• Serving Their Country: A Short History of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service in the Australian Army
• ‘A Homosexual Institution’: Same-sex Desire in the Army During World War II
• Steyrs and Sheilas: The Modern Role of Women in the Australian Army
• Sexuality, Cohesion, Masculinity and Combat Motivation: Designing Personnel Policy to Sustain Capability
• Religious Diversity in the Australian Army: The Next Diversity Frontier?
• Military Retirement: Reflections from Former Members of Special Operations Forces
• Hazing in the ADF: A Culture of Denial?
• The Myths of Cultural Awareness: Culture Does Not Eat Strategy for Breakfast
• Securing Army’s Future: Enhancing Career Management
• Learning to Add Value: Fostering Cultures of Effective Learning in the Australian Army
• Family Friendly Army — First Class Policy, Second Class Implementation
• From Institution to Occupation: Australian Army Culture in Transition
• Army’s Spirit
• Brothers and Sisters in Arms: Experiences of Gay Soldiers in the Australian Army
• On the Culture of the Australian Army
• Fifty Shades of Grey: Officer Culture in the Australian Army
• Lost in Translation – Plight of the Embed
CONTENTS

CHIEF OF ARMY FOREWORD ........................................................................................................ 5

EDITORIAL .................................................................................................................................. 10

HISTORY
Serving Their Country: A Short History of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service in the Australian Army ............................................................................................... 11
Dr Noah Riseman
‘A Homosexual Institution’: Same-sex Desire in the Army During World War II .......... 23
Dr Graham Willett and Dr Yorick Smaal

GENDER AND SEXUALITY
Steyrs and Sheilas: The Modern Role of Women in the Australian Army ............... 41
Lance Corporal Hannah Evans
Sexuality, Cohesion, Masculinity and Combat Motivation:
Designing Personnel Policy to Sustain Capability ..................................................... 58
Lieutenant Colonel Charles Knight

RELIGION
Religious Diversity in the Australian Army: The Next Diversity Frontier? .......... 79
Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Hoglin

IDENTITY
Military Retirement: Reflections from Former Members of Special Operations Forces ........................................................................................................ 97
Kira Harris, Dr Eyal Gringart and Dr Deirdre Drake

DISCIPLINE
Hazing in the ADF: A culture of denial? ............................................................................. 113
Dr Richard Evans
OPERATIONAL CULTURE

The Myths of Cultural Awareness: Culture Does Not Eat Strategy for Breakfast ...................................................... 128
Captain David M. Bergman, Swedish Armed Forces

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Securing Army’s Future: Enhancing Career Management ................................. 142
Major General Angus Campbell, Dr Corinne Manning and Brigadier Paul Nothard

Learning to Add Value: Fostering Cultures of Effective Learning in the Australian Army ................................................ 158
Steven Talbot

Family Friendly Army — First Class Policy, Second Class Implementation .......... 172
Lieutenant Colonel Kirsty Skinner and Ms Chloe Diggins

From Institution to Occupation: Australian Army Culture in Transition .......... 187
Anthony John

OPINION

Army’s Spirit .................................................................................................. 203
Warrant Officer David Ashley

Brothers and Sisters in Arms: Experiences of Gay Soldiers in the Australian Army ....................................................... 213
Captain Dominic Lopez

On the Culture of the Australian Army .............................................................. 226
Richard Hughes

Fifty Shades of Grey: Officer Culture in the Australian Army ........................ 244
Captain James Brown

CREATIVE WRITING

Lost in Translation – Plight of the Embed ....................................................... 255
Author known only as ‘Airman Skippy Zed’

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS ........................................................................ 259
CHIEF OF ARMY FOREWORD

When I assumed command of the Australian Army in June 2011, I set myself three broad areas that I wanted focus on during my tenure. That was not to limit the host of issues that come across my desk in the course of a working week, but I wanted to have my command team know that, above all else, these matters would demand my attention and, as a consequence, their focus.

The first area was, is, and always will be, support to our soldiers on operations. The preparation prior to deployment, the training that underscores it and the rapid introduction into service of equipment to support our people is world class. It has been achieved through great commitment and dedication by soldiers, public servants and industry. There is much we can be proud of in what has been achieved and I can assure you that I will continue to seek improvement because it is our most essential task.

The second area of focus was on developing an Army with a viable and affordable force structure, with all of its essential capabilities. The aim is to ensure that Army is a robust and relevant force, capable of defending Australia and its interests well into the third decade of this Century. That is what Plan Beersheba is all about. It makes the case as to what is required to maintain essential capability within Army, and how that will be achieved with real and enduring resource efficiency. It is not a panacea for all of our force structure challenges, but it is a foundation for our future and I am very proud of the great work that has been done by many people at all rank levels to get us to this point.
The third area was focussed on our workforce and, back in July 2011, I framed my thinking around the care of our wounded and ill, and on how we lived to our Army ethos.

While we still have a way to go, especially in treating and supporting those with the mental scars of military service, I feel that we have made tangible headway in the care of our wounded and ill. However, I will be frank in saying that I did not expect to spend as much time as I have in examining and evaluating the culture and values of our Army.

Reasonably, I saw that as a well established feature of our organisation and, while I knew that there would be behavioural matters to address, I did not expect that what I said in this regard would arouse so much interest and comment, both inside and outside the Army. Subsequent events have proved that I was mistaken in this.

I don’t want any misunderstanding here. Our performance on operations since 1999 has been in the finest traditions of the Australian soldier. We have produced tough, resilient and innovative soldiers who have displayed courage in battle, while being able to treat the vulnerable with compassion. This record confirms that our individual training systems and our values work.

However, there is also undeniable evidence that the same warrior culture that has built our small teams, and equipped them to withstand the shock of combat, has been distorted by some people and used to justify bullying, harassment and intimidation.

Furthermore, the arguments that such behaviour are the preserve of a ‘few bad apples’ just doesn’t stack up. There have been too many scandals, and too many disappointed families who have felt betrayed that their sons and daughters had enlisted in the Australian Defence Force only to be treated badly.

The ‘bad apple’ concept has been the comforting cliché that we have relied on for too long to justify manifest failures of Army to provide a decent environment for all of its people to achieve their potential and make a contribution to this Country.

In no way am I arguing for a lowering of our rigorous standards. My number one area of focus is on providing the best Army for operations. However, over my 35 years of service, no one has looked me in the eye and explained how our great core value of ‘mateship’ justifies bullying a fellow soldier on account of his or
CHIEF OF ARMY FOREWORD

her gender, sexuality, religion or ethnicity. After 13 separate inquiries into various aspects of our treatment of our people within the last 15 years, I am committed to facing up to this issue in the most open and honest way we can.

One of the best ways to achieve this is to facilitate analysis and discussion on matters of Army’s culture. That is the purpose of this edition of the Army Journal. Take the time to read it, and to discuss these issues with one another and your leaders at every level. This is how healthy organisations prosper.

I am most certainly not asking that you agree with all that is expressed in this edition. That is not the point. What I am looking for is an open and respectful exchange of views that goes to the heart of what makes us the great national institution I know we are.

I commend the Journal to you. Good luck and good soldiering.
EDITORIAL

One may ask why a professional military journal has devoted an entire edition to the issue of culture. If we have learnt anything about conducting operations in far-flung locations in the past decade and the public focus on issues such as gender and harassment in the military more recently, it is that our understanding of culture is central to being both professional and effective soldiers operationally and a professional and effective Army domestically. The Australian public expects and deserves no less.

The need to understand foreign cultures is explicitly acknowledged through the cultural awareness training that we impose on our troops deploying overseas. Cultural issues inherent to the Army and that impact on the organisation and its personnel at home however, need to be even better understood if we as an organisation are to address the changing nature and expectations of the society from which we draw our members. This special edition of the Journal is a small acknowledgement that Army understands that it is part of society at large and that open debate and diversity are the hallmarks of a healthy organisation.

Culture can be such an esoteric subject, and this edition has attempted to address its inherent diversity. With the degree of media interest in the issue, it is easy to simply conflate the subject of culture in the military with gender. But, as this edition of the Journal demonstrates, there is much more to the issue of culture. While gender issues are certainly covered, so are many more of the elements that define our culture. Organisational culture — or how Army policy and structure address contemporary concerns — is a case in point. Career management and
the way in which it deals with personnel needs, whether Army culture is changing, the degree to which Army has a culture of learning (and what that means) and the challenges that uniformed personnel with children face are four issues that fall into this category and are covered in this edition. There is also an element of historical analysis, with a description of the way indigenous soldiers have served their country and an examination of the service of homosexual soldiers during the Second World War. The issue of homosexuality in the Army has also been examined with a more contemporary focus in an opinion piece written by a currently serving junior officer.

Gender and sexuality are further explored and placed in some context by two quite diverse articles from a Reservist lance corporal and an ex-British and Australian Regular, now Reserve officer, which provide two very different treatments of the subject. And, in a country as secular as Australia, the fact that religion is raised as a cultural issue is certainly laudable. Of particular interest, however, is the fact that, for a country which proclaims itself multicultural, there are no articles on the issue of ethnicity and the Army. Some articles touch on this issue, but if security forces should ideally reflect the societies from which they are drawn, the degree to which the Army does or does not reflect broader Australian society in terms of ethnicity has yet to be discussed.

There is a range of other articles that also merit the reader’s attention. A Swedish officer responded to our call for authors and has written on cultural awareness training based on his own operational experience. Cultural adaptation by ex-serving soldiers who discharge is also addressed, as is the degree to which ‘hazing’ has been a feature of Army culture. We also received a poem from a RAAF member who served on operations in an Army unit. Full marks to the author for both surviving a tour out of service and then committing it to poem. I am very happy to publish this unusual response.

The opinion pieces in this edition are particularly interesting. Alongside the aforementioned piece on contemporary treatment of gays in the military, the diversity of subjects addressed was quite extraordinary and something that I am keen to replicate in the future. Well-argued opinion pieces are a powerful way to generate debate and often less rigorous to compile. Not everyone can write them, but for those who can I would encourage you to do so. One piece comes from the pen of the RSM of the Army who shares some insights on the Army’s spirit. Given that his role is to provide the Chief of Army with frank and fearless advice and to gauge the feelings and concerns of the wider Army, his perspective is
EDITORIAL

based on a broad and current view that few if any other can replicate. Somewhat juxtaposed to the RSM’s opinion are those of two officers who examine the strengths and weaknesses of elements of Army culture based on their recent experiences.

On a more personal level, I am very pleased with the response that the Journal has received to the call for submissions for this edition. I am heartened not only by the number and the quality of submissions that we received, but by the diversity of the authors. From Army Reserve lance corporals to Regular Army major generals, from academics to RAAF amateur poets and a Swedish military officer, the fact that people felt strongly enough about subjects to write is a reflection of how widespread interest in the topic has been. With the large number of submissions we also had to call on an extensive body of reviewers, and the team utilised the expertise of reviewers from both the Regular and Reserve components, the Army History Unit, DSTO, ASPI, DFAT, ANU, UNSW and the universities of Melbourne and Southern Queensland. Our grateful thanks go to them all.

Because of the number of submissions we received, we have held some articles over to later editions of the Journal. This will ensure that the subject continues to feature in the current debate, which can only be a good thing. And finally, for a small organisation such as the Land Warfare Studies Centre, a special edition such as this takes a great deal of effort, not only to seek out authors and reviewers, but to collate submissions for the Board’s review and then to ensure that, where required, the recommended changes are incorporated and the appropriate editing is completed. My thanks on this occasion to LTCOL Nerolie McDonald, Chloe Diggins and Cathy McCullagh for their efforts in this regard.

On a more sombre note, this Journal has once again to honour the service of another brave soldier killed on operations in Afghanistan since we last went to print. On 22 June 2013 CPL Cameron Stewart Baird, MG, of the 2nd Commando Regiment was on his fifth tour of Afghanistan when he was killed by small arms fire during a contact with the enemy. Our thoughts go to his family, friends and comrades.
ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of the Australian Army, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women have served with distinction. During the first half of the twentieth century they served despite regulations prohibiting the enlistment of persons ‘not substantially of European origin or descent’. When they managed to skirt the rules and enlist however, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women often found military service an egalitarian experience providing education and employment opportunities denied them in civilian life. The friendships Australian Indigenous personnel forged with non-Indigenous soldiers broke down barriers and fostered non-Indigenous allies in the struggle for Indigenous rights. This article provides a brief overview of the history of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution to the Australian Army, grounded in the human stories of those Indigenous men and women who served across the twentieth century.
David Cook is an Aboriginal man born in 1945 in Ebor, New South Wales. Sometime around his tenth birthday, the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board forcibly removed David and his siblings from their parents. David spent the next three years of his life at the notorious Kinchela Boys Home before being fostered out to a white woman in Raymond Terrace near Newcastle. At the age of 17 David enlisted in the Australian Army. He served two tours of duty in Vietnam in the Royal Australian Engineers, one from September 1965 to August 1966 and another from September 1967 to August 1968. David was a popular soldier, well-liked by his peers. During his first tour he was injured just before the Battle of Long Tan and could hear the shelling from his hospital bed. In his second tour he served during the Tet Offensive. During both of his tours of duty he witnessed the horrors of war, lost mates and also got into mischief at Vung Tau and Nui Dat. Like so many other Vietnam veterans, when David Cook returned to Australia he received no fanfare and had to live with post-traumatic stress disorder. Compounding David’s problems was the racism he confronted in his daily life, including police harassment and racial profiling. He spent much of the 1970s and 1980s in and out of prison before returning to Raymond Terrace and settling with the support of his sisters, with whom he had reconnected. In 2011 David travelled to Cambodia to do charity work with an ex-Army mate clearing landmines.¹

David Cook is one of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have served in Australia’s armed forces from the Boer War through to the present day. The Australian Army — and indeed the wider Australian Defence Force (ADF) and its predecessors — has always played a significant role in Australian Indigenous communities because so many Indigenous men and women have served. Their service significantly shaped the development of Indigenous families and communities, and likewise contributed to the development of the modern Australian Army and ADF. Gary Oakley, the Indigenous Liaison Officer at the Australian War Memorial, asserts that the ADF was reconciling long before the rest of Australia and represented the country’s first equal opportunity employer.² The history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service has ongoing resonance today and commemorations now play a critical role in the life of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. For instance, since 2007, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, in conjunction with local Indigenous organisations, has sponsored services to honour Indigenous veterans during Reconciliation Week.³ Since 2007 Indigenous communities have organised ANZAC Day marches in places such as Redfern in Sydney. In Perth, the Aboriginal veterans’ group Honouring Indigenous War Graves marches as its own contingent.
As the centenary of the First World War approaches, the significant historical and ongoing roles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the Australian Army deserve a prominent place in the nation’s commemorations.

It is difficult to estimate exact numbers of Indigenous service personnel because until recently the ADF did not record the race of its enlistees. In 1993 a report into the ethnic composition of the ADF recorded the first statistics concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel. The report positively identified 399 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers in the Australian Regular Army and 224 in the Army Reserve, respectively constituting 1.19 and 1.33% of those forces. By the 2011 ADF Census, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel represented 1.7% of the Australian Army. Although these percentages are small, they are not dissimilar to the Indigenous proportion of the Australian population, and they constitute a significant minority demographic that contributes to the diversity of the Australian Army and wider ADF. These men and women are also continuing a long-standing tradition of Indigenous contribution to the defence of Australia. Historically the valiant work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander troops has fostered cross-cultural interpersonal relations, bridging white and Indigenous Australia and turning those non-Indigenous soldiers who served alongside Indigenous troops into allies in the fight for Indigenous rights.

Among the ranks of the 16,000 Australian troops who served in the Boer War were at least 50 Aboriginal men. The only confirmed identity is a Western Australian man named John Robert Searle who served in the 4th Western Australian Mounted Infantry. Historians also know that there were at least 50 Aboriginal trackers despatched to the Boer War, though the records about these men are sparse. They came from all states but were not formally enlisted because of regulations barring ‘coloureds’ from serving. The fate of these men is a mystery, but there are some indications that they may have been left behind in Africa after the war because of the immigration restrictions of the White Australia Policy.

By the time of the First World War, policies relating to Aboriginal enlistment — now implemented from Canberra instead of the British Colonial Office — continued to discriminate. Amendments to the Defence Act in 1909 exempted persons ‘not substantially of European origin or descent’ from compulsory call-up and militia training, but the issue of whether or not they could volunteer remained ambiguous. Early in the First World War, regulations determined that the Australian Imperial Force would not permit the enlistment of any persons ‘not substantially of European origin or descent’, effectively barring Aboriginal enlistment.
There were, of course, Aboriginal men who did manage to enlist; some passed as Italian or Maori (for whom ‘non-European’ did not matter). Others who knew the local recruiters managed to circumvent the regulations. After the devastating 23,000 casualties at Pozières and the failure of the first conscription referendum, changes in March 1917 allowed Aboriginal men with one white parent to enlist. Numbers of Aboriginal enlistments jumped, especially in Queensland and New South Wales (although Western Australia continued to enforce the pre-March 1917 discriminatory regulations). By the end of the war, an estimated 800 to 1000 Aboriginal men had served. Historian Timothy Winegard summarises the statistics: ‘Of these known [545] soldiers, 83 were killed, 123 wounded and another 17 became prisoners of war. Including the POWs, the casualty rate is 41 per cent as compared to 65 per cent across the entire AIF.’

Each Aboriginal soldier had his own story to tell, whether he worked breaking in horses for the Australian Light Horse, fought in the trenches at the Somme or was captured in Palestine. One of the more high profile Aboriginal soldiers from the First World War whose story illustrates the way that Aboriginal and non-Indigenous servicemen forged bonds of brotherhood was Douglas Grant. Grant was an Aboriginal man raised in a white family in Sydney. He enlisted in 1916 after his adopted father pulled a few strings with the NSW Aborigines Protection Board. His enlistment received considerable press attention, with The West Australian reporting:

> Douglas has many accomplishments. He writes a splendid hand, draws well, recites Shakespeare with histrionic ability, plays the Scottish bagpipes, and can earn a very good living any time by following his profession – that of a draughtsman. This brief history demonstrates what may be done with an aboriginal when taken early and trained.

Douglas Grant visited Scotland and served on the Western Front before being taken prisoner in May 1917. The Germans managing the prisoner of war camp recognised Grant as intelligent and honest and placed him in charge of the distribution of Red Cross parcels. A fellow prisoner from Esperance, Western Australia, later wrote fondly of Doug: ‘what he used to say to Fritz when they called him a “swatza Soldaten” you would not be allowed to print.’ After the war Grant returned to Australia, working in a paper factory then a small arms factory and eventually serving as a messenger and errand boy at the Callan Park Mental Asylum in Sydney. For three years he served as secretary of the Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Imperial League — now the Returned and Services League (RSL) — in Lithgow, where he used his position to fight discrimination. In one protest against
segregated sporting facilities, Grant wrote, ‘The colour line was never drawn in the trenches.’10 Through the course of the 1930s Grant’s standard of living deteriorated as he faced discrimination in securing housing and employment. He died in 1951 at the La Perouse Aboriginal settlement in Sydney.

Grant was a high-profile Aboriginal veteran who maintained some friendships with the ex-service community. Yet even Grant’s relationships were few and far between, and consequently his advocacy and the support of his peers had little impact on the discriminatory policies and practices confronting Aboriginal people. Indeed, most First World War Aboriginal ex-servicemen received little public or private support on their return to Australia. They were denied access to soldier settlement schemes, in some states the Native Welfare Departments quarantined their wages and pensions, sometimes they were denied access to military funerals, and the treatment they and their families received at ANZAC Day services and in the local RSLs varied depending on the attitudes of the local community. Essentially, while in Europe and the Middle East the Aboriginal soldier was a valued brother, back in Australia he returned to an unequal life and was gradually forgotten by all but his kin and closest mates.

Much of the First World War experience repeated itself at the outbreak of the Second World War, but ultimately the mass scale of that conflict meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel would have a larger presence and a wider impact on the culture of the Army. In 1940 the Commonwealth Government again barred enlistment of persons ‘not substantially of European origin or descent’ but, as in the First World War, there were some Aboriginal men who managed to skirt the rules. Japan’s entry into the war and the immediate threat to Australia led to the easing of enlistment restrictions. Essentially, because Australia needed all its available manpower, the race of enlistees suddenly did not seem important. At least 3000 Aboriginal people and 850 Torres Strait Islanders served in the Second World War, and again their numbers were highest in the Army. Indigenous Australians served in all theatres of the war, including Greece, North Africa and New Guinea. Indigenous soldiers were also among those captured at Singapore who became prisoners of war in Changi and on the Thai-Burma Railway.11

What really set the Second World War apart, however, was the strong participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers defending the ‘Top End’. In May 1941 the government approved the formation of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion (TSLIB). The TSLIB was a group of approximately 440 regularly enlisted
Torres Strait Islander men whose job was to patrol the Torres Strait and to provide mechanical and logistical support for ships passing through. This unit received lavish praise from superiors and visiting officers, yet its members received less pay than non-Indigenous men serving alongside them. Moreover, like the experience of many First World War Aboriginal men, part of their wages was quarantined by the Queensland Chief Protector and became part of what is now referred to as ‘the stolen wages’. It was only in 1982 that surviving members of the TSLIB received back-pay — valued by then at over $7 million.\(^{12}\)

Another all-Indigenous force was the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit (NTSRU), commissioned in mid-1941 and formed in February 1942. From February 1942 to April 1943, anthropologist-turned-serviceman Dr Donald Thomson organised and commanded a group of 51 Yolngu men in Arnhem Land, training them to use traditional bush tactics and weaponry to fight a guerrilla war against potential Japanese invaders. The group operated within a traditional framework using spears rather than guns. They embarked on patrols of Arnhem Land, constructed outposts and were prepared to launch assaults on Japanese troops who attempted to land. They received no payment except for basic trade goods such as fish hooks, wire and tobacco. The force disbanded in April 1943 when the course of the war reduced the threat of invasion, and other white units were created to patrol the sparsely defended north. It was not until 1992 that surviving members of the NTSRU and families of deceased veterans were awarded back-pay for their service.\(^{13}\)

While the TSLIB and NTSRU were the only formal Indigenous units in the Top End, there were other Aboriginal men and women employed by the Army. Some worked in labour camps set up by the Army, moving ordnance, constructing shelters, preparing food and cleaning. Others who were resident at missions worked with local Army or RAAF servicemen clearing and constructing runways, moving supplies or serving as coastwatchers, rescuing downed Australian or American pilots. The North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU), a scouting unit formed across the Top End from Queensland to Western Australia, employed local Aboriginal men as trackers. For all the duties that local Indigenous men and women performed, they received little recognition or pay, primarily because they were not formally enlisted in the Australian armed forces.\(^{14}\)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions to the Second World War brought even more cross-cultural exposure to individual white service personnel. Among the more high profile servicewomen was the poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal, formerly known as Kath Walker. Oodgeroo enlisted in the Australian Women’s
Army Service (AWAS) shortly after the fall of Singapore in February 1942, where two of her brothers were taken prisoner. Oodgeroo considered military service a liberating experience from a life of oppression. She comments, ‘There was a job to be done, just to get it done, and all of a sudden the colour line disappeared, it just completely disappeared and it happened in so many different ways too.’\textsuperscript{15} She made lifelong friendships; in one speech Oodgeroo remarked, '[in] the army, I was accepted as one of them and none of the girls I trained with cared whether I was black, blue or purple. For the first time in my life I felt equal to other human beings.'\textsuperscript{16} Being accepted as an equal was an eye-opening experience.

Oodgeroo also claims that she gained an education through the Army. She wrote: ‘I joined the AWAS principally because I did not accept Fascism as a way of life. It was also a good opportunity for an Aboriginal to further their education. In fact there were only two places where an Aboriginal could get an education, in jail or the Army and I didn’t fancy jail! Everyone was very nice to me when I joined up.’\textsuperscript{17} Oodgeroo worked first as a switchboard operator. She was adept at her job, promoted to the rank of corporal and made responsible for training new switchboard operators. She was also sent to work in the AWAS pay office.\textsuperscript{18} Already the acquisition of these skills and the experience as a trainer was preparing Oodgeroo for a life beyond simply working as a domestic servant. Apart from on-the-job training, Oodgeroo also took advantage of the educational opportunities offered to ex-servicewomen to acquire more practical work skills. She explains:

You see, Aboriginals weren’t entitled to any extra concessions of learning and it was the Army who changed the whole thing around. They said if you join the Army, you are going to go into the ‘dimwits’ course and you can learn … And as soon as I got out of the Army, of course, I went into the ‘dimwits’ course and did a stenographers course, shorthand, typing and book-keeping. But it was the only thing open for us, to improve our lot. So a lot of people [mostly men] went because they wanted to improve their lot and hoped to God they’d be still alive when the war was over so they could take advantage of this extra thing.\textsuperscript{19} Oodgeroo’s story is a familiar one among many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans of the Second World War for whom the Army opened doors to new opportunities. Even so, there were thousands of others for whom the return to civilian Australia also marked a return to discrimination.
The Australian military, too, returned to its discriminatory policies after the Second World War. In 1946 the ban on persons ‘not substantially of European origin or descent’ returned in full force and consequently limited the opportunities for Aboriginal service personnel to participate in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan. There were protests against this decision, including from Reg Saunders, Australia’s first Aboriginal officer, commissioned during the Second World War. Saunders argued: ‘Now that the danger is past I feel my race is entitled to equal opportunities with other Australians. We don’t want privileges, but opportunities for advancement and fair treatment.’ In 1949, partly under pressure from the RSL, the Australian Government lifted the restrictions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enlistment in the armed forces. The discriminatory provisions in the Defence Act were amended in 1951 and 1965, but there was still a clause exempting during time of war ‘aboriginal natives of Australia, as defined by the regulations, other than a class of aboriginal natives as so defined that is specified in the regulations.’ This clause remained in the legislation until 1992.

Meanwhile, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women continued to serve throughout the 1950s and 1960s. They were members of the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) or served in Malaya, Korea, Borneo and of course Vietnam. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the WRAAC expressed similar sentiments to Oodgeroo, often finding the Army to be a means of escape from domestic service and a gateway to education. The nature of warfare during the 1950s and 60s was quite different to that of the First and Second World War, but the one constant was the sense of camaraderie and brotherhood forged between Indigenous and non-Indigenous servicemen.

One of the more amusing examples from Vietnam was the friendship between Aboriginal soldier Clement William ‘Billy’ Coolburra and non-Indigenous soldier George ‘Snow’ Wilson. Coolburra was from Palm Island in Queensland; he enlisted in the Army in 1963 and served in Vietnam with the 3rd Field Troop Engineers from September 1965 to September 1966. Coolburra and Wilson became such good friends that their unit nicknamed them ‘twins’; part of the irony was that Coolburra had very black skin and Wilson was so pale that people thought him albino. In 1966 Prime Minister Harold Holt visited the troops in Vietnam and met Wilson. Holt asked where his twin brother was, and he was shocked to see that Wilson’s ‘twin’ was actually an Aboriginal man. Coolburra and Wilson’s friendship endured long after the Vietnam War. Indeed, one major change from previous conflicts was that Aboriginal Vietnam veterans remained much more closely connected with their
non-Indigenous compatriots than in previous conflicts. Coolburra and Wilson’s friendship was so strong that in 2001, when Coolburra was facing renal failure, Wilson donated his kidney.23

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have continued to serve in the Australian Army in the decades since the Vietnam War. They have been involved in peacekeeping missions such as Somalia, Cambodia, East Timor and the Solomon Islands, and they have also served in Iraq and Afghanistan. From the 1980s, recognising the important contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during the Second World War, the Australian Army once again turned to their local knowledge to defend the Top End. In 1981 the Army established The North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE), a Reserve unit based in the Northern Territory. More than 60% of NORFORCE’s membership is Aboriginal, its members primarily drawn from remote communities across northern Australia. Similar units formed in the 1980s were the Pilbara Regiment and the 51st Battalion, The Far North Queensland Regiment. These units conduct surveillance operations and are also trained to defend the Top End in the event of invasion. They have built significant partnerships with remote Indigenous communities and represent the new direction that Army has taken since the 1980s, actively promoting a role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers.24

Of course there have been some racial tensions within the armed forces. There are ex-servicemen and women who report instances of being taunted or bullied by either peers or superior officers because of their race. Some incidents have been reported in the media, including photographs of soldiers dressed as members of the Ku Klux Klan published in 2004. Reports of racism in the Army are more common among ex-servicemen and women who served in non-combat roles, suggesting that the life-or-death nature of war is a significant contributing factor to racial harmony. It was not until the early 1990s that the ADF, in response to complaints from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel, formally adopted policies to deal with racial vilification. Since the 2000s the ADF has actively committed itself to Reconciliation in a variety of ways. The Department of Defence launched its first Reconciliation Action Plan in 2007; its 2010–14 plan pledges that ‘Defence will be genuinely committed to a broadened membership base and actively involved in realising strategies that encourage and foster Indigenous participation and potential.’25 In 2008 the Department of Defence established a Defence Directorate of Indigenous Affairs as part of its Indigenous Employment Strategy. The Directorate’s job is to work with Indigenous communities and to provide advice on Defence Indigenous personnel
and policy matters. The Indigenous Employment Strategy also promises that ‘each Commanding Officer has the responsibility to ensure that his/her personnel have access to an environment that is genuinely committed to diversity in the workplace and accepts the differences that set each person apart from the next.’

The long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the Army has benefited the Indigenous service personnel themselves, the Australian Army and indeed all of Australia. In early conflicts the Army provided a glimpse of equality; after both the First and Second World Wars Indigenous veterans were at the forefront of the fight for Indigenous civil rights. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women continued to serve, they forged friendships with non-Indigenous personnel. Interpersonal relations such as these broke down stereotypes and turned non-Indigenous service personnel into allies in the fight for Indigenous rights. Until recently, the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers have been overlooked. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ex-service personnel have fought for recognition, the Department of Defence, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Australian War Memorial and historians have all come to appreciate the significant role Indigenous Australians have played in the ADF, and likewise the significant status of military service within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Diversity in the Australian Army — and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel in that diversity — has not been without its challenges, but permeating the stories of Indigenous ex-servicemen and women is a sense of pride in their service defending kin and country.
THE AUTHOR

Dr Noah Riseman, recipient of the 2009 C.E.W. Bean Prize in Military History, completed his PhD at the University of Melbourne in 2008. His thesis presented a comparative analysis of Yolngu, Papua New Guineans and the Navajo Code Talkers in the Second World War and was revised and published in 2012 by the University of Nebraska Press as Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War. Dr Riseman is currently a Senior Lecturer in History at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. He is a Chief Investigator on two Australian Research Council projects examining the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service, with a particular focus on the post-Second World War era. Any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander current or ex-service personnel who are interested in participating in these projects are encouraged to contact Noah at Noah.Riseman@acu.edu.au.

ENDNOTES


2 Gary Oakley, interview with Stan Grant, Awaken, National Indigenous Television, 12 April 2013.


Serving Their Country: A Short History of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service in the Australian Army


9 No name, signed No 7 (15th), Esperance, ‘Fort McDonald’, *Western Mail* (Perth), 22 September 1938, p. 2.


14 See *No Bugles, No Drums*, produced by Debra Beattie-Burnett, directed by John Burnett, 49 min. Seven Emus Productions in association with Australian Television Network, 1990, videocassette.


16 No name or date of speech, simply ‘Kath Walker,’ in papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, University of Queensland, UQFL84, Box 30: speeches and reports.


22 Sandy MacGregor, as told to Jimmy Thomson, *No Need for Heroes*, CALM Pty Ltd, Lindfield, NSW, 1993, pp. 89–90.


HISTORY

‘A Homosexual Institution’: Same-sex Desire in the Army During World War II
Dr Graham Willett and Dr Yorick Smaal

ABSTRACT

Sex, gender and sexuality have always been the subject of lively debates within and around the military — from the age-old problem of the on and off-duty sexual behaviour of servicemen to the more recent process of creating a place for women as front-line fighters. In recent years a spate of scandals has challenged the reputation and operation of the armed services. But there is another side that needs to be taken into account — increasingly, very public action is being taken in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) personnel against those accused of sexism and homophobia. This article seeks to place these developments in an historical context, focussing on homosexuality during World War II. Drawing on the memories and memoirs of homosexual men as well as archival records of the responses of Army officials and other servicemen who encountered same-sex behaviour, we explore a range of homosexual behaviours
and identities present in the armed services. We are particularly interested in how a vilified, marginalised and criminalised minority made lives for themselves in the forces and, for all the risks and penalties they faced, the fact that these lives were characterised by pleasure and conviviality as much as by fear and victimisation. Three forces were at work, each shaping the homosexual sub-cultures in their own ways — the commanding echelons, homosexual men, and the broader mass of service personnel.
Introduction

On Anzac Day 1982, a small group of ex-servicemen approached the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne to lay a wreath in memory of the mates they had served with in past wars. Bruce Ruxton, then Victorian State President of the Returned and Services League, intercepted them. ‘There is no way you can lay a wreath,’ he declared, summoning a nearby police officer to escort the men away. The problem was that these soldiers were members of the Gay Ex-servicemen’s Association and ‘poofeters’ were not the type of people Ruxton wanted to see included in a day of remembrance that was rapidly taking on a sacred aura. He went further, telling the Weekend Australian the next day that ‘I don’t know where all these queers and poofeters have come from. I don’t remember a single poofter from World War Two.’1 Buzz Kennedy, a columnist for the same paper, surveyed his mates from the 2/32nd, 2/28th and 2/43rd Battalions and reported that they had all agreed: ‘ours was an entirely heterosexual mob’, Kennedy declared. He went on snidely to question the gay veterans’ credentials: ‘With the visual evidence of the size of the gay community in 1982, the question has to be: where were they then?’2

Almost immediately, others wrote to the papers to correct the memories of these two old war-horses. A doctor reported that ‘while the recorded number was small, they did in fact exist’.3 Another asserted that the batman (personal attendant) to no fewer than three of the most famous Allied generals was ‘one of the gayest fellas I have ever met; gay as a Christmas tree’ in fact.4 A third declared that there had been ‘quite a few [who] were tolerated as long as they took no for an answer’.5

The belief that there were no homosexuals in the Australian armed forces is not new. The official history of the Australian Army Medical Service’s work during World War I, published in 1943, flatly denied the presence of ‘moral perversion’: ‘There is no evidence pointing to any significant homosexuality in the Force, and this is on par with Australian experience in general. The records of the [AIF] therefore provide no contribution to the place of the homosexual in a total war effort.’6

But for historians of homosexuality the question has always been one of ‘absence or invisibility?’ Absence of evidence is not, as we know, evidence of absence. Since they began their work in the 1980s, Australian gay and lesbian historians have been inspired by the gay liberation slogan ‘we are everywhere’ to find out whether this is true; to see where homosexuals might be found — digging through archives, interviewing women and men, hunting for clues and evidence — only to discover that, yes, we were there, even in the armed forces. In this endeavour,
they have been part of a broader international quest with important studies published on the United States (US) and Canada and forthcoming work on the British and Australian experience. More recently, military historians have also turned their attention to the culture of the armed forces, looking at the lived experience of soldiers, sailors and airmen. They, too, have started to find evidence of same-sex desire and behaviour in memoirs, newspapers, official reports and records, oral histories, and so on.

In this article, we will survey what is known about homosexuality in the Australian military. To narrow our focus, we will examine the memories and memoirs of homosexual men in World War II as well as the responses of Australian Army officials and other servicemen who encountered same-sex behaviour and identity. We will show what no-one could ever seriously have doubted — that homosexuals were present in the armed forces. But we are interested, too, in how a vilified, marginalised and criminalised minority made lives for themselves in the services and, for all the risks and penalties they faced, forged lives characterised by pleasure and conviviality as much as by fear and victimisation. Three forces were at work, each shaping the homosexual sub-cultures in their own ways — the commanding echelons, homosexual men and women, and the broader mass of servicemen and women.

The contemporary significance of a discussion of the Army’s efforts to grapple with the issue of homosexuality needs hardly be laboured. Sex, gender and sexuality have always been the subject of lively debates within and around the military — from the age-old problem of the on and off-duty sexual behaviour of servicemen, through to the more recent process of creating a place for women as front-line fighters. Episodes of scandalous sexual behaviour revealed since 2011 (the Skype Scandal, the ‘Jedi Council’) have been presented as both a public relations nightmare and a serious disciplinary problem. In 2011, the public was made aware of a virulently homophobic Facebook campaign directed by serving personnel against gay colleagues, which was treated with a disturbing lack of seriousness by the authorities.

But there is another side that needs to be taken into account. Both the reputation of the forces and their efficient functioning are regarded as threatened by such behaviour and, increasingly, very public action is being taken against those accused of sexism and homophobia. In February 2013 uniformed personnel were permitted to march in the Mardi Gras parade. In May 2013 the Australian Defence Force Academy launched its LGBTI support network with a public celebration attended by senior officers of all three services, as well as cadets and Defence civilians.
In recent weeks, the emergence into the limelight of Lieutenant Colonel Cate (formerly Malcolm) McGregor has extended the scope of the discussion to encompass the place of transgender people within the services.\textsuperscript{14}

In recent decades the Army, like the other military services, has found itself responding to a changing world and changing demands around sex and sexuality. It would be hard to argue that the overall trajectory has been anything other than one of respect for human rights and a willingness to embrace diversity. In this article we seek to draw attention to the fact that such challenges (although they would have been framed very differently) have a much longer history than might be assumed. Specifically, we are looking at World War II.

**Military authorities**

Central to the creation of a homosexual sub-culture within the armed forces during World War II was the command structure, attempting with its powers of enforcement, example and persuasion, to create behaviours and attitudes befitting the defenders of the nation. And while the laws, rules and policies were very clear on the undesirability of homosexuality in the forces and provided strong powers to regulate it, the very existence of such measures reveals the sexual potential (and reality) of an all-male institution composed of deracinated young men in their physical prime. To borrow from the blunt assessment of Australia’s official wartime artist, Donald Friend, the Army was a ‘homosexual institution’.\textsuperscript{15} Australia’s Adjutant General acknowledged that same-sex activity occurred in many instances ‘only because of enforced segregation from female society’.\textsuperscript{16}

Sodomy, as the offence was usually referred to in the military, does not seem to have been a matter of much concern in the Australian forces until 1943 when Australian Land Headquarters in Melbourne was advised of a US Army investigation in New Guinea which had uncovered evidence of Australian soldiers practising ‘the female side of homosexual intercourse’ with US troops there.\textsuperscript{17} In response, officials in Melbourne sent a confidential request to Australian commanders asking for information ‘as to whether any instances of such practices among troops under their command have been brought to notice, and if so, what action if any, has been taken in the matter.’\textsuperscript{18}

While waiting for replies, the Adjutant General reviewed the Army’s legal powers and identified three relevant sections of the Army Act: s. 41, which addressed the civil offences of sodomy (maximum penalty penal servitude for life) and assault with intent to commit sodomy (maximum 10 years); and the military offences in s. 18(5), ‘disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind’ and s. 40, ‘conduct to the
prejudice of good order and military discipline’. In the latter two sections, the maximum sentence was two years’ imprisonment with hard labour, as well as cashiering or dismissal in the case of an officer, or discharge (with ignominy) for a soldier.\textsuperscript{19}

Prison, discharge, cashiering — these were harsh penalties. Cashiering was an especially brutal form of punishment, a very public humiliation that involved a literal expulsion of the offender from the ranks. No doubt intended to serve as a warning to others, this was also, perhaps, a ritual purging or purification of the unit, an expulsion of the offence itself, reflecting the ancient abhorrence of sodomy, the crime against nature for which the God of the Old Testament had destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the early 1980s, some 40 years after the event, Bob Herbert remembered seeing such a process during World War II, recalling:

\begin{quote}
\textit{an officer … who was cashiered for buggery. We rookies were all ceremonially paraded while the poor man was marched under armed escort and made to stand to attention, hatless, while the court-martial finding and sentence was read out.}

\textit{A drum was then rolled and the C.O. commenced stripping the epaulets of rank and various badges from the culprit’s uniform. This humiliation was never completed; the victim fainted and was carried from the parade ground.}\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Of course, enough evidence for conviction under the Army Act was required to mete out these kinds of punishments. In February 1944 the Adjutant General suggested this could be obtained ‘as in the past’ by ‘careful watching of the individuals suspected, the setting of traps, and the obtaining of voluntary and admissible confessions’. Where evidence could not be obtained, suspected individuals should be transferred to new units ‘so that they can be kept under observation, with a view to disciplinary action should the behaviour be found to justify it.’\textsuperscript{21}

The responses from the commanders to Melbourne’s 1943 inquiries revealed somewhat more nuanced views. None had more than two or three cases to report and some had none at all. Generally acknowledging the difficulty of obtaining evidence, they preferred to use medical processes to rid themselves of the problem soldiers rather than attempting to compile evidence that would stand up in a court martial or in a civil court (which was always an option where a crime had been committed). All things being equal, this was the easiest and least disruptive way to address what was considered to be a relatively minor problem.
Major General Sir Roy Burston, the Director General of Medical Services, had argued for a medical approach right from the start of the discussion: ‘Personnel reported to be addicted to homosexual practices’ ought to be examined by a psychiatrist. ‘If the report is confirmed by the medical examination’, he argued, processes for discharge were to be undertaken. There are a number of significant elements here. The medical process is presented as requiring no formal allegations, only ‘reports’ in relation to an individual. Whether these needed to be more than rumour or suspicion is unclear. Equally, the use of the word ‘addicted’ implies something more than a one-off encounter. But the whole approach assumes, surely, that a psychiatrist was able to render a clear opinion relatively easily.

Commander New Guinea Force who was dealing with the on-the-ground consequences of the US investigation in the territory shared Burston’s views — indeed, he had put such ideas into practice. When he wrote to Melbourne in January 1944 he advised that men who had admitted to ‘being addicted to this practice’ were providing statements to, and were being examined by, the psychiatrist, Major Stoller. The intention was that they were to be boarded tentative D class (classified as unfit for duty) for transfer to the mainland and final discharge. The whole process revolved around admissions by the men in the context of an ‘understanding that no punitive action was intended’.

On the face of it there is a high degree of concurrence here among the medical officers and the commanders. Homosexuality is a bad thing; people who practise it, at least in any regular way, ought to be removed. Where evidence was available to secure a conviction this route should be followed; where it did not, a convenient alternative existed. The Commander-in-Chief, however, was not convinced. He much preferred that disciplinary action be taken and advised Headquarters New Guinea Force that ‘vigorous steps’ to obtain evidence — the interrogation of the suspect and his associates, surveillance, traps — were to be taken. The problem, as he saw it, was that if confessed offenders were to be subject to medical discharge rather than disciplinary action, ‘this would, it is thought, offer far too gross an opportunity to those members who desire discharge and whose anxiety it is to escape service in remote and uncongenial localities.’ In other words, once word got out that confessing to homosexuality was a ticket out of the Army, or at least out of New Guinea, there would be no-one left to fight the war.

The legislation, the regulations, the policies were clear. The hierarchies of decision and direction were unambiguous. But the hesitations and doubts and different understandings, the conflicting requirements foisted on the commanders
(compliance with directives versus the maintenance of good order and goodwill within the unit), their various personal attitudes towards homosexuality, and so on meant that in reality homosexuals were often able — with some luck and discretion and care — to carve out a space for themselves, to forge a sub-culture in which they could live their lives. In recent years historians have accumulated a small but significant collection of memories which reveal the ways in which opportunities presented themselves and were taken up.27

Opportunity knocks
It may seem obvious to modern readers that joining or being conscripted into the Army, Navy or Air Force during World War II would present many chances for homosexual men to enjoy a rich sex life — our expectations of the realities of single-sex institutions such as the military are strong. To this we would add the recognition that for those caught up in the radically uncertain world of wartime where death might strike at any moment, a desire to ‘live for the moment’ informed the experiences of many women and men. In Sumner Locke Elliot’s fictionalised memoir of his war years in the Northern Territory, a captain tells the corporal to whom he is making love: ‘Don’t be formal for a few fucking minutes, it’s all we’ve got, it might be all we ever have.’28

But this kind of opportunity was not always what men of the time expected. Some, at least, assumed that it would be necessary to adopt a heterosexual persona — and tried to do so. John O’Donnell, who served in Port Moresby and Lae in the Engineers Company from 1942 to 1945, decided that he would be ‘butch and straight’.29 ‘Mata Hari’, who enlisted in 1940, was captured in Crete in 1941 and was a prisoner of war for the next four years, remembered the need to be cautious until other camp men could be identified.30 This was by no means an unreasonable precaution. Many of those who told their life stories to the authorities in New Guinea in 1944 reported harassment and bullying from their comrades. Len was teased: ‘they would make swishing noises and call me a poufter [sic] and mimic a cissy voice whenever I walk into the mess or around the camp’.31 Ron had an even worse time — many, he says, gave him ‘a bad spin’, and as word of his activities got around, his comrades took to calling him ‘queen’s names’.32

Others went further, imagining that they could actually change their sexual orientation, that ‘the Army was going to make a man of me’, to help them ‘become a decent, square Australian soldier’ as ‘Hadrian’, who signed up in 1940 and spent 14 years as a soldier, put it.33 Some, of course, must have stuck to their guns (as it were), eschewing sexual activity entirely, although they have not recorded
their experiences. For the others, the opportunities presented were rich indeed. John O'Donnell comments that, in his experience, it was harder to find gay men than to find sex.\textsuperscript{34}

In Hadrian's case, however, his determination simply meant that he missed out on opportunities while in training during the early years of World War II near Atherton in Queensland that, on reflection, he would rather have taken. Many years later he ran into someone with whom he had shared a two-man tent to be told that sex had always been a possibility at the time, if only he had been alert to what was going on around him. Roderic Anderson had the same (lack of) experience, regretting in his memoirs that he had, though his own overly cautious approach, missed out on much pleasure.\textsuperscript{35}

Others picked up on the opportunities early on — the temptations were all around, all the time. Pete, one of the New Guinea informants, tried ‘over and over’ to give up homo-sex, but he couldn’t help himself.\textsuperscript{36} Ian had hoped that the discipline of Army life might help him curb his ‘impulses’, only to find the ‘opportunities were better and more consistent’ even than in civilian life.\textsuperscript{37} Not that the temptations were all on the one side: like Pete, Ken found that many soldiers (gay and straight) were ‘able to pick me for what I am’, and would approach him. It was only in response that he found himself unable to ‘resist the urge to go with them’.\textsuperscript{38}

The squares

Some of this — perhaps most — was situational homosexuality. In the absence of women with whom to interact, many heterosexual men were prepared to involve themselves in sexual acts with other men, as the Army itself reluctantly admitted. Pseudonym John, who served in the RAAF from 1943 to 1944, knew of many men who, in ‘civvy street’, would never have thought, never dreamt, of having sex with a male but who, ‘because there were no women around [and] they were missing it’, were ‘very, very happy’ to participate.\textsuperscript{39} Many of these men went on after the war to marry, including some of those who had extended affairs in wartime.\textsuperscript{40} John O’Donnell was one of these, marrying after he returned home because the family expected it.\textsuperscript{41}

For heterosexuals, sex with men was always a managed process, self-justified and explained to others in a variety of ways. One option was simply to deny that there was any homosexuality at work. John O’Donnell reports that most of the men he had sex with would tell him they ‘definitely weren’t camp, they only did it because there weren’t any women to be had, so if you agreed no one was a poofier,
everyone was protected.’ Pseudonym John was ‘having an experience’ with a sailor, about the same age as himself, who insisted there were no homosexuals in the Navy — which didn’t stop the two of them having ‘a nice time together just the same’.

For others, sex with other men occupied a realm apart in other ways — it was not, for example, to be understood as cheating on girlfriends. Some activity was simply a response to particular erotically charged moments. Hadrian asserts that the crowds at the Atherton town centre toilet dispersed only during interval in the movies when many of the men left to ‘give the picture crowd a go’. The screening of pornography on film nights would usually generate an increased interest among straight men in the chance to be sexually serviced.

The sheer scale of participation by straight men is perhaps the most surprising element of these memoirs. Pseudonym John remembers ‘lots of other fellows who just wanted to get their rocks off’ and he jokes that, within five minutes of Darwin being re-opened to soldiers in early 1944 after the last of the air raids, a beat (a cruising ground for men seeking sex with one another) was established — it ran the full length of the main street in town and the bombed-out buildings provided privacy for their sexual encounters. All that was required was eye contact while sauntering along the street, a casual greeting to indicate interest and ‘you had a customer’. Hadrian’s initial cautiousness and timidity evaporated when he happened to find himself in the public toilet that the Army had erected in Atherton town centre to cater for the influx of men: ‘every square inch of walls [was] covered in graffiti, whose explicitness changed my mind about the Australian Army in one fell swoop’. Returning at night he found the toilet ‘filled’ with men of all ranks ‘from lonely privates to the occasional Major’.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that Hadrian believes that the troops were less prejudiced in relation to homosexuality than the rest of the population. This also fits with other recollections. Even reasonably public sexual encounters were greeted on occasion with good-humoured interest. Pseudonym John reports an episode when he happened to look into the cabin of a truck that he was in the back of and found his mate Ron performing oral sex on the driver: ‘Look at this fellows!’ he urged the others in the back of the truck with him — and he reports no offence being taken.
The kamps

For contemporary readers, the existence of situational sex on the part of heterosexual men is less surprising than the richness of kamp life that existed in the military during the Second World War, much of which has only come to light in recent years, and has been less widely recognised. ‘Kamp’ or ‘camp’ was the word most commonly used by homosexual men during this period — and, indeed, until the 1970s when it was supplanted by the American term ‘gay’. The delights of sex with heterosexuals were one thing; the discovery of other homosexuals was something else again. Not that this was a difficult task. Telling their stories, many of our memoirists and informants come eventually to discuss the sheer numbers of kamp men they encountered. ‘Mata Hari’ claims that he had sex with perhaps 300 of the thousands of camp servicemen. Pseudonym John was quite certain that, of his RAAF unit of about 200, fourteen were like him, including a flight lieutenant and even, it was said, the Commanding Officer. In the Northern Territory overall, he says, there must have been ‘hundreds’.

