative also comes into sharp relief in cases of peacekeeper-related sex scandals, where the UN response typically depicts the abuse as aberrant, isolable, and as something that occurs in contradiction to, rather than in the context of, UN peacekeeping (Guterres 2017; Westendorf and Searle 2017).

In its simplest form, the idealized narrative of peacekeeping paints the peacekeeper as protector – benevolent, firm, and driven by altruism rather than self-interest or the pursuit of power – and the local chiefly as beneficiary: alternately valiant peacebuilders or piteous victims, with the selfish spoiler as foil and common adversary to the "good" local (Razack 2000, 2004). Enloe (1993:33) captures the paradox underpinning this idealized narrative of peacekeeping when she argues that a UN peacekeeping force "seems to perform military duties without being militaristic." The appeal of UN peacekeeping in its archetypal form is that it offers the promise of protection, stability, and safety, free of the compromising taint of militarism and "hard" power.[43] Following from this is the expectation that peacekeepers will relate to local populations with greater integrity than non-UN

[41] My use of "narrative" here builds on Sandra Whitworth's (2004) argument regarding the narratives of UN peacekeeping past and present, and indirectly on Mac Ginty (2011:19-46) on liberal peace narratives. "Idealized narratives" operate similarly to "organizational myths" that help mask tensions between an institution's goals, values, and activities or product (Bliesemann de Guevara 2014). My use of "narratives" should not be confused with narrative approaches to IR; see for example Wibben (2011), Daigle (2016).

[42] See for example the promotional videos uploaded by the UN on the UN peacekeeping playlist on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL49CE20981558F582 (accessed 20 December 2016).

[43] See also: Cockburn and Zarkov (2002); Cockburn and Hubic (2002); Higate and Henry (2004, 2009); relatedly Pruitt (2016).

affiliated foreigners, such as foreign investors (who are profit-driven); development workers (who are not always subject to codes of conduct or sex prohibitions, and may settle longer and maintain more intimate friendships and relationships with locals); and diplomats (whose interests are foremost aligned with their home countries). Even stronger differences are maintained between UN peacekeeping forces and other foreign military forces (much less occupying armies or private security forces), which are seen as a much more coercive presence (Higate 2012b; Sanghera, Henry and Higate 2008; Sion 2008). Conversely, UN peacekeeping is represented as being about collective and individual sacrifice in service of others who needing help. For example, the frequently asked questions section of the anti-SEA training material used in UNMIL in 2007 states:

> When you are serving on a UN peacekeeping mission, you are a representative of the organization during your free time as well as during your working day. [….] You accept this when you accept the job. You are held to a very high and strict standard of conduct because in the environment of a peacekeeping mission in a war-ravaged society – your behavior, both professional and personal, is always associated with and reflects on the image of the mission. [….] [P]eacekeeping is not a "normal" job. Not everyone is suited for peacekeeping. If you do not feel that you can meet the high standards of conduct required, then you should not be in peacekeeping (UNMIL undated: section 5:1).[44]

These expectations regarding the exceptionality of UN peacekeeping are not just communicated to peacekeepers, but also parroted by them. In interviews where I never succeeded in breaking through with the interviewee, I was privy to this kind of "on-script" narrative of peacekeeping and peacekeepers' relations to locals, centering on peacekeepers' sacrifice for the benefit of a grateful population.

Peacekeepers are thus represented – and represent themselves – as protectors and stabilizers. The way that gender works in this idealized representation is usefully expressed in Young's (2003:2) critical analysis of the "logic of masculinist protection," in which "the role of the masculine protector puts those protected, paradigmatically women and children, in a subordinate position of dependence and obedience." Here the peacekeeper – whether man or woman – is the masculine protector, while local people – both men and women, young and old – are the paradigmatic women and children (see relatedly Hicks Stiehm 1982). However, Young also notes that, for protective masculinity to have meaning, there must be something to protect against:

[44] This material was obtained in full from a Liberian source. The quoted material comes from a module on Frequently Asked Questions.

> The logic of masculine protection, then, includes the image of the selfish aggressor who wishes to invade the lord's property and sexually conquer his women. These are the bad men. Good men can only appear in their goodness if we assume that lurking outside the warm familial walls are aggressors who wish to attack them. The dominative masculinity in this way constitutes protective masculinity as its other (Young 2003:4).

