

CAN SOLDIERS BUILD PEACE? A HUMAN SCIENCE APPROACH TO
UNDERSTANDING CANADIAN SOLDIERS' EXPERIENCES IN PEACE
OPERATIONS DEPLOYMENTS

Patlee Creary

Soldiers play an important role in the peacebuilding triangle; they act on behalf of intervening third parties that wish to limit hostility and build local capacity in conflict spaces. Using results from a hermeneutic phenomenological study of twelve Canadian soldiers' experiences in peace operations deployment, the paper contends that an interpretive understanding of the soldier's deployment experiences can contribute to more effective long-term sustainable peacebuilding. Understanding the lived experiences of the deployed soldier uncovers themes of humanization, multiple skills and informal third party functions that contribute to micro-level peace. Incorporating these themes into future soldiers' peace operations roles could bring into being a peace builder identity that better fits the requirements for post-conflict peacebuilding.

INTRODUCTION

How can soldiers more effectively contribute to long-term sustainable peacebuilding? External military forces play an important role in post-conflict peacebuilding.¹ They carry out peacekeeping, peace enforcement, stabilization, and reconstruction mandates during peace operations.² They formally represent third parties, such as the United Nations or groups of cooperative states, as they work to limit hostility and build local capacity.³ Soldiers have interaction with an affected population as a result of peace operations deployments, even though that military-other contact can

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