What this meant was that the opportunities to live kamp lives were much more numerous than many would have thought. Sexual encounters of various kinds (anonymous sex, fleeting encounters, real relationships) and a rich social life both figure in these stories.

Hadrian recalls with great affection the ‘invigorating, all-male environment’ and sometimes wished he was back in it. Pseudonym John waxes lyrical, noting that the straight men would often spend their time grizzling about Army life, especially in the isolated far north of Australia, whereas the kamps ‘were having a ball. We really were having a wonderful time.’ He reports on picnics at the Darwin Botanical Gardens at night — anything up to a dozen kamp men, laughing, talking, drinking; nothing sexual, just a chance to relax with kindred spirits.

The New Guinea file from 1944 provides a remarkable snapshot of this kind of sub-culture because it is based on the experiences of a group of men who knew one another and reported on their activities in their own words at the time. It is easy to see how their lives worked and how dense their networks actually were — and what pleasures and conviviality their social lives provided. Len emphasises the pleasure of meeting — after a quiet month or two — other kamps: ‘They seem to be good company for me knowing they are the same as myself.’ Many of them refer to themselves as part of a collective — often as ‘the girls’ — who found one another in Port Moresby and proceeded to become close friends, partying together and sharing sexual adventures. Neil declared that, since arriving in Moresby and
‘getting in with the Kamp crowd’, he had been out every night. Morrie says the same.58

The American Red Cross canteen was a popular place to gather, to cruise and
to pick up and it was here that Gerald first became part of the kamp scene.59

Jack adds to this: the troops’ canteen and the sergeants’ club.60 The beaches and
the dense, encroaching bush provided privacy, as did air-raid shelters and trucks.61

The scene provided a variety of sexual and romantic opportunities, from casual
pick-ups to short-term relationships to long-term love affairs. But not all the
relationships were sexual. Kenneth Harrison’s experience in Pudi and Changi
prisoner of war camps is one example of this: ‘I had always considered myself
the normal male and it was with a sense of shock that … I found in myself certain
homosexual tendencies. There was no desire in the least of a physical nature,
but there was the urge for the companionship of one of my fellow men and the
desire to be of service and to share all things with him. These thoughts and feelings
were kept very carefully to myself.’ Harrison was ‘gratified and relieved’ to find that,
when the difficult life of the camps, with its hard work, semi-starvation and a
vitamin deficient diet was resumed, these feelings vanished completely.62

Less dramatically, Pete noted that, after he was called up, he made ‘a friend’,
but they ‘did not do anything to teach each other’.63

To some extent, which opportunities were taken up depended on the kamp men’s
expectations, or on their changing circumstances. Many experienced more than
one of the available options. At one point Ray Hartley, who shared his life story —
including stories of his war years — with Garry Wotherspoon in the 1980s,
was involved with the sergeant with whom he shared his tent; later, when he was
posted to St Ives, he had a ‘real affair’ which lasted 18 months and involved the
usual romantic and sexual adventures of young men in love — most memorably,
having sex at the back of the bus with his boyfriend as they made their way to a
weekend hotel getaway.64 John commented that relationships might last a year or two,
but rarely survived the return to Australia.65 Hadrian was even less optimistic —
he thought that there was no point in forming relationships at all because transfers
were too common.66 Some of these were presumably transfers used by the
authorities as a means of dealing with such attachments; others would simply
have reflected the vagaries of military manpower management. Len, whose riotous
sexual experiences would have shocked his commanders, notes at the end of his
statement that five weeks previously he fallen in love with a man ‘who returns my
love and has asked me to live with him in later life’.67
At the opposite end of the spectrum from romantic love, group sex was not unknown among the kamp men of Port Moresby — but rarely within the crowd itself. The ‘girls’, as they often called themselves, were attracted to ‘men’ — a category that included heterosexuals, bisexuals and, in the rare cases where they report sex with other homosexuals, they were homosexuals who were masculine in presentation and identity (‘butches’ is the term used, in contrast to the ‘girls’ or the ‘bitches’).68 Truck parties, in which one or more of the ‘girls’ was driven by a group of men to the beach or into the bush to service them sexually are also reported.69

That at least some ostensibly heterosexual servicemen — both Australian and American — sought out the company of the kamps indicates some level of wider acceptance for the ‘girls’ even if only for sexual relief. There are other examples in which obviously effete men were tolerated by fellow soldiers — Donald Friend’s diaries tell of ‘a character known as Phyllis ... [who had] plucked eyebrows, camp voice, big bum and wavy hips and flapping hand gestures.’70 Barry, who served with the RAAF, remembers a ‘very camp’ man with dyed hair who went by the name of ‘Petal’,71 while another Air Force man had a friend who ‘got away with being a bit on the trissy side’.72

But effeminate behaviour in an otherwise masculine world could also incur a different set of circumstances — from teasing and bullying as some of the New Guinea ‘girls’ describe, to ostracism and violence. In this world, the ‘butches’ found it easier to fit in, even if the ‘bitches’ found solace in fellowship. Anderson’s memoirs suggest that effete behaviour, rather than homosexual activity as such, was regarded with particular distaste. When one soldier put on a ‘sissy voice’ the possibility of (homo)sex was quickly terminated despite one soldier flashing his large erection to his mates. A few days later, this same group of mates got drunk on ‘jungle juice’, compared penis size, and then paired off before disappearing into the night. With the correct gender codes in place, they simply claimed they were too drunk to remember what had happened the night before.73

Lawson Glassop’s novel, The Rats in New Guinea, also reveals how effeminate men posed a threat to the military’s masculine traditions. Newcomer John Hemilton, a former radio announcer renowned for his ‘fruity’ voice, posed a direct threat to the unit according to the book’s main character, Mick Reynolds. ‘Surely Hemilton was not a queen’, Reynolds thought. ‘That was one thing you feared — having a queen in your section.’74 The use of the word ‘fear’ here is particularly telling, as Garry Wotherspoon has observed.75
Conclusion

Glassop’s novel was presumably based on his wartime experiences. Like Ruxton and Kennedy and many of their contemporaries, Glassop’s main character was homophobic — Mick was fearful of effeminate men rather than simply averse to, or offended by, their presence. Part of this anxiety may be rooted in the homosocial constitution of the armed services and the potential for platonic affection to manifest physically. Clearly a good number of otherwise straight men engaged in same-sex behaviour, happy to take their pleasures where they could find them. Perhaps displays of effete and effeminate behaviour roused psychological anxieties in those who sought fleeting moments of passion in the arms of their comrades. Whatever the case may be, and despite the general opprobrium for homosexual behaviours at the official level, the recollections of the servicemen explored here indicate that homosexual acts were not an uncommon part of Army life. But more than this, the discovery of at least 20 kamp men in New Guinea shows that homosexuality founded on a common sense of self, and marked out through gender inversion, could flourish in particular circumstances.

When the Official History in 1943 dismissed all suggestion of ‘moral perversion’ in the Army of World War I, it is likely that the authors were responding as much to the then strong anxiety about such matters as to the facts of the distant past. Homosexuality, as an issue of concern for the Army, has a history; it comes and goes — and not in a straight line. Army life offered multiple homosexual and homosocial experiences for the straight, the kamp and the butch alike. Despite denials of its existence, the Army not only enabled and sustained a diverse range of homosexual relationships, it offered a place where many young men, free from the traditional constraints of home, could experience homosexual pleasure, sometimes for the first time. And while many men returned home to their wives and girlfriends, others made new friends, found loving relationships or reaffirmed their kamp sense of self. Others still would be forever changed; in the mainland staging camps, in Europe, or the territory of New Guinea they finally found themselves.
THE AUTHORS

Dr Yorick Smaal is a social historian and a research fellow based at the Australian Research Council’s Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security, at Griffith University. Yorick has research interests in sex and gender, crime and punishment and war and society. He has published on numerous aspects of homosexuality, and his first book, Sex, soldiers and the south Pacific is under contract with Palgrave Macmillan.

Graham Willett is Honorary Fellow at the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne. He is author Living Out Loud, a history of gay and lesbian activism in Australia, as well as many other chapters and articles on Australian gay and lesbian history. He a long-standing member of the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

ENDNOTES

This research was funded by an Australian Army History Grant and a bursary from the Palm Center, University of California. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

8 Paul Jackson, One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military during World War II, McGill-Queen’s University, Montreal, 2004.
11 On World War I see Peter Stanley, Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force, Pier 9, Millers Point, 2010, s. 35 and, more speculatively, his Men of Mont St Quentin: Between Victory and Death, Scribe, Melbourne, pp. 194–95, 233–34.


14 Ian McPhedran, ‘Voice of Change’, Herald-Sun, 5 July 2013; One Plus One, ABC TV, 5 July 2013 (Jane Hutcheon interviews Cate McGregor).


16 National Archives of Australia, MP742/1, 84/1/164, Homosexual Males (in the Armed Forces during WWII Discharge) [hereinafter NAA, Homosexual Males], Homosexual Males, Minute, 22 February 1944.


18 NAA, Homosexual Males, DGMS, Homosexual Males, Minute, 1 February 1944.

19 NAA, Homosexual Males, Adjutant General, Homosexual Males, Minute, 22 February 1944.

20 Herbert, ‘Still Shocked’. Well into the 1950s and 1960s cashiering was still being used against homosexual women and men. In 1954 Truth reported that Army authorities had uncovered ‘an unsavoury cell of homosexuals’ at Puckapunyal Camp in Victoria. Working with what the newspaper described as ‘commendable speed and ruthlessness to strike at this canker’, five men were paraded at Albert Park Barracks and discharged. Over the course of the 1950s, nearly 200 men are known to have been discharged from the armed services ‘in circumstances indicative of homosexuality’. ‘Vice Shock in Army Camp’, Truth [Melbourne], 23 June 1956. More than 100 servicewomen were discharged in the same period for the same reason. One of these, Helen, describes being marched onto the parade ground before the entire barracks, stripped of badges and buttons and dishonourably discharged. It might have gone easier for her, she said, had she succumbed to pressure from commanders to name other women known to her as lesbians, but she refused: Ruth Ford, Lyned Isaac and Rebecca Jones, ‘Helen’, in Forbidden Love, Bold Passion: An Exhibition of Lesbian Stories 1900-1990s, History Inverted, North Fitzroy, 1996, p. 12.

21 Adjutant General, Homosexual Males, Minute Paper, 22 February 1944.

22 NAA, Homosexual Males, DGMS, Homosexual Males, Minute Paper, 1 February 1944.

23 We have discussed the medical aspects of homosexuality in the services in detail in ‘Eliminate the “Females”: The New Guinea incident and medical approaches to homosexuality in the Australian army in World War II’ in Ernest Kho and Christina Twomey (eds), The Pacific War 1941-5: Aftermaths, Legacies, Culture, Routledge, forthcoming.


25 NAA Homosexual Males, Adjutant General, Homosexual Males, 24 March 1944.

26 NAA, Homosexual Males, Adjutant General, Homosexual Males, Minute Paper, 22 February 1944.


31 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Len’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944. The NAA has made the file ‘MP742/1, 84/1/164, Homosexual Males (in the Armed Forces during WWII Discharge)’ available with many excisions, including the names and service numbers of the 18 men who provided life histories to the medical staff. To facilitate our discussion of this material we have given each of the men a first name running alphabetically in the order that his statement appears on file from Alfie to Ron. In other cases (Hadrian, Mata Hari) the names are self-selected. In the case of Pseudonym John, this is the name bestowed by Dino Hodge, the interviewer.
32 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Ron’ [name expunged], Statement, 7 February 1944.
33 Hadrian, ‘Homosexuality in the Forces’, *Camp Ink*, vol. 3, no. 3 [1973], p. 4. ‘Square’ is slang for heterosexual.
36 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Pete’ [name expunged], Statement, 25 January 1944.
37 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Ian’ [name expunged], Statement, 12 January 1944.
38 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Ken’ [name expunged], Statement, 21 January 1944.
40 Pairman, ‘In Which We Serve’, p. 38.
41 O’Donnell, ‘John’s Story’, p. 49.
42 Ibid., p. 48.
44 Hadrian, ‘Homosexuality in the Forces’, p. 4.
45 Ibid.
46 O’Donnell, ‘John’s Story’, p. 49.
48 Ibid., p. 29.
49 Hadrian, ‘Homosexuality in the Forces’, p. 4.
51 Pairman, ‘In Which We Serve’, p. 38.
54 Pseudonym John, ‘Cuckoo-Cloud Land’, p. 25.
56 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Len’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944.
57 For example NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Quincey’ [name expunged], Statement, 12 February 1944; NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Pete’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944.
58 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Neil’ [name expunged], Statement, 31 January 1944; NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Morrie’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944.
59 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Morrie’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944; NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Len’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944; NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Gerald’ [name expunged], Statement, 13 January 1944.
60 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Jack’ [name expunged], Statement, 12 January 1944.
61 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Ron’ [name expunged], Statement, 7 February 1944; NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Quincey’ [name expunged], Statement, 12 February 1944.
63 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Pete’ [name expunged], Statement, 25 January 1944.
64 Ray Hartley, ‘Our Hearts were Young and Gay’ in Wotherspoon, Being Different, pp. 36–37.
65 O’Donnell, ‘John’s Story’, p. 49.
67 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Len’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944.
68 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Gerald’ [name expunged], Statement, 13 January 1944.
69 NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Len’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944; NAA, Homosexual Males, ‘Morrie’ [name expunged], Statement, 27 January 1944.
71 Barry, interviewed by Graham Carbery, 19 January 1983, ALGA.
72 Floyd, interviewed by Graham Carbery, 1988, ALGA, p. 7.
75 Wotherspoon, City of the Plain, pp. 88–89.
GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Steyrs and Sheilas: 
The Modern Role of Women in the 
Australian Army

Lance Corporal Hannah Evans

ABSTRACT

The role of women in the Australian Army has undergone enormous change since the 1980s, resulting in a significant increase in employment opportunities for women. This article describes the changing nature of female employment in the Australian Army and the Australian government policy reforms that have guided this change. It argues that the employment of women in the Army has been progressively shaped by strategic policy and the nature of both domestic and overseas operations and that the traditional definitions of combat-related duties and combat roles are redundant in this day of modern asymmetric warfare. Defence policy must therefore consider the nature of current operations, recognise that the tasks undertaken by women are complex, and acknowledge that policy should be driven by tactical requirements and what this article terms ‘value for policy’, rather than the pursuit of female equality and political correctness.
Introduction

Both servicemen and women make enormous personal sacrifices on a daily basis. However, the Australian public is exposed to very little of this information and much of the material in the mainstream media appears in response to accusations, incidents or investigations. Therefore it is not surprising that the media is highly critical of the working conditions of women in the Australian Army and their perceived lack of equality. In light of the recent investigations into sexual harassment and the announcement by Defence Minister Stephen Smith of the commencement of the full integration of women into combat roles and the ab initio recruiting into these roles planned for 2016, it is timely to examine the current role of women in the Army. Drawing on publicly released Defence sources, I will argue that combat duties are inherent in all categories of employment within the Army and that policymakers should develop and review Defence policy in recognition of the complex tactical and operational environments in which women are employed. In fact the current roles filled by women in the modern Army are no less dangerous than those of their male counterparts, particularly given the nature of asymmetric warfare and the hardships that often characterise humanitarian operations. The pursuit of equality should not be the basis for policy reform — particularly for Defence, an organisation that requires capability and performance to protect Australia’s strategic interests and deployed personnel.

Integration — pushing the boundaries for equality

Defence statistics from 1 June 2012 reveal that 307 Australian Defence Force (ADF) women were deployed overseas on operations — some 9% of the total deployed force — while females comprise approximately 10% of the permanent full-time Army.¹ These percentages have shown minimal growth (2%) since the 1990s, suggesting that both the Army and ADF have not increased in attractiveness as an employer of choice for women.² The revolution in women’s employment in the Army began in the mid-1980s with the disbanding of the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC). The WRAAC was originally designed to replace men with enlisted women so that those men could be released in preparation for war. Reflecting the societal values of the time, the corps structure effectively segregated women from their male counterparts. The disbanding of the WRAAC reflected a change in Australian society and led to the integration of women into a number of previously male-only roles. It was accompanied by the removal of automatic discharge on pregnancy and equal working conditions.³
The Army was officially exempted from the provisions of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* allowing it to bar women from combat duties and combat roles.\(^4\)

Under the Act, combat roles are defined as ‘those requiring a person to commit, or participate directly in the commission of, an act of violence against an adversary in time of war.’\(^5\) Under Regulation 3 of the Act, combat-related duties are defined as ‘duties requiring a person to work in support of, and in close proximity to, a person performing combat duties, in circumstances in which the person may be killed or injured by an act of violence by an adversary.’\(^6\) Ironically, while the Sex Discrimination Act was designed to eliminate discrimination against females, the Army’s implementation of the Act saw women who were once employed in combat-related duties (for example in the Royal Australian Engineers and the Royal Australian Corps of Transport) unable to continue in these roles.

In May 1990, policy was amended to allow women to serve in some combat-related positions with a trial period of three years during which the combat-related duties exemption was removed. This opened up more career opportunities for women, raising the number of positions available for women in the Army to 55%.\(^7\)

That same year women were permitted to serve in combat-related positions in the Gulf War, as medics, nurses, logistics and supply operators, military police, intelligence analysts, drivers and movement operators. During this operation all personnel, regardless of rank or gender, were at risk of chemical or biological weapons attacks and potentially also targets for Scud missiles. Given the indiscriminate nature of the NBC (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) threat, the training and protective standards that were applied throughout the operation were likewise universal and made no allowance for gender. As a result women worked in hazardous environmental conditions clad in NBC protective equipment. While women were not employed in direct combat roles, they were nonetheless in danger from indirect and direct fire. The nature of warfare (in this case asymmetric warfare) had blurred the geographical ‘front line’ and rendered the traditional definitions of combat roles and combat duties redundant.

In 1992 the combat exclusion policy was further relaxed and women were allowed to serve in all positions and units within Defence, albeit only in combat-related support roles. This change, along with increased measures to prevent sexual harassment and to improve treatment of women in the ADF, was driven by an increased awareness of prevalent sexual harassment and from mounting public pressure resulting from the HMAS *Swan* incident.\(^8\) There remained only front-line combat roles such as Special Forces, infantry, artillery, armoured and combat engineers from which women were excluded.\(^9\) Prior to this, male-only infantry
units would only employ male support staff (such as Operator Administration and Operator Supply). This policy change allowed women to ‘post in’ to these combat units for the first time. Women were also able to participate in training and deployments with those units and, although women were posted in support roles, if that unit was subsequently raised as a front-line combat unit, those women could then be exposed to direct contact with the enemy. Yet, in practical application, these exemptions and the Act itself proved irrelevant, particularly given the nature of modern asymmetric warfare in which direct engagement with the enemy is equally likely in both combat and combat support roles. This was certainly the case for Corporal Jacqui De Gelder, a female medic who was attached to an infantry section for an ‘outside the wire’ patrol in Afghanistan. She was chosen for the task because of her qualifications and was required to engage with the enemy when necessary. Her gender was never an issue in her ability to perform in a combat role.10

Debates over the inclusion of women in the Army’s combat units have emerged numerous times over the past two decades. In 1991 and then again in 1992, the Army created a Women’s Evaluation Team to examine the combat-related employment of females in response to pressure to allow women to serve in combat units.11 In 2000, the Australian government again reviewed the policy of combat exclusion and subsequently removed its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), put in place under the Keating government (these reservations worked to support the exclusion of women from combat roles).12 However the National Interest Analysis, tabled in parliament on 7 April 2000, revealed that the Australian government was not yet ready to move away from combat exclusion.13 Although trials were held in which women could participate in combat duty initial employment training and in Special Forces selection programs so as to provide a basis for research, the issue of women in combat roles lay dormant until 2011. In September of that year, due to mounting public pressure and the gender issues highlighted by the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) Skype scandal, the Australian government re-reviewed the policy and subsequently removed the gender restrictions for combat employment categories. Like the HMAS Swan incident, the Australian media’s questioning of the Defence response to the ADFA Skype scandal led to a review into the treatment of women at ADFA14 and a separate review into the treatment of women in the ADF.15 These reviews led to a major reconsideration and redefinition of the role of women in Defence and indeed in the Army.
The recommendations of both reviews focused on the culture of Defence and the need to break down gender restrictions in order to remove a culture of inequality for women. Pragmatically, the reviews noted that the removal of gender restrictions would need to place the caveat of selection on the basis of job merit over gender, and indicated that this policy would improve overall ADF capability, although it did not specify how this would be achieved. A major issue that was not addressed was how Defence, and the Army in particular, would prevent gender-norming of the standards required for these combat roles as this could critically affect tactical capability.\(^\text{16}\) Gender-norming is the institutionalised practice of lowering extant standards or creating gender-centric standards. The United States military, for example, found that the implementation of gender-normed standards (under the ‘equivalent training’ system) increased the proportion of women within its forces. However, the institutionalising of gender-normed standards in critical training — which could negatively affect tactical capability — became the accepted norm. These standards included training in which female physical fitness is scored differently to that of their male counterparts and combat conditioning was changed to accommodate female strengths and weaknesses (for example discontinuing practices such as running with heavy weapons). There was also a regime of continuous re-testing or re-qualification of female candidates who had previously failed components of the requisite training.\(^\text{17}\) While gender-norming in the Australian Army would provide benefits such as an increase in diversity and female representation, it can have a long-term negative impact on tactical capability as combat-tested standards are not attained.

In June 2012, the government approved a five-year implementation plan for the employment of women in combat-related roles and, on 27 September 2012, the Defence Minister announced that all gender restrictions would be removed.\(^\text{18}\) Consequently, female staff cadets on graduation from RMC Duntroon are now able to elect combat duty postings including infantry officer, artillery officer, armoured officer and combat engineer officer. From January 2013, in-service transfers for currently serving non-commissioned officers and other ranks were also offered. Importantly, these transfers were often successful against non-gender-specific requirements such as the Physical Employment Standards Testing.\(^\text{19}\) The strategy of filling the combat ranks with women ‘from the top down’ is designed to help the transition for direct entry ‘off-the-street’ female recruits by 2016. The Australian Human Rights Commission’s Review into the Treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force: Phase 2 Report recommended that no fewer than two females per combat section (a section can consist of up to 12 people) should make a ‘critical mass’ to reduce the risk of sexual harassment and to provide a peer support
network within the section — yet this overlooks the critical questions often asked by commanders in the Army: will there be enough females willing to transfer or enlist in those roles to make up that critical mass? And dismissing the notion of achieving gender equality, will those numbers and the change of policy bring about a significant tactical advantage on the ground and increase the effectiveness of ground operations? Considering the relatively small numbers of women within Defence, and the potential for even smaller numbers choosing combat roles, it is possible that most Army combat sections will not have women because of the ‘critical mass’ requirement. Allied to this is the question of whether the change will equate to ‘value for policy’ — in other words, will the level of funding allocated to developing and implementing this policy equate to a capability increase for the Army? For example, in Afghanistan, female Army members have used their gender as a cultural advantage and thereby increased force capability. Given the current fiscal climate, it is apt to note that changes to Army employment must consider how funds expenditure can be justified with increases to capability.

The integration plan also runs the risk of further segregating those females by clustering them in targeted units or sections. While it is sensible to ensure that they have a female peer support network within their immediate workplace, the ‘critical mass’ requirement could possibly undermine the original intent of full integration.

Deployments — adapting to the mission

To fully understand the current role of women in the Australian Army, it is necessary to examine their operational employment and consider how gender has impacted on their roles. Since the first Gulf War, the roles filled by women, both on deployment and on exercise, have been diverse and often equally as dangerous as those of their male counterparts. In recent deployments women have worked in high threat areas performing tasks that are often outside their job description. A common attitude of ‘soldiers first’ and then job or trade second, has been a key training point for deployments and throughout initial employment training, again displacing the traditional definition of combat roles. A female driver, for example, could be transformed from a Heavy-Rigid Driver into a section member engaging with the enemy in order to fight through an ambush. This is the reality, and indeed the expectation, that the modern soldier and officer must prepare for regardless of corps or gender. The Australian Army has been in a state of constant deployment since the Gulf War and, as a result of the indiscriminate nature of modern asymmetric warfare, women have been constantly in the firing line. One consequence is that the role of women in the Army has become less defined by their trade, with women engaged in tasks such as patrolling, community engagement and security piquets, traditionally the domain of combat-related corps such as infantry.
Women have also taken part in strategic regional, humanitarian and stabilisation operations and these roles have been just as complex and varied according to the mission tasks and force requirements. The use of females to engage with the local populace in non-warlike operations highlights the issues surrounding the traditional definition of combat-related duties. How can this definition of ‘combat-related duties’ be applied to the roles filled by modern Army women who are working in battlespaces in which the threat is undefined and so is the nature of their duties and roles? In these operations the notion of gender has been challenged as, at times, men and women (irrespective of gender) have been required to perform tasks that are out-of-corps job roles (where they are working in areas not defined by their employed trade). In the Sinai (Operation Mazurka), Army members are posted to the Multinational Force and Observers. Women posted to this operation have performed both out-of-corps roles and also served in support of the headquarters element. Similarly, women have also been part of the ADF contribution to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (Operation Aslan) which oversees development work and nation-building in conflict-riven South Sudan. Throughout this operation, Army women have been involved in aviation and logistics support roles (such as drivers and petroleum operators), out-of-corps roles as military liaison officers and also in headquarters positions.

In the Asia-Pacific region Army women have also engaged in civil and military regional operations and exercises, often in support of the maintenance of peace and stability. In these operations women have been required to monitor and support the civilian population as part of civil military cooperation teams (CIMIC). On deployments such as Operation Bel Isi in Bougainville, Operation Anode in Solomon Islands and Operation Astute in East Timor, women have actively engaged in a range of support programs and been members of monitoring teams with an emphasis on cooperation with civilian government and non-government organisations. These teams perform a similar function to that of female engagement teams (FETs) in the Middle East and provide good examples of how deployed women have been tasked with traditionally unconventional roles.

During these operations women have been members of the CIMIC teams, civilian monitoring teams, headquarters staff, police liaison teams and acted as interpreters. Likewise, throughout these operations and exercises, women have also filled more traditional roles including radio operators, drivers and logistics staff.

The ADF domestic operation, Operation Resolute, is one of Australia’s largest current operations and is designed to protect offshore maritime interests and enforce border security. The Transit Security Element (TSE) comprises both male
and female members of the Army and Navy. Like the FETs, the TSE offers a clear example of the use of gender to improve capability and constitutes a small but tactically vital component of Operation Resolute. As part of their duties, members of the TSE participate in boarding parties, securing and searching vessels and potential irregular immigrants as well as performing daily seafaring duties. A minimum of one female is assigned to each TSE section (so that the section can comply with the rules of engagement concerning same-gender searches); that female undertakes the same force preparation training and rostering as her male counterparts. Importantly, women have proven their ability to adapt to training subjects that traditionally belonged to male-only combat trades. Competencies such as ‘search techniques’, ‘apply basic defensive techniques’ and ‘apply the principles and techniques for controlling resistance’ comprise critical force preparation training for TSE members. Interestingly however, women did not need to belong to a combat corps to fill this role; like the FETs and female search teams (FSTS), once their rotation or tasking is complete they then return to their original employment category (and unit). Yet the TSE role also demonstrates the clever use of gender throughout an operation in the use of female TSE members to search female asylum seekers. The TSE also illustrates the varied nature of out-of-corps roles to which women have been exposed and their ability to complete the training required for these tasks while also successfully providing a tactical capability through use of their gender. In other respects, however, the TSE illustrates that gender is irrelevant to the role, with more attention paid to the individual’s ability to perform as a member of a highly skilled team.

In Afghanistan and Iraq (on Operation Falconer), deployed units require all members (regardless of gender) to perform their employed job roles, as well as adhere to security procedures relevant to the deployment. Clearly, regardless of gender or rank, all deployed members need to be aware of the threat of indirect fire (and NBC attacks) and be prepared to enter combat where necessary. As previously described, in Afghanistan, female Army members have used their gender as a cultural advantage and thereby increased force capability. Female members of coalition forces have operated in high risk areas in order to actively engage with the local female Afghan population as members of FSTS, FETs and female human intelligence exploitation teams (FHET) accompanied by male security teams. Women who belong to FHETs and FETs are required to perform these tasks in addition to their normal duties. The use of these teams in engaging with the local Afghan female population has proven a significant boon to coalition forces in Afghanistan. This is illustrated by the work of the FETs who were operating within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and who
contributed to the Lines of Operations by collecting vital information used to map the atmospherics and effects of the battlespace and provide a basis for future operations. By engaging with and extracting information from the female half of the Afghan population, gender was effectively used as a means to increase tactical, operational and strategic capability and indeed provides considerable assistance to efforts in Afghanistan.32 Anecdotal evidence of the role of the FETs and the beneficial nature of their work suggests that:

FETs enable bonds to be formed between ISAF females and the local female population, and already the successes are apparent. The FETs support education programs, economic development and the provision of health services to the local population and provide an opportunity for Afghan women to openly discuss their concerns and needs for improving their lives and those of their families with the female soldiers … 33

While the FETs are non-combatant in nature, they have been required to operate in areas that pose a high risk of direct confrontation with the enemy. Even though officially women were previously ‘gender restricted’ in these warlike operations, all personnel were equally at risk, as the threats from IEDs (improved explosive devices), suicide bombers and indirect fire attacks blurred the geographical front line.34

The use of gender to increase capability
The use of gender to provide tactical advantage also has implications for tactical and operational capability. Clearly, combat inclusion will increase capability through the use of women in traditional combat-related roles alongside their male counterparts and in unconventional roles such as those of the FET, FST and FHET. Since women are already providing this capability, however, their combat inclusion seems merely set to formalise their current work on a policy level. In addition, combat inclusion also suggests that the moral dilemma of putting women on the front line is no longer an issue and that society has faced its fear of mothers or sisters being killed in action or taken as prisoners of war. Ultimately, the role of women, prior to combat inclusion, has been adaptive, from the mission down to the task, in many of their roles, gender has been irrelevant. Nonetheless gender can be used to comply with the rules of engagement for an operation or to increase capability, as illustrated in Afghanistan.

Domestic operations provide further evidence that women increase tactical capability due to their gender and also illustrate the ability of women to serve in unrestricted gender roles. In the past, domestic operations have seen both males and females employed as members of search teams and in support of security teams.
In these operations, once again, gender is not an operational concern and both genders have successfully filled out-of-corps job roles; as such, the threat exposure has been the same for every individual. Some of the Australian Army’s key domestic contributions have included the Sydney Olympics (Operation Gold) and The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Operation Guardian).

During these operations both men and women were subject to complex yet risky security environments and could have faced terrorist threats, targeted threats from the Australian public and from criminal groups. As a result they had to be ready to adapt to the situation, which could change from low threat levels to high threat levels with little or no warning. Similarly, females perform the same work as their male counterparts (and face the same risks) in Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) operations including recent responses to the Queensland Floods (2011), the Victorian Bushfires (2009) and Cyclone Yasi (2011). During these peacetime national support roles women join their male colleagues in providing emergency assistance to the local Australian communities, in rebuilding and participating in search teams. In addition to out-of-corps roles, women also contribute in conventional areas such as logistics, communication, medical and trades support. In these roles gender is irrelevant to the individual soldier’s proficiency and ability to complete his or her tasks successfully.

Support services and culture

For combat inclusion to be successful, women (and men) in the Army need to have adequate access to welfare and support services and a positive culture of inclusiveness. While a number of these services are available to women, the Review into the Treatment of Women in the ADF indicated that many women prefer to utilise informal peer support. Women also have ready access to formal support services which range from fairness and equity networks to housing support services including the Defence Community Organisation, chaplaincy support, the Defence Equity Organisation, the Defence Women's Network and the rank hierarchy. The review revealed that, while most ADF members were happy within Defence, there were also many complaints that women were given preferential treatment and are treated more ‘fairly’ than their male counterparts (ranging from career promotions or more ready access to leave entitlements). The review also noted concerns that, if women served in certain roles, their presence might affect the capability of those employment categories, therefore reducing the overall performance and cohesion of the unit:
For many personnel there is also an enduring ambivalence about whether and where women ‘fit’, whether there should be more serving women, whether the presence of women affects capability and what roles they should perform. This is of concern …

Cultural complaints such as these could potentially undermine the full integration of women into combat roles and these should not be dismissed lightly. Indeed, it must also be noted that cultural change will not happen quickly and that it may take generational change for cultural complaints such as this to disappear. The Canadian Army noted a breakdown in unit cohesion when it first initiated combat inclusion, but proved that, with effective and proactive leadership, the transition could be successful. While the ADF review was comprehensive, it failed to address the overriding issue that the Army is required to be an offensive and defensive force. Although diversity can impact positively on a tactical level, Defence support mechanisms should not be modelled on civilian ones and the introduction of equity and diversity policy is not a tactical consideration. So, for the strategic commander whose decisions are based on the battlespace and mission rather than the ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation of soldiers and officers, these mechanisms and policy have little tactical application. The review highlighted this conundrum, questioning the implications of female integration into combat roles for a mission-focused, tactically minded organisation:

The nature of the ADF’s war-fighting mission and emphasis on its ‘warrior culture’ perpetuates this belief, as has, until recently, the policy restriction on the employment of women in direct combat roles. The removal of this restriction means this formal policy barrier is gone, but the practical impact on women’s participation is less clear.

Hence the five-year integration plan for females into combat roles will foster more equality for Army women, but will the tactical advantage for commanders be as significant as the costs to review and implement the reform? While this question cannot be definitively answered until the integration plan is completed in 2016, at the lowest level some of these costs will include modifying training establishments according to the service provisions necessary to accommodate women, and ensuring that employment training packages are developed to produce the same training outcomes for female soldiers. These packages will need to address the physical differences between male and female soldiers — which may result in the female soldiers reaching the training outcomes but over a prolonged period of time.
However if the integration is successful the Australian Army has the potential to become a more egalitarian and diverse organisation which values women based on their ability rather than their gender. Defence will also need to invest in research and development of equipment that better suits the needs of a female combat soldier and in order to prevent unnecessary injuries and costly compensation claims. In terms of increasing capability, will unit manning and position allocation increase to accommodate these combat-qualified women? If not, then it is harder to measure an increased capability output. It is also apt to consider former Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy’s argument on the significance of policy decisions for Defence:

Right now our soldiers are at war. It might not be a war of national mobilisation but, nevertheless, we are defending our national interests and our young men and women are in mortal danger right now. There is a real live enemy out there trying to kill our soldiers. The decision we make about supporting current operations and shaping of the Army in the future are not esoteric decisions. They are real and vital and lives depend on our conclusions.43

Over the last two decades women in the Australian Army have experienced significant change in employment opportunity and equality of working conditions. With the ever-changing nature of Defence policy and the strategic concerns of the Australian government, there will no doubt be more opportunity for women to exhibit their ‘mettle’. But in today’s terms the Army has planned to withdraw from Afghanistan in 201444 and the full integration of the first cohort of trained women into combat roles may not occur until late 2013, which may be too late for women to ‘earn their desert guernsey’.45 However, long-term changes to policy must consider the future implications of women serving in warlike operations. How will Australia respond when a female soldier is taken hostage? How will Defence compensate women with hip injuries who are unable to bear children due to long-term load-carrying stresses? If, for example, a female infanteer is killed overseas, will policy revert to its previous state? When Lance Corporal Jacinda Baker died in Afghanistan (the first female in the New Zealand Army to die since the Vietnam War), the New Zealand Prime Minister John Key publicly announced that he would not accelerate the removal of troops from Afghanistan nor would there be a re-evaluation of women in combat arms.46 But the question remains for the Army and the wider ADF — and it is one that cannot be dismissed — of how the Australian public and indeed the ADF will respond to a female death in combat. More importantly, will this prompt the Army to reintroduce a policy of gender
exclusion despite its discriminative nature? On an operational level, will the current integration policy endure if modern asymmetric warfare disappears to be replaced by a return to conventional warfare?

Conclusion

Dramatic changes in the nature of women’s employment in the Army over the past two decades have been driven by cultural and social change, public pressure and operational requirements — including changes in the nature of warfare itself. Women have finally been admitted to combat and combat-related roles that were previously the exclusive domain of their male counterparts. This change has produced many benefits, particularly in terms of capability, with women increasingly used on operations to fill roles in FETs, FSTs and FHETs — unconventional roles that cannot be filled by men and which have provided significant tactical advantage on the ground. Domestically, women also feature in border security operations where they are crucial members of TSE, again working alongside their male counterparts and often providing additional capability. Yet these gains have also produced their own conundrums. How will Defence safeguard the extant combat standards (which have been tried and tested on operations) against gender-norming? How will the Australian public respond to the first female death in combat? Will the additional investment in resources to realise the full potential of combat inclusion be reflected in additional capability? It is clear that continued consideration of the issue of ‘value for policy’ is required, while the broader implications for Army of putting women in the so-called ‘front-line’ should also continue to be assessed. The Army is traditionally a conservative entity and not given to rapid change. For the sake of those women who will be the trailblazers of this new policy, implementation should be gradual and considered lest it be compromised by accusations of tokenism and gender norming. This policy has enjoyed a brave start — it deserves the chance to prove itself over time.
THE AUTHOR

Lance Corporal Hannah Evans is a member of the Kokoda Foundation and is currently studying towards a Bachelor of International Studies (Politics and international studies) and Languages (Mandarin) through the University of New England while training for her commercial pilot’s licence (helicopter) at the Fleet Flight Training School. She is posted to the University of New South Wales Regiment at Armidale where she is an orderly room corporal. She has deployed as a section member on Operation Resolute and on Operations Anode and Astute.

ENDNOTES


3 Melanie Oppenheimer, Australian Women and War, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Canberra, 2008, p. 222.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Oppenheimer, Australian Women and War, p. 222.

8 In 1992 a female medical officer was sexually assaulted and sexually harassed during a deployment on HMAS Swan. Following the court martial of the male officer who was charged with the offence (resulting in an acquittal), other female personnel posted aboard HMAS Swan reported their own instances of sexual harassment, gender discrimination and inadequate living quarters, as well as the improper conduct of officers while ashore. The resulting investigation and the negative publicity surrounding the incident prompted a parliamentary inquiry into the issues facing women in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and also into sexual harassment in the ADF. A significant aspect of the inquiry focused on the fact that women had only been integrated into the RAN in the 1990s and that there was a lack of managerial preparation, education and guidance prior to the integration phase. The HMAS Swan incident was at the centre of the inquiry and, at the core of its recommendations, was the assertion that attitudes and traditions of the formerly male-only defence force had to adapt and change to its new inclusive workforce. These incidents also prompted the introduction of sexual harassment training and the extra regimental appointment of Sexual Harassment Officers in units and sub-units. Cited in Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Sexual Harassment in the Australian Defence Force, August 1994, Canberra.


16 In 1993 a preventative program was conducted at the 1st Recruit Training Battalion to reduce the number of pelvic stress fractures of female recruits where there was a fracture incidence of over 11% recorded in a research group of 143 female Army recruits and 0.1% in male recruits (a total of 16 female recruits to 1 male recruit). This incidence was reduced to nil when the route march speed was lowered from 7.5 km/h to a controlled pace of 5 km/h, when female recruits were encouraged to march in their own comfortable step length and on soft grass rather than hard surfaces, and when physical training sessions were changed to interval training sessions. This study recommended that, in order to reduce the risk of lower limb injuries, primarily to female recruits, the route march speed should be lowered, in essence gender-norming the standard for route marches to accommodate female recruits. Cited in Rodney Pope, ‘Prevention of Pelvic Stress Fractures in Female Army Recruits’, Military Medicine, Vol. 164, May 1999, pp. 370–73.


19 In 2009 the Defence Science and Technology Organisation in conjunction with the University of Wollongong established the PES Centre of Expertise. The PES is designed to identify an appropriate set of physical tests for Defence employment groups which are suited to the physical demands of those groups and is currently being implemented across the Army. Cited in Defence Science and Technology Organisation, Physical employment standards, revised 5 December 2012, at: http://www.dsto.defence.gov.au/research/6962/ (accessed 1 July 2013).


21 Ibid. The report noted that, based on the Canadian experience, while the numbers of women within those combat roles and indeed within Defence increased only incrementally (from 0.3% to 3.8% from 1989 to 2006), the implementation plan to include women in the combat arms was successful. The review concluded, however, that for the policy to be successfully implemented in the ADF, there should be a focus on one combat unit/work section/platoon/ company within each service and that women should be clustered to achieve a critical mass. This strategy somewhat mirrors the WRAAC unit structure in which women were grouped into that specific corps. By segregating a mass of women into specific sections the implementation plan fails to fully integrate women into combat units in those combat roles and is at risk of further segregating women from their male peers.

23 Ibid.


30 ADDP 3.11, Edition 2, Chap 1, Para 1.17.3.


32 Ibid.


34 One of the issues posed by asymmetrical warfare and counterinsurgency operations is the absence of a formal and defined battlefield. This move away from conventional trench warfare has led to a major rethink in the tasking and training of Army personnel. An important lesson that has been learnt from Afghanistan (in population engagement and counterinsurgency) and from peacekeeping operations is that, by utilising the intrinsic characteristics of members such as gender, race (native language proficiency and ethnicity) and pre-Defence life experiences, engagement and information gathering can be increased and thus overall capability is enhanced. By eliminating the need to provide training in these areas and by drawing on these individual strengths, these features can be a useful and cost-neutral means of improving tactical capability. This was highlighted by Lance Corporal Poppy Wenham who was deployed to Bougainville as a driver and signaller and who was utilised in patrols as she spoke Pidgin (the native language) and could easily engage with the local population. Cited in Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 2008, p. 229.


36 ADDP–D, Edition 1, Chap 6, Para 6.10, Historical Example.


39 Ibid., p. 83.

40 Ibid., p. 188.

41 Ibid., p. 114.


GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Sexuality, Cohesion, Masculinity and Combat Motivation: Designing Personnel Policy to Sustain Capability

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Knight

ABSTRACT

How might mixing the sexes affect the capability of small combat teams? As Australia integrates women into its combat arms, the policy challenges that sexuality presents may prove more enduring than those of gender. Objections to integration based on women’s capabilities are expected to quickly become redundant, although the masculine culture of combat units demands careful management. Hyper-masculinity can undoubtedly be hostile to women, but is a long-established way to meet the profoundly unnatural psychological demands of close combat. Effective integration therefore appears to require careful adjustment of Army’s methods of building team cohesion. Furthermore, even gender-neutral approaches to generating the cohesion that is so vital for combat arms will not change the potential for sexual interaction that mixing genders creates. The social dynamics involved represent some level of risk to the trust on which cohesion depends.
How real is this risk to capability from sexuality? That is the overarching enquiry of this article, which also explores key notions of motivation, cohesion and masculinity and their relationship with sexuality itself. Although possible approaches are described, as yet not enough is known to make policy recommendations. Policy-makers simply don’t know what levels of sexual interaction actually occur during training and operations, how disruptive they may or may not be, nor the extent to which existing prohibitions and policies modify behaviour. This article is, above all, a plea to investigate these questions and how sexuality, trust and cohesion interact.
Introduction

The Australian Army is integrating women into combat units. To realise the capability improvements this offers, leaders and policy-makers have a responsibility to identify and manage possible risks. Concerns based on individual female performance appear misplaced, but reduced cohesion is plausible given the damage to trust that can occur through both unwanted and consensual sexually motivated behaviour. Harassment has a clear disciplinary, administrative and capability impact and has prompted robust policy responses. Policy concerning consensual sexuality appears to have received little attention, although its parameters may have some impact on unacceptable behaviour. Furthermore, there is a need to resolve the tensions between a gender-neutral ideal and the value of exaggerated or ‘hyper’ masculinity for combat team cohesion.

Concerns about combat-arm gender integration may well prove unfounded and in retrospect may seem as spurious as the arguments long proposed against the integration of African-American soldiers in the US military or gay soldiers here. On the other hand, gender differences in sexual attitudes, response and behaviour appear to have a biological basis, evolving from women’s greater risks and costs of reproduction. These differences may be more resistant to cultural change than racism or homophobia and the costs and benefits of integration may be perceived very differently by men and women. Certainly, traditional, proven approaches to generating combat group cohesion have features that appear antagonistic to integration and team trust is vulnerable to likely sexual interactions. If Army ignores these complexities or simply issues behavioural directives, effective integration may be delayed or compromised.

This article seeks to prompt and inform debate and poses several fundamental questions: how might sexuality impact on cohesion and the motivation to fight? What levels of consensual sexual interaction, if any, can and should be accepted in the military combat team? What policy approaches might achieve these desired levels and what are the advantages and risks of coercive penalties? This discussion does not offer more than tentative answers, but it does explain why sexual behaviour is resistant to control and offers evidence of the power of such behaviour. To avoid sensationalising the discussion, specific Australian Defence Force (ADF) examples are not used, although both anecdotal and medical data are available. A discussion of hyper-masculinity has a central role because it is strongly linked to cohesion and motivation.
The non-problem of female performance

Many of the difficulties experienced by other militaries in their efforts to integrate women flow from gender differences in physical performance, use of different standards (such as the US ‘equality of effort’ metric) and consequent actual or perceived dilution of capability. The initial failure of Canada’s 1989 integration of women in the infantry had its roots in male resentment of females who fell short of established performance standards but were retained to meet politically mandated quotas. To avoid this, the government has directed that objective physical performance standards be applied in Australia.

A British survey conducted in 2010 indicates that, in countries where the option exists, few women can or want to achieve combat-arm standards; thus females comprise only around 1% of integrated combat units for armies worldwide. Consequently, the likely outcome is a small cohort of highly motivated women, ‘distilled’ by physical tests to rank above the male average on many other measures including leadership potential. A disproportionate number will probably serve as officers or in the Special Forces without any positive discrimination. This distillation can be expected to compensate for gender-based differences in average psychological performance such as the greater physical aggressiveness of males from an early age that some critics of integration highlight. Women’s apparent lower risk preferences and subtly different cognition are a potential asset for the adaptive thinking that Army seeks, although a recent study showed that, when freed from social norms, their military decision-making may be as aggressive as that of their male counterparts. Meta-studies indicate that the psychological differences between the genders are not categorical but shifting distinctions of degree that selection criteria can address. Consequently, concerns over performance dilution from integration appear misplaced; however the effect on work group cohesion is less certain.

Integration and combat cohesion

Most, but not all, earlier studies of female integration in training and barracks settings suggested either a possible or actual negative impact on cohesion. The 2010 British review of female employment policy took a precautionary stance and recommended against further integration of women because of ‘potential risks associated with maintaining cohesion in small mixed-gender tactical teams engaged in highly-dangerous close-combat operations.’ That decision was based on inconclusive results from a specially commissioned major study that included the combat troops integration experiences of other nations and the first analysis of the impact of mixed gender on small team cohesion in actual combat.
This contemporary research is important in identifying potential issues, notwithstanding its small sample size, other (self-acknowledged) methodological limitations and the fact that the female British Army soldiers were not fighting within fully-integrated teams as will occur under Australian policy.17

Male and female combat veterans who were surveyed perceived risks to cohesion through damage to trust and confidence from factors including the disruptive impact of relationships, male competition for female attention and female flirting or ‘wiles’, especially in barracks.18 The British study also showed that soldiers anticipated that mixing genders would have disruptive effects during combat, including inducing male protective behaviour, although this perception was not necessarily supported by any analysis of combat incidents. Substantiated problems were confined to individual women’s performance in combat and social factors prior to combat. Objective standards will address the former, so the most plausible risks to capability arise from the intersection of social behaviours and cohesion.

Combat motivation, reputation and cohesion
For the typical soldier, combat motivation comes from maintaining reputation, rather than patriotism or ideology. The historian John Keegan19 argues that achieving the ‘admiration of others’ and avoiding their scorn is the psychological mechanism that overcomes exhaustion, terror and the inhibition to kill and keeps an individual fighting.20 The soldier seeks to maintain a self-image that is validated by the wider group. Sometimes the ‘desire of an individual to preserve status in the group is literally stronger than the fear of death.’21 Why would such concerns with reputation evolve? Predispositions should be explained by survival or reproductive advantage. Puny ancestral humans succeeded because they learned to hunt and fight collectively, so it is easy to see why failure to be a reliable coalition partner might be penalised. But why would an instinct to be highly selfless, risk tolerant, aggressive or courageous emerge, since it would reduce survival chances? The most plausible explanation is that such behaviour would offer status and thus reproductive opportunities.22 According to this view, reputation is ultimately a ‘sexual strategy that can be activated in domains (such as war fighting) that appear on the surface to have little to do with reproduction.’23

This phenomenon of individual concern for reputation appears universal in military cultures and it necessarily occurs in the context of well-bonded or cohesive ‘in-groups’. The strongest bonds exist within a ‘primary in-group’, a crew, section or squad that corresponds to an ancestral hunting band. Crucially, members do not simply provide mutual support; they also subconsciously
monitor one another constantly for performance and conformity to ‘tribal’ norms. These come from the wider ‘secondary in-group’ or ‘tribe’ from which soldiers draw identity, for instance ‘3 RAR’ or the ‘US Marine Corps’. Cohesion seems to be an altruism-maintaining mechanism and, for the purposes of this article, is the psychological bond which enables an individual’s reputational and emotional motivation to place team and then task interests above personal ones.

Evidently, cohesion plays a vital role in combat units — but what is its relationship to gender? Why did a 1996 ADF study find a ‘pervasive belief in the importance of male bonding for group cohesion and operational effectiveness’ and why do many males believe that females threaten those bonds?24 Undoubtedly male chauvinism plays a part, but there also appear to be other factors at play. The greatest trigger for violence in tribal societies is sexual competition among young males.25 Hannagan and Arrow explain bonding mechanisms as ‘social engineering … to damp down intragroup fighting over women’ and ‘promote victory in war’.26 This accounts for the widespread exclusion of women from hunting and fighting and the ‘transfer of status competition to the intergroup level’. The introduction into a bonded group of ‘others’ who represent potential sexual partners, whether they are of opposite gender or homosexual, may disrupt the social dynamic. This is more than concern over the interloper's power to provoke sexual desire, although that is a well-researched driver of misogyny.27 The work of feminist scholar Connell offers a different nuance: masculinity is a ‘performance’, usually intended to build and maintain a reputation among other men.28 A person who is dissimilar disrupts the ‘rules of the game’.