In the ideal narrative of peacekeeping, the "bad men" are the spoilers and criminals working to undermine the peace. In other words, the "good men" protect the "good local" from the "bad men" ("bad local"). The fallacies of the logic of masculinist protection that Young describes, and that underpin the idealized narrative, are incisively analyzed by feminist scholars. For example, Carver (2008:71) notes that the concept of "warrior-protector" is based on certain restricted constructions of masculinity that are "themselves predicated on competitive hierarchies of exclusion beyond that of gender, notably 'race'/ethnicity, class and any number of other cultural markers of 'difference' and 'superiority'/'inferiority'." These hierarchies would exclude many peacekeepers. Sjoberg (2013:201) questions the very possibility of militarized protection, arguing that it only increases gendered violence and insecurity: "belligerents victimize (women) civilians seen as the property of the enemy under the same logic that motivates them to provide protection to the (women) civilians that they see as their own property" (see also Eichler 2015). These valid critiques notwithstanding, the logic of masculinist protection put forth by Young remains salient in terms of the idealized narrative of UN peacekeeping, and how peacekeepers (should) benignly and protectively relate to local residents.

But peacekeepers' discourse about locals – most vividly evoked when talking about activities tangential to "official" peacekeeping activities, such as sex, socializing, and peacekeepers' daily maintenance – also represent obvious, but largely unscripted or covert, challenges to this idealized narrative. Indeed, they practically upend it. Peacekeepers' discursive constructions of local people are hyper-masculine in how they sexualize and pathologize local bodies, while simultaneously positioning the peacekeeping speaker as something separate and superior.[45] The most egregious examples above – of dirty or predatory women; of mothers pimping out their own daughters; of women who are so sexually coarse that they are incapable of experiencing exploitation; of men who cannot treat "their" women properly; of people for whom relationships are only opportunities for enrichment – tell not just of debauchery but of debasement. While local women are not always the

[45] Here I use "hyper-masculine" as referring to an *intensification* of "general hegemonic understandings" of what constitutes "real men" (Bengtsson 2016:414). In other words, hyper-masculinity is a concentration of the traits generally associated with dominative hegemonic masculinity.

exclusive subject of these discourses, their bodies, behavior, and sexuality are at stake in ways that local men's are not. The debasement is thus woman-focused. Where local men do figure, however, they are simultaneously highly sexualized and feminized (as not being "real" men), in ways that are meant to discredit them (Enloe 2015). Moreover, as Claire Duncanson (2015:235) argues, "strategies of feminization – although directed at men – have an impact on women by reinforcing 'feminized' qualities with inferiority." Thus, both the content and the function of the discourse are gendered. They describe the local person in ways that accord with misogynistic tropes, at the same time that they draw a clear distinction between the superior, rational (masculine) teller and the problematic, unruly (feminized) local subject.

Given peacekeepers' discursive constructions of local women and men, it is no wonder that peacekeepers are wary of them – even fear them. Or starting at the other end: peacekeepers – with their limited contact with locals, strict security regulations, and the long, mission-prescribed list of places and things to avoid – fear and distrust locals, and give expression to this fear in how they discursively construct local people. Yet while peacekeeping missions project power by the way they move through space (Higate and Henry 2009), what peacekeepers themselves give expression to is neither protective nor dominative, but something more brittle. In constructing the local person as capricious, scheming, exploitative, and predatory, the peacekeeper knowingly or unwittingly emphasizes their own vulnerability. This does not obviate the possibility of protection. However, it complicates notions of how power, masculinities, and femininities operate in peacekeeping sites. It upsets the assumption that peacekeepers – backed by significant resources, serving as key security providers, and with the potential to exit – are necessarily the more powerful, agentive (masculine) party. Peacekeepers' discourse evidences instead a perception of susceptibility to locals that goes beyond the threat of organized violence and conflict, to encompass locals' presumed attributes of untrustworthiness, avariciousness, and hyper-sexuality, and the dangers that these pose.

Undeserving locals, conditional protection

How peacekeepers talk and think about locals may not seem to matter, so long as they do their jobs. But can peacekeepers hold such opinions of local people and still do their jobs effectively? This is a question I cannot attempt to systematically answer here. It would require metrics to determine what counts as effectiveness for the different types of peacekeepers, according to the mandate and the resources available, and taking into account the local context and stakeholders' interests (Martin-Brûle 2017). It would ideally require evidence from a mission where the kinds of discourse I present are not prevalent, and where peacekeepers maintain a closer, less segregated relationship with locals

– none of which I have. However, I can proffer some observations based on my sources' own descriptions of how their perceptions of local women and men affect their ways of working, against the backdrop of a heavily securitized and regulated mission environment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, (re)producing discourse that, at least in part, constructs locals as predatory, dirty, diseased, and unfailingly opportunistic seemingly impacts how sources approach their peacekeeping duties.