Biological differences may also play a role. Humans and chimpanzees share a unique capacity for systematic intra-species warfare that is enabled by a predisposition to form strong coalitions or ‘in-groups’ and adaptably define others as ‘out-groups’. Perceived threats dramatically accentuate these biases. A complex psychological mechanism modifies deep inhibitions against same-species killing, increases aggression and distorts risk perception across a range of decision-making.29 Concurrently, it increases bonding and the sense of group identity.30 Both genders share these inclinations, but not their translation into violence. A propensity for sustained out-group aggression and exaggerated in-group bonding is almost exclusively limited to ‘demonic males’.31 Some neuroscientists32 question the role of testosterone while evolutionary feminists dispute the mechanisms of violence.33 However, even scientists who deny a role for ‘nature’, recognise that male coalitional violence is hardwired by ‘nurture’ into the ‘connections of the brain’.34
None of these observations remotely constitutes an argument that women cannot fight or bond; indeed a reduced female predisposition to testosterone-driven irrational aggression or loss of fine motor skills may enable superior performance in modern war. However, it does suggest that both biology and sociology help explain why men may bond differently and more readily than women and why bonding is fundamentally linked to notions of masculinity and its exaggerated form, hyper-masculinity.

Hyper-masculinity
Across time and place, militaries have exploited ‘hyper-masculine’ behaviour as a mechanism to generate both cohesion and the aggression required to overcome inhibitions and reliably kill at close quarters. It is ‘abnormal conduct for abnormal’ effects. Hyper-masculinity is particularly associated with elite infantry units because it is a proven tool for sustaining the offensive culture required for conventional war. Rosen et al. have also shown such hyper-masculinity to be associated with ‘greater vertical and horizontal cohesion and readiness’ across many types of unit because it supports psychological readiness for combat. Exaggerated sexuality may play a role by altering hormone levels. Certainly, primitive tribal societies used sexual arousal to motivate their warriors and Roberts has controversially argued that the US Army deliberately exploited sexual hyper-masculinity and myth to motivate troops after D-day. Woods cites anthropologist Lionel Tiger as proposing that, in military groups, stereotypically sexually-referenced humour, posturing, language and name-calling combines with roughhousing to raise testosterone levels as a process of displaying and testing psychological fitness to fight and build a ‘tough aggressive self-image for the soldier’ and the group. As described earlier, the group is regulated not only by demanding exaggerated masculine traits but by seeking out and condemning those that the group conceptualises as non-masculine: currently this uses misogynistic labels such as ‘feminine’ as well as homophobic ones such as ‘gay’, but historically hyper-masculinity has also been conceived as homosexual, most famously by the Spartans.

Group repression of the non-masculine inevitably decreases male acceptance of women: in practice it is often hostile, as illustrated by Wadham’s description of a 1980s Australian infantry culture, based on his service in 2/4 RAR, that denigrates the feminine and females. A zero-tolerance approach to harassment has curbed blatant misogyny, but overt sexuality remains part of the contemporary masculine military environment. Flood’s study of ADFA cadets found that ‘sexual activity is a key path to masculine status … other men are the audience … Heterosexual sex can be a medium for male bonding.’ This is hardly different from any social
grouping in which young men are a majority (an engineering faculty for example). The boundary between normal assertive male sexuality and unacceptable anti-female behaviour is difficult to define. Nevertheless, the Army has far more at stake, and simply prohibiting clearly unacceptable behaviour does not create a female-friendly environment. The Chief of Army has mandated a fundamental attitudinal shift and it is difficult to see how this can be achieved without addressing hyper-masculinity and modifying the established training and culture of combat units.

There may be other reasons to ‘de-masculinise’ military culture, particularly the need to avoid overreaction in contemporary complex conflict. For example, the macho culture of the Parachute Regiment has been implicated in the 1972 Bloody Sunday shootings in (London) Derry that massively shifted local Northern Irish Nationalist opinion towards armed resistance to the British Army. The dilemma for the senior Army leadership is that a hyper-masculine culture is probably both a barrier to gender integration and a risk in counterinsurgency, yet remains a proven cohesion tool in conventional war. For example, the ‘Para’ culture that was counterproductive in Northern Ireland won remarkable battles in the Falklands in 1982. Despite officer and non-commissioned officer casualties, sustained team-level aggression by junior Para soldiers overcame greatly superior forces and well-prepared defences. Given that conventional war is the primary task of the Army, before one cohesion-enabling culture is dismantled an alternative needs to be embedded.

There is fierce academic debate over how cohesion is built. Although hyper-masculinity is strongly associated with cohesion and combat effectiveness, few military sociologists regard it as essential. Many are critical of exclusive male bonding based on collective rituals of drinking, fighting and sex, arguing that cohesion is, or can be, built largely through ‘drills and training’ and in a ‘standard model’ based on ‘trust and teamwork’. The more demanding the performance standards achieved, the higher the self-image and mutual confidence and trust of members, but also the higher the standard the individual must attain in order to maintain reputation. This is the approach used by many Special Forces. There seems to be no reason cohesion cannot be built along non-gendered lines in mixed units with reputation primarily referenced against concepts of professionalism. However, if an effective non-gendered cohesion model exists, it has yet to be proven by a mixed combat unit in high-intensity, sustained conventional battle. Virtually all female participation in combat has been within masculine military cultures.
In any event, hyper-masculinity appears to be deeply embedded in combat unit culture and plays an important if unmeasured role. Constructive change in combat units will involve more than ‘tweaking’ current training to strip proscribed ‘masculine’ manifestations and reproducing the mixed culture of support units which is unproven in sustaining close battle. Battles and wars are won by cohesion. The fact that cohesion in mixed support units has proven sufficient for supporting roles is not proof that the same culture will be adequate for those whose job is to kill and maim at close quarters. Analysis and new models are needed and change must be carefully and positively communicated and managed. If manifestations of hyper-masculinity are simply treated as misogyny and dogmatically prohibited without persuasive explanation and this is allowed to be understood by male soldiers as emasculation of their established combat identity, the consequence may be at odds with intent: resentment, demoralisation and clandestine ostracism of women.

Even if Army develops and proves an alternative or modified model for developing cohesion that is effective in combat units, it will remain threatened by human sexuality. It seems obvious that actual sexual relationships in the team will introduce jealousies that will erode trust and threaten the primary loyalty of the individual to the group. The challenge is that even innocent rapport or unacted desire can have a similar effect: possibility is destructive. The condition that will logically sustain trust in small teams is belief that intra-team sexual relationships will not occur. Before leaders can construct policy to support this belief they need to understand the mechanisms that make disruptive sexual interactions likely and thus make that belief so difficult to establish.

The regulatory challenge of consensual sex
Do observers who dismiss sexuality as a policy challenge misjudge the relentless force that maintains life itself? ‘Sex drive’ is not crude inclination striving against considered rational choices, but a subtle and complex distortion of decision-making processes. Human evolutionary success is a result of highly cooperative group behaviour. This became possible when violent male sexual competition was reduced by social order mechanisms, including notions of sexual morality. However, clandestine sex outside socially approved relationships is an effective genetic strategy, explaining the propensity for illicit sex demonstrated by non-paternity rates. Policy to manage sexuality should understand it as a sophisticated psychological mechanism that appears to modify the sense of right and wrong and allow the disregard of risk in order to rationalise and take opportunities for sex.
Trust, cohesion and thus capability can also potentially be damaged by sexuality despite little or no sex occurring. The minority group in any mixed-gender community may have increased perceived value and power as social or sexual partners. A female US soldier’s account of her Iraq deployment describes abnormal and disconcerting levels of male attention, the psychological pressures to have sex and the ‘double-standard’ social penalties for doing so. US studies show that, once the environment becomes sexualised, jealousy and hostility arise not only among competing members of the majority gender, but also towards the minority, who are perceived to have advantages of sexual opportunity and influence. Apparent hostility may reflect suppressed attraction or signal an intention not to compete. Leaders (of either gender) may be harder on the minority sex in order to demonstrate that they do not favour them. Morale and readiness suffer. Paradoxically, a US study found that 27% of female veterans reported establishing relationships with a man as a defensive strategy. Conscientious effort to police problems can still create an environment sensitised to indications of attraction or favouritism, regardless of whether any relationships develop or not.

The most effective control of sexual behaviour occurs in societies which have strong moral rules and which value reputation and monitor compliance. Distinguishing the effects of moral conviction from severe penalties for infidelity adopted in some religious societies is difficult, but criminological theory suggests that certainty of consequence better predicts compliance than the severity of punishment. The Kurdish PKK guerrillas are unusual in comprising up to 30% female combatants and boasting a high level of compliance with their rule of total celibacy. Segregation and brutal punishment for sexual relations are bolstered by cultural, ideological and religious belief. However many members are secular, so religiously motivated self-regulation cannot be decisive. Cultural willingness to seek out, condemn and punish rule infraction appears to be the control mechanism.

Nevertheless, even severe punishment, unreinforced by strong group moral belief fails, as the execution of pregnant members of World War II communist guerrilla groups demonstrated. Indeed, any punishment for what peers perceive as a non-crime may deter its reporting or encourage its concealment. A British study of sex on deployment showed that few soldiers breached a ban on sex, but for most the prohibition did not influence their actions and, very revealingly, for a substantial minority it acted as a challenge.
International data shows that soldiers follow or exceed societal norms for levels of sexual activity and defy military constraints intended to preserve capability. About 10% of US servicewomen have an unintended pregnancy in any year (twice their national average) and 5% of military women deployed during the Gulf War became pregnant despite an almost total ban on sexual behaviour.

In US surveys over half of respondents reported that prohibited sexual activity occurred in their units, which is corroborated by sexual assault and STI figures. Respondents indicated both past and intended defiance of the often-applied ‘blanket rule’ prohibition on sexual relationships.

One explanation of such defiance is that armies attract ‘high sensation seekers’; men or women who typically have above average levels of testosterone and cortisol, are effective soldiers and engage in risky behaviours, including sexual ones, especially during deployments. These characteristics are shared by many leaders.

A persistent minority defy social disapproval, their own codes and military law to conduct affairs that exploit the attractiveness conferred by high status and their own capacity to create opportunity. This ‘Bathsheba’ effect, named after King David’s manipulation of his position for sexual advantage, is supported by the historical record of sexual risk-taking. Generals Petraeus and Sinclair are merely the most recent of a pantheon of exemplary commanders, including Eisenhower, MacArthur and Patton, who chose to take the career risks of illicit sex. The pattern extends downwards. A 2012 analysis of US Navy commanding officers dismissed for personal misconduct showed that 48% involved sexual behaviours, typically for ‘conducting an inappropriate relationship’.

The regulation of sexual behaviour can also be approached as a problem of socialisation. In 1978 Margaret Mead proposed that harassment in the workplace might be controlled by a kind of ‘incest taboo’ in which the very notion of a sexual relationship at work would be abhorrent. True desensitisation to attraction depends on a shared early childhood (the ‘Westermarck’ effect), but a socialised taboo may be feasible. In the 1980s, the author observed mixed US Air Force logistic units in which a sexuality-controlling social norm had evolved independently of official prohibition. Sex within the working section was taboo (and would be reported if it occurred), sex within the flight was only acceptable within long-term relationships, but sex with a member of the wider squadron or elements beyond was accepted. Hannagan’s discussion of re-engineering gender relations notes the example of Soviet soldiers’ treatment of their female peers as ‘sisters’ (to be protected against the predations of other men) and suggests that this idea could be inculcated alongside a non-fraternisation policy at the section or platoon level, akin to that applied in the chain of command.
Clearly, proscriptive policy alone will neither control anti-cohesive sexual behaviour nor deliver a truly female-friendly environment. If both those objectives must be met, then an enculturation program seems both needed and problematic. Certainly, much could be achieved without controversy. For instance, Defence media policy might seek to displace hyper-masculine norms by portraying women who display both attributes strongly linked with success in combat and ‘feminine’ traits. Yet social science warns us that this requires fine balance because hostility to ‘outsiders’ is reduced by removing perceptual cues of difference.81 To reduce the perceived ‘threat’ posed by females to the male group it is important to individuate women, for instance emphasising personal and not group achievements.

Deeper changes in culture will require leaders to confront issues of gender and sexuality that have until now been considered private. As other issues recede, sexuality may loom larger. Is Army ready to take the logical step of extending the established combat team value of loyalty to encompass ‘sexual fidelity’ to the team and organisation? Military hyper-masculinity and harassment is strongly linked to predatory, coercive or violent male conceptions of sex. The necessary zero-tolerance approach to unwanted sexual behaviour is unlikely to shift men’s problematic underlying beliefs. Real attitudinal change requires ‘beneficial’ levers such as promoting the advantages to men of more equal models of sex and sexual relationships.82 Are leaders equipped or willing to tackle such topics?

**Sex and policy options**

Given the above understandings and uncertainties, what policy settings are required to minimise the challenge to combat team cohesion that sexuality appears to represent? Is it desirable or even acceptable to have different approaches in the combat arms or is an Army-wide approach essential? Current regulations and instructions dealing with sexual interactions appear to give commanders considerable scope for interpretation of the proscription of relationships ‘on duty’. Given the importance of minimising sexual relationships within the small work team, and the limits of control, it may be useful to imagine different policy options in order to tease out issues. Policy-makers might consider three broad approaches: ‘strict regulation’, ‘European liberality’ and a compromise labelled ‘enculturation’.

**Strict regulation**

Strict regulation would apply the current framework more firmly to prohibit sexual relationships at any place on duty, broadly conceived. As a matter of policy, enforcement would be consistent right across the Army with significant penalties for breaches.
The advantage of this approach is that it is simple and scrupulously fair, and explicitly supports the objective of keeping the work environment desexualised and policing harassment. Unfortunately, it is inevitably a method of coercion and not of control, in that the evidence suggests that not all members will be deterred from sexual relationships. These infrequent and clandestine sexual behaviours and their associated scope for later blackmail will occasionally generate destructive unit crises. In the short term and in combat arms units with very small numbers of women the problems are likely to remain perceptual, but this may still undermine the full acceptance of women. In professional units with a high proportion of women it is unclear whether strict regulation would positively de-sexualise working relationships or generate artificial distortions, but one might anticipate a high level of disruptive transgressions in a future conscripted force or a force conducting a sustained and unpopular deployment.

**European liberality**

A liberal approach approximates that operating in countries such as Germany or Norway where rules reflect likely behaviour. Policy would carefully identify a minimum set of situations in which sexual relationships must be prohibited, including where members are on duty, in a small work team or in a direct chain of command and the exchange of sex for benefit. ‘On duty’ would be defined as times when members are actually performing work tasks, on call or directed to rest. In barracks or base areas when off duty, aside from the proscribed relationships, sexual interactions would be treated just as they are in a civilian workforce. Some consideration might be given to better defining the scope for senior members to have relationships with juniors, based on the notion of (chain of command) dependency rather than rank.

The advantage of this approach is that it best aligns with societal norms (indicated by a US survey of office workers in which 60% reported sexual intimacy with a colleague) and is likely to achieve a high degree of acceptance and compliance from generation Y soldiers. This approach could also be expected to reduce the potential burden on the disciplinary system. Furthermore, by minimising both the set of behaviours subject to regulation and the penalties prescribed, this policy would support social consensus for disciplinary action. This would in turn be expected to increase the probability of reporting of breaches and the consistency of command action, leading to compliance.

However, the social dynamic effects are unpredictable, particularly where gender imbalances are acute, and the continuing requirement for leaders to police the behaviour of subordinates might become excessive. The Dutch Army offers
an example of a relatively liberal attitude to sexual relations on operations. The infantry and artillery units deployed to Kosovo and Bosnia had a small number of embedded women as well as support attachments. A unit commander commented that ‘it’s hard to choose between women’s contribution by softening the masculine atmosphere and the (mainly sexual) dramas that they create.’

Interestingly, despite more liberal (application of) Dutch regulations, descriptions of the challenges of the sexualisation of the work environment and the level of relationships are very similar to those in US units where sexual interactions were actively repressed. However, in the Dutch account, serious harassment and sexual assault do not appear as prevalent as in US accounts. The notion that liberal policy is associated with reduced harassment is supported by research showing that Dutch servicewomen experience less harassment than British, although other cultural factors are also at play. Conversely, a strong link between a repressive attitude to sex and high interpersonal aggression has also been recognised since the 1970s. Given an ADF-wide direction to eliminate harassment, this linkage deserves further investigation.

**Enculturation**

An enculturation or social re-engineering approach would be based on the regulations of a liberal approach, perhaps expanded to exclude relationships between members of defined larger work groups such as platoons. However, the disciplinary tools would be regarded as secondary to a large-scale enculturation program that sought to build sexual taboos. This would be a major evidence-based effort to communicate the problems of sexual relationships within the chain of command and small work teams, presenting such behaviour in terms of letting the team down and articulating the desired behaviour. As is currently done with suicide awareness, all members would be told they have a role in counselling or advising their peers, such that discouraging relationships within a small team is seen as a group responsibility of the team itself.

To be effective, such a program should also quite explicitly indicate between whom, when and where sexual relationships are to be considered healthy and normal. It would be key to communicate the notion that those who happened to be in a position to pursue a sexual relationship would be in a position of privilege and that they have an obligation to act in a way that is considerate of others. A social re-engineering approach might also need mechanisms that allowed the transfer of members between work groups to deal with tensions arising from relationships. The advantage of this approach is that it would probably not only achieve
acceptance and compliance, but would support the development of a new Army culture that manages the major challenges of sexual relationships while avoiding the pitfalls of a coercive approach.

Enculturation has attractive features but is not a simple alternative to a stricter or more liberal approach; indeed a policy solution might meld elements of all three as well as other approaches. In any event, policy-makers must define the challenges before determining the policy responses.

**Conclusion**

This article has argued that, when integrating women into combat teams, the policy challenges of sexuality are distinct from those of sex; the first arise from mixing genders and the second from characteristics of gender. The integration debate has centred on the latter, especially on ‘feminine weakness’ notions grounded in the superior physical performance of the average male and problems where this has been disregarded. However, in Australia, objective performance standards are expected to make such concerns redundant, shifting the focus to the former and confronting elements of ‘hyper-masculinity’. Such culture is a proven and traditional driver of combat motivation and team cohesion, yet its elements are problematic for integration. Building a gender-neutral combat culture requires better understanding of the psychology of reputation and a modified cohesion model.

The real policy challenges of mixing genders concern defining and managing the possible risks to cohesion posed by sexuality. Regardless of whether any sexual relationships actually occur, there is potential for them to affect the social dynamics of the mixed group. The reader has been introduced to the psychological mechanism of sex drive that distorts decision-making in favour of illicit sex. That theory has been supported by data showing a consistent defiance of prohibitions on sex in mixed units (with adverse effects on morale), especially where soldiers are unpersuaded of a moral need for such regulation. A failure of even severe punishment to deter points to the value of enculturation approaches to regulate sexual behaviour. Such an approach has been contrasted with both strict enforcement and liberality in order to explore policy implications, however no policy recommendations are made: as yet there is insufficient knowledge to do so. Currently, policy-makers simply don’t know what levels of sexual interaction actually occur during training and operations, how disruptive
they may, or may not be, nor the extent to which existing prohibitions and policies modify behaviour. There is no empirical basis on which to judge the ‘problem’, or indeed whether there is one.

As Army begins the process of integrating women into combat arms units, there are several questions it must be able to answer if it is to establish appropriate policy settings, especially those related to consensual sexuality:

- Do combat units require a higher level of cohesion than that currently demonstrated in mixed support units?
- What are the appropriate methods, measures and standards for building cohesion for mixed combat units?
- What is the proper role of masculinity in military culture and the building of cohesion?
- What are the factors that determine whether sexual dynamics will threaten trust and thus cohesion?
- What constitutes acceptable sexual behaviour in mixed combat units?

Army needs debate and measurement. Perhaps the concerns explored in this article are unfounded or wildly overstated. This should be demonstrated, not assumed. A confidential survey of sexual attitudes and self-reported behaviours among important sample groups including recruits, leaders of mixed units, combat unit soldiers and veterans would be straightforward, but has not been done: perhaps it is ‘too uncomfortable’? Even if the objective risks prove minimal, until these confronting topics are decisively engaged, clandestine objection to the presence of women anchored in issues of sexuality remains a wellspring for harassment and a roadblock to effective integration. Even, or perhaps especially, ill-founded concerns and incoherent arguments need to be brought out into the open and met with reasoned analysis and persuasion.
THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Knight is a Research Fellow at the Land Warfare Studies Centre. He has an unconventional background: originally a British regular officer, he served in Oman and on COIN teams elsewhere. In Australia he joined 1 Commando Regiment, later commanding 2/17 RNSWR before returning to Special Operations Command for a decade to develop future concepts and capabilities. The author of urban and special operations doctrine and a training specialist, his civilian roles have included ballistics and explosives research, risk analysis for terrorism and crisis response planning and corporate management at the national level. His academic research has investigated adversary strategies, Australian vulnerabilities and flawed decision-making in complex conflict. Lieutenant Colonel Knight’s PhD thesis investigated the utility of coercive repression in insurgency.

ENDNOTES


6 Ibid. Current British infantry physical standards are met by only an estimated 0.1 % of all female recruits and 1.5% of trained female soldiers.

7 The Israelis have a much higher proportion of women in combat arms but these mostly serve in instructor and specialist roles, with only one fully integrated infantry unit.

8 The integration of women in the British Special Reconnaissance Regiment demonstrates both the feasibility of this and their value in unconventional roles.


11 As articulated in Adaptive Campaigning - the Future Land Operating Concept.


17 In the cases of combat analysed in the study, none of the women were permanent members of combat-arm, section-level mixed small teams selected against common physical standards. Group dynamics factors were therefore possibly conflated by performance issues.

18 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd, Study of Women In Combat, 2009. It is worth noting that the concerns about ‘stereotypical’ female behavior such as ‘flirting’ were raised by female soldiers as well as males.


20 Browne, ‘The relevance of sex differences in risktaking to the military and the workplace’, p.139.


26 Hannagan and Arrow, ‘Reengineering Gender Relations in Modern Militaries’, pp. 309, 311.


37 Browne, ‘The relevance of sex differences in risktaking to the military and the workplace’, p. 122.


40 Across different cultures, warrior tribes have been observed to become sexually aroused before going into battle. I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, The Biology of Peace & War Men, Animals & Aggression, Viking, New York, 1979.


49 Noting that this does not exclude hyper-masculine culture in some Special Forces.

50 Smith, The Most Dangerous Animal, p. 82.


57 Sadler et al. cited in Hannagan and Arrow, *Reengineering Gender Relations in Modern Militaries*, p. 316.


62 Pregnancy policy is beyond the scope of this article except to note the potentially anti-cohesive effects of flawed policy settings. A constant and tangible complaint among those opposing integration in the US is that under the Congressionally–mandated conditions, pregnancy offers women a choice to avoid or return from a deployment that is not available to men. Controversially, Private Christie Oliver openly used this to avoid a further tour of Iraq. See Browne, ‘The relevance of sex differences in risk-taking to the military and the workplace’.


66 T.S. Jenson, *Soldier rape, our own worst enemy: the effects of deployment, sex ratios, and military branch on the sexual assault of active duty women in the us military*, University of Oklahoma, 2011.


77 M.F. Light, ‘The Navy’s Moral Compass: Commanding Officers and Personal Misconduct’, Naval War College Review, Vol. 65, 2012, p. 145. Note that this includes officers of both genders and that the author claims that mixed sex crews per se are not the cause.


79 Browne, ‘The relevance of sex differences in risktaking to the military and the workplace’, p. 197.

80 Hannagan and Arrow, Reengineering Gender Relations in Modern Militaries, p. 317.


85 L. Sion in The Challenging Continuity of Change and the Military: Female Soldiers – Conflict Resolution – South America, proceedings of the Interim ISA RC 01 Conference, 2000, Gerhard Kümmel (ed), Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, p. 239.


RELIGION

Religious Diversity in the Australian Army: The Next Diversity Frontier?
Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Hoglin

ABSTRACT

A diverse workforce has been identified as a critical component of Army’s future capability. However, strategies to increase the proportion of under-represented groups have only been developed for a few discrete and highly visible demographics. This article introduces the topic of religious diversity in Army by outlining the current representation, comparing this against historic and national trends and listing compelling reasons for its consideration by strategic workforce planners in the future. Finally, the article describes the range of benefits that would result from an increase in Army’s proportion of personnel affiliated with religions other than Christianity (currently just 1.2% against a national proportion of 7.2%).
RELIGION

Introduction

Over the last decade Army has seen an increasing emphasis on diversity, including strategies for the recruitment and retention of women and indigenous personnel.¹ There is no doubt that these are necessary and important from a variety of perspectives ranging from maximising the possible candidate pool, reflecting the values, demographics and expectations of the wider Australian community, and ensuring that Army is well placed to remain a balanced and focussed organisation. However, despite an emphasis on resolving the gender balance and increasing the number of indigenous personnel in the Australian Regular Army, the lack of religious diversity has gone largely unnoticed.²

That Army’s religious diversity has attracted little attention is something of an anomaly in the current climate, particularly given that the extent of under-representation is relatively large and comparatively visible.³ Frequent deployments to, and multilateral exercises with countries with high proportions of Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus have not yet attracted a wider narrative concerning Army’s lack of religious diversity and any limitations this may place on its ability to operate effectively.⁴ However, this is unlikely to remain unnoticed for much longer and the need to address aspects of religious diversity is gaining momentum. Nationally, this has been recognised in the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper which, in reference to cultural and religious diversity, states that ‘there are gaps in participation in some of Australia’s institutions and organisations, such as in our parliaments, businesses, labour movement and civil society organisations.’⁵ The 2013 Defence White Paper notes that, within Defence, ‘specific activities are underway for improved recruitment of women and diverse groups … from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.’⁶ In addition, the 2012–17 Defence Corporate Plan describes the strategic target of increasing the ‘representation of women and multicultural Australians to better reflect [the] Australian community.’⁷ In many respects the strategic intent to increase religious diversity might already exist, but this has not yet permeated through other aspects of Army’s policy.

This article introduces the case for a more deliberate approach to religious diversity in Army. While strategies for increasing religious diversity are not presented, the article discusses differences between Army and the broader population, the recent history and trends within Army, and describes opportunities that may result from increased religious diversity. Finally, in order to inform a broader dialogue, this article closes with a short discussion on whether Army should proportionately reflect the demographic characteristics of the nation or
simply reflect its values. This article argues that, once Army has progressed its gender and indigenous personnel strategies, there may be sound justification for focussing more on religion as the next possible diversity frontier.

**Why we need religious diversity**

In 2012 the Australian Human Rights Commission released its *Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force* (also known as the Broderick Review). While religious diversity is not addressed in the review, many of the reasons offered for increasing the representation of women are equally applicable to increasing the proportional representation of any demographic group. Specifically, the review identified five reasons to support its argument that ‘a change in the treatment of women must be a priority for a strong and sustainable ADF’:

- to attract the best talent
- to reduce costs
- to increase capability
- to be a first class and high performing employer
- to take a [national] leadership position

These reasons also resonate with the need for religious diversity, although there are further capability-related factors including the need to:

- gain a deeper and more intimate cultural understanding and appreciation of local populations in likely areas of future operations, including religious sensitivities and practices (beyond that possible through cultural awareness training during force preparation)
- maintain, within Army, a religious advisory capacity to enhance international understanding during coalition operations, multinational exercises and other activities where diverse religions are represented in an international task force
- enhance the effectiveness of domestic disaster relief programs through consideration and understanding of religious customs, traditions and immediate faith-related needs in affected areas
- increase the potential candidate pool for enlistment in the Army from an under-represented demographic segment
- increase the attractiveness of Army as an employer and career option
This combination of factors provides the imperative for increasing Army’s religious diversity: it will improve operational capability, international engagement capacity, and social balance. A positive and likely second-order effect is that it will also improve Army’s national and international reputation as a diverse and inclusive organisation that more closely reflects the Australian society it represents and is able to adapt to a wide variety of religious and cultural scenarios.

An emerging priority for religious diversity

Unlike other areas of diversity currently being addressed by Army, there are very few strategies that focus on religious diversity. There may be several reasons for this, not the least of which could be the absence of a current political or social imperative. In the short term this is unlikely to change as religious advocacy groups in Australia tend not to pressure the government on issues such as proportional representation in the military, nor are there any pressing internal reasons to explore religious diversity.

This lack of political and internal pressure is unlikely to persevere for another decade, especially since the release of policy documents such as the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper and Australia’s Multicultural Policy strongly suggest the need for greater diversity in public institutions. As religious diversity increases within the wider Australian population and Army’s gender balance and representation of indigenous people improves, it is possible that other areas of demographic under-representation in Army will attract some attention. As such, internal and external pressure to increase the representation of religious groups should be anticipated.

Contributing to other pressures may be the practical realities of continued recruiting underachievement. This may draw attention to potential candidate pools that are not well represented in Army. For example, in 2011, over 12% of the recruiting demographic aged between 20 and 29 were affiliated with a non-Christian religion, yet this demographic contributed less than 2% of the total recruiting achievement. Since the proportion of people affiliated with non-Christian religions is forecast to increase over the next decade it follows that this demographic may provide a growing pool of potential candidates and should feature more deliberately in recruiting initiatives. Ultimately, the government is likely to demand strategies to increase religious diversity from Army should it not independently see the need given continued recruiting underachievement.
Current religious diversity in Australia and Army

Religious affiliation in Australia

National religious affiliation is reported in the National Census, the latest of which was conducted in 2011, the same year as the ADF Census. The Census, the findings of which are summarised in Table 1, indicated that, although the population remained dominated by Christian affiliations (61.1%), the proportion of those of no religious affiliation was also large and approached one-third of the population (31.7%). The representation of other religious groups, grouped as non-Christian, accounted for the remaining 7.2% of the total population.

Table 1. National and Army religious affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>National Census 2011</th>
<th>ADF(Army) Census 2011</th>
<th>Army PMKeyS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion total</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Orthodox</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian/Reformed</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Total</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha’ism</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritualism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-Christian</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian Total</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Religious affiliation in Army

Army’s religious affiliation was captured from two sources including the ADF Census and the human resource system, PMKeyS. Figures shown in Table 1 indicate that Army’s total religious affiliation comprised around 59% Christian and less than 2% non-Christian. Although the proportion of those indicating a Christian affiliation in Army was similar to the broader Australian population, non-Christian and non-religious affiliations varied considerably. The proportion of non-Christian affiliation was about six percentage points lower than the wider population, and non-religious Army personnel was around eight to ten points higher.

The relatively low level of non-Christian representation is a point of concern given that there are no obvious barriers to religious diversity in Army. Unlike gender representation, where the recruiting and retention of women has been constrained by cultural and career management barriers, and the recruiting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is constrained by selection disadvantage, there are no similar barriers to entry that apply uniquely to religious affiliation. Although this may oversimplify the experiences of those seeking to enter the Army, and further research may be required to identify any organisational barriers, it remains unclear why non-Christian religious representation is so low across the board.

Interestingly, this low representation of non-Christian religions is also present among other comparable nations. Figures from the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and the United States of America indicate similar levels of religious under-representation in their armies as shown in Table 2 (although the time period over which figures were obtained differs between countries and between Census and Army figures). It is possible that some of the underlying reasons may be common between nations and that these are reflected in Australia’s figures. For example, concerns about racism within the military or cultural reluctance towards military service, which are significant factors in the UK, may also be factors restricting proportional representation in Australia.
Table 2. National and Army religious affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Representation</th>
<th>Regular Army Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States of America</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>United Kingdom</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trends in religious affiliation**

**National trends and influences on Army**

Over the last few decades there has been a three-way interaction at the national level that has seen a decrease in Christian, and increases in non-religious and non-Christian affiliation. The proportion of Christians has decreased from 73% to 61.1%, those affiliated with no religion has increased from 25.1 to 31.7%, and non-Christian affiliation has increased from 2% to 7.2% since 1986.35 These trends, which can be expected to continue in the foreseeable future, will change the demographic characteristics of future recruits and will have a subsequent impact on the diversity of Army. Progressively, there will be fewer recruit candidates of Christian and more of no religious affiliation. There will also be an increase in potential non-Christian candidates; however, historical representation in Army, discussed shortly, suggests that Army’s proportion might not increase without intervention.

To some extent, the national trends have already been reflected in Army over the last decade, although the size and nature of the change differs. As Figure 1 indicates, in 2004 around 70% of Army personnel were affiliated with Christianity, a number which fell to around 57% in 2013, a decrease of more than one
percentage point per year and greater than the corresponding decrease in the wider Australian public (which was around half a percentage point per year). This decrease in Christian affiliation has been matched by an increase in personnel who are not affiliated with any religion, increasing from 29% to around 40%. This high rate of change has been influenced by two related demographic factors: the changing religious affiliation of young Australians in the target recruiting ages, and the high proportion of relatively young personnel in Army.

Although broadly reflected in Army’s Christian and non-religious affiliations, national trends have not been apparent in non-Christian affiliations. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of Army personnel with non-Christian affiliation has remained virtually unchanged over the decade despite increases in the proportion and numbers of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and others in the wider Australian population. If Army was recruiting effectively across a broad cross-section of society then, all things being equal, non-Christian affiliation in Army should have increased in line with national changes; however this has not occurred.

![Figure 1. Religious affiliation in Army 2004–2013](image)

**Data Source:** PMKeyS

**Figure 1. Religious affiliation in Army 2004–2013**

The representation of non-Christian affiliation has been so small that the percentages described in Figure 1 don’t adequately illustrate how little the situation has changed. The raw numbers paint an even bleaker picture of religious diversity in Army. For example, in January 2003 there were 101 personnel who indicated in PMKeyS that they were Buddhist; in January 2013, ten years later, there were 103.
Although there were 33 more Hindus and 22 more Muslims over the same period, their increase in proportional representation can only be measured in fractions of one percentage point which presents a stark contrast to their national increase. In total, in January 2013 there were only 340 Army personnel with a non-Christian affiliation of which the largest groups were Buddhist (103), Muslim (48) and Hindu (44).

This lack of non-Christian representation has several implications for Army. Significantly, it portrays Army as lacking the ability to relate to large community sectors on religious grounds; still worse, it points to the fact that Army does not even possess the numbers to reflect a capacity to change. For those members who are serving there are also implications arising from the lack of critical mass which leads to constraints in developing support networks, sharing lived experiences, or even practising their chosen faith in an inclusive Army environment. Their strength is simply too small to adequately contribute to any improvements to capability that religious diversity might otherwise offer.

Changes among ranks
Changes in the nation’s and Army’s religious affiliations have also been reflected in differences between ranks. There is clear evidence that junior personnel have considerably different religious characteristics to those of more senior personnel in both officer and other ranks. Over 55% of all private soldiers and 50% of officer cadets had no religious affiliation in January 2013. This compared with just 18% of warrant officers and 6% of generals (brigadier and above). Figure 2 illustrates an incremental increase in religious affiliation as the rank increases from private to warrant officer, and from officer cadet to general.
Although there was a noticeable difference in affiliation between the ranks, there was still very little difference in non-Christian affiliation. The proportion of personnel in each rank with a non-Christian affiliation ranged from 1.6% to 3.8% with no evident trend from junior to senior ranks. That the proportion had not increased in the junior ranks is noteworthy when compared to national figures for each age group. Figure 3 shows that the proportion of Australians with a non-Christian affiliation was higher in the younger age groups. This means that, not only is Army unrepresentative in a broad sense, the relative gap is actually increasing in the younger demographic.

It is unclear why there was no increase in non-Christian affiliation in junior ranks. Proportionately, the 2011 National Census showed that, in the key recruiting age demographics, 11% of 20 to 24 year olds and almost 14% of 25 to 29 year olds were affiliated with a non-Christian religion. Army’s proportion in the ranks associated with these ages was just 1.6% of officer cadets and 2.3% of privates. On first principles, if over 11% of 20 to 24-year-old Australians were non-Christian, a similar proportion of Army’s junior ranks should also have been non-Christian; however, Figure 2 shows that this is clearly not the case.

The broad implications of Army’s non-Christian representation have already been outlined; however, the divergence between junior ranks and young Australians is even more significant because it restricts Army’s ability to correct this deficiency. Army’s workforce approach of ab initio recruiting means that religious affiliations
that are currently under-represented in junior cohorts will forever remain that way. Even if Army were to increase the proportion of non-Christian affiliated personnel recruited from today, it would take well over a decade for these personnel to be represented both in sufficient numbers to establish a critical mass, and become sufficiently promoted to provide the advocacy necessary at the middle ranks.

Data Source: ABS

Figure 3. Religious affiliation in Australia by age group (2011 Census)

Future direction of trends in religious affiliation
The changes in Army’s religious affiliation over the last decade, combined with both the different affiliations between ranks and the trends in the national population, suggest that, in the coming decade, Christian affiliation will continue to decrease and the proportion of those with no affiliation will increase. As over 50% of officer cadets and 55% of privates have no religious affiliation, it is reasonable to expect that by 2040, when these personnel filter through to Army’s higher ranks, at least 50% of Army personnel will have no religious affiliation, including some of the most senior personnel. Religion and religious identity are therefore likely to be less important to a majority of Army personnel over the coming decades than has been the case in the past.

The future proportion of non-Christian affiliation is less clear. As the proportion of junior personnel with non-Christian affiliation is less than 2% there may be very little change in the medium term. Even if the proportion of non-Christian recruits increases to reflect the proportion in society then the change will be gradual over
many decades. However, since there is no impediment for Army (or the Australian Defence Force) to alter its recruiting strategy, it is unlikely that non-Christian affiliation will keep pace with changes in the wider Australian population without intervention, thus resulting in a widening gap. Nonetheless, if Army can address the under-representation of non-Christians then several future opportunities may be presented.

**Future opportunities**

An increase in non-Christian representation in the Australian population presents Army with several opportunities relating to achievement of recruiting targets and the subsequent benefits of a diverse workforce. At the last National Census there were around 370,000 adults in the key 21 to 29-year-old age group; therefore, there is likely to be an existing pool of potential candidates from which Army is yet to draw to contribute to achieving its recruiting targets. Army routinely falls short of its target for many employment categories and it seems intuitive that if there is a large section of the community that is not widely represented, then recruiting underachievement can be minimised simply through recruiting from this demographic.40

A certain critical mass of religious diversity will also enhance Army capability. The deployment of personnel familiar with the religious practices in the area of operations will assist communication, removal of cultural barriers, and other human factor aspects of overseas deployments. Such religious diversity will not only assist in improving international engagement and the ability to operate in combined operations and exercises, it will also assist in understanding an adversary and avoiding the possibility of antagonism and hostility resulting from religious insensitivity.41 Nationally, Army also stands to benefit significantly from an outward appearance of tolerance and inclusiveness that will contribute to its reputation as a socially balanced and responsible organisation.

Regardless of how the opportunities presented through religious diversity are viewed by Army, the current representation of non-Christian affiliated groups appears to be well below that which might be considered reasonable to capitalise on any opportunities. Even after accounting for a possibility that many religious groups may have an adverse view of military service, the current number of 340 non-Christian affiliated people is probably below a critical mass for representation, exacerbated by the geographic dispersion of Army. Based on national representation, around 2000 Army personnel (i.e. 7%) should be affiliated with a non-Christian religion (and even this might not reach a critical mass). However this raises the question of how Army should reflect society and whether it is appropriate or necessary for Army to have a proportion of non-Christian affiliated members that reflects the national level.42
Reflecting Australian society

Whether and how Army, or any service, should reflect society is a question that is not infrequently discussed. Detailed discussion is outside the scope of this article, but a broad outline of the central tenets of some selected literature may be useful. In short, there are two prevailing views on representation which have been described as either statistical (i.e. proportional) or ‘delegative’. ‘Delegative’ representation occurs ‘where members of groups are represented in the ranks of any profession by some of their members’ but not necessarily represented proportionately.

Typically, Army takes the former view — that it should reflect society in terms of its proportional representation. For practical reasons, proportional representation is not always achievable because of the differing propensity of some demographic groups to join the military. Any cultural reluctance to join may be based on a variety of factors such as the esteem in which military forces may be held or perceptions of racism; regardless, such attributes have the potential to restrict goals of proportional representation. Therefore, although proportional representation might be a simple, intuitive and attractive objective, more analysis concerning the practicalities of such objectives may be required.

The latter view, that an army can reflect the values of society without necessarily resembling it, could be appropriate when considering religious diversity. Dandeker and Mason argue that ‘if proportional representation proved to be unattainable … perhaps delegative representation would offer a more promising way forward.’ In other words, should there be no feasible likelihood of proportional representation being achieved in the short, medium or long term, perhaps a critical mass of representation would achieve the same diversity outcome. If this view is adopted then there may not always be a need for a recruiting quota system or targeted recruiting initiative. Instead, a more measured approach that would facilitate and allow the recruitment of a greater number of under-represented personnel could be implemented.

Although a solution to achieving the best diversity objective for the Australian Army is not presented here, the current numbers suggest that, not only is Army significantly under-represented in the proportional sense, there are also too few people with non-Christian affiliation to achieve delegative representation. In this regard, any medium-term objective of increasing representation to anything greater than current levels will require a significant net increase in the number of non-Christian personnel that, in all likelihood, could only result from some form
of deliberate recruiting and/or retention action. What the non-Christian diversity objective should be is open to further analysis but a figure higher than current levels of under 2%, but less than 7% could be considered reasonable.48

Conclusion

There are many advantages to be gained from increasing religious diversity in Army ranging from the strategic to those that are more practical in the conduct of everyday activities. A reasonable proportion of personnel from a diverse range of religions will allow an intimate appreciation of religion that can contribute to Army’s effectiveness on both domestic and international operations. Furthermore, it will improve Army’s national and international reputation as a diverse and inclusive organisation. Finally, strategies to increase diversity will provide an opportunity to reach into a potential candidate pool for the achievement of recruiting targets. In combination, these advantages are likely to improve Army’s operational capability, international engagement capacity and social balance.

Whether armies should reflect the demographic composition of society or simply represent the values of society without necessarily maintaining proportional representation, is a valid topic in itself. Currently, non-Christian affiliations are significantly under-represented and it can be argued that Army neither reflects nor represents the wider Australian community. Therefore, Army is unable to capitalise on the opportunities and benefits that religious diversity provides. Given the emerging emphasis on diversity in strategic guidance, the option not to address religious diversity may not exist for much longer and strategies to address this now require consideration. As a first step, Army must have a discussion about the level of representation needed to reflect the values of society. Having established this level, Army will be in a position to begin to address religious diversity thereby capitalising on the resulting opportunities and avoiding the political and social scrutiny that may otherwise result. ■
THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Hoglin graduated from RMC in 1994, having completed a Bachelor of Science (Honours) majoring in statistics. In 2004 he completed a Master of Science in Management through the United States Naval Postgraduate School and in 2012 a Master of Philosophy in Statistics through the University of New South Wales. He is currently the Staff Officer Grade 1 Workforce Analysis – Army and has been involved in workforce analysis since 2004.

ENDNOTES


2 There are no current strategies concerning religion in the ADF. The diversity area of the ADF’s website only briefly mentions religion and the link contains simply a guide to religious belief. See Department of Defence, Canberra, ‘Religion and Belief’ at: http://www.defence.gov.au/fr/rr-religion.htm (viewed 4 July 2013).

3 Photographs of deploying troops are dominated by young, white males with almost no evidence of the wearing of headdress and garments associated with some religions despite it being permitted in the dress manual: see Australian Army, Army Dress Manual, Army Headquarters, Canberra, 2013, Chapter 2, pp. 14-17. For example, a search using ‘parade’ on the website Australian Defence Image Library on 4 July 2013 shows no religion-specific items of dress and demonstrates the general demographic of Army personnel. See: http://images.defence.gov.au/Fotoweb/search.fwx

4 For more information on religious representation see CIA World Factbook at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook


9 Ibid., p. 43.

10 For a discussion on the use of cultural knowledge in operational planning see E. Bledsoe, The Use of Culture in Operational Planning, Masters Dissertation, United States Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2000. The benefits of increased military cultural

11 This has been described as ‘social legitimacy’ by V. Aziz, ‘Effecting Discrimination: Operational Effectiveness and Harassment in the British Armed Forces’, Armed Forces & Society, 34 (4), 2008, p. 729.

12 There are some dated policy documents such as Department of Defence, Defence Instructions (General) Personnel 26-2 Australian Defence Force Policy on Religious Practices of Australian Defence Force Members, Canberra, 2002; Department of Defence, Defence Instructions (General) Personnel 35-5 Defence Multicultural Policy, Canberra, 2002. There are also guidelines such as Department of Defence, Guide to Religion and Belief in the Australian Defence Force, Canberra, 2012. However, there is no strategy for proportional representation.

13 Although the Defence Diversity and Inclusion Statement released in March 2013 explicitly defines religion in its definition of diversity, there are currently no ethnic or religious diversity strategies in the ADF. The ADF’s Human Resource Metrics System, which has recently included a diversity reporting area, only provides detailed reports on women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, but aggregates the ‘Culturally and Linguistically Diverse’ due to an inability to provide more fidelity.


15 Although religion is not mentioned explicitly, in so far as religion is associated with multiculturalism the Australian government’s multicultural policy emphasises the importance of diversity. It is policies such as these that will direct Defence multicultural policies including the recruiting and retention of personnel. See Australian Government, The People of Australia, Australia’s Multicultural Policy.

16 Army routinely fails to achieve its recruiting target. See F. Pinch, ‘Diversity: Conditions for an Adaptive, Inclusive Military’ in F. Pinch, A. MacIntyre, P. Browne & A. Okros (eds), Challenge and Change in the Military: Gender and Diversity Issues, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, Kingston, 2006, pp. 171-192. Pinch notes that, in the Canadian Forces context, ‘there had to be a great deal of interpenetration and boundary permeability between the military and society … where the military had to rely on the human resource pool and the support of the public to sustain itself.’ (p. 173). Achievement of targets in Australia may reveal a similar reliance on a more diverse range of community sectors.

17 National data obtained via the ABS Survey TableBuilder available at: http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedsbs/censushome.nsf/home/tablebuilder Fields used were AGE5P – Age in Five Year Groups and RELP – religious affiliation. Table developed and last viewed on 27 June 2013. Defence data obtained from the PMKeyS Data Warehouse with crosstabs of age and religion.

18 Ibid.

19 The ABS defines ‘no religion’ as those indicating both ‘unspecified’ or ‘no religion’.


22 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cultural Diversity in Australia.

23 Roy Morgan Research, Report on 2011 Defence Census, Department of Defence, Melbourne, 2012, p. 212. Rounding error produces a total of 100.1%. Army-specific data provided by Ms Ruth Beach, Directorate of Strategic People Research.

24 Data extracted from PMKeyS on 13 Mar 2013, correct as at 1 Jan 2013.
Personnel Management Key Solutions, or PMKeyS, is the ADF’s human resource information system.

There has been a proliferation of terms relating to the spectrum of those who have no religion including anti-theist, atheist, agnostic, irreligious, ignostic and free-thinking among others. The sources of data on religious diversity, which include the National Census, ADF Census and Army human resource data, all included options for a non-religious/unspecified affiliation, also termed ‘no religion’. For comparison, Army figures for ‘no religion’ include atheists, agnostics, those who indicated ‘no religion’ and those who did not specify a religion.


Due to differences in census dates and military reporting the figures in Table 2 do not reflect the same year. Rounding error also applies.


Although there has been a decrease in total Christian affiliation, the trend is not consistent among Christian denominations. Catholic representation, which is still the largest single denomination in Army, has not changed significantly, decreasing from 28% in 2003 to 24% in 2013. In contrast, the representation of other Christian affiliations decreased from 42% in 2003 to 33% . It is difficult to examine this trend in more detail as there appears to have been a migration away from the Uniting Church, Presbyterian, Anglican and other denominations toward the more generic ‘other Protestant’ affiliation.
37 In the 2011 National Census, 39.6% of 20 to 29 year olds either had no religion or their religion was not stated.

38 Comparisons over the same time-frame are not possible given the census timings; however, between 1996 and 2011 the proportion of Buddhists increased from 1.1% to 2.5%, Hindus increased from 0.4% to 1.3% and Muslims from 1.1% to 2.2%.

39 Data was obtained via the ABS Survey TableBuilder available through the link http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/tablebuilder. Fields used were AGE5P – Age in Five Year Groups and RELP – religious affiliation. Table developed and last viewed on 27 June 2013.

40 The propensity of people of non-Christian affiliation to join the military may not be the same as others; nonetheless, recruiting opportunities may still exist.

41 Bledsoe, The Use of Culture in Operational Planning.

42 Given a national population of 1.55 million people with non-Christian affiliation, including 370,000 from the recruiting demographic of 20-29 year-olds, a strength of 320 would intuitively seem to be below what might be available from this population.


44 Dandeker & Mason, ‘Diversifying the Uniform?’, p. 488.


46 There are several examples of this in the United Kingdom where studies have found that Hindus and Muslims are reluctant to join the military, although some of this reluctance may have resulted from perceived racism. See Hussain, ‘The British Armed Forces and the Hindu Perspective’, pp. 197–212; Hussain, ‘British Pakistani Muslims’ Perceptions of the Armed Forces’, pp. 601–18. Representation is also discussed in Jung, ‘Can the Canadian Forces Reflect Canadian Society?’, pp. 27–36; Dandeker & Mason, ‘Diversifying the Uniform?’, p. 489.

47 Dandeker & Mason, ‘Diversifying the Uniform?’, p. 491.

48 I believe 5% is a reasonable and achievable objective subject to considerations such as propensity to join.
IDENTITY

Military Retirement: Reflections from Former Members of Special Operations Forces
Kira Harris, Dr Eyal Gringart and Dr Deirdre Drake

ABSTRACT

This article explores the impact of military identity and culture on the retirement and reintegration of members of Special Operations Forces (SF) into civilian life. The experience of retirement is explored through interviews with five former members of the SF. These interviews were analysed to identify the shared experience of retirement including the causes, context and consequences. The data indicated that personal attachment to the unit was heightened by key aspects of SF culture (camaraderie, intensity, elitism and distinctiveness from the mainstream community). After leaving the regiment, participants described the experience of grief and subsequently employed a variety of psychological approaches to managing this emotional response and adapting to civilian life. In general, these approaches sought to replicate the military culture in the civilian environment and avoid triggers that would excite or remind former SF soldiers of their past military identity. This study seeks to enhance understanding of military retirement from an SF perspective and recommends further research into the role of replication and avoidance in the retirement experience.
IDENTITY

Introduction

Military psychology argues that the unpredictable operational environment requires defence forces to emphasise conformity in behaviour and attitudes, as well as implement a system of beliefs to allow units to operate with optimum effectiveness and reduce the psychological impact of the battle environment.¹ The military unit represents an autonomous entity, deliberately structured to enhance survival and to reduce discontent on deployment and the negative psychological impact of the combat environment. A soldier’s identification with the military is enhanced through the cohesive nature of military units, which shapes the social identity of soldiers and fosters the internalisation of group norms through psychological processes.² The military’s collective identity promotes strong social bonds and an intensified identification with the organisation. These social bonds within the unit and in the military identity are reinforced both through organisational processes and the relationships between soldiers and their leaders.

The organisational processes that serve to strengthen the military identity are also those found in entitativity literature, depicting a social group as a coherent, unified and meaningful entity that influences information processing and social perceptions. The entitative principles which are instrumental in the military setting are proximity, similarity, common fate, and cohesiveness. Members of military units remain in close proximity to one another when training and on deployment. Conformity to military norms is a method of reducing social distance between soldiers by emphasising personal similarities in values, attitudes and behaviour.³ Similarity comprises the internal homogeneity and behavioural consistencies which form a collective identity and promote segregation between groups with differing dynamic characteristics.⁴ Similarity between soldiers can be observed in the wearing of the uniform and the use of military symbolism, separating soldiers from mainstream society and other military groups.⁵ Physical, emotional, cultural and social attributes are shared with a linguistic identity that further segregates military forces from the mainstream. Soldiers share a common fate; having a common group goal or facing a shared threat significantly influences group processes and effectiveness by enhancing intra-group solidarity and reducing the likelihood of internal factioning.⁶ Cohesiveness is observed through shared norms, mutual acceptance, soldiers’ attraction to the collective identity, and resistance to disruptive influences. Strengthening a unit’s cohesion can improve soldier performance and personal satisfaction. However, elevated cohesion can also pressure soldiers into conformity and group-think, as well as raising anxieties when structures change or soldiers leave. The strong discipline
that characterises the military also helps to develop unit cohesion through enforcing standards and norms. Other factors identified in literature that contribute to the cohesive military unit include esprit de corps (the spirit of camaraderie and devotion to a goal), the separate and distinctive military discipline systems and a doctrine that binds soldiers to a common purpose.

Soldier identification with the unit is not only influenced by the ideological and organisational factors of the military but also the relationships forged within the unit. A cohesive unit is characterised by trust between soldiers and those in command. Four principal tenets are generally recognised as essential to successful relational bonds. Competence provides an indicator of a fellow soldier's ability to perform his or her allocated tasks. Predictability ensures soldiers can rely on one another's response and gauge the reliability of others. Honesty amplifies the trust among soldiers, in particular the confidence that promises, once given, will be kept. Benevolence represents the likelihood that soldiers will voluntarily provide assistance to their mates.

From a social identity theory perspective, the combination of entitativity and intra-unit relationships reinforces identification with the military identity and culture. The soldiers’ personal attachment to the unit and to the military is reinforced by personal socio-psychological investment in the job and relationships. This attachment presents the military career and lifestyle as the preferred choice. However, the drawdown of military forces in the Middle East and the imposition of budget restrictions will have a major impact on soldier retention, and the successful reintegration of soldiers into civilian life must now become a prime consideration.

Previous studies have demonstrated the impact of the military career on personal adjustments to civilian life. These studies identified transition issues associated with the inability to disengage with the military identity, mental health issues, anxiety, grief, and the long-term effects of the combat role on reintegration into civilian life. The populations used in these studies varied in rank and operational involvement; however none focused primarily on SF soldiers.

The effectiveness of SF units is rooted in the comprehensive system of selection, training, infrastructure support, leadership, and organisational culture. Bartone et al. describe soldiers who are successful in SF selection as displaying higher levels of resilience, good health and elevated performance under a range of stressful conditions. They comment that these soldiers demonstrate a strong sense of commitment to life and work, are actively engaged in their environments, and exhibit high levels of belief in their capabilities. Bartone et al. also argue that
these soldiers are internally motivated and able to create their own sense of purpose. These points of distinction between SF and other operational soldiers may point to the need for differences in the exiting processes.

As such, this article aims to explore the personal experiences of soldiers retiring from the SF units which were central to their social identity. SF soldiers represent an under-researched population as their operations are classified and information regarding specific aspects of training and operations is not generally publicly accessible. Most available information comes from secondary sources such as media reports and memoirs. While these provide valuable insight into the nature of SF operations, there are also concerns over the accuracy and validity of information.15

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this research were recruited for the purposes of a PhD study exploring the experiences of disengagement from a variety of groups. Sampling was based on participants experiencing retirement from an SF unit. Methods of recruitment included the use of personal and professional networks and snowballing. Five former SF members were interviewed, representing three Australian soldiers from the Special Air Service Regiment and Commandos, one from the Israeli SF, and one who had served in both the Australian and British SF.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to facilitate broad-ranging dialogue exploring the participants’ perceptions of the causes, processes and experiences of retiring from their SF unit. The semi-structured interviews invited detailed descriptions from the participants which emphasised their personal experience of retirement. Participants were asked to provide background information concerning their military service including the duration of that service before describing in detail their experiences of leaving the military. The remaining interview was conducted in a conversational manner to allow the participants to expand on their experience while limiting researcher bias. All interviews were audio-recorded with identifying information removed from the transcripts. On average, interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour.
Data analysis

Data was analysed using a grounded theory methodology that allowed retirement to be understood through the participants’ personal experiences rather than imposing pre-existing theories onto the data. By emphasising the participants’ description of retirement, a substantive theory can be formed around the shared experiences including the causes, context and consequences. Interviews were compared for shared themes and coded to form an integrated and detailed set of variables and hypotheses concerning the conditions and processes of retirement. Throughout the research process memos were used for the comparison of participant experiences, to identify central themes in their experience of the retirement process and to enhance analytical rigour.

Findings

The aim of the study was to explore personal experiences of retiring from the SF. Core themes from the interviews included positive factors relating to personal attachment to units, threats to unit commitment, post-exit psychological responses of grief, avoidance, replication, and the rejection of the military discourse.

The interviews identified four distinct themes relating to personal attachment to the military identity: camaraderie, elitism and significance, distinction from mainstream society, and intensity. Participants described strong relationships with those within their unit, often describing them as family or ‘brothers’. A former Israeli SF soldier described the intensity of the relationships and the predictability of interactions, comparing the bond to love:

To try to be more exact, it’s even the most closest I can tell you about it is love. Why I say love, well because the understanding there is between two people sometimes, only by looking at each other. Only by seeing each other. You know, I can think now what my friend would do and immediately it gives me power. I see now what they going to do and I know what I would do. So this kind of thing, without knowing, what I expect from my friend, I know he will do. So this is why I say it’s like love. You are using another way of communicating. Another way of relationship that you can rely on, that you can trust on and in the middle of the night he is there and I am here, and I know that he is going to do that. I know it, because I know him, and that I know that he know me. Things like this start to happen with us, and only know when I talk to you about it, I never thought about it before, during these things. Its knowing, you know. You know someone love you, you know someone be there for you. So this is what is so sacred about it. Sacred. (SF4)
The bonds within the unit are reinforced through close proximity and the intensified interactions that occur during operations and training. SF groups are separated from the mainstream community and engage in activities that are only truly understood by those in the unit. This bonding provides SF soldiers with a sense of distinction from the community:

*The job is so far removed from anything that any normal person does, in the way, the actual requirements of the job and what we have to do and where we are sent is actually so different it can be classed as even being surreal in terms of the reality of the actually job. It’s very hard for most people to comprehend the demands that it puts on you mentally and physically because it is it can be, you know you are fighting a war, so you are fighting, you are in the unit in the most intense time in terms of this conflict that Australia has been involved in and that has been the last 12 years where Australia has been involved in this period and since then and prior to that I think the last time was the Vietnam war. (SF1)*

As this former Australian SF soldier explained, the job was regarded as ‘surreal’ compared to the career of the average civilian due to the violent nature of war, as well as the mental and physical demands imposed by such an environment. This distinction between civilian and SF tasks strengthened the identification of the SF soldier as separate from the mainstream community and quite often was accompanied by an emphasis on the intensity of the role:

*Just everything, way of life, work, everything you do, your lifestyle is revolved around being part of the unit, which the tempo is really high so everything you do is flat out. Time is always critical. (SF2)*

The combination of camaraderie, distinction and significance, and the intensity of operations contributed to the perception of elitism. This elitist view was derived principally from the significance of the unit and its operations:

*There is a sense of, I say job satisfaction but that doesn’t quite do it justice, there is a real sense of how important your job is I think, which is huge and just trying to fill that void is really tough. I guess it is sort of job satisfaction and I guess that feeling of how important it is what you are doing. Not in a patriotic way or a helping these people out, I don’t know it is hard to describe it, but filling that was what was the most difficult as there are very few jobs that give you that I think. (SF5)*
The participants described their commitment to the unit in various ways but emphasised the role of factors such as camaraderie and elitism when describing their personal attachment to their military role.

**Threats**

The participants’ desire to separate from the SF unit was triggered by events or circumstances that initiated the re-evaluation of their role in the military. Participants emphasised long-term physical injuries or illnesses and family commitments as the precursor to evaluating their commitment to the unit and military lifestyle. While the high intensity, physical nature and their satisfaction with the job were described as key motivating factors for maintaining employment, the inability to perform tasks due to injury and illness could lead to negative self-evaluation. Long-term illnesses and injuries prevented participants from achieving the desired level of intensity and physicality. The detrimental effect of their physical condition, coupled with their inability to maintain involvement in their desired team role, threatened the self-image of elitism:

> It was a definitely a shock to the system thinking that I was the fittest, fastest, strongest I’ve ever been and suddenly put on my knees ...
> Depressing, very depressing. Going from nothing can stop you, physically able to do anything to suddenly being told, or knowing that you can’t do even the most basic thing. (SF1)

One participant required five operations in a year and a half. This meant that he was unable to perform in the operational aspects of his role which led to psychological distancing from other soldiers in the regiment:

> I asked to be put in a job where I wasn’t involved in the operations stuff and I didn’t want to be around the people at work flat out busy because you just feel like you are missing out. (SF2)

This move into an administrative role did not fulfil the personal needs of the participant nor provide the same level of job satisfaction. The lack of physical competence and inability to perform was unexpected and threatened the participant’s self-concept as he was no longer able to achieve previously held standards.

In addition to physical competence, some participants described the conflict between military and family life, with the commitment to long periods away from home causing disillusionment:
It’s very restrictive if you had a family and things like that, so whilst it is was a great life and an awesome job to me it wasn’t really conducive to having a family. (SF1)

All participants emphasised that being away from home for long periods of time conflicted with their desire to establish or maintain the familial role:

I still loved the job but just was six, seven, eight months a year away from home and it was just pretty tough you know. (SF5)

For participant SF5 the time away was only viewed as a negative factor when discussed in terms of family commitments, otherwise he continued to regard his role in the military in positive terms: ‘I reckon I’ll be 60 and going I want to do it, yep one hundred per cent.’ While participants were quick to point out that their partners were supportive of their careers and understood the necessity for time away, changing personal priorities emphasised the conflict between the two salient social identities, military and family.

Post-Exit

Participants were provided with various levels of support in terms of medical assistance, skills transfer and certification, and paid leave in preparation for exiting the military. However, the socio-psychological significance of the military identity meant that retirement produced psychological unease:

It was just, it just felt very, just like something was missing a lot, like I didn’t have the, you know don’t worry there’s a honeymoon period where you know I’m on holidays, how good is this or its different but then reality sets in and you are like, you do start to miss it which is why I was so and have been at various stages, it seems to happen less and less now the longer I go, but very, very tempted to go back all the time, all the time. And even still now, especially, the thing that triggers it now, just really any time I see the guys on the news, especially if someone is hurt or killed over there, the last couple, two that have been killed over there were friends of mine, one in particular and when that happens you kind of, there is a sense of sense of guilt I guess, which is totally ridiculous I understand that but you kind of feel I don’t know, it’s just human nature I think but it comes with the job. There are sort of times when I think about it but earlier on it was kind of virtually daily, and you always kind of remember all the good parts, especially because the army was really the only thing I’ve ever done, you know serious work capacity, I really had nothing else to compare it to. (SF5)
This participant described the common reality observed in this study. Participants reported initial relief when leaving, or described the ‘honeymoon period’ of the initial weeks of leave, but then experienced episodes of grief. All participants described their experiences of grief post-exit, citing the loss of intense camaraderie, of purpose, and of guilt over fallen comrades.

Participants described their experiences of grief and missing the job as part of a process and employed psychological strategies to help cope with these emotions. They explained their efforts to reduce the psychological impact of leaving the military as a defence mechanism that manifested in two ways: by replicating the military environment and/or engaging in experiential avoidance (the attempt to change, alter or avoid private experiences, for example, staying away from interactions and information relating to the military). Both approaches were observed, with most participants displaying elements of both strategies to reduce the psychological impact of moving towards a civilian identity.

Some participants felt their career options were limited by their Army-based skill set and moved into the security and fitness industries which they considered most resembled their military environment. One participant described this as common within military retirees and emphasised the transfer of the military culture:

> I guess it is a support network. Sometimes it can be a bit double edged in that you’ve left the military, but not really sort of thing because you are still hanging about with ex military people.

> Are they still very military minded?

> Yeah very much so. The way they talk, the way their personalities are. Yeah, it’s very similar. (SF3)

This participant also described how the linguistic identity and behavioural norms of the military culture are transferred to a civilian career. While he recognised the psychological support implicit in maintaining the cultural identity, he also noted that those who maintain the military identity in civilian life ‘have left, but haven’t really left’.

Another participant described his efforts to replicate the activities and military lifestyle he enjoyed while in the regiment:

> One of the things that made working in the regiment good was that we came to work and we were allocated two hours a day to train in the morning. We did our training and we did whatever we did during the day whether it be shooting or fast driving, or parachuting or whatever and then
at the end of the day I would go back and train before I went home. And then I would ride home from there, so to me that was the perfect lifestyle and I wanted to emulate it. So the best way to do it was to try and set up the exactly the same thing. So we start[ed] a gym where we could rock up to work and train all day and then we started up a security consultancy where we did stuff we were very familiar with during the day and after the end of the day we would train again. And that was the day, so to me we are creating, I am trying to create that same lifestyle that we were so used to, and so enjoyed. And one of the big things about working there but outside the army this time and trying to surround ourselves with similar people who think the way these boys think. And they don’t necessarily have to be soldiers and 6ft 6 and 120kg guys they can be guys and girls now, but the common thing is that they are geared towards doing the best they can and being the best person they can and a lot of these guys that is what they do. So to me the gym is part of this vision. (SF1)

This participant not only tried to replicate the physical intensity and lifestyle of the regiment, but also tried to reproduce familiar relationships with like-minded people. Instead of attempting to reconcile the military identity with a civilian role, his personal attachment to the military was reinforced by his attempts to recreate the military experience in his social environment.

While some participants attempted to replicate the military culture, there was also a tendency to avoid information or interactions that aroused negative emotions. These emotions were prompted by the reminder of military involvement, or reigniting the desire to return to the military role. One participant who suffered permanent injuries from his military career commented that interaction with members of his regiment reminded him of his declining physical competencies:

Sometimes, depends on who it is. I sort of dread the guys in the regiment that come up, I don’t really want those guys up here, reminds you of where you were at before. I don’t know, and a lot of them are pretty messed up anyway. (SF2)

Another approach to dealing with the emotions of separation was to avoid information relating to the current military context. For those who still maintained a positive attachment to the military identity, the avoidance of media reports and literature helped minimise negative emotions with the reintegration into a civilian identity:

But it’s still, I now have a real tough time or I just avoid seeing things on the news, if there is an article in the paper about it I just don’t read it, I know that it will stir up those feelings and I just don’t want to have to deal with them
all the time. I used to be a bit of a military nerd, you know reading all the different magazines and books and all those now I just really, I haven’t read any army or military books in so long, just because I know it will just get me excited and I don’t need this so I’ll read other stuff and that will do. (SF5)

These deliberate attempts to control the environment and manage emotional responses reveal the significance of the military culture in the participants’ retirement experiences. Replicating the military culture in civilian life reinforced social identity by allowing the military identity to continue. Despite replicating part of the military culture, some participants also avoided military interaction and military information. This conscious avoidance protected the participants’ psychological wellbeing by increasing emotional stability. However, experiential avoidance suggested an unwillingness to confront thoughts and feelings, which has been shown to contribute to future psychopathology, including post-traumatic stress disorder.17 The combination of both replication and avoidance indicates that the participant is unable to psychologically detach from the military culture.

Rejecting the narrative

Government political agendas provide the basis for the military’s existence and legitimise the behaviour and actions of soldiers that would otherwise be considered immoral.18 However, two of the five participants described a cognitive shift away from the political objectives of the government which determined their military operations and expressed disillusionment with the resultant operational goals:

In that time, when you are young, you believe more in everything. You believe in the government, you believe in the goals which today I totally, it’s totally different. Today I don’t believe so much. (SF4)

I think as you get on a bit you start to question things more than when you are young and naive. Like Timor I thought it was awesome. We go there [to] help people and rescue the refugees and stuff. And later you find out it was all about gas and oil, you know that was the real reason, as a country they were interested in Timor. You go that was pretty average, but I mean we still help people so that’s good. Afghanistan is not really, well you don’t go around helping too many people over there. (SF2)

The rejection of the political narrative that previously supported personal involvement in the regiment’s operations can have implications for the psychological integrity of the former SF soldier. For one participant, the disassociation with military goals and the methods used led to regret over his involvement.
While he acknowledged positive aspects of the job relating to camaraderie and lifestyle, the participant’s rejection of the political ideology led to his questioning the compatibility of his personal values with the military narrative:

*I like helping people so, if I went back in time I would have joined the Firies [fire brigade] because that is more about helping people. I’m not kind of interested in the whole gung-ho crap and anyone that is probably shouldn’t be in that role anyway because it is not about that, it’s about just getting the job done and quite often you see people that have watched too many movies and they get carried away, they won’t even get in the army, they definitely almost wouldn’t get into Special Forces because they don’t want that. For me I’d rather go out and save people and rescue people rather than go out and kill people for example.* (SF2)

This rejection of the military narrative demonstrates a complete psychological disengagement from the military identity, as opposed to the physical disengagement which sees soldiers move on from military careers but maintain an attachment to the ideological aspects.

**Discussion**

In Australia, the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan and the imposition of government budget cuts are likely to have implications for the retention of returning SF soldiers. As such, the defence environment can only benefit from enhancing its understanding of the military-civilian identity of former soldiers, particularly those in the SF who are long-term career soldiers and who comprise an understudied population. While these experiences are commonly expressed anecdotally by SF soldiers and other military combat personnel, this study explores SF soldier retirement from a socio-psychological perspective.

Two methods of adjustment were adopted by participants after retiring from the SF in an attempt to reduce the psychological impact — experiential avoidance and replication. Experiential avoidance is an attempt to prevent negative emotional arousal and aims to promote emotional stability. However, experiential avoidance can cause psychological distress and affect quality of life as well as contributing to depression, anxiety and substance abuse. While experiential avoidance is associated with psychopathology, the replication of military culture may serve as a buffer against the negative aspects of retirement. Replication requires only small changes to personal behaviour while core aspects of the organisation, culture and
identity are maintained. Nicholson argues that the peripheral changes in these environments will, over time, promote personal development which can ease reintegration into civilian life.20 There is much to gain from further research exploring the role of replicating military culture and avoidance as coping strategies, as well as the impact of these on the psychological transition after retirement.

The rejection of the military narrative by two participants suggests that former soldiers engage in a post-exit evaluation of the ideological premises which supported their military involvement. The rejection of the military narrative can have implications for the post-military identity and self-esteem, particularly if guilt or shame over military involvement is experienced.

While this study is limited by the small sample size which restricts the general applicability of the findings, it provides a valuable insight into the experiences of former SF soldiers exiting the military. While precautions were taken to reduce researcher bias and obtain accurate information, the information received from the participant is influenced by perceptions and the willingness to disclose personal details:

I find that with a lot of ex military people, they are not that type of people who open up, sort of thing. Quite stubborn in their emotions, kind of that culture as well. A lot of military people don’t like revealing too much of themselves sort of thing. Maybe it’s pride, or stubbornness or whatever. But I reckon you’d find that with a lot of military people. I think a lot of them are quite humble as well. Kind of the attitude of, we just got on with it, sort of thing. (SF3)

The interpretation of events and experiences is also subjective and influenced by cognitive processes designed to protect the concept of self. While this limits the use of qualitative methodologies and must be taken into account in the analytical process, it does not discredit the value of the research which explores the personal interpretation of a ‘lived experience’.21
Conclusion

In this study, the majority of former SF soldiers maintained a positive attachment to military culture and their involvement in the regiment. The desire to replicate the military culture demonstrated the personal significance of the military role to their identity and also highlighted their difficulties in adjusting to the civilian environment. The avoidance of reminders indicated a defence mechanism that was not used to negate the military experience but to protect the self from preoccupation with the past career or negative self-evaluation.

This article seeks to highlight the experiences of retiring SF soldiers and facilitate further discussion of the transition from military to civilian life and the impact of the continuing military culture in the civilian sphere. While further research is needed, these participants’ experience of retirement can provide valuable information to enhance the understanding of those working in critical support areas such as veterans’ affairs.
THE AUTHORS

Kira Jade Harris is a PhD student and teacher at Edith Cowan University specialising in psychology and terrorism. This article draws on the research from her PhD thesis exploring the disengagement experience from various ideological social groups including Special Forces, motorcycle clubs, political and religious fundamental groups and cults.

Dr Eyal Gringart is a Senior Lecturer and the Deputy Head of the Social Justice Research Centre (SJRC) at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. He is a life member of the Oxford Round Table and his main areas of interest are human rights, social psychology, and health psychology. His research areas include modifying stereotype-based behaviours, the psychology of terrorism, ageing, and the body and mind connection.

Dr Deirdre Drake is a Senior Lecturer at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. She is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and her research interests include adult development and ageing, psychology and law, adult development and transitions, and public opinions on the justice system.

ENDNOTES


18 Soeters et al., ‘Military culture’ in Caforio (ed.), Handbook of the sociology of the military.


Hazing in the ADF: A Culture of Denial?

Dr Richard Evans

ABSTRACT

Hazing, or bastardisation, has been the subject of repeated scandal in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for at least 40 years. At its most serious, as documented in the 2011 Piper Report, hazing is clearly criminal behaviour. This article uses the techniques of criminology to explore hazing as a group social practice in the ADF, and considers whether the response of the ADF to hazing can be characterised as collective denial.
It is important to treat hazing patients as victims of violent crime.

Dr Michelle Finkel
Department of Emergency Medicine
Massachusetts General Hospital, 2002

Introduction: ‘A personal dignity’

Reflecting on the remarkable fighting qualities of the men he had commanded during the First World War, General Sir John Monash wrote:

The democratic institutions under which he was reared, the advanced system of education by which he was trained — teaching him to think for himself and to apply what he had been taught to practical ends [meant that] … mentally the Australian soldier was well endowed. In him there was a curious blend of capacity for independent judgement with a readiness to submit to self-effacement in a common cause. He had a personal dignity all his own … Psychologically, he was easy to lead but difficult to drive.

Monash was neatly defining the Anzac legend, a set of characteristics which are central to the Australian national identity, a proud military heritage which is commemorated each year on Anzac Day.

There is a darker side to Australian military culture, however. In 2012, ‘The Report of the review of allegations of sexual and other abuse in Defence: Facing the problems of the past’ was released. Often referred to as ‘the Piper Report’ (after the multinational law firm DLA Piper which prepared it), the document assesses claims of abuse from nearly 850 people, finding almost all of them credible:

[A]llegations received relate to sodomy, rape, and incidents of sexual assault at ADFA with other cadets looking through the window and other incidents of filming consensual sex and taking photographs. Young sailors who were sodomised were threatened with further like treatment if the incident was reported. Young women had their breasts grabbed. Young men were given ‘regimental’ showers which comprised being scrubbed with a wire brush and often thereafter ‘nuggeted’ which involved having boot polish rubbed on their genitals and anus.
The report documents examples of cruelty and humiliation directed towards new recruits in every branch of the ADF, including its training institutions, in every decade from the 1950s. In some sectors during some periods it was endemic. Yet, until recently, the military community’s response to allegations of hazing has usually been one of denial.

This article will apply techniques from the discipline of criminology to explore how the ADF and the wider Defence community have collectively responded to the exposure of hazing in the ADF.

‘Part of the ordinary routine to toughen you up’: hazing

While the Piper Report considers many forms of abuse in a wide range of contexts, this article will concentrate on ‘hazing’, also referred to as ‘bastardisation’. The term ‘hazing’ will be used, except in direct quotations, as ‘hazing’ is more widely understood than ‘bastardisation’, which has other meanings and is used in this sense only in Australia.

Hazing refers to the practice of established members of a group engaging in systematic and often ritualised abuse of new entrants to that group. The particular forms of abuse vary. Common forms include physical beating, burning or branding, sexual assault, the forced consumption of foul or toxic substances, forced over-exercise and confinement in small spaces. Dangerous over-consumption of alcohol is often associated with all these practices. Hazing has occurred across cultures and institutions, including universities, sports teams, criminal gangs, and the armed forces.

Hazing may be primarily psychological, but often involves the infliction of physical pain and the deliberate humiliation of the newcomer. While unusual, it is not unknown for hazing to cause serious injury or even death. More commonly it causes emotional harm to its victims, some of whom develop mental health and/or drugs and alcohol problems. Some victims leave the organisation. Others stay, and perhaps become abusers themselves. Some are so traumatised that they take their own lives.

Hazing is a resilient cultural practice in military organisations. Credible studies have documented hazing in the armed forces of the United States, Canada, South Korea, Russia, the Philippines, Brazil and Norway. There is no reason to think that the ADF would be immune from such practices.
The Piper Report notes that:

*The majority of complaints received by the Review from young people have involved bastardisation of various kinds. This has ranged from making life temporarily uncomfortable to savage and repeated assaults that, if they occurred in the civilian population, could properly be regarded as criminal offences.*

The report assessed hundreds of specific allegations, some with accompanying photographic evidence, of cruel and humiliating hazing rituals. One man who had personally experienced hazing wrote to the inquiry: ‘At RMC Duntroon in 1983 the physical and mental abuse I (and others of my year) experienced was shocking by any measure. I am tormented by it still to this day.’ He described a photograph of one ritual:

*Here shown is a cadet being held down by his hands and feet by several other cadets. His groin has been forcefully smothered with Metsal (a liniment ointment similar to Dencorub, it causes excruciating burning pain when applied to genitals). The cadet subject of the activity is being bucketed with a concoction comprising human excrement and a multitude of other things (coffee, vegemite, sour milk, and the like). This is but just one of the types of conditioning activities cadets were subjected to on a daily basis.*

The Piper Report is an important document in the history of the ADF because it provides credible and authoritative confirmation of the reality and extent of hazing. However, few of its findings are unprecedented. Credible allegations of hazing in the ADF recur, year after year. A cursory search of the NewsBank media database tells the story of the recent past: ‘Brutality inquiry extends deadline - Defence swamped with complaints’; “Defence suicides inquiry 'overdue’”, ‘Suicide and bastardisation in the defence force’; ‘Probe casts doubt on defence force behaviour – again’; ‘Inquiry slams military justice of Defence Forces’; ‘Defence abuse figures soar’; ‘Drunken antics at Defence event’; ‘Claims Defence hid sex assaults’; ‘Defence sex scandal - Cadet secretly filmed liaison with colleague’. This is by no means a complete list, and if the database had access to older records, the litany would extend back at least to the 1960s.

A 1970 inquiry conducted by Justice R.W. Fox found that hazing, with varying degrees of intensity, had occurred at the Royal Military College (RMC), Duntroon, from its creation in 1912. The Fox Report, it is clear from subsequent inquiries, did not succeed in changing the culture at RMC Duntroon. Hazing has also
occurred at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) and many other ADF training institutions.\textsuperscript{29} Formal inquiries have found credible evidence of hazing and similar abuse in particular sectors of the ADF in 1971,\textsuperscript{30} 1994,\textsuperscript{31} 1996,\textsuperscript{32} 1998,\textsuperscript{33} 2000,\textsuperscript{34} 2001,\textsuperscript{35} 2002,\textsuperscript{36} 2005,\textsuperscript{37} 2006,\textsuperscript{38} 2008,\textsuperscript{39} and 2009.\textsuperscript{40} Such relentless exposure of similar patterns of abuse begs the question: why does little seem to change?\textsuperscript{41}

‘Reporting of bastardisation was useless’: cultures of denial

The idea that someone is ‘in denial’ has become a cliché of pop psychology and self-help books. The principle is that humans often conceal from others and from themselves ugly truths, such as addiction. The lie becomes part of the harmful condition, trapping the person in a cycle of denial and abuse.\textsuperscript{41} However, denial is a social as well as a personal phenomenon. It is rare that one person belonging to a generally healthy and supportive community is in denial. Families, groups, large organisations and even whole societies can be in denial. When denial is the collective ‘reality’, it becomes extremely hard for an individual to challenge. A person with a drinking problem, for example, has a bleak future if he or she belongs to a family or workplace in which excessive drinking is the culturally sanctioned norm.\textsuperscript{42}

This tendency for established social systems, even those which are dysfunctional, to protect themselves from change, is referred to as homeostasis. Referring to homeostasis in families, Douglas Scaturo writes:

\textit{In its adaptive form, its function is to preserve the family from destructive influences and alterations and to prevent disintegration by keeping a dynamic balance within the family’s system. In its maladaptive form, it rigidly prevents the family from making the necessary adaptations to normative changes that generally occur and need to occur across the family’s life cycle.}\textsuperscript{43}

Though they are larger and more complex in their operations, social systems such as businesses, schools, churches and government agencies demonstrate similar patterns.\textsuperscript{44} Institutional cultures will tend to protect themselves from change. Essential to homeostasis in dysfunctional systems is collective denial, usually manifested in a code of silence. This may be literal silence — certain things are just never spoken about — or silence through evasion, rationalisation and language games. The silence even extends to victims.\textsuperscript{45} It is no coincidence that institutions with a culture of silence, such as the Catholic church, police services and the armed forces, tend to be both resistant to change and at high risk of abusive practices.\textsuperscript{46}
The exact extent of hazing in the ADF is not known, partly because with rare exceptions the ADF culture has discouraged victims from reporting the abuse. According to the Piper Report, ‘The consistent story has been that reporting of bastardisation was useless in times past. Either the complainant was told to get used to it and/or it resulted in further mistreatment.’

In the past, hazing has been talked around and over, minimised and trivialised. ‘LegoLingo’, a glossary of ADFA cadet jargon first published in 1987, defines ‘bastardisation’ thus: ‘The boys having fun. Nothing whatsoever as harrowing as the Press makes out. Simply Character Building.’ The treatment of the Duntroon cadet described above was, by any objective assessment, a criminal assault. Had it been inflicted on a prisoner of war, it would probably be classified as torture. But such terms were never used by perpetrators, or indeed by victims. The person who supplied the photographs to the Piper Report explained:

> It wasn’t considered to be abuse by those involved, it was just ‘part and parcel’ of the ordinary routine to toughen you up, and to sort out whether a cadet was of the ‘right stuff’ for arduous Army service.

The Piper Report, and the many other reports preceding it, document hundreds of incidents of assault against ADF members, ranging in seriousness to the aggravated rape of a minor. While it is difficult to determine the number of ADF personnel disciplined for such assaults, the Piper Report found that ‘many people who have carried out abuse — including sexual and other assault — in the ADF have not been identified, or — if identified — have not had any significant action taken in relation to them.’

At times what might be termed ‘statistical denial’ is used to minimise the significance of the Piper Report. It is pointed out that the ADF is a very large organisation with tens of thousands of members, so multiplying that by the 60 years of the Piper Report’s scope, the number of allegations of serious abuse is comparatively small. Such arguments ignore well-known truths: that all forms of abuse are under-reported in the community; that under-reporting is particularly pronounced in relation to assaults which are degrading and/or of a sexual nature; that this trend is even more evident in environments with a strong culture of non-reporting, and greater still among male victims.

That ADF members have failed to report abuse, in part because they have had no faith that the response would be effective, and that they had a justified fear of retribution, is well documented. An investigator into misconduct at ADFA in 1998 noted that: ‘even though there was clear evidence that offences had
occurred and notwithstanding the support which the Review Team may have been able to offer, cadets were reluctant to speak out and were not prepared to submit formal complaints. Fear of retribution in the form of ostracism or victimisation or worse is a very real concern for cadets.\textsuperscript{56} Far from being a secret, the hostility and contempt held for cadets who reported misconduct by their fellows was traditionally a matter of pride. In ADFA slang, one pejorative term, ‘jacking’, could mean ‘putting yourself ahead of the team’, ‘not showing the required effort’, or ‘informing on fellow cadets’.\textsuperscript{57} To ‘cross the road’ (take a complaint about a fellow student to ADFA staff) was similarly despised.\textsuperscript{58}

Stanley Cohen, perhaps the world’s leading thinker on institutional denial, describes three main ways in which organisations attempt to deny reality. If an institution is accused of serious wrongdoing, for example the use of torture, those in authority will respond with: \textbf{outright denial} (‘torture does not happen’); \textbf{interpretive denial}, in which raw facts are conceded but the \textit{meaning} is disputed, often by renaming (‘we do that — but that isn’t torture’); and \textbf{justification}: what has happened is necessary, justified by some higher purpose (‘torture is an unpleasant necessity — that’s war’).\textsuperscript{59} The controversy about the use of torture by the United States military and intelligence services has followed this pattern.\textsuperscript{60}

Several examples of the first two responses are cited above; for a great many more, see the Piper Report. What of Cohen’s third form of denial, justification? Is hazing, for all its terrible costs, somehow necessary to a military organisation?

\textbf{Does hazing serve a purpose?}

There has been surprisingly little research into hazing and its social function.\textsuperscript{61} Most explanations fall within three main themes:

1. hazing generates group solidarity
2. hazing is an expression of dominance
3. hazing allows for the selection of committed group members\textsuperscript{62}

Aldo Cimono argues that hazing is related to group renewal. Any group that wishes to continue to exist must recruit and absorb new members. However, ‘Newcomers … may take the benefits associated with being a coalition member without paying the costs of maintaining these benefits in the future.’\textsuperscript{63} According to this view, hazing is a means of raising the costs of entry to a group. It is a test of commitment and character. Are the newcomers really suitable, indeed worthy, to belong to the group? Justice Fox found that hazing at Duntroon was justified as:
... a means of absorbing the new entry ... and giving the incoming classes a corporate sense of being ... the application of considerable pressure to a new cadet is one way of ensuring that he is sufficiently robust to withstand pressure that subsequently may be applied during his military career.\textsuperscript{64}

These beliefs, which Fox explicitly rejected, remain widespread. They are however, difficult to document, as they tend to be expressed informally, in personal conversations or forums such as talkback radio and the internet.\textsuperscript{65} Hazing is justified on the basis that it creates group solidarity, weeds out those who are not suitable ADF members and ‘toughens up’ those who are.\textsuperscript{66} In 2004, during a Senate inquiry into the military justice system, the Executive Director of the Australian Defence Association, Neil James, was asked by a journalist whether military discipline was ‘out of step with social expectations’. The reason for the question was the alleged failure of the ADF to adequately investigate the suicide of a junior soldier who had been racially vilified. James responded: ‘Do you want the country defended by an armed forces or a rabble?’\textsuperscript{67}

Whether hazing is genuinely necessary to an effective armed forces is impossible to definitively answer without a detailed comparative study. However it can be easily demonstrated that there have been military organisations with high levels of hazing which, when put to the test, have become ‘a rabble’. One well-documented example is the armed forces of the Russian Federation in the 1990s, which were infamous for brutal hazing or dedovshchina.\textsuperscript{68} Second and third year recruits would cruelly torment ‘the weak, the timid, the fat, the mentally troubled, the effeminate’.\textsuperscript{69} Such practices may not have been a causal factor in the humiliation of Russia’s military in the First Chechnya War, but they were certainly no asset. Similarly, ill-discipline was widespread and in some times and places endemic among the United States armed forces during the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{70} There were many causes of this problem, but lack of hazing during training cannot be blamed.\textsuperscript{71}

The idea that hazing eliminates unsuitable ADF members is untenable. The ADF has formal selection criteria, and these should go a long way towards ensuring that those embarking on a military career are suited to it. If the criteria are flawed, or not properly applied, that is a matter for command to address. It defies logic as well as justice that informal and illegal abuse, inflicted on new cadets by slightly older but still immature and inexperienced cadets, will prove to be a superior selection process.
That hazing has a long tradition in the ADF is at times used to justify its continuation. But the fact of a practice having endured a long time does not necessarily make it either necessary or beneficial. Cohen draws the comparison between institutional denial in organisations such as the armed forces and the ‘vital lies’ characteristic of abusive families, in which everyone including the victims of abuse collude in preserving a facade of normality. Damaging and dysfunctional behaviours, from child abuse in families to corruption in police forces, are often very resilient within groups, with even direct victims of such offences ‘graduating’ to become offenders themselves.

Even accepting, for the purpose of argument, that there may be some benefit to the ADF from hazing, that benefit would have to be enormous to justify the waste of human potential, the damage to the organisation’s reputation and the very significant financial costs that hazing brings. And even that assessment ignores what the Piper Report documents so starkly: the vast costs in terms of shattered lives, ruined careers, mental health problems and needless human misery which hazing has inflicted on Australian men and women.

Scandal and reform
Lawrence Sherman, who has studied scandal and reform in police agencies, argues that a major public scandal about a particular police force usually occurs when malpractice has been well entrenched for a long period. Organisational dysfunction generates periodic ‘little scandals’, accusations of wrongdoing which have limited impact and which can be successfully stonewalled. If such scandals can be survived with little adverse consequence, this can actually encourage perpetrators to believe themselves untouchable. It is only when a number of factors coincide — particularly a large number of credible allegations and support for an inquiry by respected public figures — that the ‘little scandals’ explode into a major scandal and exposure of wrongdoing by a public inquiry. This exposure, and the damage to the organisation’s reputation, create the opportunity — not always taken — for reform.

Sherman’s model applies to the Queensland Police Service in the 1980s and the New South Wales Police Force in the 1990s. In both cases, widely rumoured corruption and misconduct had successfully been denied or deflected for decades. In both cases, unusually credible allegations supported by respected public figures surfaced when there was a window of political opportunity for an inquiry. In both cases, the reality exposed by the inquiry proved far worse than the organisation’s critics had alleged.
The ADF has endured decades of little scandals, and some bigger ones, in relation to hazing. Unless there is genuine and sustained cultural change in the ADF, hazing will continue, and the scandals will continue. This is a dreadful prospect. Scandal is a blunt instrument. It punishes the innocent as well as the guilty, because it punishes an entire organisation. As Sherman puts it, ‘Scandal is a public act of labeling … a ceremony of status degradation’.\(^{77}\) It is, indeed, almost the only way society can punish an organisation.

Scandal results from a widespread sense among the public that the organisation has breached the important social trust placed on it, that its real, informal goals have deviated from its stated, legitimate goals.\(^{78}\) In policing, corrupt officers have a stated goal of preventing crime, but a real goal of committing crime.

**What of the ADF. What does it exist for?**

The men who General Monash was so proud to command on the Western Front in 1918 enlisted for many and varied reasons, but one element is neatly expressed by a Norman Lindsay recruiting poster. The scene is an Australian farm which has been captured by German soldiers, presumably after an invasion. A young man watches in horror as his father is savagely beaten. In the background a young woman is seized by leering Germans, her fate obvious. The poster demands: ‘Will you fight now, or wait for THIS?\(^ {79}\) Gauche to modern eyes, the poster encapsulates why Australia has a military service. The ADF exists to use force, perhaps far away, in order to preserve the safety of the Australian people. In particular, the ADF exists to protect Australians from brutality and lawless violence.
Conclusion

The Piper Report documents hazing abuse, including degrading physical assault and crimes such as rape. Perpetrators appear rarely to have been punished.\textsuperscript{80} By contrast, victims have endured further trauma for the mere fact of having been victims.\textsuperscript{81} In visiting lawless violence on Australians — moreover on Australians who are comrades in arms — the members of the ADF who engage in hazing betray the core reason for the existence of their organisation.

The experience of confronting misconduct in police forces offers hope that this can change. The experience of reform in Australian policing shows that cultural change is possible. It is slow and there are frustrating setbacks. Vested interests will fight back, and opportunist or timid political leaders will at times reverse or stall reform.\textsuperscript{82} But it can be done.

One essential element is overcoming the culture of denial. One of the tragedies of collective denial, as Stanley Cohen observes, is that it prevents the group from learning. Denial dooms us to repetition: ‘We keep on doing the same stupid, destructive things.’\textsuperscript{83} The painful process of facing, openly and honestly, the reality of abuses such as hazing must continue if Australia’s military community is to successfully meet the challenges of the future. The Piper Report represents a brave and admirable step in this direction.
THE AUTHOR

Dr Richard Evans is a Lecturer in Criminology at Deakin University, Geelong.

ENDNOTES

3 Richard Evans, Disasters that Changed Australia, Victory, Melbourne, 2009, Ch. 2 ‘Just slaughter’.
4 Gary Rumble, Melanie McKean, D.C. Pearce, Department of Defence and DLA Piper, ‘Report of the Review of Allegations of Sexual and Other Abuse in Defence Facing the Problems of the Past, Vol. 1, General Findings and Recommendations,’ Department of Defence, Canberra, 2011 (the report was publicly released early in 2012, and is sometimes given that date. Henceforth ‘Piper Report’).
5 Ibid., p. 73.
6 See, for example, Piper Report, p. 58.
10 Finkel, ‘Traumatic injuries caused by hazing practices’.
12 Finkel, ‘Traumatic injuries caused by hazing practices’.
15 Piper Report, p. 73.
16 Ibid., p. 76.
17 NewsBank (http://infoweb.newsbank.com) contains ‘Complete full-text content of more than 100 local, regional, national & international newspapers. Covers community events, schools, politics, government policies, cultural activities, local companies, state industries, and people in the community’. The search which retrieved the articles cited below was conducted on Australian newspapers, with the search terms ‘military’, ‘ADF’, ‘defence’, ‘bastardisation’, bastardization’ and ‘hazing’. The database’s records for most news sources go back to 2000.

19 Trudy Harris, The Australian, 30 October 2003.
23 Jason Koutsoukis, The Sunday Age, 2 April 2006.
26 Ian McPhedran, The Advertiser (Adelaide), 6 April 2011.
27 See, for example: The Bulletin (Sydney), 6 June 1964; The Australian Women’s Weekly, 5 November 1969.
28 Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Military College (Chairman R.W. Fox), Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Military College, Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Military College, Canberra, 1970 (henceforth, ‘Fox Report’).
29 These include HMAS Cerberus and HMAS Success (Piper Report, pp. 71, 97), HMAS Leeuwin (p. 80), Royal Australian Naval College, Jervis Bay (p. 88), Recruit Training Centre, Kapooka (p. 88), and the School of Infantry, Singleton (p. 89).
32 Clare Burton, Women in the Australian defence Force-two studies, Director Publishing and Visual Communications, Defence Centre, Canberra, 1996 (included consideration of sexual harassment and other abuse in training institutions).
36 Senate Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Rough justice? An Investigation into allegations of brutality in the army’s parachute battalion, Parliament of Australia, 2002 (many of the victims were recruits under training).
37 Senate Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *The Effectiveness of Australia’s Military Justice System*, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, Canberra, 2005 (one focus of the inquiry was the failure to properly investigate suicides by trainees who had possibly been subjected to hazing abuse).

38 A.M. Whiddett and B.L. Adams, *Report of an Audit of the Australian Defence Force Investigative Capacity*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2006 (found that investigative capacity was seriously inadequate, and that this was a factor in the non-reporting of abuse).

39 Senate Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, ‘Report on Reforms to Australia’s Military Justice System’, 2008 [this report included the assessment of reasons for under-reporting of hazing practices, including ‘elements within the ADF culture that tolerate bullying and harassment and other forms of victimisation of those who are perceived to be weak or who report wrongdoing’ (s 4.32).]


45 Finkel, ‘Traumatic injuries caused by hazing practices’.


47 Piper Report, p. 73.


49 See, for example, Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), S31, c1-3. Every Australian jurisdiction has similar definitions of assault.


52 Ibid. pp. 71–73 for examples.

53 Ibid., p. 121.


56 Piper Report, p. 110.

57 Ibid., p. 209.

58 Ibid., p. 110.


61 Østvik and Rudmin, ‘Bullying and hazing among Norwegian army soldiers’.


63 Ibid., p. 246.


66 Kane McKay, ‘Where’s Help When We Need It?’, The Advertiser (Adelaide), 13 July 2013, p. 52.


68 Herspring, ‘Undermining combat readiness in the Russian military’.


70 For the most extreme example, see W.R. Peers et al., The My Lai Massacre and its cover-up: beyond the reach of law?, Free Press, New York, 1976.


72 Piper Report, p. xxix.

73 Cohen, States of Denial, pp. 6, 10, 51.

74 Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (Northern Territory), Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, Board of Inquiry, Darwin, 2007.


77 Sherman, Scandal and Reform, p. 64.


79 Norman Lindsay and W. E. Smith Ltd, Will you fight now or wait for this, Commonwealth of Australia, 1918. The poster can be viewed online at: http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an14166011.

80 Piper Report, p. 51. This section of the Report is titled: ‘Defence has not been able to provide records or other information to indicate that all or even many of the perpetrators of specific abuses and/or perpetrators of specific mismanagement of allegations of abuse covered by previous Reports were called to account.’

81 Ibid., p. xxxiii.


OPERATIONAL CULTURE

The Myths of Cultural Awareness: Culture Does Not Eat Strategy for Breakfast

Captain David M. Bergman, Swedish Armed Forces

ABSTRACT

Since military operations in international settings often place a greater emphasis on cooperating with indigenous forces and working within local populations the understanding of cultural factors — what is commonly referred to as cultural awareness — is frequently stressed in military training. This article presents a slightly dissenting view from mainstream cultural awareness training and critically analyses the ‘primacy of culture perspective’, concluding that cultural factors will not significantly alter human nature and that military commanders often tend to over-complicate the issue of culture. This article will argue that most human behaviours are universal — not cultural — and that although understanding cultural factors may appear to be an operational necessity, they do not fundamentally change the principles of warfare, military strategy or the military profession. Culture is one factor to consider in military operations, but by no means the most crucial. This article also considers the perspective that cultural awareness has to start with an awareness of our own culture and how we will be perceived in international operations.
Introduction

During recent years both the Swedish Armed Forces and the Australian Defence Force have participated in similar operational deployments to Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa. Since these deployments often involved cooperation with indigenous forces and working within local populations, the importance of understanding the local culture — what is commonly referred to as cultural awareness — has been emphasised in military training.¹

Experience has clearly shown that aspects of different cultures — such as religion, language, local and regional customs, values and ways of living together — will affect military operations in current and future deployments.² It has shown that soldiers should have a deep understanding of the local population’s culture and sub-cultures, as well as an ability to influence people and perceptions.³

This article will present a view that differs from mainstream cultural awareness training. It will dismiss common misconceptions about cultural awareness and will propose a practical framework for soldiers. This framework is based on solid scientific evidence and tested by my own operational experiences.

Defining and approaching culture

Culture is a difficult term to define, mainly due to the fact that it is a collective term describing many different things. From art and literature to customs, values and beliefs, culture is a term that defines and describes many aspects of our lives that we cannot easily group under the same heading. In different areas the word is given different meanings. Hence there is a need to operationalise what we mean by the word ‘culture’.

The word ‘culture’ originates from the Latin culturae ‘to cultivate’. Whereas natura is the untouched form, culture is a pattern that has been created by man. In social terms it is most often described as ways of living together. Culture is always shared and used to distinguish different groups that have more or less distinct characteristics.

Culture distinguishes social constructions within a group of individuals. These seldom, if ever, match national, geographical or ethnic boundaries and it is very difficult to ascertain exactly how small or large a culture is.⁴ Any identifiable culture can be further broken down into unique, more or less homogenous sub-cultures. This further complicates the definition of culture.
The problem of how to define and delineate a culture soon becomes obvious. How far should the cultural division go — does it reach down to the level of tribes, neighbourhoods, families or even individuals? How do we conceptualise the fact that an individual can be influenced by several cultures or sub-cultures to varying degrees? An individual can be part of the cultures of a church, a trade union, a military unit, a football team or a family — all influencing him or her to different degrees and in different ways. While these questions have no easy answer they lead to one important conclusion: when discussing culture in an operational context, it is difficult — even dangerous — to generalise so broadly as to speak of one Somali, Afghan or Iraqi culture. Our mindset, given our profession, should be that we interact with humans, and culture is only one factor to consider.

But since we’re dealing with human beings, do we really need cultural awareness training? Historically many wars and peacekeeping operations have been successfully waged without any such training. Shouldn’t the ‘good bloke factor’ or plain common sense be enough? Certainly, being a good person is an important element, but it should be supplemented with knowledge about the individuals we are meeting. As for the common sense factor, we should always ask ourselves: common to whom? Individuals from another culture may view the world from a different perspective, thus making ideas about what is sensible ‘common’ primarily to them. Having a mindset that encompasses these perspectives is likely to enhance operational effectiveness.

There is clearly a need for cultural training in the modern military. The question is how we can best prepare soldiers, sailors and airmen for future operations through this training.