A command-level military peacekeeper in UNMIL gave an example of the link between peacekeeper discourse and performance. This commander was on his second deployment to UNMIL and thus able to shed light on intra-mission changes over time.[46] The commander acknowledged that his soldiers had become less likely to intervene when they witnessed fights, public disturbances, or conflicts by/between Liberians. The reason he gave for this sprung directly from the discourse of Liberians as opportunistic, untrustworthy, and mercenary, combined with the opportunity for extortion opened up by the ZTP. Specifically, the commander claimed that his soldiers were wary of involving themselves in interactions with locals that would leave them vulnerable to extortion attempts against them, where the locals involved make up specious stories of peacekeeper abuse. He stressed that the hesitation on the part of peacekeepers was the same whether it was local men or local women involved. Of interest here, however, is that the source's contention (of local willingness to press extortion attempts on the basis of false abuse claims) was not SEA-specific. In other words, the commander extrapolated from the opportunity to report – and in his eyes, extort – peacekeepers that the focus on SEA provided to locals, to imply that locals would use *any* interaction with peacekeepers – even those where there is clearly no possibility of sexual wrong-doing – to coerce and exploit them. It is thus safer for the peacekeeper to keep one's distance, and this is what his men were doing, in contrast to their previous mode of interaction with Liberians, in a period preceding the UN's focus on SEA.

Similar reasoning was voiced either obliquely or explicitly by many sources. Neither peacekeepers nor the mission had anything to gain from inserting themselves into disputes or conflicts between locals; conversely, doing so could put peacekeepers at physical and reputational risk, and rebound to damaging effect on the mission. While peacekeeper humility in the face of often complex local disputes is not to be disparaged, peacekeepers' reluctance to engage can tip over into indifference and inaction, including in the face of larger or more organized clashes. Peacekeepers are right, however, in that inaction in the face of discrete disturbances is likely the safest or least troublesome choice (for them) in any given situation. The view towards locals enunciated by many peacekeepers likely only strengthens this stance.

[46] Interview with military peacekeeper, UNMIL, Monrovia, 21 November 2007.

Further evidence of a connection between peacekeepers' representations of locals and their approach to their job was articulated by a focus group of UNMIL military peacekeepers, who, referring specifically to Liberian women, agreed: "We protect them in the homes but avoid them in the street."[47] This statement is revealing in two ways. First, it points to a discomfiting aspect of the way that some peacekeepers understand their role as protectors, which is that being a protector requires people *worth* protecting. Recall that in Young's analysis, the purported masculinist protectors were protecting the family, understood narrowly as one's own flesh and blood, and broadly as one's country. No such unifying relationship obtains in peacekeeping. Instead, peacekeepers' allegiance is demanded to the ideals of UN peacekeeping and the specifics of the mandate: there is no presumption of shared identity or common loyalty between peacekeepers and the peace-kept. This is perhaps especially challenging for uniformed peacekeepers, who are at the sharp end of the protection of civilians (POC) mandates guiding most UN peacekeeping missions (including UNMIL and MONUSCO). In the absence of shared blood or national ties, the impetus to protect may not be experienced as urgent. Thus, the locals' obligation is to be "worth protecting," here embodied by those women that stay "in the homes." Such a view indicates that, mandate aside, simply being a civilian is not enough to merit protection.

Second, and directly following, the statement indicates that violation of the idealized role on the part of locals justifies *lacking* protection on the part of peacekeepers. The women "in the street" are perceived not with pity, sympathy, or even indifference, but rather with suspicion and wariness. Indeed, the women "in the street" are not just unworthy of protection, but actively to be avoided (see also Mäki-Rahkola and Myrttinen 2014:15). Interestingly, no distinction between "in the homes" and "in the street" was made for Liberian men. From this, one may conclude that Liberian men are deemed uniformly threatening. Conversely, it could indicate that these peacekeepers do not situate local men "in the homes," which would concur with peacekeepers' representations of local men as failing to control "their" women and, by extension, the family life that happens in the home. According to either logic, there is no place in protection for local men and their problematic, simultaneously failing and yet highly sexualized masculinities. Finally, while the need to be worth protecting, and the determination of who is worthy and who is not, were most forthrightly articulated by one group of military peacekeepers, the sentiments expressed were shared by many other peacekeeper sources. The idea of the "good local" hardly survives first contact. It is eroded by evidence of behavior that peacekeepers deem inappropriate, distasteful, or simply too "different."

[47] Focus group comprising nine male contingent military peacekeepers, UNMIL, Monrovia, 22 November 2007.