**Awareness is not enough**

To begin with, let’s examine some of the basic factors concerning training in cultural awareness. A common error can be identified in the term itself: awareness. Have you ever received a military order that states: ‘Kilo Lima, advance to the town square, and be culturally aware’? Probably not. This is because cultural awareness is only a means to reach a military objective and never an objective in itself.

When giving lectures on operational culture I often ask individuals to select which category best describes them: 1) scholars of social anthropology or 2) soldiers, sailors and airmen. To date, no-one has selected the first option. Since I have primarily given presentations to military audiences, this is an expected result,
but it is relevant exactly because of that. In a military context it is not the cultural phenomenon per se that interests us but rather how — if at all — it will affect our military operations.

The cultural awareness training given to soldiers can take many forms. It is possible, however, to group culture training programs into two broad categories. The first category comprises simple approaches often involving a ‘cultural awareness smart card’ that is laminated and fits in your pocket. With clear do's and don’ts, these cards tell you in simple terms how to face another culture. Do not spit, do not break wind, do not show the soles of your feet and do not greet with your left hand. If you commit one of these cultural mortal sins you will be forever doomed. But if we look at these critically the flaws become self-evident. Do you often spit at people when you talk to them? Do you not normally shake hands with your right hand? The behaviours described on these smart cards often reflect not cultural, but rather more general human codes of conduct and if our soldiers can’t follow them to begin with then we have bigger problems than those addressed by cultural awareness training. Nor can we, for that matter, reduce human interaction to something that can be described in an Ikea-style manual.

The other category comprises a more advanced approach which involves studying everything about an area or a culture. This approach often involves listening to lectures from ‘experts’ on the area such as professors, ambassadors, diplomats or aid workers. The problem with this approach is the same as the question that the rifleman asks when he or she finishes reading a prescribed book or after leaving a lecture: so what? While often highly interesting, lectures and books on the subject are often too theoretical and too difficult to easily implement within the daily military routine, especially for the average soldier. If anything, this approach can create a dangerous sense that culture is impossible to fully understand and that soldiers do better by not trying at all. The simple ‘smart card’ approach contains too many broad generalisations while the advanced ‘going for the PhD’ approach is too theoretical and not applicable to military operations.

One other possible reaction to the expectation that cultures will be substantially different is to prohibit certain topics of discussion where differences may arise. During one conversation with a counterpart in the Middle East I explained the directive from our armed forces to never discuss politics, sex or religion. The man simply looked at me perplexed and finally answered: ‘Then what is there left to talk about?’ There are seldom any ‘hazardous topics’ that shouldn’t be discussed. On the contrary, people across the world share a willingness for conversation and
the points mentioned above are among the most common topics for discussion, both within and across cultures. To reduce or restrict communication cannot be a viable solution.

What we must try to do is to give soldiers a simplified, defusing approach — free of intimidation or restriction — that views the individuals we encounter as human beings. And this must be an approach that recognises that the cultural behaviours of those individuals are seldom, if ever, an obstacle for communication or military cooperation.

**In a different culture, everything changes**

The argument is often made that ‘when working in a different culture, everything changes’. The implication is that, unless born and raised in the culture in question, one can never fully understand or function in that society. This paints the culture as an obstacle that can never be overcome. But looking critically at this primacy of culture perspective, do we really believe that some of the people we encounter are like aliens that do not share the same cognitive processes and basic human values as the rest of the world’s population? Probably not.

In fairness, some of the sources on cultural awareness mentioned earlier recognise that culture doesn’t change everything, despite adopting a primacy of culture perspective. For example, Christopher Lamb, in his discussion of persuasion tactics in US psychological operations notes that ‘persuasive communication transcends culture by the most basic appeals’, arguing that the most fundamental principles, for example the appeal to self-interest, are universal across cultures.8

But there is strong evidence that more than just the basic principles of psychology are common across cultures. In reality, most human behaviours are universal. Few are culturally distinctive, and I have yet to find support for the claim that culture can fundamentally alter human cognition. In fact, it was recently discovered that the classical psychological conformity study conducted by Solomon Asch in 19519 has been positively replicated 133 times across the globe.10 This, along with other studies, indicates that the fundamentals of human psychology are common to individuals everywhere. Matsumoto asserts that ‘general functions are more likely to yield cultural universals, while specific functions are more likely to prove culturally distinctive.’11 By this he means that our general human functions are the same, and that it is the small, specific functions that are culturally distinctive. Humans are humans wherever you go in the world, and there is more that connects us than separates us.
They are the strange ones

So far we have limited our considerations to the culture of the individuals we encounter during overseas deployments. But another equally important variable in the cultural equation is your own culture, how it manifests itself and how it will be perceived by the local population.

If we are talking about cultural differences, then we are talking about a measurable distance between ourselves and another social group. When considering the distance between point A and point B, it is always the case that the distance from each point to the other is the same. To another culture, we are as different to them as they are to us. If we perceive cultural differences, so will they.

In this cultural equation we often view our own culture as normal — we are the normal ones and they are the strange ones. But there is no logical argument to support such a claim. In fact, when visiting another country, wouldn’t it make more sense to accept that we are the strange ones and that that country’s citizens are normal? Our culture does not set the standard for what is ‘normal culture’ even though we might unconsciously assume this.

This error in thinking is not uncommon and has a natural explanation. We view the world through our own eyes and interpret it according to our own expectations, values and beliefs. Information that is new to us and does not match our expectations or previous experiences is, by definition, strange to us.

To view culture in black and white terms is a characteristic of ethnocentrism. This view often results from a lack of education and experience and can cause an individual to see his own culture as ‘right’ and any other as ‘wrong’. Ethnocentrism influences our perception of the world in varying degrees. But it is clear that, in order to fully understand and appreciate another culture, we must first be aware of and embrace our own culture and be open to the fact that other persons may view us as culturally strange.

Organisational culture and operational culture

In addition to the cultural differences of individuals in another country, we must also consider the culture of our own organisations. We often react strongly to the differences of a foreign culture, but can be blind to the fact that these may be dwarfed by the differences between the services (army, navy, air force) within our own military.
This is natural in all major organisations. A study of international corporations notes that sometimes the differences within an organisation can be greater than the differences between similar organisations in different countries. ‘The temptation to attribute differences to different cultural mindsets is strong,’ states Professor Livia Markóczy, ‘... but may pale in comparison to the differences between the production people and the marketing people in that same firm.’13

Israeli Army psychologist Ben Shalit makes a similar point when he recounts his experiences visiting the front-line troops in the Sinai desert.14 His first stop was the commander of the paratrooper battalion. Eager to make a good impression, the sharply dressed Shalit saluted crisply when reporting correctly to the commander. His behaviour led to a scolding and almost got him thrown out of the command post. Saluting, wearing headgear in the field and calling title by rank was almost a mortal sin (no reason to give the snipers a clear target) and unheard of within the strongly functional discipline of the paratroopers. A few hours later, Shalit put his newly acquired knowledge into action when visiting the commander of the armour battalion, which in turn earned him another scolding and almost saw him thrown out of that command post as well. Attention to the smallest detail was considered fundamental for combat success among the tankies (formal discipline was considered crucial for the intricate teamwork of the tank crews) and any form of sloppiness or neglect was considered unacceptable. Behaviour was operationalised around the objectives and modus operandi of the different kinds of units, which in turn affected their organisational culture.

Shalit points to even more interesting differences in organisational culture when he admits (with good humour) that the only possible reason the two battalion commanders tolerated his behaviour was that he was wearing a navy uniform, which apparently automatically excused his ignorance of proper military manners. Despite notable differences in organisational culture, Shalit makes no suggestion of a consequent reduction in the combat effectiveness of each respective unit — rather the opposite — or the ability of the two commanders to work together towards a common objective.

These examples raise an important question: if we can successfully work together with individuals from other parts of our own organisation with significant differences in organisational culture without any advanced training, then shouldn’t we be able to work together with individuals from cultures in other countries as well?

Markóczy’s theories argue that we already have the ability to work with individuals from other cultures, but that ‘our view is obscured by our expectation of substantial cultural differences’.15 When we expect the individuals we are meeting to be
radically different, with behaviours it will be impossible to fully comprehend, we tend to limit our communication, making our expectations a self-fulfilling prophecy. But if we instead embrace the fact that every individual is first of all a human, who holds the same basic values and beliefs as we do, we can start to look for commonalities that will facilitate communication and are likely to enhance the overall efficiency of the operation we are undertaking. If you search for differences you will build obstacles — but if you search for commonalities you will build bridges. Even if there are numerous differences between cultures, an approach based on trying to find commonalities will probably be far more fruitful.

During a deployment to Afghanistan I served as team leader, working closely with the local population. On one patrol we were accompanied by a colonel and his close protection team. During a short stop, while trying to negotiate the best way to reach the police station that was our destination, I noticed that one of the military bodyguards — a military policeman — had engaged an Afghan police officer in conversation at an intersection ahead. Surprised, since I knew that the individual could not speak the local language, I walked up to them. As I approached I could clearly hear the soldier, a sociable and outgoing man from Gothenburg, in heavily accented Swedish and with wild gesticulations, asking for directions to the police station. What was more surprising was that the Afghan police officer clearly understood him, and was answering with directions in the local Dari dialect. These directions led us directly to the police station.

When asked for the reason behind his actions, the military policeman simply answered, ‘I saw that he was a police officer as well, I figured he had to know the way.’ When asked more specifically why he didn’t bring an interpreter, the man only laughed and said, ‘Now you’re only seeing the problems.’

Although I firmly believe that the communication between the two police officers would have been better with an interpreter, it clearly indicates that communication does not have to be complicated. The two individuals were not afraid of cultural boundaries and searched instead for commonalities. Identifying each other as police officers established common ground between them, and the use of simple words such as ‘police’ and ‘motor’, together with body language was sufficient for them to communicate.
**Culture does not eat strategy for breakfast**

A phrase often heard and repeated as a mantra before and during overseas deployments is that ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast’.\(^{16}\) This phrase, and others like it, suggests that unless we understand the cultural context in which we operate, our military strategies will never succeed. In some cases, military theorists have gone so far as to coin the term *culture-centric warfare* with the implication that we should approach all military operations from a cultural perspective.\(^{17}\) It is not uncommon for culture to be portrayed as the primary factor affecting success in military operations.

But is understanding the cultural context really more important than understanding the military profession, operational art or military strategy? If this was the case then local employees — natives from the culture in question — would be best suited to conduct negotiations, liaison, psychological operations, mentoring, special operations or any other type of military task that involves contact with the local population. This is probably not the case. Looking back at the most successful campaigns and operations in military history, are those successes the result of superior cultural awareness or the best military strategy and resources to pursue that strategy? Not understanding the cultural context *might* be a barrier, but not nearly as dangerous as having insufficient skills in the military profession.

When considering cultural factors we should always bear in mind that we are soldiers — experts in the instrument of legitimised violence — who conduct military operations.\(^{18}\) We’re not midwives, priests, anthropologists, journalists or members of any other profession. We’re soldiers, and as soldiers we should adapt only to the cultural phenomena that affect our military operations and leave the remaining cultural elements for others to explore.

**Cultural awareness or cultural adaptation?**

During overseas deployments it is not uncommon to see soldiers from different nations embrace some of the cultural practices of the local population to varying degrees. Examples include growing long beards, wearing civilian scarves or hats from the area or participating in local ceremonies in order to express ‘deep cultural sensitivity’. The implication is that this will raise the level of communicative trust and therefore increase operational effectiveness. Committing to the ‘go native style’ (a practice originally undertaken by special operations forces) is sometimes accepted as justification to break military rules and regulations even if there is no other logical reason for this.
There is, in fact, little evidence in the literature on cultural psychology or in military doctrine that the ‘go native’ approach — mimicking or adapting to the culture in question — produces any increase in operational effectiveness. On the contrary, the individuals you encounter will expect you to be a good representative of your culture. To over-adapt can easily be counter-productive and cause more harm than good. Markóczy agrees, arguing that ‘the line between being insensitive and sensitive to cultural differences may be as thin as the line between being sensitive and oversensitive to them.’

Let us consider another example but in reverse: a warlord from Afghanistan comes to your regiment in your home country to negotiate. On arrival he is clean-shaven, sporting a slicked-back hairstyle and is dressed in clothes common among the hip-hop culture of the urban youth in your city. Would you interpret this as incredibly culturally sensitive in a way that makes you trust the individual more, or would you find it laughable or even suspicious? Probably the latter!

One possible explanation for the ‘go native’ approach is that it lends a perception of cultural competence. From a purely individual perspective the approach can actually have some limited effect. Reducing the differences in physical appearance might give the perception that, as a corollary, any cultural differences will be reduced as well, thus facilitating interpersonal communication. If an individual feels confident that a longer beard makes him better at communicating, then it might give him the confidence that perceived cultural obstacles can be overcome more easily. However, this will only affect the individual’s belief in his own ability to communicate, and not how this behaviour will be interpreted by a counterpart, thus still making it highly likely to be counterproductive.

The arguments for the ‘go native’ approach also rest on the premise that culture is an obstacle that has to be overcome in order to communicate. Methods to overcome perceived cultural obstacles might have some effect, but will probably never be as effective as not regarding cultural differences as an obstacle in the first place.

The tendency to over-complicate culture

So why are the views expressed above not mentioned more often in training or in the literature? Many people, not just soldiers, are required to work within a different culture. This has created a flourishing market for consultants and cultural awareness training programs. To simplify the problem or downplay the need for training is not in the interests of individuals making a business from the delivery of such training. Another explanation is that academia places a premium on statistics
and identifiable differences between experimental and control groups. Intercultural psychology places a premium on finding differences, not similarities, between cultures. And humans — including researchers — tend to find what they expect to find.\textsuperscript{20}

Kelton Rhoads emphasises these effects in his work on intercultural communication. He asserts that it is not uncommon for researchers and lecturers to masquerade psychological universals as cultural specifics.\textsuperscript{21} He cites several examples of influence campaigns designed to be successful in a given cultural setting when in reality these campaigns would succeed — or fail — in any cultural setting for similar reasons. Although Rhoads’ work focuses on cross-cultural communication in general, military examples of this difference-bias are not difficult to find:

- A study discussing communication techniques for psychological operations to foreign target audiences in the Arab world stated that using ‘Western style’ dissemination methods such as television were less persuasive and that the culture in question was more likely to be influenced by relationship-centred, interpersonal communication. This is absolutely true, however it is also true in other parts of the world, and is a good example of a universal principle masked as a cultural specific.\textsuperscript{22}

- During the conflict in Afghanistan, US forces have, to date, been accused several times of desecrating the bodies of enemy combatants. During one incident in 2005, the action of incinerating the bodies instead of burying them infuriated the local community and was categorised by many as a ‘huge cultural blunder’, indicating the need for increased cultural awareness training.\textsuperscript{23} The act was in itself despicable, but a valid question is: can you name any culture in which the desecration of bodies would be anything but insensitive? If a taboo is shared across cultures then it is not culturally but rather humanly insensitive.\textsuperscript{24}

In addition to the difference-bias, culture is sometimes used as a scapegoat for behaviours which have no valid justification. Comments such as: ‘it’s in their culture’ or ‘they don’t want to help themselves’ are sometimes made in frustration. Such comments clearly externalise the reason for failure to communicate and also attribute this failure to a culture, not a person. To attribute failure to external causes without acknowledging one’s own shortcomings is actually a normal reaction, according to Attribution Theory, a psychological principle derived by Fritz Heider.\textsuperscript{25} Ironically, in the reverse situation, the same individuals would be more likely to internalise the causes of successful communication. They would ascribe success to their own personal competence (such as a high level of cultural awareness)
rather than favourable situational factors. But the fact remains. In general we have a tendency to automatically attribute failures to external causes generally, and often culture specifically, rather than take the time to find more plausible explanations.

We don’t always need to find complex answers to cultural questions. Sometimes the simple explanations are best. The principle of simplicity is an excellent tool when encountering a foreign culture. For example, in some under-developed countries people sit on the floor and eat with their hands. We can seek a complex cultural explanation for this behaviour — and believe me, I have heard several of them — or we can accept a simpler explanation that requires fewer assumptions: they are very poor and have never been able to afford furniture or cutlery.

Conclusion

Culture should best be viewed as a moderator of psychological effects rather than something that fundamentally changes human nature. Cultural differences are natural and should exist, but are seldom — if ever — an obstacle, nor are there any ‘cultural mortal sins’. Most human behaviours are universal, not cultural. If we search for cultural differences we will build our own obstacles. But if we search for commonalities instead, we will build bridges and a stable ground for future military cooperation.

Cultural differences will enrich your experiences in another country, but they are seldom — if ever — a factor that fundamentally changes human psychology or the basic principles of warfare. The extent to which a cultural phenomenon requires an explanation depends on your task: if it is clear that culture will affect your operations, then by all means it should be included as a factor in operational planning. But if the culture does not affect the task at hand — and the chances are that it won’t — then the solution can be as simple as carrying on with the military operation and leaving culture as a phenomenon for the anthropologists to study.
THE AUTHOR

Captain David M. Bergman is a founding member of the Swedish 10th Psychological Operations Unit. He has served as team leader, platoon commander and officer in charge of training, has seen operational service in Bosnia and Afghanistan and is a former exchange student to the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. He holds a Master of Social Science in psychology and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in comparative literature. He is a published author both of fiction and non-fiction, having written the Manual of Operational Culture for the Swedish Armed Forces and a number of volumes on aspects of military psychology.

ENDNOTES

1 Angus Houston, Joint Operations in the 21st Century, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2007.

2 Steven Brain, Operational Culture: Is the Australian Army Driving the Train of Left at the Station?, United States Marine Corps, School of Advanced Warfighting, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, Quantico Virginia, 2008.


5 Brain, Operational Culture.

6 The conceptual question ‘common sense – common to whom?’ is often asked by cultural lecturer Karin Sharma. See Karin Sharma, Alla dessa kulturer (in Swedish), Industri litteratur, 2011.

7 Rhoads, ‘The Culture Variable in the Influence Equation’.

8 Lamb, Review of Psychological Operations Lessons Learned from Recent Operational Experience.

9 Solomon Asch, ‘Effects of group pressure on the modification and distortion of judgments’ in Harold Guetzkow (eds), Groups, Leadership and Men, Carnegie, Pittsburgh, PA, 1951.


‘Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast’ is a remark attributed to Peter Drucker who was an American consultant and educator in modern business management. The quote was popularised in 2006 by Mark Fields, President of Ford Motor Company.


19 Markóczy, ‘Are cultural differences overrated?’.


ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Securing Army’s Future: Enhancing Career Management
Major General Angus Campbell, Dr Corinne Manning and Brigadier Paul Nothard

ABSTRACT

Army’s leaders are determined to build and sustain a relevant, positive organisational culture for its people and the land force capability they create. Army recognises that, in the future, competition for labour will be fierce. By raising its status to that of a first class employer of choice, Army hopes to recruit and retain quality personnel. This article describes one aspect of Army’s career management reform — the Officer Enhanced Career Management model (ECM). It provides insight into Army’s development of the ECM, which was informed both by the recent reviews into Defence culture and leading research into diversity and inclusion in the corporate world.
Introduction

In 2011 reviews into aspects of Defence and Australian Defence Force culture were published which called for Defence to create a more inclusive and accountable culture for its members.\(^1\) Review recommendations were synthesised into a strategy for cultural change and reinforcement in Defence entitled Pathway to Change.\(^2\) Career management was identified as a key area for reform, particularly in relation to women,\(^3\) with the Report into the Treatment of Women in the Defence Force (Broderick Review) noting that Defence’s career management systems were outdated and lagged significantly behind those of other corporate entities.\(^4\) People within the military often argue that the unique function of the armed forces precludes their comparison with and prevents them learning from non-military organisations — the old analogy that apples cannot be compared with oranges. But even comparisons between militaries are akin to comparing apples, oranges and grapefruit given differences in size, demography, geography and national intent. Army recognises that current world leaders in diversity and inclusion tend to inhabit the corporate sector and offer evidence-based lessons and approaches that can be universally applied across industry. Thus, Army has drawn on leading diversity and inclusion research in the corporate sector to develop a strategy that consolidates best practice with service needs. This article describes a key career management reform in Army that promotes greater diversity and inclusion — the Officer Enhanced Career Management model (ECM).

The need for change

Army’s career management system was established in the 1920s, developed further in the 1950s and has evolved incrementally since. While the system has proven effective in producing a pool of talented officers, it was fundamentally designed for and optimised to support an overwhelmingly male workforce. The discriminatory nature of the system reflected contemporary societal norms and institutional expectations. The ethical and social justice issues associated with a more balanced acknowledgement of the value of women’s service within Army has seen slow, modest, incremental improvement since the 1970s. And while ethics and social justice may be less tangible but more powerful currents of long-term change, this article explores only the demographic realities compelling more substantial action today.
Increasing the proportion of women in the Army is essential for future capability as demographic indicators project a relative contraction of the Australian labour market. The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency has recently reported that competition for labour will be fierce in the coming decades. As noted in the Broderick Review:

> Over the next five years, Australia is projected to see fewer than 125 people exiting education for every 100 people retiring … this shift is particularly significant in the ADF’s core target market of 17-24 years which will experience very little growth over the next 15 years. This means that the pool from which the ADF traditionally recruits is diminishing [within a growing economy], placing further pressure on Services to engage and retain talented employees.

For the past 20 years, the participation of women in Army has ‘flat-lined’ at around 10%, indicating that recruitment and retention strategies have not adequately engaged one of the largest pools of available labour. In addition, Army has attracted limited numbers of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, a second untapped labour source. The representation of members from a non-English speaking background within the ADF is 5.4%, well below the benchmark average of the Australian labour force of 23.6%. Given that this sector represents another very large pool of labour in the country, which is predicted to grow over coming years, the ADF is missing out on acquiring a diverse and talented group of people with the potential to significantly enhance capability. Recent comments by Nareen Young, CEO of the Diversity Council of Australia, support this argument: ‘… harnessing cultural diversity in Australia and from abroad will be essential to meeting the challenges of skill shortages, global labour market competition and an ageing population.’ While the focus of this paper is on women in the Army, ethnic diversity is another critical area for reform. If it does not draw talented labour from the broadest sectors of the Australian community, most notably women and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the ADF may soon find itself in a parlous state.

**Women in the Army**

The recent reviews into Defence culture provided an impetus for Army to complete a comprehensive analysis of policy, recruiting, retention, career management and facets of Army life that influence women’s decisions to serve. By examining women’s experiences, Army has been able to identify strengths and weaknesses associated with its career management system in general. This research has
supported the progressive redevelopment of Army’s career management system, strengthening its basis in gender-neutral policy and refining its application to recruiting, retaining and managing Army’s people, while preferentially developing and advancing the most talented. The first phase of this process has involved scrutinising Army’s career management of its officers, leading to the development of the ECM.

In November 2012, women comprised 8.1% of Army’s senior leaders at the rank of colonel or above. While this rate was marginally higher than Air Force and only 2% lower than Navy, it nonetheless represents a significantly lower level than the 21.2% of Australian Public Service (APS) staff at the EL2 classification or above in Defence. Some may dismiss this comparison on the basis of the different roles and requirements of military and APS staff in Defence. Army also rates poorly against comparable industries in relation to female workforce participation, as illustrated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Female (full time)</th>
<th>Female (part time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public administration and safety</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information media and telecommunications</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, water and waste service</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, postal and warehousing</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the public administration and safety sector may be comparable only to office roles in the military, Army is hardly in an ideal position, tracking only better than the construction industry, in which women’s participation rates currently sit at 5.8% (full time) and 5.9% (part time). The Chief of Army has set a goal for women to comprise 12% of the force by 2014. Clearly, if mining, manufacturing and utilities can do better, 12% is only the first step.

Army will never be able to compete with the corporate sector to pay its way out of the constraints of demography. Rather, Army must be a first class employer of choice. If it fails to adequately reform its organisational culture and recruit more
women and people from non-Anglo backgrounds future capability requirements will not be met. While Army’s ECM applies to all officers, it draws its initial insights predominantly from the experience of women in the Army — and the ECM will necessarily continue to evolve to embrace the breadth of talent and diversity resident within the nation. Acknowledging the challenge Army faces in attracting a more ethnically and culturally diverse workforce, this discussion will now concentrate on the question of gender.

Army’s senior leadership does not assume that reforms to provide gender-neutral employment will drastically change the demographic nature of certain elements of the service, for example the ground combat arms. Overseas trends, particularly in Canada and New Zealand, indicate that very few women choose this career path. Canada for example recently reported that women represented 2.4% of its combat arms. That said, those women who do choose this career path have proven themselves highly effective professionals within strong combat teams. Despite recent media discussions being somewhat fixated on women in combat roles, Army is cognisant that greater numbers of women are more likely to be drawn into other areas of service. Whatever career path an individual chooses, Army’s leadership is intent on providing that choice, subject to each applicant meeting gender-neutral physical, educational, intellectual and psychological employment standards.

Unsurprisingly, women in the Army are as diverse in their views, interests, needs and wants as any other sector of the community. However there are three key aspirations that have been consistently raised through forums and workshops in the development of the ECM:

- remove all gender barriers and explicit or implicit employment discrimination
- design a career model that assumes our people may, at a time of their choosing, have family care responsibilities
- employ all Army’s people on merit

While the ECM addresses some aspects of each of these aspirations, every officer and soldier in the Army also has his or her part to play. When the stereotypical man explains that ‘I did this and I did that’ and the stereotypical woman says, ‘we did this and we did that’, both are often saying the same thing. When a man eagerly steps forward for early promotion and a woman suggests she might need another year of development, they may both be equally ready. When a man reflects on his successful career it has often been enabled by a supportive partner and caregiver; when a woman reflects on her career, successful or otherwise, it has often been
a dual career — military professional and principal carer. The policies and processes of the ECM or any other arrangement will never be sufficient in isolation. Army’s people need to confront and question their inherited, assumed and unconscious biases that constrain rather than liberate all of Army’s talent.

As noted previously, research into Australian demographics highlighted the fact that Army needs to conduct its business differently in order to attract and retain its people. The design of Army’s ECM was informed by the insights and aspirations of Army’s women and men as one mechanism to achieve this goal. Not only does it seek to provide a more equitable playing field for all Army officers but, in doing so, it seeks to draw on the talent of a sector of Australian labour thus far grossly under-utilised by Army.

The ECM — key concepts
The objective of the ECM is to assess and apply merit to select and advance a diverse and inclusive group of strategic leaders. Much of the research on which Army has drawn in formulating this model has emerged from the experience of large, complex, multinational corporations operating in ruthlessly competitive and dynamic business environments. While Army is not a public corporation, it should not be prejudiced against or afraid to learn from business, as indeed business has routinely learnt from the military. Critically, understanding the intellectual rigour of relevant research and how it might be usefully applied to Army is what is important. The four key concepts that provide the basis for the ECM are merit, strategic leadership, diversity and inclusion.

Merit in the Army comprises a comparative judgement of an officer’s performance, qualifications, education and potential made by an authorised Delegate informed by the advice of a committee of senior officers and external experts. Excellence in infantry minor tactics does not automatically translate to effectiveness in leading Defence capability development. Hence, the implicit weighting of these four characteristics will vary for different rank levels and at different times in Army’s institutional history. A more sophisticated, less doctrinaire or dogmatic appreciation of the subtleties of merit is an issue with which Army’s leaders are coming to terms. The criticism of ‘like begetting like’ is an easy but lazy caricature of a complex challenge, as Army strives to embrace the capability value inherent in a diverse, inclusive workforce.
The purpose and value of assessing merit is to develop and progress strategic leaders which Army defines as those officers who demonstrate the following critical attributes:

- a shared identity as an officer in the Army and the Australian Defence Force
- a deep appreciation of Army’s role within twenty-first century Australian society
- the mental agility and leadership skills to operate in complex, multi-faceted environments marked by ambiguity and uncertainty
- expertise as a combat or logistic officer capable of developing, supporting and executing plans across the full spectrum of conflict
- selfless interpersonal maturity

Strategic leadership is not about rank or level. Rather it is about attributes and understanding, such that an officer can contribute, lead and take action at any level (tactical, operational or strategic), aligned to and progressing Australia’s national objectives and the long-term institutional needs of the ADF and the Army.

Diversity involves recognising, respecting and valuing visible and non-visible difference among people. Army’s concept of diversity is not confined to perceived visible difference but seeks to value a diversity of thought and considered opinion which is rigorous, critically analysed and culturally astute. In its ‘Business Case for Diversity’, leading US company Chubb outlined the importance of this approach:

Diversity is about recognizing, respecting and valuing differences based on ethnicity, gender, color, age, race, religion, disability, national origin and sexual orientation. It also includes an infinite range of individual unique characteristics and experiences, such as communication style, career path, life experience, educational background, geographic location, income level, marital status, military [or in Army’s case non-Army] experience, parental status and other variables that influence personal perspectives.

These life experiences and personal perspectives make us react and think differently, approach challenges and solve problems differently, make suggestions and decisions differently, and see different opportunities. Diversity, then, is also about diversity of thought. And superior business performance requires tapping into these unique perspectives. 14
While diversity is critical in fostering enhanced and sustainable institutional performance, such improvement cannot be fully realised without efforts to create an inclusive organisation.

_Inclusion_ involves generating a sense of belonging by providing an environment in which the diverse contribution of individuals is respected and valued. Inclusion harnesses the latent potential that diversity provides. Inclusion is recognised and actively promoted by leading global companies such as the Rio Tinto mining group:

_We are a global company, and wherever we operate, and across every part of our business, we strive to create an inclusive culture in which difference is recognised and valued. By bringing together men and women from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills, experience and perspectives, we believe that we are able to deliver the best solutions to challenges and deliver sustainable value for Rio Tinto and its stakeholders._  

The recent cultural reviews into Defence performance highlighted the fact that it needs to create a more inclusive culture. Research into positive organisational environments has highlighted the importance of inclusivity:

_When employees feel highly included they feel more engaged in their work. This means that employees are motivated to turn up to work and to do their best work. On the other hand, the more an employee feels excluded (e.g. that they are not being treated respectfully or that they do not belong to the team), the less likely they are to want to participate or bring their full capabilities to the table._

Army wants its members to feel part of a cohesive team, a team that gains from and provides support to its members as they collectively face the unique professional and personal challenges involved in serving the nation. This is why ‘respect’ and ‘teamwork’ are two of Army’s core values. By creating an environment in which Army’s people feel included and valued, they are more likely to contribute to and embrace innovation. They are also more likely to speak out against unacceptable behaviour.

High levels of diversity and inclusion are required to achieve organisational excellence. This is supported by research into business performance conducted by Deloitte Australia and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission which concluded that diversity and inclusion ‘are equally critical for business success’. This study surveyed 1550 employees from the manufacturing,
retail and health care sectors to better understand the interplay between diversity and inclusion. It revealed that, when a company showed a bias towards either diversity or inclusion, its performance was rated by employees as significantly lower than when it displayed high levels of bias towards both.\textsuperscript{18} It stated that employees were 80\% more likely to regard their company as high performing when they perceived a strong level of commitment to both diversity and inclusion.\textsuperscript{19}

This assessment of employee perception is substantiated by research undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which reinforces the performance advantage of a dual focus on diversity and inclusion:

\begin{quote}
People work best—and remain engaged and loyal—when work enables and empowers them to be fully who they are. Diversity absent inclusion erodes employee engagement: involvement in and commitment to their work, and to the company’s strategy, mission, and value proposition. The organization must be not only diverse, but also inclusive and flexible.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Critical to, and implicit in demonstrating strategic leadership is the capacity for officers to foster truly diverse, inclusive teams such that multi-faceted, ambiguous or complex challenges are successfully overcome, and allowing Army to excel as an organisation. To that end, diversity and inclusion need to be embraced in the understanding of each of the four elements that describe merit — performance, qualifications, education and potential — and the relative weighting applied to them for both individuals and groups of individuals within Army. In practical terms this means valuing and recognising a broader range of skills and experiences, enhancing the flexibility of careers such as the sequence and delivery of professional development, experience (time in rank) requirements, and developmental career milestones. For example, officers with alternative but commensurate experiences will now have an increased opportunity to contend for senior and demanding (rank-progressive) appointments alongside counterparts who have taken a more traditional route. By developing a more sophisticated understanding of what constitutes ‘merit’, Army is both securing and improving its already high professional standards.

The insights from business offered in the preceding paragraphs should not surprise anyone in the Army — well-led teams of professionals perform well. But sometimes it is worth hearing this from others whose job descriptions and challenges vary but whose people, like Army’s, just want to be a valued part of a team making a contribution to their community. These four key concepts — merit, strategic leadership, diversity and inclusion — have informed the design of Army’s ECM and its benefits for capability, should it be applied diligently and appropriately.
By way of reassurance, while excellence in combined arms manoeuvre will remain an essential requirement for Army’s combat leaders, there may be more than one pathway and one timeline to acquiring such skills. Further from the combat arms, the variety of options to build rank-progressive careers will be more readily apparent. In both however, diversity and inclusion will characterise the approach of our strategic leaders at all levels to harness the full potential of all our people.

The ECM

*Pathway to Change* has provided the catalyst for the ECM. Australian demography compels change in the way Army attracts and retains its people. The aspirations of Army’s women inform the objectives of change to career management for all. The concepts of merit, strategic leadership, diversity and inclusion provide the policy basis for change. From these considerations, the next evolution of Army’s officer career management system, the ECM, has been developed, principally through changes in two core aspects of that system: ‘talent management’ and ‘progression through career milestones’, including recognition of non-Army experience.

**Talent management**

In Army, ‘talent’ (or ‘talented officers’) is defined as those officers who demonstrate heightened levels of intellect, sophisticated interpersonal skills, conscientiousness, determination and innovation. Talented officers are identified by members of their chain of command and by the Directorate of Officer Career Management–Army through documenting individuals’ potential for more demanding appointments from the rank of junior captain onwards.

The ECM includes a Talent Management Program that provides focussed management of individuals identified as potential senior leaders. Previously, Army managed the highest performing officers on the command and leadership pathway through reviewing an individual’s relative merit according to defined gates, mostly associated with attaining command positions. However, Army recognises that talent exists well beyond this group to include officers with the diverse range of skills needed to sustain workforce requirements. This has become evident in recent years through the promotion of officers who have progressed through non-linear career pathways. Importantly, this cohort tends to include many female officers with families who have struggled to balance career and personal requirements in order to remain competitive for promotion. As Elizabeth Broderick indicated in her review into women in the Defence Force, increased levels of female participation in the workforce leads to enhanced performance and capability.21 It is in Army’s
interests to address this issue and capitalise on female talent. Through the creation of a Talent Management Program that recognises and fosters the development of all talented officers, a more diverse pool of high quality candidates will be available for selection for senior roles.

**Progression through career milestones**

Army currently recognises that an officer’s broad formative experiences, skills and performance are the best indicators of potential for more demanding senior appointments. Significant weight is afforded to performance as a sub-unit commander, at Command and Staff College, service as a lieutenant colonel staff officer, and unit command in determining an officer’s merit for more senior rank. The new ECM will continue to recognise the skills and experiences that these four career milestone appointments provide, but the sequence and method of attaining these milestones can be tailored to an individual officer’s circumstances, correlated to their assessed talent and potential. In addition, the model formally recognises that an officer can gain similar experiences in alternative environments that are also of value to Army. By devising a system of comparable professional experience, Army seeks equity within the ECM to ensure that the quality and range of Army officers considered for promotion remains high.

In the past, Army career management required officers to meet a minimum ‘time in rank’ requirement before being considered for progression by the Personnel Advisory Committee. This system was intended to provide Army officers with a similar range of experiences and opportunities in which to demonstrate their potential for more demanding roles. However, this has also stymied the progress of some of our most talented officers. This was noted in the Broderick Review:

*Women and men can — and do — have career breaks that may affect their progression, but the reality for many women is that they are more likely to need to access periods of leave and flexible working arrangements at different times of their careers ... Given the reality that women (and increasingly men as well) will take time out of their careers at various ranks, a strict time in rank model predicated on traditional full-time unbroken service is an inefficient way for the ADF to develop and harness the potential of its entire workforce. Those taking career breaks will simply not have the ability to progress into senior leadership ranks, regardless of talent, because they will be precluded by time requirements.*

22
The ECM will broaden the number of career filters to create a candidate list for the Personnel Advisory Committee’s consideration that precludes ‘time in rank’ as an obstacle. This change recognises that ‘talent’ can take a multiplicity of forms and creates a broader pool of candidates for consideration for promotion to middle-level and senior ranks. In the junior ranks, ‘time in rank’ requirements will remain as Army believes that extensive experience and foundation in an officer’s corps are key to success at more senior levels. Subsequently, in certain circumstances, Army may benefit from accelerating a few of its most promising mid-level leaders.

While Army understands the importance of nurturing its leaders, it is also essential that selection and posting are based on business and capability requirements. A core function of the ECM includes the selection of officers for posting based on considered interaction between an officer and his or her career advisor. Compassionate circumstances are closely considered; likewise personal development and individual preferences comprise supporting considerations, but ‘service need’ must ultimately retain primacy.

Professional development and experience outside Army have the potential to bolster Army’s performance when an officer returns to duty. For example, outplacements in selected organisations can generate networks and corporate knowledge that will enhance Army’s business performance. In recognition of this benefit, the ECM will encourage and support outplacements for a small number of Army’s most talented officers. It is envisaged that these opportunities would initially be six months in duration and selected and arranged by Career Manager–Army (CM–A) with a range of significant corporate entities and other government departments. On return to service, officers will not lose seniority and their acquired skills and experiences may support their presentation to the next Personnel Advisory Committee or be considered in their selection for more demanding roles.

Enhancing professionalism through education is a core component of Army’s officer development. At present, Army selects approximately 70 officers for attendance at Australian Command and Staff College each year. Some of those selected subsequently withdraw, typically for personal reasons, while many attending already have tertiary qualifications commensurate or in excess of that awarded by Staff College. To date, the great majority of officers promoted above the rank of major have been Staff College qualified. While the immersion experience of Staff College represents professional best practice narrowly conceived, it can act as an insurmountable hurdle in relation to some officers’ ability to progress their careers. This is particularly the case for officers who are unable to attend a residential course due to family commitments. The Broderick Review highlighted the potential negative implications of this:
This particular career gate often coincides with critical child-bearing years for women, and therefore poses a potential structural disadvantage to women’s career prospects. One woman told of cutting her maternity leave short to take up a position at ACSC which she believed would otherwise have been lost, while another said that she had: ‘never seen a group of women who plan their conception down to the actual day in the way that Army women do … I’ve got to have the baby then, because if I don’t have the baby then I’m not going to get into staff college.’

Army realises that there are legitimate alternative avenues for gaining this knowledge and experience already being undertaken within the broader Defence Organisation. For example, the Australian Defence College is developing an Army Reserve Australian Command and Staff College package to be delivered via distance education. CM–A, in consultation with the Australian Defence College and Headquarters Forces Command, is developing complementary distance programs from a range of Australian universities to be undertaken by selected officers in existing posting locations. By providing Army officers with residential or distance education opportunities, Army acknowledges the need to develop some of its people through flexible work arrangements.

For many years global research has indicated that flexible work arrangements contribute to enhanced business performance. Research conducted by the Center for Talent Innovation in New York, a leading think tank in diversity and talent management, concluded that flexible work arrangements were a major drawcard for workers and resulted in high productivity levels. It found that:

… data shows that workers across a spectrum of ages — from Baby Boomers who have worked hard to reach the peaks of their career, to Generation X’ers struggling to satisfy professional ambitions and personal fulfillment, to Millennials who view work/life balance as their right — are looking for a remix of conventional rewards. Many of these don’t cost a dime but pay off in increased engagement, loyalty, and willingness to go the extra mile … If there’s one work perk that rises above the rest, it’s Flexible Work Arrangements … 87% of Boomers, 79% of Gen X’ers, and 89% of Millennials cite flex as important.

Army policy actively supports formal and informal flexible work arrangements. Officers are already able to negotiate with their local chain of command to form arrangements that enable them to start work late or finish early supporting
broader family and personal commitments. The focus of the ECM is on a more formalised arrangement for an officer to take advantage of part-time work or ‘job share’ opportunities. The new model empowers CM–A and the chain of command to endorse flexible work arrangements with no detriment to the officer’s career progression, predicated on close consultation with the officer’s career advisor concerning his or her relative merit, potential and career aspirations.

As with the previous career management system, the Personnel Advisory Committee will remain a powerful and relatively objective mechanism in assessing the comparative merit of officers. It will continue to play a central role in informing career management and Delegate decisions in relation to both promotion and appointment. Under the ECM, the Personnel Advisory Committee will be further empowered to evaluate a broader range of experiences and skills than at present. This will facilitate the consideration of talented officers who may not have previously met a filter requirement. To assist this process, membership of the committee is being expanded to offer greater diversity by including senior officers with non-traditional career paths and members external to Army and Defence. While these additions may result in slightly longer processes, they will ensure that change meets external best practice.

Conclusion

Army’s leaders are determined to build and sustain a relevant, positive organisational culture for its people and the land force capability they create. The ECM is one example of change in that direction, drawing on the experience of women in the Army. The success of Army’s ECM will be measured by the degree to which the processes of successive career management cycles support the identification, selection and posting of all Army’s officers to maximise their contribution over the long term. Success is critical to Army’s future. In 2013, Army will develop a comparable career management model for soldiers. This will be a complex task due to the sheer number and broad-based membership of this group. However, it is a challenge that Army is determined to meet.
THE AUTHORS

Major General Angus Campbell is the current serving Deputy Chief of Army. He is a graduate from the Royal Military College, Duntroon and has served in Infantry and Special Forces. In late 2005, he joined the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet advising on national security. After returning to Army, he led the Military Strategic Commitments staff in Defence headquarters until assuming command of Australian forces deployed in the Middle East Area of Operations in 2011.

Dr Corinne Manning is the Senior Advisor to the Chief of Army. She has worked for the Australian Army since 2011 and is currently responsible for the strategic oversight of Army’s cultural reform agenda. Previously, Dr Manning worked as an academic at La Trobe, Monash and Victoria universities specialising in Australian military, Indigenous, disability and migration histories.

Brigadier Paul Nothard is the current serving Director General Career Management – Army. He is a graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon and was allotted to the Royal Australian Corps of Transport. He has served in a range of postings and staff appointments including command of the Force Level Logistic Asset – Middle East Area of Operations.

ENDNOTES


2 Defence Committee, Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2012.


5 Deloitte, Building the Lucky Country: Business Imperatives for a prosperous Australia – Where is your next worker?, 2011, p. 15.


8. Defence People Group, Culture and Workforce Capability Outlook 2012, p. 60. While there is known under-reporting of those from non-English speaking backgrounds, even if this figure doubled, the statistical outcome is still well below the Australian labour force average.


10. Ibid.


17. Ibid.

18. ‘Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup?’, pp. 6–10.

19. Ibid., p. 6.


22. Ibid., pp. 144–45.

23. Ibid., p. 147.


ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Learning to Add Value: Fostering Cultures of Effective Learning in the Australian Army

Steven Talbot

ABSTRACT

Organisations remain relevant and competitive through their ability to harness and deploy knowledge in order to promote future success through adaptation. To this end, an organisation’s capacity to generate cultures which promote learning at individual, team and organisational levels is paramount. This article examines the significance of culture, and in particular, the role of learning cultures in the Australian Army as vehicles for individual and organisational development. In doing so, this article considers why it is important for the Australian Army to have effective learning cultures, how some learning practices can be viewed as more relevant or useful than others, and who is required to do the learning. The article concludes by emphasising the value of developing learning cultures in which learners learn useful things, and in turn, learning is made useful through organisational application. In this sense, we can regard learning as a process which holds much of value for Army.
Introduction: A few words on culture

Unless you have been living in a cave for the last few years it would impossible to miss the significance of culture and its prominence within discursive frameworks operating in Defence. As a sociologist who has been examining the significance of learning in the Australian Army for almost a decade now, I find the current focus on culture both fascinating and frustrating. It is fascinating in the sense that culture provides a powerful lens for examining organisational identity and practice. And it is frustrating in the sense that certain practices and behaviours seem to reappear in spite of well-meaning efforts to reduce their occurrence.

A significant contribution to the current cultural discourse is made by *Pathway to Change*, a strategy for promoting cultural change and reform produced in response to a series of culture and internal reviews across Defence. This discourse on culture, more often than not, tends to ‘problematis’ culture, or more significantly, representations of particular aspects of a Defence culture which are thought to be responsible for a variety of institutional transgressions requiring some form of intervention. Putting arguments relating to causation aside, the effect of these representations creates a perception of a Defence culture which needs to be ‘fixed’. I use the word ‘a’ very deliberately because, when culture is spoken of in this context, it usually draws on a singular view of culture. This homogeneous view of culture has the unfortunate effect of tarnishing the entire Defence Organisation including admirable facets of organisational culture such as mateship, professionalism and *esprit de corps*, which are surely worth preserving. Such a view ignores the extent to which the Australian Defence Force, and in particular its three services, comprise culture(s) — plural.

Ironically, with all this emphasis on culture, whether through references to ‘fixing’, ‘changing’, or growing the ‘right’ sort of Defence culture, there appears to be a reluctance to define the term itself. This of course begs the question: if the organisation cannot define culture, how can it expect to ‘fix’ it, or have any meaningful way of determining whether or not it is growing the ‘right’ sort of culture? Here the social sciences offer a way ahead. Sociologists and anthropologists, for example, draw distinctions between material and non-material culture. Material culture comprises artefacts and objects such as ships, tanks and the ‘Bunny Ears’ in Russell, Canberra. Non-material culture is more concerned with ideas: ideas about the way the world is (knowledge); accompanying ideas or preferences about the way things *ought* to be (values); and the translation of values...
into rules and expectations which express how things *should* be done (norms). While the exact wording is not important, any definition should incorporate these aspects of material and non-material culture.

While it is possible to explore the relationship between material and non-material culture and learning, this article confines its discussion to non-material culture. In particular, this discussion ponders the merits of Army adopting a more learner-centric view in order to increase its organisational agility and adaptive capacity. In doing so, it considers the extent to which Army’s adaptive capacity can be enhanced through the generation of learning cultures which promote knowledge creation and sharing, in which leaders value and promote learning so that learning becomes an everyday feature of individual and organisational practice.

**Why does Army need a learning culture?**

The Australian Army needs to cultivate effective learning cultures in order to better realise its modernisation and strategic planning efforts; successfully manage and influence change; make informed decisions concerning capability development; maintain reputation and societal support; foster creative and critical thinking among personnel across the organisation; and, most significantly, save lives.

The idea of learning *in* and *by* organisations is a focus of learning organisation proponents. A multitude of definitions exists for the learning organisation, each with its own particular focus. Some authors describe the learning organisation in an aspirational manner making reference to a desired state of being or guiding philosophy for change initiatives. Some liken the process of becoming a learning organisation to an ongoing quest, while others use the term to describe a type of organisation. The result of this proliferation of definitions is a degree of confusion over the term. For the most part, however, the learning organisation is depicted as a ‘systems level’ concept within the literature.

Evidence of ‘systemic health’ can be discerned through the presence of the following factors:

- a clear sense of identity, purpose or mission
- a capacity on the part of the system to adapt and maintain itself in the face of internal and external changes
- a capacity to perceive and test reality
- some degree of internal integration or alignment of the sub-systems that make up the whole system
These four factors, Schein argues, provide a prerequisite for learning, or the ‘basic capacity to learn’.⁶

Within learning organisations, successful adaptation to change and uncertainty is believed to occur through the learning efforts (both planned and incidental) of individuals and the organisation as a whole. To this end, learning organisations foster cultural conditions which promote and support learning. That is, they have cultures in place which:

- view learning as playing a vital role in informing organisational self-awareness, facilitated through storing, capturing, and sharing new insights with organisational members (knowledge)
- acknowledge and communicate the importance of learning for achieving individual and organisational outcomes (values)
- are characterised by leaders demonstrating their own commitment to learning, encouraging personnel to do the same (norms)

Indeed, learning processes within organisations are tied to culture. Culture helps determine what constitutes knowledge, and which kinds of knowledge can and should be managed. Consequently, culture informs the ways in which new knowledge is created, legitimated, transferred or hoarded within organisations.⁷

Within many organisations, however, considerable energy and attention is often devoted to information technologies for solving knowledge-management and knowledge-sharing problems. Unfortunately, these technology-driven systems are frequently implemented without consideration for the actual way in which people acquire, share and use information.⁸ In such instances, an organisation’s capacity to learn is hampered by its failure to align individual, social and technical aspects of learning with their cultural underpinnings.

The Adaptive Army initiative acknowledges the important role learning plays in assisting the Australian Army to remain agile and responsive in order to meet its operational challenges and strategic goals.⁹ In 2009, the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Gillespie, described the Adaptive Army as aspiring ‘to be a true Learning Organisation where shared, timely knowledge and flexible learning are accepted as the norm for individuals, teams and the organisation.’¹⁰ The learning organisation depicted here connotes both a technical and a social view of learning. The technical aspects of learning incorporate such things as technology-driven architectures designed to provide the flexible delivery of learning, as well as technologies which support the storing and dissemination of information.
The social aspects of learning include informal means of generating and sharing information (knowledge), as well as cultural expectations (norms) for knowledge-sharing and learning which attempt to ‘standardise’ behaviour.

Whether or not Army (or any other organisation for that matter) can be a ‘true’ learning organisation is an interesting question. Learning organisations are often characterised as having relatively flat and decentralised organisational structures which empower employees to make decisions with reduced managerial constraints.\(^{11}\) This (a)structural characteristic is presented as being antithetic to rigidly hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations in which strategic knowledge remains in a few heads ‘at the top’, and power flows down from the top to the bottom. The assumption here of course is that bureaucracies are places devoid of creativity and learning, and that learning organisations are devoid of structure, routine, and constraints on practice. Both positions are untenable and unhelpful in generating sustainable cultures of learning. Army does not need to undergo a total restructure to become a learning organisation. Having sound organisational structures in place, after all, allows organisations to function and maintain order. The learning nub for Army, in this respect, relates to the incorporation of sufficient flexibility within existing organisational structures so that continuity can co-exist alongside change, and requirements for routine, obedience and order do not come at the expense of creativity and innovation. Moreover, Army needs to have mechanisms and metrics in place to track the extent to which learning is applied to produce desirable outcomes, whether they are changes in individual behaviour, processes, or the creation of learning cultures amenable to adaptation.

**What sort of learning, and what is being learned?**

When considering the question of why it is important that the Australian Army has effective learning cultures so as to become more organisationally agile and adaptive, it is also worth asking what sort of learning is required and, more to the point, what should be learned.

The learning organisation literature is awash with numerous examples of favourable learning approaches believed to improve individual and organisational performance. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge provides a list of five inter-related component technologies or disciplines required to establish a learning organisation.\(^ {12}\) These disciplines include personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. Systems thinking is the cornerstone of Senge’s learning organisation and, in its simplest sense, is the ability to see the big picture. It is a conceptual framework which encourages people to see the relationships between many parts, and identify processes rather than focus on linear cause-and-effect relationships.\(^ {13}\)
For Senge, these five inter-related disciplines promote generative learning within and across an organisation. Other well-known learning approaches noted in the literature include single and double loop learning, continuous learning, action learning — learning to solve problems, and learning resulting in the generation of new knowledge. The language used to describe these types of learning, however, is often unhelpful, requiring patience and perseverance from readers as they navigate through a sea of overly prescriptive motherhood statements and management speak.

Pedler and Aspinwall offer some clarity on the matter through their four categories of learning which they consider indicative of learning organisations. Simply expressed, these four categories include learning about things, learning to do things, learning to become yourself, and learning to achieve things with others.

Learning about things: We are probably most familiar with this kind of learning which is concerned with knowledge generation and transfer. Commonly, this involves the learner sitting in a classroom, whether in a university or Army training facility, learning the specifics of a particular subject matter. Often this type of learning relies heavily on the presentation of material, requiring the recipient to memorise chunks of (often decontextualised) information. This teacher-centric stance to learning posits the learner as a passive recipient of information. If done poorly, this approach not only has the potential to alienate soldiers from learning, but also presents learning as a chore, yet another undertaking for busy people to cram into their already hectic working lives.

Learning to do things: A complementary extension to the notion of learning about things is learning to do things. This type of learning involves the development of skills, abilities and the competencies of learners. There are many examples of how Army fosters this approach to learning through its regime of competency-based training programs and exercises as well as operational deployments. Learning to do, and its partner, learning by doing, place the learner in a more active role, providing more immediate learning outcomes, as they allow cause and effect relationships to be played out in a variety of contexts. Thus, this type of learning also has an experiential and immersive quality that enables learning to occur through both participation and observation while, in the process, providing further avenues to learn about things. Ideally, learning about and learning to do should occur in tandem culminating in a balance between theory and its application. Placing too much emphasis on theorising without application may produce paralysis. Alternatively, placing too much emphasis on action unsupported by theory may produce catastrophic results.
Learning to become yourself: This type of learning, as the name suggests, connects learning to notions of personal development. Here the goal of personal development is to realise one’s full potential. Reflection is key to this ongoing process of self-discovery and, in terms of achieving full potential, so is an ability to learn how to learn. Learning how to learn involves learning about one’s strengths and weaknesses as a learner in order to become more proficient at problem-solving. As Army personnel learn to ‘become themselves’, values and attitudes are formed. Becoming ‘oneself’ is an interesting notion in military institutions such as Army, where it could be argued that individual identity formation takes a backseat to the formation of a collective identity designed to produce conformity, cohesion, and social order. In this respect, ‘learning to become yourself’ would only be permissible insofar as such learning does not result in the generation of values and attitudes which contravene cultural norms, and behaviours harmful to the Army brand.

Learning things with others: This type of learning is primarily concerned with learning that occurs through social interaction. Most often, this pertains to learning which occurs as a consequence of belonging to a group or team. Learning things with others can still involve learning about a particular subject matter, but also incorporates the idea of learning about one’s own strengths and weaknesses through the process of working collaboratively with others. Taken a step further, this may also include learning how to get along with others, becoming familiar with and modifying one’s behaviour in accordance with group norms and expectations. Combined arms combat teams, battlegroups and, on a larger scale, units, are places where learning things with others is fostered within Army.

It is tempting to view working and the four types of learning highlighted above as mutually exclusive or conflicting activities. Such a view posits learning and work as discrete activities, often with the former occurring in preparation for the latter, resulting in the production of recognised qualifications and/or skills which enable workers to perform tasks associated with forthcoming roles. In this scenario, learning finishes and then working begins — that is, until a bump occurs in our career trajectory forcing us to return to learning in order to become qualified for our next role. Working and learning, of course, are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the workplace is where learning attains its relevance and currency. This is the learning derived from the rich insights gained from being soldiers, soldiers reflecting on and harnessing the knowledge acquired through experience, whether in the barracks or on operations. In this regard, learning is not another job for soldiers to undertake, but more importantly, occurs alongside work, often informally, and as
a consequence of day-to-day practice. This sort of learning is facilitated through enculturation, observation, social and networked interaction and participation. If captured, this learning can be the impetus for organisational innovation, creativity and transformation. The informal learning culture which shapes these learning opportunities is dynamic, living and emergent, as opposed to formalised constructions of ‘culture’ which are frequently imposed on organisations from above as part of culture change initiatives.

These four types of learning complement existing systems designed to facilitate individual and team learning across Army and, through careful integration, can assist with the development of skilled, educated, agile and resilient personnel. However, the examples of learning highlighted above do not occur in a vacuum. Culture, expressed through organisational values, norms and expectations, informs the extent to which these types of learning manifest across Army. As both signifiers and shapers of culture, leaders play a key role in creating workplace environments which support learning; for example through the creation of supportive environments in which personnel are encouraged to ask questions, challenge assumptions behind strategic thinking, reflect on mistakes, innovate, and take risks. Is this a realistic expectation within the Army context? Should all leaders in the Australian Army be charged with responsibility for facilitating learning? If a more pragmatic response is warranted, which leaders ought to adopt this role? How much questioning and risk-taking should they permit? At what point can asking a question be perceived as an outright challenge to a commander’s authority? Such considerations highlight the danger of simply trying to replace a generic learning organisation culture with another. An important part of Army’s learning in this respect relates to finding an appropriate balance between leadership behaviours which facilitate learning, critical thinking and innovation, as well as respect for authority.

A word of caution is warranted here. There is an assumption in the learning organisation rhetoric that all learning is good, and that learning in itself is enough and will automatically lead to desirable outcomes. In relation to the first observation that all learning is good, we can probably think of many examples where learning can lead to undesirable outcomes. One, after all, can learn how to make petrol bombs, avoid tax, rort the system, turn a blind eye to injustice, not get caught, as well as pass on ‘good’ news rather than all news. In terms of learning being enough in itself, learning is a valuable pursuit, but if Army is to become more agile and adaptive, the learning has to be applied in ways that are useful to the organisation so as to produce a change in behaviour. This learning can be applied
up front: informing strategic thinking, planning and change management initiatives. It can also occur after the event by feeding lessons back into the organisation or through conducting reviews and the like, such as those associated with *Pathway to Change*. For all of these things to occur, the learning needs to be captured so that the organisation as a whole can benefit, an issue touched on in the next section.

**Who is doing the learning?**

Related to the question of what sort of learning is occurring in the Australian Army, is the identification of who is learning. In this respect, we can speak of the learning journeys of individuals, or individual learning; the learning by individuals in groups and teams, or team learning; and learning which occurs at a collective level, or organisational learning. Since aspects of individual and team learning have already been discussed, this article now turns its attention to organisational learning.

An easy assumption to make is that if all individuals are learning, the organisation is learning as well. However, organisational learning is more than the sum of individual learning.24 As discussed, individuals learn within organisations through such things as workplace learning, and training and education initiatives designed to enhance their personal development opportunities. The organisation learns when learning/knowledge is embedded or stored within the organisation so that it becomes part of the organisational memory and the insights derived from these lessons (new knowledge) are used to inform desirable changes in practice/behaviour.25

In order to become a learning organisation, it is important that Army personnel know what types of knowledge are held in the organisation (and among individuals) so that this knowledge can be shared. Such knowledge-sharing can occur through so-called ‘soft’ approaches such as teamwork, collaboration, and facilitative leadership, and ‘hard’ learning processes and infrastructures which facilitate the generation, collection, interpretation and dissemination of information.26 Hard processes and infrastructures can include both high and low technology systems to capture, store and share learning.27 Within the Army context, low technology approaches involve the capturing/codification and dissemination of knowledge through written reports, doctrine, routines and the like. High technology approaches include the use of databases, share points and various portals to ensure that information moves up and down the chain of command, as well as laterally through sanctioned websites offered by the Defence intranet.
While the Australian Army has many hard and soft mechanisms to facilitate knowledge-sharing across the organisation, the knowledge-sharing potential of these mechanisms is subject to a variety of factors which could inhibit organisational learning. Hard mechanisms are reliant on ongoing maintenance and system support to prevent degradation of service. Information systems also require careful coordination and integration to maximise their knowledge-sharing potential. Organisational restructures and the redistribution of resources and effort brought about by climates of extreme fiscal constraint can place considerable pressure on information technology support teams to provide more with less. Similarly, soft mechanisms are reliant on the maintenance and coordination of (social) systems so that knowledge-sharing capacities do not degrade. In this respect, knowledge-sharing is encouraged through the development of trust, mateship, notions of reciprocity, mentorship, and the development of shared understanding. If organisations value these soft mechanisms for knowledge creation and transfer, they need to create spaces and opportunities for this type of social interaction to occur.

Once again, culture provides the glue for holding the hard and soft learning framework together. Mechanisms for learning (or change for that matter) are unlikely to yield productive learning outcomes (desired changes in behaviour) if they are not embedded within an appropriate organisational culture — a culture in which the shared values and beliefs shape the way organisational members think, feel and behave. There is a stark difference between Army having the technological and social structures in place to support knowledge-sharing, and having personnel who voluntarily want to share their knowledge with others. While the existence of shared organisational values and beliefs may not guarantee that knowledge-sharing will occur, they can at least create the cultural conditions in which knowledge-sharing is more likely to occur. Creating and enacting behavioural norms which encourage voluntary knowledge-sharing will further assist the production of a supportive learning culture.
Conclusion

How we think about (organisational) culture, its origins, representative power, and significance for the attitudes and behaviour of organisational members, informs the ways in which we respond to so-called cultural crises. These same cultural considerations, however, can also be a powerful tool for enabling organisations to gain strategic advantage. When allied with a cultural mindset which values learning — a mindset which is translated into norms and expectations which encourage learning behaviours at individual, team and organisational levels, organisations such as the Australian Army can increase their capacity for adaptation.

Greater organisational agility and adaptation can occur when individual learning is embedded into organisational systems, processes and structures. The Australian Army already has mechanisms in place to successfully identify and capture insights derived from operations. Through validation processes these insights become lessons which may be codified as doctrine and transformed into a variety of tactics, techniques or procedures for subsequent operations. To further enhance organisational agility and adaptation an additional but related learning system might be considered. By employing similar processes and mechanisms to those used to facilitate organisational learning from lessons gained from operational contexts, this learning system would focus more on the analysis of lessons arising from informal and barracks-based learning contexts. This second system would assist with the identification of process-oriented lessons and consider their significance to longer term policy-driven and change-management issues such as the efficacy of structural reforms, as well as cultural concerns articulated within Pathway to Change.

The trick in all this is to learn useful things and, more to the point, make learning useful. Learning becomes useful through organisational consumption and application. Through purposeful and timely application, learning adds value. Value is added through the retrospective application of learning that is captured following an event, and when learning is proactively sought and strategically applied at the ‘front end’ — informing decision-making. The Australian Army cannot afford the luxury of learning for learning’s sake. Useful learning provides the impetus for performance improvement by assisting personnel to maximise their potential in their efforts to meet personal and organisational goals. With this in mind, it is worth remembering that the Army is not a university, and the primary goal of all personnel is not learning. This is fine. The Australian Army does not
need to create more scholars to maximise its learning potential. In order to reach its learning potential, however, it does need to create cultural conditions in which learning becomes a normal feature of practice.

It is important to end with the following two observations. First, this article adopts a very organisationally centric view of culture to argue a case for growing cultures conducive to learning in the Australian Army. The Australian Army sits within a broader societal context. The learning cultures discussed here are premised on the voluntary cooperation and somewhat altruistic desire of personnel to put organisational interests ahead of their own. It could be argued that the modern Australian landscape is one which promotes excessive individualism and self-interest over collectivism and collective interests. If this is the case, the Australian Army’s aspirations for becoming more like a learning organisation may be made more difficult by the presence of broader societal expectations which run counter to this goal. Second, is there a chance that, with all this emphasis on culture at the moment, we have missed something? In our haste to point the finger at culture, have we done so at the expense of focussing our attention on possible economic, systemic or political conditions which inform organisational disquiet? Thus, although well-intentioned, we may be creating cultural fixes for economic, political, structural and systemic problems.
THE AUTHOR

Steven Talbot works within the human science discipline in the domains of social and organisational learning. While at DSTO, he has examined issues relating to learning organisations, social and organisational learning, lesson capture and dissemination. Steven has a PhD in Sociology from Flinders University, South Australia.

ENDNOTES


10. Ibid.


13 Hodgkinson, "Managerial Perceptions of Barriers to Becoming a 'Learning Organisation'".


20 The notion of learning to become yourself adopts a social constructionist view of identity formation. In this regard, self identities are viewed as being socially and historically constituted, subject to change and negotiation, in opposition to a ‘fixed’ or predetermined notion of self which minimises individual agency.


ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Family Friendly Army —
First Class Policy, Second Class Implementation
Lieutenant Colonel Kirsty Skinner and Ms Chloe Diggins

ABSTRACT
This paper has two primary objectives. The first of these involves an examination of Army’s family friendly policies, which can be broadly summarised as addressing affordable day care, paid maternity and parental leave, carer’s leave and flexible work arrangements. The effectiveness of Army’s policies will be gauged through comparison with employment conditions in the public and private sector. The article’s second objective comprises analysis of the effects of the Army force generation cycle on service families, particularly in terms of children’s schooling and relocation pressures. The role of the commander/manager in implementing and approving policy will also be discussed with a view to highlighting some of the challenges of policy implementation. Recommendations for policy change will be provided throughout the paper.
Being a parent and a full time Army officer is absolutely complementary – one doesn’t come at the expense of the other; however you must be absolutely organised and very clear on your core business and work outputs, as there is just no room for extra nif naf.

Respondent 15

Introduction

The challenges of balancing family and professional commitments are not necessarily unique to Army or Defence. Employees in other industries face similar challenges such as moving frequently, living in remote locations, working long hours and routine absences from the family home, on top of the normal pressures of balancing parental responsibilities with a rewarding and successful career. However, Army families are unique in that serving members often lack control over where or when they relocate or deploy, and this uncertainty exists for the entirety of the serving member’s career. Inevitably, this has flow-on effects for the family relationships and personal health and wellbeing of Army members.

Massive changes to employment conditions for Army parents have been introduced in the last two decades. Improvements to pay and salary schemes, leave entitlements, and the introduction of family-oriented policies have provided opportunities for a better work-life balance for Army members and have contributed to the ascension of women into senior officer ranks. Women — often the primary carers within a family unit — have traditionally struggled more with the pressures of balancing parenting and full-time work, and thus appear to benefit most from family-oriented policies. In reality, however, contemporary parenting in Army families is predominantly a challenge for men. Of the 10,167 parents in Army, 9268 are males and only 899 are female. Therefore, family-friendly policies have a significant impact on the serving male population of the Army, and as such should be viewed as gender-neutral initiatives.

To that end, this article is neither intended as a commentary on the status of women in the Army, nor a contribution to the wider debate on gender relations in Defence. Instead, its primary objective is to examine the effectiveness of Army’s family-friendly policies which can be broadly summarised as addressing affordable day care, paid maternity and parental leave, provisions for work absence when children are ill (carer’s leave), and flexible work arrangements. This article will describe Army’s policies — which are articulated primarily through the Defence
Employment Offer — and performance in these areas while also comparing these with employment conditions in the public and private sector. While the nature of military service is unique and in some ways incomparable to civilian industries, Army can learn from industry and the private sector how to better implement its own policies. Following the outline and comparison of policies provided in section one of this article, section two will contextualise Army’s family-oriented policies within the force generation cycle, describing its impact on family members and relationships. Recommendations for policy change will be made throughout the course of this discussion.

This article combines the findings of academic research with personal perspectives and the experiences of Australian Army officers. A survey of ten questions targeted at senior officers and commanders was sent to workplaces around Australia. Thirty-seven officers responded to questions concerning the support their own children and spouses required during the Army force generation cycle and whether this affected command decision-making. This informal survey was not scientific nor was it undertaken through the Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee on a scale sufficiently large to provide a representative population. Rather the respondents’ personal experiences assisted the authors to understand the challenges some families face, and the different strategies units employ to assist in minimising these challenges. The survey responses may also suggest an avenue of formal research for those investigating flexible work arrangements within Defence.

**Section One: Army’s family-oriented policies**

Discussion of Army’s family-oriented policies is usefully prefaced by consideration of the Defence Employment Offer (DEO). The DEO encompasses the tangible and intangible benefits that Defence offers to an individual in exchange for employment as a serving member. It includes salary, service allowance, superannuation, health (medical, dental, physiotherapy), subsidised housing and uniforms. It also includes leave entitlements and policies which govern the military workplace and therefore set the framework for service members’ ability to interact with their families. The DEO considers the unique nature and challenge of military service — the requirement for 24/7 duty, movement within Australia and overseas deployments.

This article will compare the DEO to public sector provisions within Australia and in other countries. The purpose of this comparison is to demonstrate that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has exceeded the provisions provided to the
public sector in Australia and, by virtue of this, has become an employer of choice. Furthermore, by outperforming the public sectors of other countries, the ADF provides better benefits and conditions than comparable militaries around the world, which often perform on par with the public sector of their various countries.

Four major family-oriented policies are discussed in the following paragraphs: children’s day care, parental leave entitlements, carer’s leave, and flexible working arrangements.

**Defence Day Care**
Defence has attempted to provide affordable children’s day care through the creation of Defence Day Care Centres on or close to select bases. Serving members are able to salary sacrifice to pay the fees, considerably decreasing the cost. The day care centres located close to Army bases are fully subscribed and profitable; however the centres located close to Navy and Air Force bases have proven less profitable, raising questions over the continued operation of Defence Day Care Centres. While the reason for this disparity has not been researched, it may be that Navy and Air Force families remain in one location for longer periods (over repeat postings) and therefore seek alternative day care arrangements within the community. The result is that service personnel must rely on obtaining civilian day care positions which are becoming increasingly expensive. In the last five years, children’s day care costs have risen from $55 to $104 per child per day in long-term day care. As Sheryl Sandberg suggests, unless a woman has a job that challenges and interests her, paying such a high portion of her wage in care deters many women from re-entering the workforce after childbirth.4

**Parental Leave**
Defence’s second major family-friendly policy concerns leave entitlements. Army provides extensive maternity leave entitlements allowing women 14 weeks’ leave at full pay (or taken as 28 weeks on half-pay) and a total of 66 weeks’ leave when combined with other forms of leave.5 Spouses are entitled to two weeks’ parental leave on full pay (or taken as four weeks on half-pay). The member may then be granted 64 weeks’ parental leave without pay.

If we compare the Army leave provisions with those of the Australian Government, Army fares well. Currently, public service employees are entitled to 12 weeks’ maternity leave, spousal leave for two weeks (minimum wage), and paid parental leave for 18 weeks (minimum wage).6 Army also compares well with the international community. Our neighbours across the Tasman are consistent with Australia,
providing 14 weeks’ paid maternity leave (to $475 per week) which can be extended to 52 weeks’ unpaid leave. They also provide up to two weeks’ unpaid parental leave. Canada pays 15 weeks’ maternity leave and 35 weeks’ paternity leave (for those who have paid their employment insurance) for 600 hours of employment.

The gold standard, however, is in Sweden, where parents can ‘take 480 days off work, receive 80% of their pay for the first 15 months and divide their leave however they see fit, barring that both parents receive 2 months of parental leave that is exclusive to them’. They can take this leave at any time until the child is eight years old. While there is no obligation for Army to meet the generous leave entitlement of Sweden, there is real value in allowing existing leave entitlements to be taken until children are older (until four to eight years of age). There is no additional cost to Army because the entitlement for leave already exists, but the benefit to the serving member is enormous. This would allow the member to choose to retain a portion of leave to address the challenge of childhood illnesses or school holidays. This concept was supported by the Child Family Community Australia Paper, which accompanied the introduction of Dad and Partner Pay.

This article likewise recommends that Army consider allowing serving members to retain their parental leave entitlements until a child is eight years old.

**Carer’s Leave**

Defence’s third major family-friendly policy involves carer’s leave. The DEO recently expanded the use of paid carer’s leave to ten days per financial year. In industries such as the Australian construction industry, paid or unpaid carer’s leave is not an entitlement. As Sandberg asserts, the lack of paid carer’s leave is a key factor in the families of sick children falling into debt and poverty. This is the antithesis of the community capacity-building that Army supports. Army could evolve its policy in this area to recognise the challenges that caregivers face by expanding the parental leave entitlement to include care for immediate family members. Such a policy change has proven successful for the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Massachusetts, which replaced its parental leave policy with a family leave policy to allow 12 weeks’ leave for ‘new parents, but also for employees who need to care for a spouse, child or parent with a serious health condition’. Army could also consider expanding the entitlement to include care for immediate family members.
Flexible Working Arrangements

Defence’s fourth and final major family-friendly policy concerns flexible working arrangements. Broader societal influences have seen employment patterns change for Australian families. The DEO addressed this by introducing flexible working arrangements which allow serving members, in consultation with their hierarchy, to work unconventional hours or reduced hours (for proportionally reduced pay), or to work remotely where practicable. Of course, flexible working arrangements are not necessarily feasible in all Army’s work environments. Some employees, particularly those working in the field, on deployment, or in highly demanding roles have reduced flexibility in work hours and attendance, and may not have the same access to flexible working arrangements as those working in office environments. Nonetheless, where it is possible to support families by allowing members to work flexibly, Army should do so. If it cannot be done in today’s work environment, then it should become an aspiration for our future workforce.

The introduction of flexible working arrangements necessitated a review of standard workplace structures that govern office work, including the baseline expectations concerning when, where and how work will be done. It is still possible for employers and employees to collaborate to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and personal commitments if expectations and priorities are clearly articulated and agreed. Workplace plans should be constructed collaboratively to satisfy both parties and to ensure that employees affected by the flexible working arrangements of other workers are fully informed. Within Army, where a significant power differential exists due to rank, negotiation over flexible working arrangements could be facilitated by a third party — a flexible working arrangements ‘broker’.

For Army, the key obstacle in implementing flexible working arrangements is the culture of ‘presenteeism’ which, according to one survey respondent, involves ‘the belief that if you are not standing in front of your commander you are not a productive member of the team’. This culture affects a member’s willingness to apply for flexible working arrangements, the likelihood such arrangements will be approved, and whether the member will feel comfortable using any flexible working arrangements granted. This highlights the requirement to ‘shift the work culture to performance evaluation as separate from employee visibility’. As one respondent from a headquarters workplace noted:
I know my boss expects me to be working extended hours (up until 6pm) and he is frustrated by my inability to do this [due to collecting child from day care before 6pm] and is expressing that. I am fully aware that this is colouring his perception of me and that I can expect him to make some comment about this in my annual report which will have obvious flow-on effects.19

While there are individual and collective training requirements which can only be met by all members of the team being present, the objective for Army should be to differentiate between activities that require all members to attend and activities that could be conducted with a degree of flexibility, rather than presuppose that all staff are required all days of the year. After all, Army copes with people taking leave (annual, sick, maternity) so there is scope to include flexible work arrangements in most organisations within the Army.

Currently, less than 1% of Army members are utilising flexible working arrangements. The nature of Defence work means that to have 100% of its members on flexible working arrangements would not be in the organisation’s — or the members’ — best interests. However there is still considerable scope for greater participation. Chief of Army Lieutenant General Morrison has provided strategic guidance on the issue, reinforcing his support for increased flexible working arrangements within the Army, stating that ‘providing our officers and soldiers with the flexibility they need to balance their work and their personal commitments is a key element of retaining them.’20 Despite this, some survey respondents expressed their reluctance to use flexible working arrangements on part-time leave without pay as they were concerned that this might be detrimental to their careers. Essentially, if an assessing officer believes part-time leave without pay correlates to decreased performance and motivation, a weaker annual report will be issued. Therefore, ‘while perhaps reducing day to day work/family conflict, part time work may have negative long term career consequences, which also need to be taken into consideration.’21 Noting that promotion boards consider the six-year reporting history of serving members, a poor report thus carries a six-year residual impact. These long-term career consequences need to be considered as ‘most working parents committed to keeping their families at the centre have pursued non traditional career paths.’22

This highlights one of the biggest challenges for the implementation of successful flexible working arrangements in the Army: reaffirming the value of non-traditional or non-linear career pathways. As one respondent claimed, ‘the message now is if you are not assessed as suitable for command you are of little value to Army,
and treated and managed as such.”23 Perceptions like this need to be addressed by Army’s Career Management Agency to demonstrate that Army wants to retain the talent, experience, and institutional knowledge that personnel and capability-streamed staff possess. This article recommends that Army should actively manage careers that deviate from the command, leadership and management model to better retain talent and organisational knowledge. Overhauling organisational culture is not solely about celebrating the demographic diversity within our ranks; it should also be about recognising and capitalising on the many types of service and working arrangements in which members are engaged.

Army should be aware that flexible working arrangements come with a clear management overhead to implement and support them for the benefit of the organisation and its members. The required management skills could be taught on promotion courses for senior non-commissioned officers and junior officers or via compulsory Campus courses such as that used for the new performance appraisal reporting.24 Such education programs should ‘cover topics such as negotiating a return to work plan before taking leave’, the importance of ‘on ramps’ and ‘strategies for maintaining contact’.25 It should be recognised that the management costs of implementing flexible working arrangements compare favourably with the cost of recruiting and training replacement soldiers.

Army’s family-oriented policies provide a world class framework of entitlements to support serving members and their families. Any discussion of the support options available must recognise that the nature of Army service is inherently one of devotion and duty to country, and that barracks positions are more open to flexible working arrangements than field positions. As one respondent commented:

The ADF should define what is appropriate [rather than dictate a solution to work-life balance]. The ADF should also accept that being a member is demanding ... we must recognise that the types of sacrifices expected of members of the ADF can never be fully compensated ... every individual's sacrifice takes a different form. Some costs are borne by the individual in the sense of time and effort. Some costs are borne by the family of the serving soldier.26

It is therefore necessary to ground the academic theory and policy aspects of family-friendly policies within Army’s force generation and posting cycles.
Section Two: the force generation cycle

The force generation cycle prepares Army for war by categorising members into ready, readying, and reset phases. In theory, during the ready phase a member is poised to deploy — whether on a long-term or short-term operation. In the readying phase, members spend considerable time in the field conducting collective training and mission rehearsal exercises to prepare for deployment. During the reset phase, members rest, reconnect with family and attend promotion courses. The force generation cycle is a sound concept, but does not provide the clear delineation between phases originally anticipated, as noted by the following respondents:

*I have learned that the [force generation] cycle is busy regardless of which year one is in. All that changes is the emphasis and type of training, and the types and amounts of resources available.*

*My key observation is that during the readying, ready and reset period is that the tempo of work does not decrease. The nature may change however we are just as busy regardless of the force generation cycle.*

It is difficult to apply Army’s family-friendly policies during the force generation cycle as the tempo and volume of work varies significantly and the commander does not have the ability to employ additional staff to mitigate the loss or changed work habits of staff. While the force generation cycle was meant to provide certainty to families and respite to members, in reality members spend more time away from their families.

The aim of the force generation cycle is to provide structure to the lives of serving members, but Army personnel post into and out of units at different stages of the cycle, and also to units outside the cycle, which negates the anticipated rest phase. This poses the challenge of adjusting from the deployment, reconnecting with family and then leaving the unit family. Survey respondents described the additional pressure of postings on family units:

*From a family perspective – is the rest phase of this cycle occurring? Many families report of postings straight after deployment – therefore adding two stressful events to a family at once – reintegration post prolonged separation, on top of moving and setting up house.*
Moving out of the force generation cycle with a posting to another location introduces another collection of parenting challenges for military families in terms of children’s education. This is exacerbated by the release of posting orders after the end of the financial year:

*Catholic schools are required to submit enrolment numbers for funding purposes on 30 June for the following academic year, which is before parents have even been informed where they will have to look for schools. The mismatch reduces the flexibility that Catholic schools have in accepting enrolments from out of state in the second half of the year.*

Concerns regarding school enrolment are amplified when a child has experienced learning difficulties. A US study found that some children are being lost in the education system: ‘any child who is five months behind at the end of first grade has only a one-in-five chance of ever catching up to grade level.’ Despite differences between Australian and US educational and deployment systems, in the absence of a comparable Australian study, US findings highlight the potential for similar challenges in Australia. For example, current Defence policy identifies the key school years as grades 10 to 12; perhaps the first two years of school should also be identified as critical for stability.

Education and day care challenges are exacerbated as Defence Housing allocates a married quarter or approves the use of rental assistance only four weeks before a posting date. A family has minimal ability to obtain appropriate care and plan its daily work and school schedules at such short notice. One solution would be to issue posting orders in May. This would require a fundamental change in the function of the career management agencies and would rely on career managers commencing their preparations for the promotion board in the previous calendar year. Yet the enormous value of posting orders issued in May to the thousands of Army families would be well worth the changes to the career management system.

Another possible solution would be to have Defence Housing Australia advise families of their new address and the date of their projected removal in June (before the end of the financial year). Defence Housing Australia could advise the date the family would leave its current residence and the date the new residence would be available. While this would limit the flexibility of families to alter their removal dates, the value to the majority of defence members would compensate for the inconvenience to the minority.
Alongside the problems of finding suitable education, day care and housing, there are myriad personal challenges caused by relocation such as separation from friends and merging into a new school culture. Both children and the service spouse require enormous confidence to meet these challenges. Unless the spouse can work remotely, he/she is:

*Required to restart in her [or his] employment every posting. This causes a huge amount of financial and emotional stress each move ... If we go MWD-U [i.e. the member moves alone while his/her family remains in the former location], her [or his] employment and the stability of the kids schooling will be the main factors for making that decision.*

As a result many spouses choose to leave the workforce to look after the family and assist with the transition:

*At the time of initial [career] sacrifice the loss is tangible, unavoidable (child bearing) and within a honeymoon period; when children commence school reflection rightly kicks in and unfairness/tiredness/appreciation deficit is questioned.*

This article does not suggest that Army has a role in the allocation of responsibilities within a family, particularly as offering ‘a one size fits all’ approach to family problems is ‘certain to result in costly failure for the organisation and resentment on the part of employees.’ Instead, Army’s role extends to creating a policy framework for the serving member, which ‘does not dictate behaviour directly ... but provides a framework for rational choice.’ This can allow a serving member to craft the work arrangements that support the family, whether through standard working hours or flexible working arrangements.

When this observation is placed in context of the cycle of Army’s two and three-year posting cycles and internal position change within the unit, this becomes an almost constant challenge for serving members. For those who are primary caregivers and are negotiating the ins and outs of a new posting, that challenge can be intensified:

*When children need more attention and this stage coincides with a new posting it is hard to convince a new chain of command that while you are normally committed to your job and prepared to work towards achieving appropriate work-related goals, that at that particular time the balance needs to swing more away from work and toward family.*
Ideally, we need to be able to devote sufficient time to our families, feel competent and challenged at work and be valued as an employee. Within an Army context this would require career management agencies to employ serving members in a job that is within their level of competence and expertise and it would require their commander to value their contribution. Career management agencies and commanders therefore have a key role in maintaining the quality of members’ family lives and ensuring members remain mentally and physically available to their families. For Army this means that if we manage people well (which is a sunk cost as we are already paying the wages of the staff responsible for career management and commanders) we will not be required to pay retention bonuses to retain dissatisfied people. While the force generation cycle, deployments and postings impose challenges on our families, commanders can represent the biggest impediment to accessing family-friendly policies. A commander can nurture a culture in which applying for leave or flexible work is feasible with resources available to mitigate the absence of staff members. If flexible working arrangements are to be effective, managers need to be resourced to negotiate arrangements which suit the workplace and, if required, obtain additional resources to achieve identified targets and/or outputs. By encouraging and supporting commanders to facilitate family-friendly policies in their work units, Army will create flow-on effects that will minimise work/life conflict thereby increasing job satisfaction and contentment. This, in turn, will have a positive influence on productivity, innovation and retention.

Conclusion

Army has world class family-friendly policies — the stumbling block comes with select individuals’ aversion to implementing these, in positions where it would be feasible. As one survey respondent commented:

*The issue of support in my view resides solely with the supervisor/commander. The system provides maximum flexibility; however, the decision makers empowered to provide that flexibility remain the weak point.*

The irony is that this aversion is countered by the extensive micro-level flexible working arrangements implemented within units which enable people to contribute to their families in a way that suits them and Army. Perhaps the problem lies in a fallacious belief that, if such arrangements are formalised, there will be some impact on the member’s career.
As this article has argued, Army’s family-friendly policies are often impeded by a prevailing workplace culture of ‘presenteeism’, the tempo of the force generation cycle, and the willingness and ability of commanders to approve the use of these policies. This discussion has also identified that the force generation cycle, deployments and postings have a direct impact on families and children by not providing certainty to families or time to rest and reconnect. This undermines Army’s credibility as a ‘family first’ organisation.

To address these concerns, this article recommends consideration of the following policy amendments:

- parental leave entitlements should be available until a child is eight and should be expanded to include care for immediate family members
- Army should actively manage careers that deviate from the command, leadership and management model to better retain talent and organisational knowledge
- management skills for flexible working arrangements should be taught via Campus courses to raise awareness and encourage managers to approve their use in the workplace
- posting orders should be issued in May and Defence Housing Australia should inform members of their new residential address in June (before the end of the financial year)
- school years of grades K to 1 and 11 to 12 should be classified as critical years for a child’s education

The work-life balance that Army promotes is certainly achievable. It is simply a matter of prioritising different aspects of members’ lives in concert with their families and employers to ensure that all parties are receiving the support they need. It is not the role of Army to dictate one model for the perfect work-life balance, but rather to provide policies which equip serving members with practical options. Army’s policies provide these options — it is now for commanders to be encouraged and supported in implementing them. If commanders support the implementation of flexible working arrangements, and the recommendations outlined in this article are adopted, pressures on Army families will decrease and the recruitment of new serving members will increase as Army’s first class policies will be implemented at a first class standard, raising Army’s status to that of preferred employer.

Family Friendly Army —
First Class Policy, Second Class Implementation

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
THE AUTHORS

Lieutenant Colonel Kirsty Skinner is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force Academy, Royal Military College Duntroon and Australian Command and Staff College. She has a Bachelor of Arts (Politics), a Graduate Diploma of Management in Defence Studies and a Master of Arts (Strategy and Management). Lieutenant Colonel Skinner has served in regimental, training and staff planning environments and has seen operational service in East Timor and Iraq.

Chloe Diggins is a Research Officer at the Land Warfare Studies Centre. Her postgraduate studies include a Masters in Political Science (International Relations) from the University of Malmö, Sweden, and a Masters in Policing, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism from Macquarie University. She is currently researching the role of gender in the Australian Army.

ENDNOTES


2 The Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee is committed to the creation and maintenance of an environment in which research on humans undertaken on Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel, by ADF personnel, or on Defence property, is conducted both professionally and ethically.

3 ‘Family’ in this context encompasses single members and their next of kin, married/ de facto members, and married members with their children.

4 Sheryl Sandberg is the Chief Operations Officer of Facebook and the author of Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead (written with Nell Scovell), Knopf, New York, 2013.

5 Often this is a mixture of leave without pay, annual leave and long service leave.


8 See: http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/types/maternity_parental.shtml#long


12 Sandberg, Lean In.

14 Ibid.


16 Ibid.

17 Respondent 7.


19 Respondent 3.


22 Hertz, ‘Working to Place Family at the Center of Life’, p. 16.

23 Respondent 7.

24 The Campus Learning Management System is the Australian Defence Organisation’s Learning Management System.


26 Respondent 6.

27 Respondent 6.

28 Respondent 17.

29 Respondent 5.

30 Respondent 7.


32 Respondent 7.

33 Respondent 19.


36 Respondent 3.

37 Respondent 13.
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

From Institution to Occupation: Australian Army Culture in Transition

Anthony John

ABSTRACT

For some time, the Australian Army has been moving from Huntington’s *institutional* culture model, characterised by a sense of service above self, to Janowitz’s more *occupational* model which is defined in terms of market principles. This shift from one cultural model to another is a result of both internal and external pressures and is reflected in what is broadly referred to as Army’s ‘culture’. This article uses the twin issues of recruitment and retention to measure this shift and provide some context for the resulting changes to that culture. While a degree of occupationalism is accepted within the ranks of the Army, there is evidence to suggest that there are limits set by stakeholders in line with institutional behaviour and attitudes. This cultural shift and its implications form the central focus of this article.
Culture does not change because we desire to change it. Culture changes when the organization is transformed — the culture reflects the realities of people working together every day.

Frances Hesselbein

Introduction

With demands for reviews and responses to reviews coming thick and fast in the Department of Defence it may be useful to re-frame the debate over the ‘culture’ of Defence and take a broader view of some of the issues at hand. A definition for the term ‘culture’ is a good starting point. For the purposes of this paper, culture will be very broadly defined as the sum of a shared set of values and norms which form a bond between people at the most basic level including language, religion, beliefs and traditions. Second — and importantly — culture must be capable of being transmuted from one generation to the next.2 The Army should not, however, be viewed as monolithic in its culture. It is a subset of the overall Defence culture and in turn has sub-cultures of its own.

The process of socialisation takes time to nurture and inculcate. It appears from a quick glance at the table fronting the 2012 report Pathway to Change that its authors may be somewhat ambitious in their time-frames for cultural change.3 However, without a compelling imperative such as military defeat in detail or massive loss of public confidence, generational change is far more likely and, in Army terms, this equates to a 20-year period. As Frances Hesselbein comments, cultural change cannot be mandated; it reflects changes in the organisation and its people. Change management is hard work and cannot be achieved easily or quickly.

This discussion of Army culture focuses on recruitment and the other side of that same coin — retention. Both elements have had a significant impact on Army workplace practices and policies and speak to the Army’s strength — its human capital. Each area has a number of strands and each is significant in and of itself, although space prohibits any more than a light treatment of each in this discussion. This article argues that the Australian Army is undergoing a fundamental cultural shift, as are the other services. While the Army experience is particularly emphasised, the nature of change within the Army will be placed in the context of changes within the wider Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Australian society and, where necessary, changes to international society.
Purpose and scope
This article identifies some of the cultural trends and challenges within Australian society that are influencing or have influenced the Australian Army. These influences can be tracked on three levels, either in isolation or combination: first, as part of the broader Australian society’s cultural tectonic moves; second, at the organisational level by the Army and/or Defence itself; and finally, as part of individual and collective change in attitudes and behaviour by military members.

The early theorists
Political scientist Samuel Huntington in 1957 and sociologist Morris Janowitz in 1960 proposed two differing schools of thought on military culture. In *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington noted the tendency of US military officers to become part of the growing US Department of Defense bureaucracy, known as the military-industrial complex. The dominant military figure for Huntington was that of the ‘heroic’ professional identity or the warfighter who advocated eschewing bureaucratic support roles in favour of concentrating on the core function of warfighting. No doubt for Huntington the term ‘warfighting’ was redundant — for what other purpose is the Army used except for fighting wars?

The Huntington model, also known as the ‘institutional’ military model, is legitimated in terms of values and norms; that is, its members are driven by a purpose transcending individual self-interest and family in favour of a presumed higher goal. Its members see the services as a calling or vocation as well as an obligation of citizenship. Members of the military ‘institution’ are commonly viewed by the public, and perceive themselves, as different and apart from society as a whole. Alongside the notion of selflessness and subordination to the greater good is an expectation or social contract with the organisation to meet all their basic needs and provide all their required services. The characteristics of the organisation reflect this self-perception of traditional patriot and protector of society. There is little room in Huntington’s military for the inclusion of minorities for the sake of diversity.

Janowitz, in *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, also noted this tendency for officers to become part of the burgeoning bureaucracy. He described this as ‘civilianisation’ and advocated a more integrated military. This integrated military would also reflect or at the very least refract the wider societal composition. Under the Janowitz model the military needs to adopt the skills and orientations common to all large organisations in order to become more efficient. This so-called ‘convergence’ theory has significant implications for career patterns and development and, ultimately, the characteristics and self-perception of
the military. Janowitz advocated that the military should be part of society and reflect its values. The Janowitz model describes the ‘occupational’ military, defined in terms of market principles and characterised by the members’ priority of self-interest over the interests of the employing organisation. The self-perception of the employees (as they would label themselves) is based on appropriate expectations and demands. The occupational military is cash driven and compares itself with external organisations for benchmarking purposes. As a consequence, the distinctions between the military and other large organisations are increasingly blurred.

Academic Dr Cathy Downes, who has analysed the personnel operations of the Australian Army, comments that Western armed forces (including Australia’s) have ‘to greater and lesser degrees, undergone a process of civilianisation in which there has been a convergence of technical and managerial skills and organisational formats between the military and civilian sectors.’ Her overarching hypothesis is that the military is ‘moving away from an institutional format to one more and more resembling an occupational one.’

Although Huntington and Janowitz were commenting on the US military experience specifically, Professor Charles Moskos noted that the theory, concepts and hypotheses are more universal and that ‘much research has been conducted in Western military systems outside the United States.’ According to Hugh Smith, although the research has primarily focused on the US, ‘the Australian experience fits the model rather well.’ In fact, this appears to be something of an understatement. Correspondent Ian McPhedran noted that the number of star ranks (brigadiers and above) in the Australian Army has doubled in the last five years and numbered 77 in 2010. This represents a ratio of one general per 1560 soldiers, double that of the US Army. This is not to suggest that an increase in star rank officers equals an increase in occupationalism. In fact, the tendency in the corporate world is towards ‘flattening’ the organisational hierarchy. It does, however, show that Huntington’s original thesis has some validity in the Australian construct.

**Recruitment**

Recruitment is vital to any large organisation and its long-term viability. This is especially true in a ‘closed’ system such as the Army. The question of who serves and who does not is also fundamental. It is accepted as a truism in a Western democracy that the Army reflects the society from which it is drawn. Indeed, British military historian General Sir John Hackett argues that the Army must (emphasis added) reflect its host society. In doing so, it should share the same core values and be committed to the goals and aspirations of the culture it protects and the society it is ultimately established to defend.
Each new recruit brings with him (or increasingly and more significantly her) a piece of society and its values and, in its own small way, this will affect the institution. In addition, those same recruits have certain expectations and demands that they expect to be fulfilled. Externally, the policies of the government of the day and the trends and expectations of society will apply pressure for the armed forces to conform to the nation’s behavioural norms and cultural standards. This was very evident in the public response to the ADFA Skype scandal and other similar incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

The transition from an institutional military format to an occupational one manifests itself in the culture of the organisation. The culture and processes of the military include the ‘circle of life’ recruitment of its members, methods of retaining them and, ultimately, of retiring them. It should be noted that not all Western armed forces will advance evenly along a continuum from institutional to occupational military culture. For legal, cultural, and historical reasons, some military forces will embrace some measure of change however reluctant or actively opposed they are to this. However this process appears to be an inevitable shift as the Army follows its host society — willingly or otherwise. Whether there are limits imposed on this process and how long they remain, may depend on the nature of society and the degree of change.

In the early 1970s, following the end of the Vietnam War, Australia abandoned conscription and opted for an all-volunteer force. As a result, the Army has relied on the use of market-oriented strategies to compete with civilian employers for quality recruits. Former Deputy Secretary of Defence Alan Wrigley regarded this as ‘a turning point: with the abandonment of conscription went the notion of the citizens’ obligation of service to the state.’11 The Army recruiting marketing strategy moved from a focus on ‘not just a job but a career’ to the blandly all-encompassing ‘Defence Jobs’.12 While the change in language may be subtle it is nonetheless meaningful.

Recruiting is no longer the preserve of ‘old and bold’ sergeants seeking to fill their quota. Recruiting today is a unique collaboration between the public sector Department of Defence and the private sector human resources contractor Manpower Services (Australia) to provide an integrated recruitment organisation for the military. It is interesting that employees of a civilian human resources corporation, who may know little about service in the Army, are case officers and first points of contact for candidates in the enlistment process.

As noted in the latest Defence Annual Report, the ADF’s recruitment and retention program has now been in place since 2007, with $3.1 billion allocated over a ten-year period to a range of initiatives. The program includes retention bonuses...
focussed on reducing separation rates in critical categories and ranks in the short term, while longer-term structural change, remuneration reform and other benefits have been introduced to encourage members to stay longer. At the same time a number of improvements have been made to recruitment practices. These include initiatives such as specific-to-corps entry and 12-month enlistments as a ‘try before you buy’ option.

Ethnic diversity

In 1993 a major report initiated by the ADF concluded that the military was underrepresented in soldiers from non-English speaking ethnic groups. Given Australia’s large immigrant population, the report appeared not only suggestive of underlying discrimination but also indicated wasted opportunity in recruiting potentially highly skilled personnel. For example, there are thousands of native Arabic and Farsi speakers in Australia yet there is still a need to train soldiers as Arabic linguists and hire interpreters in the Middle East Area of Operations. While the report concluded that there were no formal barriers to ethnic participation, it highlighted the need for the ADF to be proactive in recruiting a more ethnically diverse force. The report recommended the targeting of minority groups for recruitment although it opposed the setting of mandatory quotas. Hugh Smith believes that first generation immigrants are unlikely to enlist due to structural reasons such as age, cultural and language issues. The ethnicity of the Army, as measured by place of birth and self-identification, continues to be monitored through the ADF Census at five-year intervals. The latest ADF Census in 2011 notes that over 90% of both the full-time and part-time force was born in Australia (86%), the United Kingdom (5%) or New Zealand (2%). There is less than one percentage point difference across all services. This is slightly under the 2011 Australian Census figures for the general population of Australia which indicate an Australian-born percentage of 78% while those born in the United Kingdom total 6% with some 2% born in New Zealand.

Nevertheless, the Army continues to encourage multicultural recruitment and retention and much money and effort is devoted to trying to achieve this elusive recruiting goal. Research into impediments to the enlistment of individuals with culturally diverse backgrounds has led to the establishment of a specific recruiting program including a school visit program by service personnel from multicultural backgrounds to promote the Army and community engagement with ethnic councils.
Indigenous issues

Indigenous recruitment and retention is also an Army priority albeit one in which the Army has a better report card. According to the 2011 Defence Census, less than 2% of the Army self-identified as indigenous Australian, a figure consistent with the overall Australian population. The Directorate of Indigenous Affairs was launched in 2008 to provide a single point of contact for Defence Indigenous issues. The Directorate oversees the implementation of initiatives and strategies arising from the Defence Reconciliation Action Plan such as pre-recruitment courses, seminars and scholarships. The ADF Indigenous Employment Strategy also generates initiatives to attract and recruit more young indigenous people from remote, regional and urban communities throughout Australia. Cultural integration training is mandatory and provided regularly. The Regional Force Surveillance Units present an excellent model of integration with large numbers of indigenous soldiers in their ranks and a flexible training and qualification regime to cater for their unique circumstances.

Female members

The recruitment and employment of women in the Army was formerly limited in scope, with women employed to perform what were often regarded as auxiliary functions. Historically, most Western armies refused to allow women to participate in close combat. Increasingly, however, these restrictions have been challenged and new policies adopted. Internal pressures for change from within the Army and the external pressures of civilian lobby groups and changing social norms have also combined to drive policy to the point where the range of employment opportunities for women in the Army has slowly increased over the last 30 years. In 1979, 5.7% of the Army overall and 4.8% of officers at the managerial level were women. During the early 1980s the separate women’s corps was disestablished, women were awarded equal pay with their equivalent male counterparts, and specific female issues such as maternity leave were addressed. By 1993, 83% of Army positions were open to the employment of women.

The 2011 ADF Census records the percentage of women in the Army as doubling to around 10%. The Census also recorded an increase in the number of senior female officers with at least three 1-stars and one 2-star officer at that time. In 2012, the Pathway to Change Report contained no fewer than three sub-reports specifically relating to the employment and/or treatment of women. This report cleared the remaining barriers to the employment of women in the Army with the proviso that all standards including physical standards must be met. The efforts...
of feminist advocates, both individuals and groups, parliamentary lobby groups and the expectations of females in the Army, had successfully combined to bring about change.

Retirement
The introduction of the all-volunteer force demanded other flow-on changes in military remuneration and various conditions of service. This trend was clearly a move away from the institutional features of pay and conditions set solely by the employer, in this case the Commonwealth Government, to the more occupational model in line with the civilian workforce. This included the abolition of the daily rate of pay or wage to an annual military base salary and the inclusion of a service allowance. The introduction of an annual military salary allowed a direct comparison with that of civilian counterparts, something which had been difficult to achieve previously. The service allowance, which was to be paid in lieu of other allowances such as married members’ allowance, upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work, but it was also paid in lieu of overtime and compensation for ‘exigencies’ of the service. While the pay system was not flexible enough to cater for individual overtime, the concept was at least acknowledged.