Protection is thus made conditional on local behavior and peacekeepers' perceptions of it. This indicates that, at least among some peacekeepers, protection is not a right; its provision, not a duty. It must be earned, and this makes it fragile. Phillips (2016) identifies a similar dynamic when she discusses the "complex ways notions of our common humanity can be weakened by idealized notions of the human."[48] Speaking of the negative shifts in sentiment among Europeans towards refugees, in the wake of (alleged) serial sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015, Phillips argues that the initial solidarity for refugees was based on an idealized notion of refugees as perfect victims, which collapsed once some refugees were revealed to not be perfect after all. The notion of equality and common humanity initially extended to refugees was thus revealed to be conditional, and, "As soon as you make something conditional, you open up the space for gradations of humanity, and you open up the case for exclusions – certain people that we do not have to treat any longer as human beings."[49] These observations resonate with the attitude towards protection articulated by the UNMIL peacekeepers cited above. They illustrate how problematic idealized narratives of different groups of people – such as peacekeepers and locals – can be when they are employed, not aspirationally, but as a test. Making protection conditional implies a fundamental failing at the heart of UN peacekeeping, because it violates the norm that all civilians have an equal claim to protection from violence and imminent threat (Francis, Popovski and Samford 2012; Jackson 2014).

Thus, the protective masculinity that forms the basis of the idealized narrative of peacekeeping is again troubled. In the previous section, it was argued that the clash between the idealized narrative and peacekeepers' hyper-masculine, sexualized, and misogynistic discourse discloses a more vulnerable, brittle form of peacekeeper masculinity, complicating the logics of protection. The fragility of protective peacekeeper masculinity is further underlined by the conditionality of protection, and the subsequent obligation of local people to prove that they are worth protecting. This demonstrates that peacekeepers' discursive constructions of the local disclose sentiments and point to (in)action that cuts against the core of UN peacekeeping and its promise to protect.

Conclusion

[48] Lecture by Professor Anne Phillips, Oslo, 4 March 2016. All quotes checked for accuracy against a video of the lecture, available at: https://livestream.com/samfunnsforskning/events/4897089/videos/114245958 (accessed 10 December 2016). The quoted text appears at 30:37.

[49] See note 54. Quoted text at 39:10.

The UN mission in Liberia did not suffer the protection failures that have latterly plagued the UN mission in South Sudan, the UN stabilization mission in the Central African Republic, and at various junctures, MONUSCO (Burke and Pilkington 2016; Laville 2016). These failures are attributed to numerous factors, including over-ambitious mandates; insufficient resources; lack of clarity as to what protection entails; unwillingness on the part of certain countries to risk their soldiers; indecision by the political leadership of the mission and/or at headquarters level; a lack of strategic planning or understanding of the local context; uncertainty among contingent commanders about the procedures governing the use of force; and simple lack of awareness that abuses were taking place.[50] These are all salient explanations for protection failures in UN peacekeeping. The analysis above suggests a further factor: an attitude towards locals that implies that protection is neither universal nor given, but conditional and needing to be earned.

This aspect of protection failure is both ethically troubling and practically challenging. Ethically, as already noted, it violates the principle that civilians deserve protection simply by virtue of being non-combatants. While the protection failures referred to above indicate that the universality of civilian protection is more aspiration than reality, making protection conditional removes even the aspirational element, turning protection into just another transaction in the intervention market. In practical terms, the attitude of peacekeepers towards locals – as expressed in their own words, and as implied through their actions – is less amenable to being "fixed" through the provision of greater resources and training, clearer guidelines, more realistic mandates, or any of the other solutions proffered in the wake of peacekeeping failures. Indeed, the training given to peacekeepers is part of the problem, as indicated above by the way that initiation training is used to disseminate "scare stories" of false SEA allegations, high STD prevalence rates, and other stigmatizing tales about locals that inform and circulate in peacekeepers' discourse. This makes sense when considering that the training is geared towards harm-reduction for peacekeepers, building on the dual presumptions that maintaining separation between peacekeepers and locals mitigates potentially risky contact, and that maintaining separation is achieved in part by frightening peacekeepers about local people. However, it does not bode well for attempts to change attitudes among peacekeepers towards locals.

[50] On protection failures in South Sudan, see the Independent Special Investigation into the violence which occurred in Juba in 2016 and UNMISS response (2016). On protection failures in the DRC, see e.g. Moloo (2016); Human Rights Watch (2014). The Office of Internal Oversight Services (2013, 2014) has also evaluated aspects of civilian protection in peacekeeping missions.

In this paper, I have used a close examination of peacekeepers' discursive constructions of local people to develop an argument about the troubling of peacekeeper masculinity and the fragility of protection. The significance and structuring role of gender is pervasive: in the content of the discourse and the construction of locals; in the idealized narratives told about peacekeeping (and that peacekeepers tell about themselves); and in the failure of those narratives, revealing in their wake the vulnerable peacekeeper and conditional protection. A core challenge for UN peacekeeping is moving protection beyond the conditional. This is not just about more resources, better training, and realistic mandates. It also requires a reckoning with the flaws and limitations of protective peacekeeping masculinity, and an approach to peacekeeping that is rooted, not in ideals and aspirations, but the recognition that protection is owed even to those that do not "earn" it.

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