Other civilian-based workplace policies and procedures have also been introduced into the military’s remuneration process. The crucial matter of determining service pay and allowances, formerly determined by the Minister for Defence as advised by the Committee of Reference, as the representative of the employer (the Commonwealth Government), was replaced in 1985 with the independent Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal (DFRT). The establishment of the DFRT allowed the military equal access to the principles by which the wider Australian community is rewarded for work and is a further step on the occupational scale. As a consequence we have seen the Chief of the Defence Force testifying to the DFRT during the ADF wage case in opposition to his employer, the Commonwealth. This is, indeed, a far cry from the previous institutional paternalistic approach to remuneration. Today, representatives from the Australia Defence Association or Defence Force Welfare Association are officially welcomed as observers at DFRT hearings.19

It is clear, however, that members of the Army still hold strong institutional values concerning pay. In 1994, performance-based monetary bonuses for senior military officers were introduced with the intention of expanding this subsequently to all ranks. The idea proved unpopular, even among the recipients, as it cut across the ethos of teamwork and the ‘all of one company’ principle on which the Army prides itself.
Twenty-five years on, and star rank officers appear to be more comfortable with the higher rates of pay with individual contracts and salary packaging which includes a car and mobile phone as fringe benefits. On the other hand, like any high-level executives in the corporate world, star rank officers’ employment tenure is subject to termination at short notice.

**Military collectivism**

The development of military industrial relations in Australia has also seen the rise of collectivism. Former Army officer Graham Pratt noted that collectivism can embrace all types of employee groupings formed to protect the interests of their members. Military industrial relations range from the use of quasi trade unions with the right to undertake industrial action to associations formed for consultative and lobby purposes such as the RSL. The formation of the Armed Forces Federation of Australia (ArFFA) in 1984 was related to the then ADF wage freeze, perceived erosion in conditions, and dissatisfaction with existing procedures.

While acceptance of ‘soft’ collectivism such as lobbying was widely supported, ‘hard’ industrial action, such as the withdrawal of labour, was not. This would seem to indicate a limited acceptance of an occupational outlook, while at the same time holding the line on institutional values.

ArFFA, although small in membership (reportedly around 3000) was widely supported in spirit by the ADF, significantly by the officer corps, and tacitly by the military hierarchy. It had observer status at DFRT hearings and a regular column in official service newspapers. It boasted some of the advantages of a trade union in that it could publicly criticise government policy and directly lobby members of parliament in contravention of the non-partisan, apolitical and institutional tradition of the military. ArFFA specifically refused, however, to use the withdrawal of labour as a means of industrial negotiation. Despite the appointment in 2002 of a prominent figure as patron (Dr Tom Frame, former naval officer, author and Anglican Bishop to the ADF), ArFFA ceased operations in 2006.

In part, the demise of ArFFA was also due to the establishment of the DFRT which had an immediate and positive impact on remuneration. With the establishment of the DFRT an intellectual and legal rigour was introduced to the process which had been previously absent. The decisions made were well documented and transparent in their logic. They also enabled military personnel to access standard Australian wage fixing principles and yet also have their own separate tribunal. It should be noted that despite, or perhaps because of the existence of ArFFA,
Individual attitudes and organisational restructure have seen the Army move a long way down the occupational path in pay matters while stepping back from the collective action nexus.

Individual rights
Shifts in individual attitudes and behaviour are also part of the broad cultural change overtaking the Army. These changes to individual characteristics are, however, partially due to cultural trends in the broader civilian society. Sociologist John Faris argues that, as the military organisation shifts in orientation, it ‘both indirectly and directly affects both the attitudes and values of military personnel as individuals’. The changing culture of the organisation and individuals within the Army can become self-fulfilling as both groups reinforce each other. As the organisation becomes more occupational in nature, members become more occupational in outlook. In turn, the members make more occupational demands on the Army and so the process continues.

A dichotomy exists between the role of a soldier as a citizen who is subject to the laws of the land and an individual who is entitled to his civil rights. On enlistment, the soldier is subject to military law and discipline above and beyond the civil code. The Defence Force Discipline Act was implemented in 1985 to overhaul the then incumbent system and, in part, bring the individual rights of service members into line with community standards.

The civil rights of individual service personnel were also the driving force in the establishment of the Defence Force Ombudsman in 1983. Service personnel lacked a legally binding contract and their employment was at the pleasure of the Crown — they enjoyed few substantive rights. The Defence Force Ombudsman extended to soldiers a measure of legal protection such as from unfair dismissal, which civilians take for granted. The Defence Force Ombudsman is, in fact, the many-hatted Commonwealth Ombudsman which handled 104 cases for the Army in 2011–2012 with a 100% closure rate. This compares favourably with the Ombudsman’s other 160 clients from various Commonwealth departments with a caseload in excess of 40,000 in 2011–12. Despite these relatively small numbers the Defence Force Ombudsman, as an independent body to redress grievances outside the chain of command, further undermines the traditional institutional approach.
Project LASER
The Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research regularly conducts research into retention and every member who separates from the military is debriefed as part of Project LASER (Longitudinal ADF Study Evaluating Retention). Specifically, the quality of retention initiatives is evaluated through survey and interview. Clearly, a healthy organisation needs a constant throughput of new blood and fresh ideas and the Army in particular requires the physical toughness of youth. What Project LASER has established is that a member rarely separates on the basis of a single issue. Reasons for leaving are generally complex and are part of a wide range of factors both personal and professional.

Evidence of a shift
Dramatic movement and change in the areas of recruiting, retention, remuneration and individual rights support the hypothesis that the Australian Army is shifting from institutional paternalistic attitudes and adopting more occupational market-oriented work practices. Nick Jans summarises this cultural trend in the ADF as ‘the legitimisation of military service [which] remains strongly normative, but with simultaneous trends towards a more industrial attitude by service personnel.’ There are, however, limits on how far the occupational shift will go. These limits are set by a combination of public opinion, the attitudes of service personnel, the Army hierarchy and the government itself. The Army also has an ethos and image formed by strong elements of tradition and patriotism. Symbols such as ceremonies, parades, uniforms, medals, and the ANZAC legend are closely linked to the national identity which is not easily put aside. Certainly, the recruit who casually enlists in the Army believing he joined a heavily armed branch of the public service will be quickly disillusioned.

Evidence also suggests that this is not a zero sum game in that more of one means less of the other. Smith and McAllister’s Survey of the Military Profession collected data on the attitudes of officer cadets from all three services over ten years. As officer cadets represent future elite opinion in the armed forces, their attitudes are of particular interest. Preliminary findings indicated that cadets reflected the attitudes of the wider society on individual rights and freedoms, and concerns over pay and conditions — as would be expected of an occupational orientation. At the same time, traditional institutional values such as service to the nation and patriotism were still strong. It appears that the individual serviceman is able to successfully integrate both strong institutional and occupational attitudes. Faris adds that, in fact, the introduction of occupational measures strengthens the individual’s commitment to the institution and makes the serviceman (and woman) a more dedicated and effective member of the organisation.
Service families
One example of occupational measures that strengthen institutional commitment lies in the issue of the service family. The Army is generous with its interpretation of what constitutes a service family, allowing single parent, de-facto and same sex, and even de-facto same sex couples full access to benefits enjoyed by more conventional couples. The Defence Census 2011 records that over half of Army personnel are married or otherwise partnered, many with children, totalling in excess of 50,000 dependants. The old Army adage of ‘recruit the soldier and retain the family’ has long roots. The Cross Report of 1998 identified family-related reasons as the main cause of separation from service of married members. The challenge for the soldier becomes one of managing a conflict of commitment to two often competing priorities. Both are described by Mady Segal as ‘greedy’ institutions inasmuch as they both demand the member’s full attention. The Army has recognised the link between satisfaction of service family needs and military effectiveness and acknowledged the importance of families to service commitment, retention and capability.

The hub of all this is the new Army creed of ‘work-life balance’. The Army Work-Life Balance Strategy creates supportive, healthy work environments for members and assists them to maintain a balance between their paid work commitment and their personal, community and cultural responsibilities, interests and obligations. Army support programs are, in turn, aimed at improving the resilience of members’ families, particularly during deployment. Such measures have included the establishment of a junior Defence Minister with portfolio responsibility specifically for Defence Personnel in 1987. The ADF Families Information Liaison Service with its network of Family Liaison Officers, the National Consultative Group of Service Spouses, School Liaison Officers and Defence Transition Mentors were all initiatives driven by the demands and needs of the service family. The year 1994 was designated ADF Year of the Family and today the ADF prides itself on being the largest corporate-based childcare provider in Australia.

Housing the service family
A key complaint of service families was once the parlous state of service housing combined with the stress of posting turbulence. Before 1987, for example, the married quarter housing stock was single-service owned, often on service property if not in service cantonments usually adjacent to a military base. Its streets were typically named after old battles and past heroes. Service transport, driven by a soldier, was used to take Army children to Army schools and preschools with
names such as ‘The Little Digger’. Wives, in particular officers’ wives, were expected to work as unpaid volunteers in community groups with the senior wife in charge and shown all the deference and entitlements of her husband’s rank and appointment. Support for family tragedies, respite care, or just information about the Army was often next door as spouses built social support networks to assist one another.

The establishment of Defence Housing Australia (DHA) as a government statutory body changed much of this quasi-village atmosphere. The stated DHA mission is ‘to deliver efficiently, housing and related services that meet Defence operational and personnel needs’. DHA has achieved this by facilitating all Army removals and centralising control of housing stock with standards relative to family composition rather than rank. Newly built housing stock is deliberately spread out so that, in new suburbs, neighbours are often civilians. New and modern housing has been built and sold on lease-back to investors. Rather than simply covering service needs DHA, as a government business unit, is also cognisant of market-driven needs. DHA today is one of Australia’s largest real estate managers and controls 18,000 dwellings worth over $8 billion.

The institutional Army model with its small, tight-knit community has given way to the occupational Army model of civilian integration and market values. In turn, satisfaction rates with service housing, with its centralised control and standards and the provision of professional support networks, have risen as measured by the inaugural Defence Family Study released in 2009 as well as the annual Defence attitude surveys.

Undoubtedly, these occupational-type measures have combined to address personnel concerns and, as a result, strengthened their institutional commitment. The Army’s initiatives to address family needs will certainly result in occupational change but will also ensure the preservation of the institutional nature of the military organisation.
Conclusion

This short analysis of changes in the Australian Army’s culture provides evidence of a continuing broad-based shift from Huntington’s institutional values-based military model to Janowitz’s occupational market-oriented military model. The examination of the two important aspects of recruiting and retention and their attendant issues provides practical data that is quite revealing. In most cases occupational change has been absorbed, although limits on the extent of that change have been established by both the institutional counterweight forces and the individuals who are the Army’s members. At the same time, an analysis of each area also shows some surprising, almost counter-intuitive results. The increase in occupational measures has paradoxically, in some cases, increased the members’ commitment. This is only possible where the individual serviceman or servicewoman is able to successfully integrate both strong institutional and occupational attitudes. The introduction of occupational measures can, in fact, strengthen the individual’s commitment to the institution and increase levels of dedication and the effectiveness of performance. Dare it be said, these measures may even produce a more committed ‘employee’. ■
THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony A. John, CSC (Retd), served in the Australian Army from 1981 to 2010. He has previously contributed to the Australian Army Journal.

ENDNOTES

1 Frances Hesselbein is the President and CEO of the Hesselbein Leadership Institute.
9 Ian McPhedran, ‘Number of Generals in Australian Army Doubles’, Courier-Mail, 3 March 2010.
17 Major General Elizabeth Cosson was the first 1-star and then 2-star female officer. She separated from the Army in 2010.


Army’s Spirit
Warrant Officer David Ashley

The oath to serve your country did not include a contract for the normal luxuries and comforts enjoyed within our society. On the contrary it implied hardship, loyalty and devotion to duty regardless of rank.

Brigadier George Mansford (Retd)

As Regimental Sergeant Major – Army (RSM-A), I have a unique leadership responsibility, one which I take very seriously. I am providing this article to the Australian Army Journal because I believe that there is a fundamental area of Army service that is often overlooked in discussions about culture — the role of Army’s spirit.

During my 36 years of service I have seen many changes to Army. However, I have also come to realise that there are enduring aspects of Army life — most notably Army’s spirit which forms the bedrock of how we operate and look upon ourselves. For me, Army’s spirit is a combination of our stated values — courage, initiative, respect and teamwork — along with four enduring aspects: pride, faith, mateship and opportunity. Together, these contribute to our people’s
wellbeing and professional satisfaction, resulting in great benefits for Army such as higher morale and improved retention. Army’s spirit is at the heart of Army life, and while it cannot be costed, seen, heard or smelt, it is certainly valued and felt by our members. While we often talk about our former stated values — courage, initiative and teamwork — and now our most recent, respect (and I will discuss this in far more detail later), the other four elements are often taken for granted and nearly always absent from Army’s conversations about our values and culture. I believe that a discussion of these elements is worth having as, along with our stated values, these form the foundation of our human and collective spirit.

The elements — pride, faith, mateship and opportunity — are interconnected and interdependent. If Army’s leaders foster and inculcate Army’s spirit in our people, the result will be higher morale, which will both strengthen and lift our Army as a respected institution. Army members who live and represent Army’s spirit are positive role models for the small number of people who I call the ‘some of us’ who feel that these are mere words on a poster or a ‘throwaway’ line — they are not! Army’s spirit and our nine core behaviours are a guide for all of us as to how to live our lives as Australian soldiers. I believe that the some of us misunderstand and misrepresent our spirit and values which sometimes results in oxygen for unacceptable behaviour and low personal standards. This is damaging to Army’s standing as a respected national institution and adversely affects the wellbeing of us all. The unacceptable behaviour and low personal standards of some have a negative impact on us all, as individuals and as an organisation. Our reputation is based on how we behave towards one another and towards those outside Army, whether in or out of uniform. Being a soldier is a 24/7 profession. Being a soldier is a way of life.

I believe that our officers and soldiers represent the best of Australian society. Few armies can make this claim. The human qualities that motivated us to join and to serve our nation are inherent in our stated values, but just as important are the five additional elements I have highlighted. It is the responsibility of Army’s leaders to continually draw attention to the importance of Army’s values and to foster a leadership environment in which Army’s spirit can flourish. This environment will be one in which our officers and soldiers look forward to parading each day — a very effective retention measure, and one which supports personal and professional wellbeing and satisfaction.
Pride
As RSM-A, I speak to more of our people, and to a more diverse Army audience, than the vast majority of individuals in Army. I have met very few soldiers who do not have great pride in Army — pride in the past and pride in today. The vast majority of the Australian people also share our great pride, as can be seen in the popularity of ANZAC Day. Army’s obligation is to continue to earn and retain the pride of our nation.

Every unit has much to be proud of. Our unit leaders should always ensure that their people know about their unit’s history and the achievements of their unit team, both individually and in the collective sense, in order to foster pride in the actions of those from yesterday, today and into the future. Pride in our history offers an important model to our officers and soldiers and shows them what we expect them to live up to. Leaders must always display the traits and behaviours that support pride and utilise it to fortify the unit environment. This is part of leadership by example.

Faith
Fundamental to faith is trust. In Australia, we have one of the most egalitarian societies in the world. Our officers and soldiers come from that society making our Army one of the most egalitarian in the world. Military environments are unique and demand superior/subordinate formal relationships and a willing acceptance of lawful orders and rules. These are essential to the way Army operates. Being a hierarchical organisation does not mean that two-way engagement is frowned upon or undesirable. In fact, our people deliver most and best in an environment of mutual trust. Our people feel the right to be trusted to perform their duties and meet their responsibilities. We expect our leaders to create a working environment based on trust. But trust is not automatic and freely given. Superiors are required to earn the trust of their subordinates through positive leadership, just as subordinates are required to earn the trust of superiors and colleagues through high work standards and behaviours.

It has been my experience that all trust must be validated. The willing, even cheerful, acceptance that trust must always be checked leads to effective supervision and the maintenance of standards best suited to the character of the Australian soldier. A glance at our grass roots history shows us this.

For trust to flourish in a unit, the principle and practice of tolerance of honest mistakes and learning must exist. This does not mean the tolerance of negligence which is never acceptable. Our officers and soldiers must know the difference
and be held to account for negligence. When a unit has an effective and clearly understood learning mechanism, where a lesson for one becomes a lesson for all, an environment of trust is built and maintained. People can see that action emanating from lessons learned leads to superior outcomes and a feeling of confidence that the two-way trust mechanism is working and supported by all. If this approach is taken across our units then our performance will simply get better and better and our people will simply get better and better. This is faith in action.

Another important aspect of faith is care and concern for people within a unit. All officers and soldiers need their superiors to give consideration to their needs, real or perceived. This includes appropriate recognition of those who have contributed to instilling and maintaining pride.

No unit is more than the collective spirit and human talent of its people. Equipment without people is not capability, it is just equipment. No leader is more than the collective spirit and talents of his or her soldiers. In my experience leaders fail when they cannot comprehend this fact.

Mutual faith, through validated trust, lifts the spirit of our people, our leaders and our Army. Collective faith contributes to collective spirit.

**Mateship**

This may be a fundamentally unique term for Australians, but is not unique to militaries. In other armies ‘mates’ may be termed ‘buddies’ or ‘comrades’. In our context, mateship is not just about being personal friends or even members of the same team or unit. Mateship is about the bond that is made when we earn the right to wear Army’s uniform and the Rising Sun badge — our common thread.

I am proud to have earned the right to wear my uniform and proud to have served our nation through the Rising Sun badge for the last 35 years. I am proud to call those soldiers who have also earned the right to wear our uniform my mate whether they are my superior or subordinate, male or female.

When the some who wear our uniform let our team down by unacceptable behaviour or bad personal performance, I feel smaller regardless of my own personal standards. This is because I am just a member of our Army team, equal to all, no better or less than anyone else on our team. A mate who lets the Army team down diminishes us all. This is why mateship is so important to our collective spirit. It is this shortfall by the some that is a major problem within Army. When the shortfall is ignored this becomes a fault of our organisational culture.
Mateship can sometimes be misunderstood and give oxygen to unacceptable behaviour. It may be misunderstood because the some consider a mate as just a personal friend or immediate colleague. The some have lost sight, if they had sight in the first place. A mate includes everyone who has earned the right to proudly wear the Rising Sun badge. The attitude of a few to ‘never dob in a mate at any cost’ betrays the collective mateship and spirit our Army needs to support a healthy culture. Walking past or ignoring unacceptable behaviour or low personal standards is not courageous, it is cowardice. I can provide many examples of positive mateship. Today we have an increased focus on psychological wounds and injuries, and for good reason. Often a mate is the first responder, able to lend a heartfelt hand and give support immediately and then to follow through by being there and available. This is real mateship and is just one example of mateship in action.

Never misunderstand what mateship really means.

Opportunity
Opportunity is one of the most practical elements of Army’s spirit and is readily available. I believe that I am a much better person and a soldier because I have been the recipient of significant opportunity over my long Army career. I am fortunate to be present when the Chief of Army presents Federation Stars to officers and soldiers who have completed 40 years of service. These impressive officers and soldiers serve as examples of access to opportunity which has contributed to their longevity in Army. As their records of service are read to the audience it is clear that most have served in multiple trades and corps and accessed commissioning or other opportunities.

Yet too many leaders focus on the short-term and short-sighted needs of their units and teams. Too many decision-makers and those who make recommendations focus on policy without due consideration of the human dimension of the soldiers’ aspirations. This is detrimental to the longer term interests and health of Army. People feel let down when they believe they haven’t been heard or their needs have been ignored. The two-way trust is broken. Allowing officers and soldiers reasonable and considered access to achieve their aspirations directly contributes to a better sense of wellbeing and to Army’s spirit.

To quote a peer of mine, ‘trust is a function of character and competence’.
Respect
Respect is our newest stated value — such is the primacy of respect to a healthy culture.

When I first mentioned the unspoken elements of Army service, I did not include respect because I considered it to be part and parcel of our values. Then one day I was talking to one of my senior RSM peers about an allegation of unacceptable behaviour. My peer remarked that soldiers could not possibly treat one another in the manner detailed in the allegation if they respected one another. He was very right. I then decided that respect deserved its own consideration.

In Army, respect has three dimensions: respect for our uniform (and through this our Army), respect for one another and respect for ourselves.

Sub-standard dress, bearing and attitude in uniform or when identified as a member of Army is not acceptable and shows disrespect for oneself and for Army. Instances have occurred in the past which highlight this issue. Duty travel on public transport and behaviour at airports are one example of areas of constant concern. The sight of a badly dressed and noisy, disrespectful individual or group easily identified as members of Army by their hat or military baggage, brings us down. For the great Australian public, open displays of bad behaviour give rise to questioning whether we are worthy to represent the proud legacy of our forebears or whether Army is a suitable place to send their sons and daughters to serve. Conversely, a positive public image can reap great dividends. In my reserve unit, 8/7 RVR in country Victoria, we had a policy of our cadre staff always wearing uniform in public. Their disciplined and respectful behaviour, matched with military bearing, paid off in increased recruiting and enhanced local reputation. In the many years I have been an RSM, the vast majority of complaints I have dealt with from the public concerning bad and undisciplined behaviour have not been about the individual in the wrong, but a genuine concern for the reputation of the Australian Army. This speaks to the pride of the greater public in us as an institution. We cannot afford to diminish this pride in Army or in ourselves.

Our people must respect one another. Regardless of gender, religion and belief, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, we are all mates. We have all earned the right to wear the Rising Sun badge. Mates respect one another. As my peer said, many incidents of unacceptable behaviour would not occur if we respected one another and our soldiers and officers understood what respect requires and what it means.
Our people must respect themselves. There is a reasonable view that Army works hard and plays hard. Playing hard does not mean drinking yourself into oblivion, using drugs, losing control, breaking the law or diminishing Army’s hard-won reputation and status. This negative type of behaviour shows lack of discipline and gross disrespect for Army and for oneself. It is a clear and present weakness and a sign of immaturity. Playing hard is robust and fair participation in sport, being law abiding and moral, responsible social enjoyment and being a mature and respectful member of our society. It is about being trusted and respected in and out of uniform, on and off duty.

Self-respect also means keeping yourself fit for battle and meeting the appearance expectations of Army and the public. I wholeheartedly support the implementation of the Physical Employment Standards which will drive a tougher, fitter, leaner and better Army. There are too many overweight and unfit officers and soldiers whose condition is within their control — and I exclude those who are recovering from wounds or injury. While I fully accept that some are suffering or recovering from injury and illness, eating a nutritious diet and exercising within restrictions may help counterbalance forced inactivity. Unless an officer or soldier has a permanent restriction that prevents fitness for battle and meeting the appearance expectations of Army and the public, this condition must be viewed as temporary. If our members are overweight and unfit it must be because of a genuine condition and not poor excuses associated with sheer laziness or a lack of enthusiasm. In my opinion, there is far too much of the latter. I ask you all to ask yourself an objective question — am I as fit as I can be? Do I meet the appearance expectations of Army and the public? Am I fit and tough enough to fight in the hardest game on earth — the battlespace of today and tomorrow? If the answer is no, strive to improve. You will not only foster respect, but improve your health with all of the benefits that accrue from a healthier lifestyle.

Some, particularly officers, have pointedly remarked to me that their workload prevents regular exercise and a healthy diet. I always ask them if they have raised their concerns with their chain of command.

We cannot afford an internal or public perception that we are too fat to fight. Being unfit or overweight because of issues beyond a member’s control is a health issue. We will support these officers and soldiers. But being unfit or overweight because of issues within a member’s control is a discipline matter. Leadership must be applied to fix this shortfall.
Courage, initiative, respect, teamwork

Our values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork should be our ‘basic drill’ to living our profession as Australian soldiers. In the Army, from ‘day one’ every officer and soldier is taught, and forever remembers that, if caught by enemy fire in the absence of orders or direction, they use the drill of ‘run, down, crawl, observe, aim and fire’. They know that in the absence of orders or directions, this drill will save their lives and put them in a position where they can regain the initiative.

On a day-to-day basis our people must use our stated values just as they use the basic drill under fire. The values ‘basic drill’ for every officer and soldier should be to simply ask themselves four questions before they take action — and we expect our people to take action. Am I being courageous (both physically and morally)? I would like to quote our Chief here, as he once commented that ‘no-one has ever explained to me how a coward in barracks can be a hero on operations. And bullies who humiliate their comrades are cowards — as are those who passively watch victimisation without the moral courage to stand up for their mates.’

Am I using my initiative? Am I respectful to the Rising Sun badge, to my mates and am I respecting myself? And am I acting for the Army team? If we follow this drill our actions will likely reflect what Army expects of us. This does not mean that every action will be perfect, but the intent to ‘do right’ is present and this will mean that you will be right. A well-intended, if imperfect action is far preferable to a thoughtless action or omission. We need to instil into our people this ‘basic drill’ based on our stated values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork.

The ‘I’m an Australian Soldier’ Initiative

The Nine Core Behaviours:

Every soldier an expert in close combat
Every soldier a leader
Every soldier physically tough
Every soldier mentally prepared
Every soldier uses initiative
Every soldier courageous
Every soldier works for the team
Every soldier committed to continuous learning and development
Every soldier demonstrates compassion
And now:
Every soldier respectful
I think it is timely now to discuss how the ‘I’m an Australian Soldier’ Initiative and the ten core behaviours that underpin its success relate to our culture and values. This initiative is a very effective yardstick for measuring our own performance and that of our subordinates, and informs our focus on training in the individual space.

To me the greatest contemporary image of the Australian soldier is a photograph taken in Rwanda in the early 1990s. It shows an Australian soldier, Trooper Jonathan Church of the Special Air Service Regiment, cradling a sick or wounded African child in his arms. Trooper Church, later tragically killed in the Townsville Blackhawk collision, clearly a great warrior and an expert in close combat is also clearly a great humanitarian — every soldier demonstrates compassion.

Trooper Church reflects what an Australian soldier should be. I have no doubt that he was an exemplar of each and every one of the core behaviours required to meet the Initiative. I bet you he would have also been proud, he had great faith and trust, that he would have been a mate and would have known what that term really meant. He was a Special Forces soldier who had accessed his opportunity, and he embodied respect. I know that when he had to make a decision or take action he would have behaved in a courageous way, both morally and physically
(and I believe you cannot be one without the other). He used his initiative, he would have been respectful to the Rising Sun badge and his Army, his mates and himself, and he worked for the Army team. We would all do well to emulate him.

Army’s spirit, which is made up of our identified and unspoken values, is strengthened by the ‘I’m an Australian Soldier’ Initiative. All three must be considered, discussed and lived together.

Many times I have used the word some to refer to those who are guilty of unacceptable behaviour or low personal and professional standards in Army. But on the whole, we have a great Army that is a trusted and respected national institution. This trust and respect has been earned though ‘hard yards’. This trust and respect was hard to win but is easy to lose. So, don’t allow yourself, or any member of your team, to become one of the some — protect and respect yourself and our Army.

Those of us who lead our teams and units must always look internally and consider whether we are fostering a team or unit environment in which Army’s spirit can flourish. This must be an environment in which the elements of pride, faith, mateship, opportunity and respect are matched by our stated values, our values ‘basic drill’, and in which we are measured in the individual sense by the ‘I’m an Australian Soldier’ Initiative.

These three, lived and considered together, will deliver Army high morale and wellbeing, professional satisfaction and a values-based culture that supports and energises us as a great national institution.

I will finish this article with a contract between each of us and our nation. Consider our contract with the quote at the start of this presentation from Brigadier Mansford. They are both compelling and both supportive of each other.

**Our contract with Australia**

I’m an Australian soldier who is an expert in close combat, I’m physically and mentally tough, compassionate and courageous.

I lead by example, I strive to take the initiative, I am committed to learning and to working for the team.

I believe in trust, loyalty and respect for my country, my mates and the Army.

The Rising Sun is my badge of honour. I am an Australian soldier.
OPINION

Brothers and Sisters in Arms: Experiences of Gay Soldiers in the Australian Army

Captain Dominic Lopez

ABSTRACT

The reality of service life for gay soldiers is far from straightforward. What is valued and cherished by some, such as a hyper-masculine culture, excludes others. For some, being gay is no more significant than possessing other characteristics, while for others, being gay singles them out for bullying and harassment: it seems there are no common denominators. Despite legislative and policy reform, incidents of bullying and harassment call into question the cultural attitudes that underpin our military service. What do we value? Why do we value it? At what cost? Gay men and women have adapted to service life in a variety of ways and it is through their stories that we begin to understand the realities of service life for gay men and women in the Australian Army today.
Introduction

This article is a response to a piece written for *The Australian Army Journal* on the experiences of gay soldiers during World War II. In my opinion, the authors raised more questions than they answered on how the sexuality of these soldiers shaped their military service. The fact that gay men had served during World War II in the Australian Army should surprise no-one. What was interesting to me was the daily reality for these soldiers. What impact did their sexuality have on their ability to do their job? How did gay soldiers respond to a hyper-masculine culture? Was it an issue? If so, why? The answers to these questions would have provided an understanding of what service life was really like for these soldiers during World War II.

The purpose of this article is to provide some understanding of the realities of contemporary service life for gay soldiers. Using the questions posed above, I intend to describe what life is like for a cross-section of gay men and women in the Australian Army today. This article reinforces current efforts to retain the best of our traditions while acknowledging that other things can be done better.

As an infantry officer in the Australian Army and a gay man, answering the questions posed above is something I felt qualified to do. And I can, very easily. My sexuality has had little or no impact on my military service and my ability to command soldiers. I have not been subjected to harassment or discrimination. I accept the Army’s dominant hyper-masculine identity, and finally, I am open about my sexuality.

I am also aware that my experience is not representative of all gay soldiers. This is due to many things. First, my experience in the Army is narrow. Since graduating from the Royal Military College in June 2009 I have only served in the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. I am a male officer and therefore in a position of authority and not subjected to the vitriol often directed towards gay women. Also, I am comfortable with my sexuality and ‘out’ at work, thereby limiting the power of gossip, suspicion and innuendo that affects many closeted serving members. To understand what life is like for a cross-section of gay soldiers, I asked Army members from the Defence Gay and Lesbian Information Service to share with me the reality of their service life. Their responses have been paraphrased for this article. Their experiences are positive and negative, funny, sad and distressing. They are men and women in training institutions, units and on deployment. They are various ranks, corps and ages. Some are at the beginning of their careers...
while others are at the end. Two are no longer serving. While they form a small sample, 46 in total, they provide an insight into the daily realities of gay servicemen and servicewomen in the Australian Army today.

**Who are these people?**
The reality of service life for gay men and women in the Australian Army is varied. Among other things, gay individuals’ aptitude for soldering, their physical fitness, their acceptance of the dominant heterosexual hyper-masculine culture and their own acceptance of their sexuality combine to create diverse and contrasting experiences. This was clear from the range of responses I received for this article. Based on their opinions and experiences, they could be arranged into three broad groups.

In one group respondents believed their sexuality had little impact on their day-to-day life in the Army. They didn’t conceal their sexuality at work and in different ways sought to conform to the dominant military culture. This group reported little to no harassment or discrimination due to their sexuality. This group accounted for 27, or 59% of the 46 responses I received. I accept that this group may be the largest due to a willingness to contribute and a desire to promote their positive experiences.

In the second group, soldiers concealed the fact that they were gay in order to navigate their way through an environment they regarded as hostile to their sexuality. In each case these servicemen and servicewomen maintained a strict delineation between their professional and personal life to avoid being ‘outed’ in the workplace. This group generally questioned the validity of the dominant masculine culture, experienced little or infrequent harassment and struggled to conform to their own perception of what the dominant culture required of them. This group accounted for 15, or 32% of the responses I received.

The third group reported discrimination and harassment as a consequence of being gay. This group accounted for four, or 9% of the responses I received. I accept that for many reasons this number may not represent the reality across the Army, as victims of abuse, particularly recent abuse, were unlikely to share their experiences with me. Nonetheless, this group shows that discrimination and harassment is a reality for some gay soldiers in the Army today.
The history of exclusion to inclusion

This range of experiences belies the changes that have occurred in the Australian Army over the past 27 years — changes that have seen Army policies shift from exclusion to inclusion. From 1986 through to 1992, the Australian Defence Force sought to exclude gay men and women from service. Defence Instruction (General) Personnel 15-5 stated that homosexuality was prejudicial to effective command relationships, a threat to national security, that it was unhealthy and that it undermined the Australian Defence Force’s responsibility to protect minors from aberrant behavior. A male warrant officer class two from The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, now retired, wrote of his experiences during this time:

I kept my sexuality a secret because people were told back then that you couldn’t trust a homosexual. I also loved my job and wanted to keep it so I didn’t say anything … it was a different time … seeing how homosexuals were treated back then was incentive enough not to let anyone know. I relied on my mates and they relied on me … I knew they wouldn’t if they knew I was gay.

For many gay soldiers serving today, these policies and beliefs have little bearing on their daily work life. However, many still keep their sexuality hidden, compelled to hide their sexuality in order to fit in. For these soldiers it would seem little has changed. A male captain from The Royal Australian Corps of Signals, currently serving, wrote about his efforts to hide his sexuality:

I know my boss is homophobic from the comments he makes at work … if he found out I was gay I’d have no chance of getting on the trip next year so I remain closeted … it’s something that I have to be careful about because it’s easy to slip up when you’re talking about what you did on the weekend, where you went and who you were with. I have to be vigilant all the time … I know my rights but it’s just easier this way.

A female corporal from The Royal Australian Corps of Transport, currently serving, also wrote about her efforts to fit in with the dominant heterosexual culture in the workplace:

I keep my hair long because if a girl has short hair people always assume she’s gay. I’d prefer people got to know me as a person before I told them I was gay as their first impression of me as a gay Army chick isn’t good.
Evolution in Defence policy was resisted by all three services. At the time, the Australian Defence Force admitted that its members were prejudiced against homosexuals and that this was the root cause of the command and morale problems a shift in policy would cause. Nonetheless, given its commitment to upholding the values of tolerance and non-discrimination, values it expected the Australian Defence Force to defend, the Australian Government legislated change to align the Australian Defence Force with the wishes of the Australian community. A male lieutenant from The Royal Australian Army Ordinance Corps, currently serving, reflected on this:

_We’re here not because they wanted us but because they were told they had to have us … I think this is still resented and is why there are these negative attitudes towards gays in the Defence Force … you have to prove yourself in order to be accepted, and even then it is done reluctantly._

Change in Defence policy, while it was externally imposed, reflected changes in how gay men and women were viewed more generally in Australian society. A female corporal from The Royal Australian Corps of Transport, currently serving, spoke about the generational factor when dealing with soldiers in her unit:

_ I don’t have a problem with the younger soldiers or officers. They have grown up with a different opinion of gay people … it’s the dinosaurs that just can’t accept me … and they never will._

In 2005 the Australian Defence Force, having been directed to do so by government, extended to same-sex couples the benefits afforded to heterosexual couples. In 2009 same-sex partners gained access to veterans’ benefits. Today the number of recognised same-sex partnerships in the Australian Army is unknown. What is known is that by affording gay couples the same benefits as heterosexual couples, effectively legitimising their relationships, gay soldiers could for the first time fully integrate their service and personal lives. For those who serve openly, particularly soldiers who have only served after the ban was lifted, this hard-won recognition seems the norm. That said, the inclusion of a gay partner in Army social life serves as a reminder that your personal circumstances are at best different. My partner reminded me of this incident while I was writing this article:

_ I introduced my partner to my boss’ wife at a mess function and her reply was ‘partners in what business?’… it was awkward for everyone at the time but we all laugh about it now. While a minor, insignificant incident, it is indicative of the heterosexual bias that gay soldiers encounter not just within Army but wider society in general._
Culture war?
Why the Army resisted change goes to the heart of current discussions on Army culture. What was the senior leadership in the Army, as well as the majority of serving members, The Returned and Services League and many in the community fighting for? What were they fighting against? Allowing gay men to serve challenged the warrior culture of the Army. This was seen as a threat to the traditional values of the Australian soldier as well as those characteristics essential in any army: controlled aggression, discipline, professionalism and male bonding. Those resisting change believed that granting individual rights and freedoms would erode the Army’s collective strength. It was seen as a dangerous path that would ultimately undermine capability. The counter arguments, in addition to those founded on human rights, stressed that the Army could only be as good as the individuals within it — that allowing all its members to serve fully and openly could only strengthen the organisation. A male sergeant from The Royal Australian Corps of Signals shared his opinion on why the Australian Army had fought so strongly against lifting the ban on gay soldiers:

Most soldiers probably hadn’t met an openly gay person before … their perception of gay men was gleaned from stereotypes and what they had seen on television during Mardi Gras … images of effeminate and cross-dressing men reinforced the opinion that gay men were everything they weren’t … warriors.

A male lieutenant from The Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers also wrote about why he felt many had resisted the inclusion of gay men in the ranks:

I understand the insecurity for many and I don’t think much as changed … very few soldiers actually resemble the image of the iconic Australian soldier … the idealised Australian warrior … we’re not born soldiers nor are all of us the bronzed ANZAC we think we are. I think this causes many to feel uneasy with their own link to the past … to their own culture. So it’s easier to just exclude everyone that doesn’t conform to this image than challenge it and make it inclusive … we’d probably be better off if we came up with a more inclusive image of the Australian soldier.

A male lance corporal in The Royal Australian Army Ordinance Corps also spoke about the idealised image of the Australian warrior and questioned whether this was an issue just affecting gay soldiers:
The pressure to fit in is as much an issue for gay soldiers as it is for straight soldiers … there’s always pressure to conform and compete … always something to make you feel insecure. There’s always someone being picked on for some reason.

Army culture represents different things to different people. There is agreement on the core values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork, namely because they are spelled out and visible; however articulating what our culture is and what is required of us seems subjective. A female lieutenant from The Royal Australian Army Ordinance Corps described what Army culture meant to her:

I am not physical and I am not a man so it is hard for me to identify with a culture based on this and not feel left out or that I don’t belong. I identify with the traits of honesty, integrity, humility, ingenuity, hard work and professionalism … I think that these are as much our tradition and our culture today as the typical masculine image most people have.

Many gay soldiers, both men and women, are comfortable with a culture based on notions of masculinity, and accept traditional and idealised notions of an Australian soldier. A male corporal from The Royal Australian Infantry Corps linked his identity as a man to the qualities of strength and competitiveness, relying on his physical abilities to secure his legitimacy and relevance in the workplace. This soldier’s experience shows that gay and straight soldiers alike share the need to prove themselves in contests to affirm their masculinity:

I’ve always felt the need to prove myself physically because that is how people are judged in the Army … if I can run faster than them and shoot more accurately than them, how can they tease me for being gay when based on their own criteria I’m a better soldier than they are?

Finally, a female warrant officer class two from The Royal Australian Corps of Signals spoke about the problem of having a culture that was not clearly articulated, one that means different things to different people:

Culture is created and needs to be shaped … we could learn a lot from private enterprise in the creation and maintenance of culture in our workplace … it seems too important to leave it up to the individual to determine what they want it to be.
The day-to-day reality

Gay soldiers have adapted to their work environments in a variety of ways. For some, a male-dominated, hyper-masculine work environment supports their understanding of Army culture. Others moderate their behaviour and conceal parts of who they are in order to fit in. A male corporal from The Royal Australian Army Medical Corps wrote about his light-hearted approach to dealing with his sexuality in the workplace:

I accept that many at work won’t know how to deal with me. I might be the first gay man they have ever met … I enjoy a gay joke as much as anyone and I think it is important to acknowledge the pink elephant in the room … it makes everyone feel at ease … I’m comfortable that having a joke about being gay doesn’t condone or enable homophobia. It works for me. Let’s not be too serious about it … we can then get on with the real task at hand.

Service life begins in a training institution. In these places, most gay soldiers make their first conscious decision whether or not they will serve openly. For me, this decision was quick and painless:

In the first week, out of the blue, someone asked if anyone was gay. I put my hand up and said I was … the other Staff Cadets in my section laughed as they thought I was joking. I told them that I wasn’t joking and that I was gay. They laughed again as they still thought I was joking. They got the message after I told them for a third time.

A male corporal from The Royal Australian Army Pay Corps also wrote about his experience in a training institution:

An instructor showed the trainees a highly inappropriate video between lessons that made fun of gay men. The instructor told the trainees as a joke that if they had a problem they should write it in their end of course evaluations … not thinking anyone would find the video offensive, but obviously knowing that it was. Several of us wrote him up and he was disciplined.

A common justification for the gay ban was that gay and straight soldiers were incapable of showering together; a gay soldier could not be trusted to control his sexual urges while a straight soldier would feel both uncomfortable and threatened. In reality this is not the case. A female corporal from The Royal Australian Corps of Transport wrote to me about her experience at Kapooka as a recruit:
I was reluctant to tell any of the girls that I was gay as I had to shower with them … I didn’t want them thinking I would be looking at them in a sexual way.

A male private from The Royal Australian Army Ordinance Corps also wrote about communal showers:

It’s not a time of the day I look forward to … while the straight guys get to play around with each other, flicking towels and running around naked … I just get in and out as quickly as possible. It’s never been sexual for me.

Being posted to a new unit, meeting someone for the first time or simply being asked if you are married or have children demands that a gay soldier make a conscious decision whether or not to ‘come out’. After weighing the risks and benefits of disclosure, and for a variety of reasons, a gay soldier may or may not ‘come out’. Some soldiers are out to everyone. Some are out to some and not to others. Some are out in some circumstances and not in others. Disclosure is not straightforward; at best it can be awkward, at worst it can open soldiers up to isolation and bullying. As I wrote this article I was reminded of the first few days at my unit:

I got a message that the Adjutant wanted to see me. He sat me down and told me that someone had written ‘fag’ against my name on the duty officer roster in the Guard Room … he wanted to know what I wanted to do about it. I told him that I was a fag and that I didn’t want to do anything about it. At the time I took it at face value but looking back I wonder if it was a test to see how I would react to homophobia and whether or not I’d be a troublemaker.

A female lieutenant from The Royal Australian Army Ordinance Corps wrote about her experiences when marching in to a new unit:

I wouldn’t say there were units where I have felt uncomfortable … but I have certainly worked with people that have made coming out less comfortable. I accept that some people just don’t agree or understand. I have moments when I get to a new unit and resent the whole process of coming out again. I do so in the knowledge that it makes it easier for the next gay soldier that comes along … I see that as my responsibility.
For many, being gay is not the biggest issue they face in their day-to-day life in the Army. A female corporal from The Royal Australian Corps of Transport wrote about life in a combat unit and the issues this raises:

*Being gay doesn’t really affect me but that’s probably more to do with my role than anything else … I don’t command any soldiers. The Army is a boys club but I get along well with boys … it’s not my sexuality that makes me feel second rate, it’s the divide between ‘war-fighters’ and ‘loggies’ that sets me apart from others in my unit … it is this divide and not my sexuality that makes me feel unwanted at times.*

In 2010 a Facebook page was set up to ‘out’ and vilify serving gay men in the Army. While media attention and public comment brought this incident into the public arena where it was roundly condemned, the sentiment that underpinned it remains. A female corporal from The Royal Australian Corps of Transport wrote to me about her experience of harassment and bullying while on deployment:

*On operations I was in command of an older man who would undermine me and refuse to follow my orders simply because I am a lesbian … I would give him a task and he would openly refuse to do it in front of my section saying that I was nothing but a worthless lesbian who couldn’t be trusted and who would get the section killed … he used his size and personality to stand over me. I formally complained but the bullying continued. I continued to complain and was eventually sent home early … it was swept under the carpet as far as I’m concerned. When I got home the incident caused me anxiety … I began to suffer from depression so I discharged.*

**A culture of reporting?**

Many who contributed to this article speculated on why some gay soldiers seem to fit in more easily than others. Most agreed that if you were competent and ‘out’ then you stood the best chance of integrating within the unit. A female lieutenant from The Royal Australian Army Ordinance Corps wrote:

*I have never been given much grief about being gay because I am upfront about it, I don’t harp on the fact that I’m gay and I am good at my job … I also behave like a decent human being. I think this sets me apart from many soldiers who have problems stemming from their sexuality.*
The experience of the female corporal on operations highlights that simply being ‘out’ does not guarantee you will not be bullied. Nor is it correct to assume that those who are bullied or hide their sexuality are incompetent. A male sergeant from The Royal Australian Army Medical Corps wrote:

> You have to be thick skinned for this job … you have to accept a level of homophobia and pick your battles. You’d never get any work done if you complained about every inappropriate comment … no one would think you were a team player.

This comment says a great deal about the culture of ‘not reporting’ in the Army. I too had no desire to report or investigate the fact that someone had written the word ‘fag’ against my name in the Guard Room. Four years on, if the incident occurred again, I’d probably behave in the same manner and ignore it. The female corporal on operations reported harassment but felt she got nowhere, feeling that her chain of command had adopted an attitude of ‘not reporting’ by sweeping her problem under the carpet by sending her home. Lieutenant Colonel Paul Morgan spoke publicly about the failings of the chain of command in dealing with those associated with the Facebook page that vilified serving gay soldiers. This bias towards ‘not reporting’ does the organisation a disservice. In seeking to shore up its strength, protect individuals and reputations, we inevitably undermine them. The Chief of Army challenges this mindset with his recent comment, ‘the standard you walk past is the standard you accept.’ In many ways this speaks against the culture of ‘not reporting.’ Whether individuals don’t want to ‘rock the boat’ or they feel their chain of command has adopted a similar strategy, cultural change in the Army will require the attitude of ‘not reporting’ to also change. Evidence of this cultural change can be seen in the example provided by the male corporal who complained about inappropriate behaviour in his training institution. According to him, his complaint, combined with those of his gay and straight peers, was handled well and justice was served.

**So what?**

This article has highlighted various experiences of gay soldiers in the Australian Army. Many things make these soldiers different: their experiences, their sex, their age, their corps and their unit. More important than their differences is what they all share — the desire to serve, the desire to belong to a team that accepts them and the desire to achieve their full potential as human beings. These similarities link them to the rest of the soldiers in the Australian Army for surely we all share these motivations. For some, it is clear from their experiences that they have achieved
what they set out to achieve; they feel they are valued and accepted for the contribution they make. For others, their resentment towards the Army and some of the people in it runs deep. These people have been prevented from meeting their full potential, and the Army is certainly poorer for this.

Writing this article has forced me to think about what life is like for other people. Service life is fine for me, and for many others, but this is not the case for everyone. Striking a balance between maintaining institutional values while valuing and protecting the individuals within that institution has created winners and losers. Is it acceptable that some soldiers cannot go to work and be themselves? Is it acceptable that some soldiers are subjected to bullying and harassment in the workplace? The answer to these last two questions is ‘no’. It is not acceptable nor is it good for the Army to have people burdened by the constant threat of being ‘outed’ at work. Equally, it is not acceptable or productive when soldiers are bullied, harassed and feel incapable of doing their job.

The Chief of Army spoke recently about treating our colleagues with respect and decency as a precondition of our employment. This seems straightforward. And it is. However, cultural change will only occur through training and leadership. Pathways to Change: Evolving Defence Culture seeks to shape our culture into the future. I had not read it and only did so because I was asked to write this article. It would seem that none of my peers has read it either. If few of us are engaged and committed to cultural change, will anything change? Will gay soldiers in 20 years’ time still be too afraid to tell their boss that they are gay because they feel they will miss out on a deployment? Given the persistence of these attitudes it seems highly likely. If we sit back and do nothing, nothing will change.

It would be facile if the sum of this article is simply ‘say no to bullying’. Soldiers will continue to bully one another and we must learn to deal with it; Army culture must evolve to deal with it. An organisation that upholds the value of diversity and prides itself on the fact that it is fully inclusive and professional in all respects is a good start. Equally important is an understanding of what reduces our capability — that discrimination, harassment and abuse of just one of us diminishes our collective capability. We must maintain the belief that we are only as good as the soldier who stands beside us — that we are all brothers and sisters in arms.
THE AUTHOR

Captain Dominic Lopez is an infantry officer in the Australian Regular Army. He is a graduate of the Australian National University and the Royal Military College, Duntroon. He has commanded soldiers on operations in Afghanistan as a rifle platoon commander and is currently serving as an operations captain in the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment.

ENDNOTES

1 This title was inspired by the title of an article I read as part of my research. See D. Kaplan and E. Ben-Ari, ‘Brothers and Others in Arms: Managing Gay Identity in Combat Units of the Israeli Army’, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 29, No. 4, August 2000, pp. 396–432.

2 I use the term ‘gay soldiers’ to refer to male and female officers and other ranks with same-sex attraction.


4 The Australian Army and the Australian Bureau of Statistics do not maintain statistics on the number of same-sex defacto partnerships in the Australian Army.

5 Brown, Homosexuality and the Australian Defence Force, pp. 1–10.

The Australian Army — our army — has its own culture, just as Wonderland did. This much is obvious. Describing — perhaps even defining — that culture is not very difficult, but for a number of reasons the Army’s culture is not often publicly discussed.

I propose to describe the Army’s culture as I have experienced and seen it these 18 years.² The time is ripe for such a discussion as our apparently dysfunctional culture seems to assume prominence in the public mind whenever the Army is mentioned.
When the Army or the Australian Defence Force is mentioned in the news, people expect the word ‘scandal’ to follow.\textsuperscript{3} This is perhaps more apparent to an interested outside observer than to those of us still serving.\textsuperscript{4} And don’t forget the political pressure that comes with it: the present Minister seems to attach a high priority to changing military culture, placing this on at least an equal footing with current operations or major acquisitions.\textsuperscript{5}

Maybe our military culture is bad, and maybe not. That is an argument for another time and place. Here I intend to describe what I believe to exist without passing judgement on it. Hopefully my description will be useful to those who must so judge. It is important, however, for the reader to understand that I have written this article based on my own experiences and those of others.

I have deliberately omitted two elements from my scope. First, the Canberra staff officer. These individuals, though nominally still soldiers, live a totally different lives and have completely different imperatives to their field (and training establishment) comrades. I had hoped to contrast these with the true Army culture described below, however space precludes this.

Second, I am no expert on the Reserve. So far as Army culture applies to part-time soldiers and units, they are represented below. But I am fully aware that there are unique complications for Reserve soldiers. It must be the very devil reconciling two different lives in two different worlds and I must respectfully leave that discussion to those who know it better.

**What are we not?**

First a word on what Army’s culture is not. Nationalistic blather notwithstanding, the Australian Army is hardly unique. In my experience our army is really very similar to the other Anglo-Western armies of our time: New Zealand, of course, but also the British, American and Canadian armies. And I also include the United States Marines.\textsuperscript{6}

Each of those forces has some unique aspects. The New Zealand Army has harnessed the warrior spirit of New Zealand’s first people in ways we in Australia should envy.\textsuperscript{7} The British have their long history, their still-strong class consciousness and all that goes with it (I fondly remember a friend from an ancient regiment deriding the Royal Tanks as the ‘People’s Cavalry’. His mess dress was the most gorgeous confection of cloth and bauble I ever saw\textsuperscript{8}). The Canadians, alone among us, draw on a French heritage as well as a British one. They have the warm hospitality and the watchful weather eye of the northern peoples. And the
Americans, with their revolutionary past and their frank willingness to lead the world forward, together with their fine good manners, represent much of what is best in all of us.

Yet all these things really serve only to slightly modify a basic theme. Our differences seem magnified to us, schooled in the subtleties of our own nations and cultures. But ask a non-Anglo to tell us apart, and the truth is soon apparent.⁹

So I don’t believe we are unique. And I doubt many of those now serving believe it either. Those of an age with me will remember the late 1990s when the doctrinal concept battle cunning appeared to shudders and cringes in Army’s reading public. It was an attempt to formalise the foolish old notion of digger-as-unique-soldier, rat-cunning and dangerous. Rejection was immediate and widespread, and those who handled the tome took good care to wash their hands afterwards. Perhaps they feared contamination with battle cunning spores. The idea was noticeably absent from the next edition, published on the heels of the first.¹⁰ In fact, that was the only significant difference, though no such announcement was ever made!

But enough of that. Suffice to say we have much in common with the armies of culturally similar friendly nations. Let’s look at what we are.

The five elements of Army culture

Army’s culture has five main elements: ferocity, honour, insularity, love and anti-intellectualism. Together these create the amazing, through-the-looking-glass world that is our army.¹¹ Let’s examine those five attributes in turn.

Ferocity or savagery

An army is a violent thing, soldiers are violent people and the currency of warfare is disciplined violence. Soldiers need the capacity for violence — this is the first essential. Armies exist to win fights: any situation not involving violent conflict¹² with a considerable foe would be better handled by another agency.¹³ This is as true of our army as any other.

So it is not surprising to find ferocity the first key element of Army culture. It is the first quality of any real military force. By ‘ferocity’ I mean the capacity, readiness and will for interpersonal violence; preparedness to commit and suffer brutality; the will to kill, maim and obliterate the foe outside the context of self-defence — that capacity is shared with most of humanity. Soldiers are prepared to kill the enemy in cold blood to achieve a mission — whether that enemy is personally threatening them or not, whether that enemy is even aware of their danger or not.
Soldiers are willing to fire artillery on an unsuspecting target from 20 kilometres away or to lie in ambush. They will take every unfair advantage they can, using a tank to mow down infantry and an attack helicopter to devastate a tank.

Soldiers are capable of attacking other people with lethal force, of striking first without warning. Without this ruthless, bloodthirsty ability to attack, the individual is no soldier and the organisation no army.

Really stepping away from the Authorised Version now, aren’t we?14

We who serve or have served take our ferocity for granted. It is utterly essential to the soldier and utterly frightful to the civilian.15 So we inculcate it right at the start of Army life. In the early days and weeks of training the biggest change in the world occurs. That’s when we learn to kill and to obey those who tell us to kill.

Recruits are ordered every second of the day, from waking (literally) to sleeping. Drill plays a big part in this.16 Then those same recruits, still acting under strict and minute orders, learn to fire on targets resembling human beings. In slightly later exercises, they aim blank-loaded weapons at actual humans representing the enemy. It takes some little time to overcome the inhibitions, to calmly take the sight picture and fire at another person, even in a blank training scenario. But the day comes, and the recruit is a useful soldier at last.17

All this changes a person more than is commonly understood. It’s an application of operant conditioning to turn relatively normal people into obedient potential killers.18 And the change is lasting and very difficult to reverse. That’s why so many of us find the transition out of the Army so difficult, and why so many former soldiers stay close as contractors, consultants, salespeople and Reservists.19

At that stage the skills of killing are still rudimentary: marksmanship, fieldcraft, weapon drills and all the rest. Initially it wouldn’t really matter if the weapons were swords and spears. On the range the recruit learns to aim at targets made to resemble people. He or she learns to bayonet them on the assault course. Learning to do it well comes with time.

For we work on the skills and the attitude constantly, long after recruit training. There is advanced training prior to the first posting; in some corps this is killing-skills focused, in others not. After that, however, nearly every day of unit life, less actual missions while deployed, is some kind of training, some honing of our skills. We build teams and practise our drills, whether it is platoon attacks, bringing a field gun into action, tank crew procedures, siting field defences for all arms,
or tactical convoys. We positively reinforce (there’s operant conditioning again!) with both praise and small informal rewards — the Friday barbeque and early knock-off when things go well. That becomes more formal when it’s time to select soldiers for courses and promotions — past performance is the vital consideration. For failure to meet the standard there is positive punishment, which can be as simple as low status in a peer group.

It works. The battlefields of recent generations — from Korea to Kandahar — reveal the verdict. Anglo-Western soldiers, and especially the Western combined-arms team, comprise a fearsome foe. Few in the world can approach their dedicated ferocity and mastery of firepower. And Australian soldiers are worthy of their place in those ranks.

Of all the cultural attributes of our Army, it is ferocity that makes us win fights. It is ferocity that makes us kill and, when necessary, be killed. Without this quality the Army might be many useful things, but it would not be an army.

Honour

Ferocity, however, is not enough. In fact, on its own, it would create problems. Unbalanced ferocity is indeed the mark of savages, not the army of a civilised people. Mere ferocity alone would yield an armed gang, a menace to society rather than a tool. Or, as it has been so much better put, a ‘brutal and licentious soldiery’. Other influences are needed.

Fortunately, we have a moral code, a concept of honour. It is pervasive and an effective counterweight to the Army’s innate violence.

Our idea of honour has a few facets. Honourable soldiers are chivalrous in battle, obedient to the will of their superiors (within limits!) and loyal to the Army. Chivalry is restricting our violence to legitimate and necessary targets — and it is also firm courage in facing those foes. It is sparing the innocent, protecting the deserving and showing mercy to the defeated. Chivalrous soldiers do not target non-combatants or wantonly finish off wounded foes. They give what aid they can.

Honourable soldiers accept surrender when it is offered. Yes, battle is confused and chaotic, and enemy soldiers who try to surrender must first convince their adversary that they are no longer a threat — and they may well be targeted in the time it takes to do that. And a wounded enemy on the ground may still look just
like one in a prone firing position and be shot accordingly. C’est la guerre. But there is a line between failing to discern the change of status from active enemy to hors de combat and murder and we all know it.

That’s why the ‘collateral murder’ video from Iraq was so disturbing.\textsuperscript{23} This video recorded an incident that occurred in 2007 and was made public in 2010. Attacking the hostile group in the first place was reasonable enough — the journalists accompanying them were unfortunate. But later firing on unarmed people dragging a wounded man from the battlefield was not all right. It might well have been murder; at the very least it was unchivalrous and dishonourable.

For the best words on modern military chivalry I know, recall Lieutenant Colonel Collins’ speech to the Royal Irish Regiment battlegroup just before their attack into Iraq in 2003:

\begin{quote}
It is a big step to take another human life. It is not to be done lightly. I know of men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts. I can assure you they live with the mark of Cain upon them.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

He was equally clear on other matters of honour, ordering his soldiers to treat their fallen foes’ bodies correctly: ‘Allow them dignity in death. Bury them properly and mark their graves.’\textsuperscript{25} But don’t get the wrong impression. That same short speech continued with ‘As they die, they will know their deeds have brought them to this place. Show them no pity.’\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Obedience} matters too. And our people are nothing if not obedient. It may seem odd to lump obedience in with chivalry and loyalty as part of honour, but I believe there is a case for linking these ideals.

Honourable soldiers obey their superiors and are proud of doing so.\textsuperscript{27} It is one of the oddest aspects of army service, this pride in obedience. It suggests a strong desire to abrogate one’s will to a worthy-seeming superior. This is hardly the position of a free person. Yet the same soldiers who gladly snap to attention and follow orders with pride are often strong, independent-minded individuals who would resist any other attempt to dominate them.

Why do we do it? What is so attractive about this position of intellectual dependence and subordination? Certainly, after a little time to adjust to civilian life, close obedience to superiors and formal discipline no longer seem attractive to me. But at the time I was as keen as anybody else. Why?
Perhaps it was because I could submerge my own insecurities, doubts, fears, modest talents, unspectacular origins and mediocre prospects in something bigger than me. The Army gave me a life far beyond the humdrum, workaday world of the outer suburbs and meaningless jobs performed only for money (and a simple living wage at that). It was a way for a lad from nowhere special to be part of the great game of nations.

That required an act of submission, the submergence of my identity and the assumption of a new one, ready-made for me. As the French officer famously told the Foreign Legion reinforcement who tried to discuss his past, ‘I don’t want to know who you were. You are now a Legionary and all that counts is the way you do your duty.’

So it proved for me in my own army days — and so it is for others. Past life experience is put aside at the door and a new person is created. Always before one in those early days are examples of glittering perfection: recruit instructors, senior class officer cadets (who in matters of dress, bearing and drill are generally as elite a corps of soldiers as I’ve seen), drill sergeants grim and awesome. They never appear out of uniform, they are never less than perfectly regimental. They serve to illustrate what is possible — what one might also become, if the necessary submission is made. So the absurd emphasis on making beds and ironing clothes and polishing anything within reach seems quite reasonable. Attaining perfection in these things will lead (in the recruit’s mind) to perfection in the rest.

The artificial recruit environment is soon left behind, but the soldier’s daily life in units continues the theme. Peers keep one another up to standard. Sharp-eyed non-commissioned officers prowl seeking uniform faults, poor drill at simple unit parades and the like. The daily routine continues the obedience habit — it is soothing to those who accept its strictures and irksome to those who do not. Willing adherence to strict routine emphasises the dissonance from civilian freedom but it is enthusiastically embraced as the price of membership.

Obedience, of course, does not mean blindness, fawning or meekness. I see little evidence of that in the Army. The soldiers I’ve known have been intelligently, actively, strongly obedient, making their discipline a willingly adopted code of conduct rather than an imposition. They are not short of spirit, nor a keen sense of the ridiculous.
Perhaps it is significant that when I set myself to consider the Army’s culture, the first thought that came to me concerned acidophilus culture instead. A fellow I knew years ago made the mistake of referring to himself and his team as the ‘cream of the crop’. Some wag immediately replied that he was more like the yoghurt … it’s an unkind world sometimes. And I suppose every serving reader will have a similar tale to this.

Then there is loyalty. If obedience is bowing to the will of a superior, loyalty is making that same submission to the unit, the Army and the nation. It manifests in the small team — section, signals detachment or whatever — that maintains its identity within the larger group. It shows in the 30-something field rank officer attached to a coalition unit who represents Australia in word and deed.

Loyalty goes beyond the day-to-day requirements of the unit. Look at soldiers in their ceremonial dress on a formal occasion. The smartness of turnout, the standard of bearing is incredibly high. Yet they all know that these things add nothing to their effectiveness in today’s warfare. What makes them put in the time and effort to attain this perfection?

It is loyalty. This is their way of honouring the Army’s traditions, their fallen predecessors and the service identity of which they are so proud. Soldiers standing mute in the ranks — or out in front of them with a sword or behind them with a stick — have only appearance and the precision of actions to show how they feel. So they make sure these are first class.

Loyalty is also apparent in the veteran community. The number of veteran initiatives launched over the last few years has surprised and impressed me.30 Many people selflessly volunteer their time, energy and money to help in this way. It’s because of an enduring loyalty to the idea of the Army that they will gladly help veterans they do not know personally — that bond is enough to guarantee entry.

So our ferocious soldiers are honourable because they kill only the legitimate enemy and are merciful and protective to all others. They obey their leaders, confident in their direction. And they do what they do for a unit, large or small, and for Australia.

But Australia on the whole knows them little, and that’s the way the soldier likes it. And the reverse is also true.
Insularity

Insularity is a double-edged trait — and a very strong one, so worth examining on its own terms. The Army is secluded from society. Originally this seclusion was for society’s protection — it was not accidental that Enlightenment and Romantic-era barracks (at least in Europe) so closely resembled prisons. Soldiers were then viewed with the deepest suspicion, and with reason.\textsuperscript{31} Now it’s at least as much about preserving necessarily distasteful (to civilians) military virtues and about a sincere wish on those civilians’ part not to know too much of what the military does.

Today, the threat Western armies pose to their societies is considerably diminished, or so runs the conventional wisdom. Certainly no in-barracks Western military is likely to prey on its own civilian population, individual criminality and weekend public-house brawling aside.\textsuperscript{32} But once deployed, much changes. The fine line of morality is so hard to see through war’s fog.

Remember Abu Ghraib in 2003–2004? A unit of quite ordinary American Reservists ran a torture centre for personal amusement.\textsuperscript{33} And just maybe they had direction to do so from the very top levels of the US Government.\textsuperscript{34} Or go a little further back to 1993 in Somalia when the Canadian Airborne Regiment beat a captured local youth to death for an evening’s amusement.\textsuperscript{35}

So perhaps the old way of thinking is not so outdated after all. Armies, even the best armies, remain dangerous to those around them at times; the line between professional and undisciplined violence can be very fine indeed. And that is a reason to maintain barriers between armies and societies.

Fortunately our own army has not recently been stained by anything worse than the tragic accidents of war. The one recent occasion when it was seriously suggested that our soldiers had done wrong met a public outcry in the soldiers’ favour.\textsuperscript{36} It was as though a national institution was threatened. In the event, the charges were dropped.

The point of this is that people outside the Army felt and, in many cases, said publicly that the Army should have a different legal status to the rest of Australia. And certainly plenty of us agreed with that. This is another side to insularity: society expects the Army to be somewhat inexplicable and to operate under different rules.

The Army exists in almost monastic seclusion. When it does come into the public eye there is careful stage management. ANZAC Day is the best example. Society’s near-universal goodwill towards soldiers on this ‘one day of the year’ is interesting.
It suggests to me a visit by a little-known alien species which attracts popular good cheer. It is not the welcome afforded an old and familiar friend but that of an exotic stranger or perhaps a well-paying hotel guest. And all the family is on its best behaviour, with no dissent or squabbling among the children.\textsuperscript{37}

It goes both ways. Public comments from within Defence are managed very carefully indeed.\textsuperscript{38} I’m unaware of the actual purpose of this control, but one outcome seems to be public ignorance of military affairs.

Not all of the insularity is for such reasons. The body of specialised knowledge and skills is of course considerable in the profession of arms. This makes it as difficult to imagine army entry at middle and later career stages, as is the case in medicine, law and, for that matter, carpentry. To join any of these requires one to begin at the beginning, so not many people will take them up mid-life. The exigencies of army service also discourage later-life entry. Few mature people with formed characters, perhaps family responsibilities, leisure interests and settled home lives, will throw it all away to become junior soldiers or officers.

That situation serves to further segment the Army from the community. Add to that official secrecy (a necessary thing!) and frequent interstate moves and it is unsurprising to find both soldiers and their families effectively dislocated from the people they live among, forming their own social groups with one another.

And we do not fight wars in Australia.\textsuperscript{39} They are waged in faraway places among people we know not, so where soldiers go and what they do there is easily ignored.\textsuperscript{40}

Ultimately, the Army is insular because it must remain different to society in several essentials. Neither ferocity nor honour is a particularly important or desirable quality in civil life, though some aspects of honour could translate. Society does not want to know much about the Army and what is done in society’s name as it’s often disturbing. Ignorance can indeed sometimes be bliss. Neither can our ferocious, chivalrous soldiers afford to adopt civilian attitudes that would weaken their military nature.

The Army is insular and somewhat secretive, and the community is only too willing to leave the Army to its own devices. Like any professional group, the Army tends to look inwards, its members seeking above all to perfect their skills and practise them undisturbed by outsiders. For its part, the wider community is glad to overlook these rather frightening people who deal in violence and who do their work in dimly understood foreign places. So soldiers gain little regular, direct support from society and prefer to look inwards for it.
Love
This may seem a strange one to include.41 Let’s get the inevitable out of the way: I’m talking about the ‘It’s about the men next to you, and that’s it. That’s all it is’, speech from Black Hawk Down.42 That kind of love.

This is hardly the first time this has been identified in popular culture. For a longer, more detailed exposition, read Maclean’s HMS Ulysses.43

In Australia the term mateship is popular. It could be substituted for love in this context, for soldiers rapidly form close bonds when they are thrown together by the Army. It’s not a question of personal friendship or likeability, it’s a survival instinct, a way of managing the turmoil and uncertainty of army life.

Soldiers on operations depend completely on one another for their success and their safety. This has long been the case, and the Army has learned to include it deliberately in training. The team is everything; individuality is sacrificed to it (this is one of the cultural features quite distinct from most contemporary social norms protected by the Army’s insularity).

This, sadly but logically, leads to many of the unfortunate and sometimes downright unacceptable incidents that plague the Army. Soldiers quickly identify those who are unable or unwilling to submerge themselves fully in the team. These individuals are ruthlessly cast out from the pack, usually with the object of creating such discomfort that the unwanted individual leaves the vicinity, the team, the unit and, ultimately the Army, entirely.

That is the general intention, at least in cases not motivated by simple thuggish brutality. Unfortunately, not all soldiers are sufficiently discerning judges to appropriately suggest to a peer that he or she might do better elsewhere. Plenty of problems have begun that way that might well have been avoided.44

So the love is that of proud creatures who have earned their place. Once an individual is well on the road to full membership of the team, people will share their last mouthful of water and carry one another on their backs like Frodo and Samwise struggling towards Mount Doom.45 But before that point, acts of compassion and generosity are determined by the individual kindness or otherwise of the soldiers concerned.

This love is strange. We see the condition that it is shared with those belonging to the team and not necessarily outside it. But even stranger is the soldier’s facility for dissolving and re-forming new teams, complete with the strong bonds of love.
This happens in combat situations where friendly elements are randomly or exigently thrown together; they usually begin to function as close teams almost immediately, despite the obvious hurdles of unfamiliarity and perhaps language barriers.\textsuperscript{46} And the teams are just as often broken up as members are posted elsewhere or elements are redistributed for missions. The old bonds are forgotten with far less heartache than the most casual relationship and far more quickly.\textsuperscript{47} The common bond of service overcomes unfamiliarity and makes for fast integration.

Yet it is strong, probably the strongest of the five cultural qualities of the Army. Love — in whatever guise you prefer — is what keeps us together, functioning as teams. It is what prevents us abandoning the fallen and also what sparks the fire of revenge. Love sustains us, welds us together and prevents us failing one another. Because of love, the team is more to us than our own needs. Because of love we will stand together, fight together and die together if we must.

\textbf{Anti-intellectualism}

I must admit I was puzzled by this one. The first four qualities rather run into one another: ferocity makes us warriors, honour makes us decent soldiers, insularity protects us from society’s influences and vice versa,\textsuperscript{48} and love builds teams and eventually the biggest team — the Army. But anti-intellectualism doesn’t seem to have a necessary relationship with any of them. Yet there it is, plain as the nose on your face.

The Army is not a very intellectual place. Certainly we employ logic often enough. A military appreciation is nothing but a series of logical deductions and inductions to find a solution to a complex problem. This is as true of a one-minute combat appreciation as a multi-day staff activity complete with regular PowerPoint briefings and lousy instant coffee.

Yet, beyond the strict application of logic to an immediate problem, thinking is not highly rated in the Army, and I doubt it ever was. One has only to attend a Staff Officer Grade X or Subject One for Y course to see that. ‘Don’t ask questions, it’s nearly morning tea time’, and ‘give them a ham sandwich if they ask for a ham sandwich’ are ruling philosophies.

Why? Because those training activities are just that: training — they are not some form of education. The intent, not generally acknowledged, is simply to realign a group of people who have been growing apart, down corps and individual pathways, for the last five years or so. It is to recalibrate officers and non-commissioned officers to an army shape and size for a cultural purpose. A few baseline skills and a little common knowledge are also imparted.
So we must look elsewhere for the Army’s intellectual ferment. There is much apparent intellectual effort expended on regimental papers and histories, on in-unit training and so on. But my experience of these events and efforts is that they are mainly forced labour for the sake of appearances. The quality is usually low and the purpose mostly unclear.

My readers must make up their own minds on this point. You should pick up some of the plentiful output of regimental papers, future operating concepts and staff products and read them critically. Is there anything new there? Has the author applied individual thought, or is the mere quotation of authorities all there is?

Along with this is an exaggerated respect for something called common sense. It seems to indicate some capacity for understanding simple matters without excessive analysis, facilitating decision and action. And it does just that, providing the matter is a familiar one, or analogous to a familiar situation. Otherwise it fails, revealing itself to be Berger’s ‘homemade ideology of the ignorant’.

All this seems at first glance rather dysfunctional, but it’s not. The soldier needs it to be this way.

The elusive ‘why’ came to me eventually, and it is simple. Free thought and knowledge have great potential to undermine obedience. We have already put obedience down as a key component of our number two cultural factor, honour. So too much free thought is dangerous to soldiers and the Army.

Armies are often required to do things that are hardly in their best interests. Still less are the interests of individual members consulted. It would be difficult to imagine a species of highly reflective or intellectual soldier who could reconcile this with the necessary obedience. Still less is it possible to resolve the contradiction between the futility of most conflicts over the medium term with the need to fight them today. Who would have spent so much blood and treasure to win the First World War knowing it would set the conditions for the Second so soon? For that matter, who would have fought in Iraq only to create a Shia-dominated theocracy whose most obvious strategic partner is Iran?

Wars in recent times have been mainly futile — at least the wars of Western powers. We have supported rebellions against tyrants only to find that their successors are unfriendly to us. We are fighting Islamic terrorists while holding onto Western economic domination of the world, absolutely ensuring that future generations of Arabs, Africans and Asians will seek to displace us. The futility of it is clear enough. But it is not the soldier’s business to consider that. He must simply fight where he is told and win where he fights.
So anti-intellectualism, the rejection of deep thought in favour of a simple and sufficient logic, is a protective screen for soldiers. It keeps them from worrying about those larger questions beyond their control, whether they be the futility of war or some absurdity in the daily routine. It is simpler and less stressful to just get on with the job.

In the end…

With those five qualities soldiers are complete. Ferocity is their foundation, making them both fighter and killer. Honour makes that violence socially useful. Insularity preserves the soldier’s identity from unmilitary influences and protects society from unsettling examination of the violence for which it is paying. Love binds soldiers into teams that will endure the horrors of war and the ennui of peace alike. And anti-intellectualism maintains the simple faith necessary for service.

If it sounds medieval, cloistered and austere, it is. Not that much has changed in the spirit of good armies since the Roman legions. If you don’t believe me, read Vegetius.\textsuperscript{56} It worked then and it still works today.

This then is the culture of the Australian Army. It has made and continues to make our army a fine fighting force. On the other hand, it breeds a ruthless rejection of perceived misfits and occasionally shelters disgraceful acts and individuals.

How does it compare with courage, initiative, teamwork? I don’t see an inconsistency there. Soldiers living and serving within the culture I describe certainly show those qualities.

There may be a case for reform because of that downside I mentioned above.\textsuperscript{57} But remember why warriors are there. Their strength and resolve are society’s last guarantee. If ferocity is lost in any reform process, that guarantee is lost. So consider first the strengths of what we have, and do not act rashly in an attempt to reconcile the Army to the society it serves. They are very different. Unless we wish to see either a militarised society or a Peace Corps in place of an army, they should remain so. ■
THE AUTHOR

Richard Hughes was born in Brisbane and educated at Ipswich Grammar School and the University of Queensland, where he was awarded a BSc (Hons) in 1994. He served in the Australian Regular Army from 1995 to 2012. Richard graduated from RMC Duntroon in 1996 and was allocated to the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. His regimental appointments include adjutant of the 1st Joint Support Unit, regimental signals officer of the 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (QMI) and command of the 72nd Electronic Warfare Squadron, 7th Signals Regiment. Richard also instructed at the Defence Force School of Signals and served in a number of staff appointments. Pirates were often involved. His operational service was in East Timor (1999-2000) and Afghanistan (2008), as a counter-improvised explosive device electronic warfare specialist. Since leaving the Army, Richard has written and published several works, including his first novel, Days of Vengeance (under the pen-name Corvus Coronoides). Richard lives near Canberra with his family, in the foothills of the Brindabellas.

ENDNOTES

1 Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Macmillan, UK, 1865 — not such a bad metaphor for the divide between the Army and the rest of society.

2 The author served from 1995 to 2012 and has retained some contact with the Army since then.

3 Be under no illusion: some things are unacceptable. I have no time for those soldiers who harm their comrades. Sometimes the wrong people slip into service, or good people turn bad. They should be dealt with harshly, but not to shield their superiors from embarrassment or to preserve Army’s good name. They should be punished and drummed out because their comrades deserve better than serving alongside criminals. And the Army and the nation need real soldiers who serve with honour.

4 The publicly-accessible Defence web page lists seven recent or current reviews and a number of other documents under the heading ‘Pathway to Change’. The premise is that military culture is flawed and must change.

5 See, for example, Minister Smith’s interview with Chris Uhlmann on ABC’s 7.30, 7 March 2012 at: http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3448185.htm This is not so hard to understand if we consider Major General Cantwell’s column published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 10 March 2012. See http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/lack-of-respect-cuts-both-ways-with-minister-20120309-1upmu.html The General’s assessment is that the Minister does not respect Australian military people. If he is correct — and he certainly had enough exposure to the Minister and the capacity to make such judgements — then it would be unsurprising to find changing military culture high on this Minister’s list of priorities.

6 The Royal Marines I really don’t know; my guess is that they fit here too. Readers familiar with that service will draw their own conclusions.
7 Probably a reflection of New Zealand’s greater national success in assimilating native and settler populations rather than anything to do with the military per se. The Maori culture and identity — warts and all — has survived white settlement far better than the Aboriginal. For a military example, Lieutenant General Mateparae, a New Zealand Army officer and a Maori, was appointed Chief of the Defence Force in 2006 and Governor-General in 2011. There is little immediate prospect of a parallel here in Australia. I hope we will see at least one Aboriginal Australian Army general by 2106!

8 And he had a hyphenated surname, of course.

9 Even within the five nations, there will be difficulties. It is not uncommon for Antipodeans to confuse US and Canadian people; likewise, I’ve been called ‘British’ by an American.

10 If memory serves, the offending publication, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1 – The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, appeared in 1999, and its successor in 2002. For Army doctrine, which normally updates on a near-geological time-scale, this is breathtaking speed, pointing to a strong institutional reaction to the original. The body expelled a polyp as fast as it could.

11 With apologies to Mr Carroll, of course.

12 Peacekeeping/making/enforcement, in my view, is simply using a threat of violence to achieve one’s goal. If the threat fails, the violence is committed instead. It’s not different in kind to combat, just in the degree of force necessary to change somebody’s mind. Put another way, if a gang of muggers simply brandish their bats and razors before demanding your wallet, rather than beating you down, have you not still been mugged?

13 For those pointing to the Army’s valuable assistance to distressed populations through disaster relief, I say that a better organisation is easily conceived: an unarmed, disciplined upscaling of the State Emergency Services. It would be much better value for money than an army in this context. The Army only looks like a good solution because the better one has not been created, not because it really is.

14 It does seem a long way from *Courage, Initiative, Teamwork* and similarly bland mottoes. But it’s not necessarily so. We need a publicly-acceptable face to put on this beast that is the Army. And I don’t believe the two ideas necessarily conflict.

15 Bethink you of the (very proper) public reaction to recent drunken violence in King’s Cross and other entertainment districts, the evergreen law and order/public safety themes in state election campaigns and the burgeoning home security market. Violence is not wanted, except perhaps under the controlled circumstances of NRL or AFL on-field thuggery or psychotic computer games.

16 The *Manual of Elementary Drill* (All Arms) 1935 puts it beautifully. Words of command ‘are designed with a view to training the soldier’s mind and body to habits of strict obedience to the will of the leader’.

17 Can you remember the first time you were able to do this easily? I can, and that was in 1995. Perhaps even then I dimly understood that something important had just happened to me.

18 Stated so baldly, the notion leaves me uneasy. It would seem to be deliberate abuse — making people violent. Against that we must weigh the social value of the Army.

19 For a really good discussion of the difficulty of reversing this conditioning, see the excellent DVA movie production *You’re Not in the Forces Now*, presented by counsellor and veteran Nic Fothergill. It’s on YouTube for those reading this electronically and not on the DRN, available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7FwL_pcpXNdM

20 When we really ought to be thinking about future potential.

21 As was reported to the Parliament of Ireland at the close of the eighteenth century.

22 Leaving aside mercy killings — can any military reader say they are always wrong? Probably less an issue in these days of golden-hour aeromedical evacuations and advanced trauma surgery in the field, but I rather suspect it still happens sometimes. In earlier days this problem was sufficiently prominent for the *misericorde*, or dagger of mercy, to be standard equipment for
English knights from the fourteenth century. See Boutel’s translation (my copy is the 1907 New Edition, published by Reeves & Turner, London) of MP Lacombe’s outstanding Arms and Armour (1868) for a discussion. It also appears in Scott’s Ivanhoe, perhaps under artistic license.

23 You don’t need to agree with Wikileaks’ analysis (I don’t) to find the later moments of that attack disturbing. Engaging those rescuing a wounded man, when the rescuers had shown no hostile intent and were unarmèd, seemed very like murder. There are plenty of copies online: watch it yourself at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=to3Ymw8L6ZI and make up your own mind.

24 Taken from the regiment’s website, http://www.royal-irish.com/, on 27 February 2013. The speech was reported by the Mail on Sunday journalist Sarah Oliver at the time of the battle.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 I remember my own young officers standing ridiculously straight and acknowledging instructions with a simple, forceful ‘Sir!’ — and at the time I wished they would relax a bit. Then I recalled that I had done the same as a lieutenant. I was proud and happy to obey leaders I considered good. So I assumed they felt that way too.

28 I learned of this standard answer in G. Ward Price’s very informative 1934 account of the Legion’s final Moroccan campaign, In Morocco with the Legion, published by The Beacon Library, London.

29 Joseph Conrad once said much the same thing about life on the sea and the calm of the ship’s routine: ‘The true peace of God begins at any spot a thousand miles from the nearest land,’ is how this seafaring author put it in The Nigger of the Narcissus. He discusses the point further in The Mirror of the Sea under ‘Landfalls and Departures’.

30 I first became aware of Soldier On, an official Army activity, and later I learned of two young veterans’ groups: Young Diggers and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of Australia.

31 Consider the horrors of the various European wars of succession and religion then still within living memory, when military bands ravaged the countryside with impunity. Murder, rape, looting and wholesale destruction were commonplace. It is hard not to see their point of view. Many of the soldiers were little better than beasts – and their officers the same. As early as 1795, Kant argued that the abolition of standing armies was a necessary precondition of lasting peace (see his Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Essay). In this work he quoted the Renaissance thinker Erasmus who considered ‘nothing so unnaturally wicked, so productive of misery, so extensively destructive, so obstinate in mischief, so unworthy of a man, let alone a Christian as war’. The effect of this thinking was clear in Wellington’s day when he called his soldiers ‘the scum of the earth’. The Duke was not disparaging his own troops; he was complaining that no Englishman of decent prospects or good family could be attracted to the colours, such was the opprobrium of service.

32 Those who have commanded at any level probably remember various Monday mornings when they said something like ‘at least tell me you won the fight’ to their soldiers.

33 It’s hard to ignore it when the famous hood and electrodes photo appears on the cover of The Economist, 8 May 2004.

34 The same front cover bore the legend ‘Resign [Secretary of Defense] Rumsfeld’.

35 The Canadian Airborne Regiment was disbanded and both the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Minister resigned, at least in part over this affair.

36 Three soldiers were charged with a number of serious offences after the deaths of several Afghan civilians, including children. The tragic incident occurred in February 2009, prosecutions commenced in 2010, and the last charges were withdrawn in August 2011.

37 Readers may be aware of the bomb scare directed against a 1961 Sydney production of Seymour’s The One Day of the Year, a notable criticism of ANZAC Day as it was then observed. It is difficult to imagine any other arts endeavour receiving a similar reaction in Australia.
38 In his 2012 book Exit Wounds, Major General John Cantwell described ‘the draconian control of information by the Defence Public Affairs Office and the Defence Minister’s Office.’ See John Cantwell, Exit Wounds, Melbourne University Press, 2012, p. 326. Readers may also remember the complete lack of public support by senior officers for Commodore Bruce Kafer, RAN, Commandant of the Australian Defence Force Academy, in 2011 after the Minister’s public attack on him. I would like to think the Commodore’s fellow flag and star officers were ordered to refrain rather than believe they deserted a comrade.

39 At least not since the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the final punitive campaigns against Northern Territory Aboriginals were mounted.

40 As former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain put it.

41 I don’t mean the forbidden love in the lines of the School of Signals or the Duntroon cadet blocks.

42 If you haven’t seen this movie, I’m not sure why you’re reading this journal!

43 Alistair Maclean, HMS Ulysses, Fontana Books, UK, 1955. This is one of the most harrowing war stories I have ever read. It is the tale of an Arctic Ocean convoy in the summer of 1943, with considerable attention given to the psychological and emotional factors that hold a cruiser’s crew together in hellish circumstances.

44 This is where corporals and sergeants earn their money. Close supervision by intelligent, seasoned and compassionate non-commissioned officers makes all the difference between an issue handled appropriately and another digger-led mess.


46 I experienced this in 2008 with Afghans and Americans thrown together by the fortunes of war.

47 See the many section/troop/team/platoon etc t-shirts listing the members’ names, worn long after that group broke up. How many of those soldiers remain in contact?

48 How many of you just pronounced that aloud as ‘vikky verka’?


50 Mark Twain is reputed to have prescribed reading the Bible as a cure for Christianity. His point stands — reason is no friend of faith, one’s own thought is unlikely to lead to obedience to another’s will.

51 Einstein himself considered that a soldier’s possession of a large brain was a mistake: a spinal cord and hindbrain would be quite sufficient.

52 Which seems inevitable to me, given the two-thirds Shia majority of the population and the post-Ba’athist political trends in the country.

53 Note the preponderance of democratically elected Islamist governments in the North African nations following the Arab Spring.

54 The figure usually thrown about is 20 per cent of the world’s people using 80 per cent of the world’s resources. Recent OECD research suggests it’s really much worse than that. Would you accept poverty as your lot because of your birth, or would you try to take some wealth and hope for yourself and your family? http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/dividedwestandwhyinequalitykeepsrising.htm

55 General George S Patton Jr, probably.

56 Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, De Re Militari (Concerning Military Matters) Vegetius describes legions of the early Empire with many points of resemblance to any of today’s better armies.

57 And of course much in the reform plan to date is positive: removal of pointless gender barriers is a step forward and opens a much greater recruiting pool to the Army. The recent investigations into abuse of soldiers are also welcome: there is no place for those who would behave so foully. Let us not, however, sacrifice the essential ferocity of the soldier to achieve other ends.
OPINION

Fifty Shades of Grey: Officer Culture in the Australian Army

Captain James Brown

ABSTRACT

As the Australian Army begins a transition from a decade abroad it is timely to ask what we know about its officer culture, how that has been moulded by operational deployments and whether the Army officer corps is ready for the challenges ahead. This article argues that egalitarianism, the ‘natural soldier myth’ and bureaucracy in the Australian Army combine to create an officer culture in which excellence and professionalism are not respected and officers are overly keen to minimise the rank divide.
There can’t be too many armies in the world where a young officer craves to be called something other than ‘sir’. In Australia the word can swiftly become pejorative, uttered with unmistakable disdain.

Chris Masters
Uncommon Soldier

We know a few things about officers in the Australian Army. The average Australian Army officer will serve for just over 13 years, just one in five has a tertiary degree, and 15% on average are recruited from amongst the ranks. But Australian Army officers also eat after their troops and yearn to be called ‘boss’. Australian Army officers shun tattoos and choose their personal car carefully, lest they be labelled as having ‘other rank tendencies’. Australian Army officers also learn, from the very beginning of their training, that their ideal role model is ‘the grey man’ who sticks with the mob and doesn’t strive to attract attention. But getting to the core of what underpins officer culture in the Australian Army is a difficult task, and one this article can only just begin to address. As the Australian Army begins a transition from a decade abroad it is timely to ask what kind of culture exists in its officer corps, how that culture has been moulded by operational deployments, and whether that officer corps is ready for the challenges ahead. There are inherent difficulties in answering these questions. Even divining basic statistical data on Australia’s Army officer corps can be difficult, and there is little published scholarship on the subject of what makes Australian Army officers different from those of other countries. Understandably, our officers don’t write much about themselves. Only two (Major Generals Molan and Cantwell) have written books on their operational experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. At a time when the wider Australian Defence Force (ADF) is reflecting deeply on its culture and what pathways will lead to cultural change, there is a surprising lack of introspection on the leadership culture in Australia’s largest military service. As Army faces a possible change to its mission and sweeping changes to its force structure, it’s worth addressing what common factors drive its leaders and how they might face the challenges of the uncertain strategic times ahead.

The perspective I will offer here is neither data driven nor conclusive. It is largely based on my own observations and those gleaned from an informal survey of colleagues both currently serving and recently retired. I hope that it will be vigorously interrogated.

There are three intertwining influences that underpin officer culture in the Australian Army. The first is a deeply cherished, widespread belief in the value of egalitarianism — particularly where it applies to relationships between soldiers
and officers. The second influence is the ‘natural soldier’ myth which weaves its way through much of the tradition and folklore of the Australian Army. And the third factor is the steady march of bureaucracy. These three influences combine in unexpected ways and, taken together, they have resulted in an officer culture that is increasingly risk averse, bureaucratic and bland. This is a culture that does not value excellence as much as other militaries. And it is a culture in which the professional aspects of ‘officership’ are not given the respect they deserve. In short, our officer culture is very grey indeed.

The consequences of this culture are cause for some concern in a small army that is seeking to reinvent itself as flexible, agile and smart. The consequences of an overly bureaucratic officer corps are reasonably clear; however the implications of other cultural aspects may be less readily discernible. An obsession with egalitarianism, for example, can lead to a lack of performance culture and a tendency to over-generalise the skills base of the officer corps. The ascendency of the natural soldier myth in Australian Army (and wider community) thinking can lead to an obsession with the tactical, a neglect of strategy and generalship, and a lacklustre approach to maintaining officer professionalism. And the significance of these consequences is magnified because Australia’s Army officers are remarkably homogenous (much more so ethnically and demographically than the wider Australian community). Despite an increase in non-conventional entries into the Australian Army officer corps (lateral transfers from overseas, in-service promotions through the ASWOC scheme), the overwhelming majority of officers still enter through a single institution — RMC Duntroon.

First, it’s useful to define what we mean by ‘culture’. Edgar Schien provides a useful definition of culture as:

\[ \text{… the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are: learned responses to the group’s problems of survival in its external environment and its problems of internal integration; are shared by members of an organization; that operate unconsciously; and that define in a basic ‘taken-for-granted’ fashion an organization’s view of itself and its environment.}^2 \]

Culture is built and reinforced by shared traditions, behaviours and practices. These can be major traditions such as ANZAC Day or other more subtle and seemingly innocuous traditions. The tradition within the Australian Army which sees officers eat last appears relatively innocuous, yet it is a powerful and pervasive way of reinforcing the belief that officers should subordinate their personal needs to those of their soldiers — and that rank should not necessarily confer privilege.
The culture of our officer corps and the self-identity of officers are mutually reinforcing. How officers see themselves is underpinned by the dominant organisational culture. This has a direct influence on what officers think, what attributes they believe they need to develop, and how they seek to do their job.

Isolating the culture specific to the officer corps is difficult. There are many cultures and sub-cultures within the Australian Army. Some are based on particular traditions and practices within and between corps. Junior officer training in a cavalry regiment, for example, is remarkably different to that of a signals regiment. There are perceived cultural differences between north and south: personnel posted to units in Darwin proudly distinguish themselves from those posted to Melbourne or Adelaide. Similarly, there are cultural differences between the ‘lightfighters’ of 3 Brigade and the mechanised warriors of 1 Brigade (though, as Plan Beersheba rolls out, these cultural differences seem likely to dissipate). There was an Army airborne culture; there may yet be an Army amphibious culture. Army’s instructional units and training institutions have their own specific cultures and practices. There is a cultural difference between the wider Army and Army Headquarters, one author commenting that, coming from regimental units, ‘newly arrived officers often find themselves confused and disoriented by the significant differences’.

There are cultural differences between the conventional Army and Special Forces, and specific cultures within the constituent parts of Special Operations Command too. Sometimes these cultures coalesce, and not always with good results. For example, criticism has been levelled at the way some Special Forces cultural practices have rubbed off on the broader Army. Army’s culture also values conventional warfighting skills over stabilisation and peacekeeping — operational experience in Afghanistan and Iraq is more highly valued than service in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. Finally, the make-up of Army’s senior officers shows that combat officers are more highly valued than logisticians.

Army’s cultural identity is constantly changing. In the past decade, close cooperation with partners and allies has led to the fusion of ideas and values. The Australian military appreciation process has become less British and more American because of Australian embedding in US military organisations. Some believe this has gone too far and that Army’s officers are uncritically adopting ideas and practices from the US military that are inappropriate for Australia’s small army. Others believe this has made Army a more professional and focused force. A degree of generational change is also underway within the officer corps, changing the beliefs that officers hold about the longevity of their
career and the importance of their non-Army life, although it is easy to overstate the impact of Gen Y on Army. However, certainly within Army and the wider ADF, significant reinterpretation and reshaping of culture along gender and diversity lines is occurring.

Wider changes occurring within the officer corps of other countries in recent decades have been similarly reflected in the Australian Army officer corps. A seminal US Army War College study into professionalism and leadership in the US Army officer corps identified a shift in pivotal values and practices among US Army officers after Vietnam. In essence, this research found that officers were increasingly less focused on their duty to the service and more focused on their individual needs and career, reflecting an occupational approach to ‘officership’ rather than an institutional one. Australian authors found that Army’s effectiveness was enhanced if its officers were more institutionally motivated and derived their self-image from Army’s culture rather than their civilian life. Another Australian study on this issue concluded that the Australian Army was a mix of both occupational and institutional cultures, drawing the best aspects of both to create a ‘pragmatic institution’ that blended individual needs and choices within a culture of duty and service. Determining what Australian Army officer culture is, can also be achieved by comparison with Australian Army soldier and non-commissioned officer culture, and the officer culture of other nations.

Like the wider Australian community from which they are drawn, Army officers believe in the importance of egalitarianism. But this quality is not as unique to Australian Army culture as some might believe. A Dutch officer comparing American and Dutch officer culture found that, in the Dutch Army, ‘the formalities between ranks are not as pronounced as in many other cultures’. In the Australian context, the importance of egalitarianism appears to be a visceral reaction to the pomp of the British officer class. Australian Army folklore records with disdain the privileges and elitism of the British military. In the Australian Army, rank alone does not confer privilege and a commission itself is not enough to guarantee loyalty and respect. Australian officers are exceptionally careful not to appear aloof from their men, hence the practice of eating last at mealtimes. But while care for soldiers is an important quality in officers and empathy with other ranks is a vital aid to military effectiveness, it is possible that Australian Army officers may have over-compensated for the practices of their colonial ancestors (and thrown away several useful British officer traditions in the meantime). The cultural cringe at setting boundaries between the ranks may be undermining military discipline. Soldiers might be excessively indulged by officers who are reluctant to criticise or discipline
because of their need to be accepted by the men — and to be called ‘boss’ rather than ‘sir’. Egalitarianism works two ways in the officer-soldier relationship. While junior officers in particular may be earnestly trying to shape their role and appear as non-elite and unofficer-like as possible, soldiers may be conditioned not to respect junior officers. The cultural cringe against elitism in the military might in fact be undermining the value of being an officer.

The Australian Army — and Australian society — do not appear to place a high premium on ‘officership’. This is in part because of the myth of the ‘natural Australian soldier’. Reinforced consistently through the rites of ANZAC, popular culture, and media portrayals of the military, the myth holds that Australians are natural soldiers because of their athleticism and ingenuity. In such thinking, Australian soldiers require little training or leadership and officers are a bumbling nuisance who are tolerated rather than required. None of Australia’s almost 4000 war memorials depicts an officer; rather, all idolise the figure of the Australian soldier. At times, this message has been accidentally reinforced by the comments and initiatives of Army’s senior leadership. In 2009, the Army commissioned expensive individual medallions for every service member to identify the nine signature behaviours expected of the Australian Army. As a signal of what leadership believed Army’s culture should be, it was unequivocal. The medallions proclaimed ‘I’m an Australian Soldier’ and the RSM-Army at the time confidently declared ‘our soldiers are world renowned’. In this entire branding exercise there was no mention of the role of officers, instead one of the signature behaviours declared that every soldier was expected to be a leader. Culture is shaped as much by what is neglected as by what is celebrated. The annals of Australian military history are stacked high with tales of personal acts of tactical heroism, and the majority of Australia’s military heroes are soldiers. Strategy, logistical excellence and the professional leadership of Army officers do not appear to be highly respected commodities. One colleague believes this also explains the rise of a ‘mandarin-class of Tier C and D RSMs’ in the past decade. And there are other consequences in an army in which the professional skill of officers is not respected. In a 2003 Australian Defence Force Journal article, Lieutenant Colonel Luke Carroll argued that the Australian Army has an unhealthy ‘tactical culture’. It makes sense that in an army in which the officer is not respected, higher end professional warfighting skills such as strategy are not respected either. Thus Australian Army officers place a higher value on gaining tactical rather than strategic skills (though it must be acknowledged that operational and strategic command opportunities are limited). The culture of egalitarianism within the Australian Army often means that officers, and their skills, are less respected than they would be in other armies.
This concern for egalitarianism and lack of respect for the leadership of officers also shapes dynamics within the officer corps. If there is nothing particularly special about being an officer, then there is nothing particularly valuable about being an excellent officer. The Australian Army officer corps has less of a performance based-culture than its peer military. Try to name the most excellent officers in the Australian Army — not the most senior, or those with the most operational experience, but the most excellent in logistics, combat and strategy. It is egalitarianism that led instructors at RMC and elsewhere to advise my classmates and me to ‘play the grey man’ who sticks with the mob and does not distinguish himself. And this attitude permeates throughout Army. Performance reporting throughout the officer corps is inflated and masks both mediocrity and excellence. Few officers are demoted or sacked for poor performance. Promotion courses are set to the lowest common denominator and failures are rare. Until recently, mediocre performance was tolerated even at the Australian Command and Staff College where very few officers failed either the professional or academic components of the course. The Australian Army has often been criticised for being anti-intellectual. This is wrong; intellectualism is there to be found. What the Australian Army has is an anti-excellence culture.

Egalitarianism shapes the very way we structure postings and career trajectories. More than other armies, the Australian Army focuses on generalised career paths for officers. The US and Swedish armies, for example, are moving to select future strategic leaders earlier because war has become more technical, fast-paced and complex. Australia does not begin to groom its officers for higher command or link promotion to performance until the rank of major. At that point an officer is 13 years into his or her military career. Given the average length of Army officer service is 13.6 years, this means that Army does not formally identify its highest performing officers until the point at which most of them are already considering leaving the military. In the US military promising junior officers are formally identified much earlier — some captains start developing strategic skills through a joint service program which posts them to strategic organisations and then to complete a top tier civilian postgraduate degree. The Australian Army educates its junior officers to the lowest common denominator. All-corps promotion courses, for example, place infantry officers alongside dentists to learn battalion tactics. Officers often comment that the Australian military is more versatile and adaptable than the US military precisely because its personnel are trained as generalists. As a matter of policy, officers rotate through multiple postings on their way to lieutenant colonel, a practice that incurs high costs for Army. Frequent postings may produce officers who are more conventional in their approach to their jobs, who focus on the
tactical issues in their posting rather than strategic tasks and who have a reduced ability to handle the complexity of modern warfare. Arguably, it is a belief in egalitarianism that fosters a default to a generalist officer posting approach in the Australian Army. This cultural bias requires the career officer to move ‘through a succession of increasingly senior staff appointments … like a sportsman whose primary sport is rugby, but who is then required to captain a soccer team, followed by coaching in hockey.’ Our inbuilt cultural biases, including an aversion to the officer culture in the British regimental system, may well be blinding us to the virtues of more specialised career streaming. Similarly, a default to the pursuit of generalist officer skills might lead to a system that underprepares officers for more managerial postings and positions. We expect that our most highly skilled regimental officers will naturally excel at strategic human resource management when posted in career management roles, or that combat officers will thrive in a staff headquarters role with little additional training for their specific role. And the ADF, one author argues, prefers to promote ‘conformist, cautious tactical officers anyway’. Egalitarianism, shaped by the natural soldier myth, may engender a lack of performance culture and over-generalisation of officer skills in the Australian Army.

The increasing bureaucracy of the Australian Army officer corps is also relevant in shaping officer culture. Several factors suggest that this ‘bureaucratisation’ is occurring, including anecdotal evidence from officers and bureaucrats alike. Speaking at a Military Sociology conference in December last year, a senior military official lamented that Army had become ‘really good at politics and bureaucracy’. In his valedictory address six years ago, then Defence Secretary Ric Smith warned of a growing:

… plethora of directives, guidelines, procedural criteria and so on that we are required to have to deal with in a host of situations that may arise in the course of our work. These compliance requirements are often driven by fear of criticism and of litigation and compensation claims. They are very often put in place in response to an administrative error or a breakdown in decision making or advising of Ministers. They often substitute for, and indeed limit the scope for, common sense, values-based judgments. And in minimising the scope for reasonable risk-taking behaviour, rules and guidelines, they limit Public Service creativity and effectiveness.

A similar phenomenon seems to exist among the uniformed members of the ADF, with particular consequences for officers. A growing list of corporate governance and administrative demands has succeeded in putting the officer back in the
office. Low appetites for risk at the highest level of command and excessive reporting requirements have trickled through the officer corps. Officers no longer independently assess the risk of activities they run, they dutifully fill out a military risk measurement matrix that spits out 100 PowerPoint slides and refers them to a one-star for approval. Increasingly, process has been substituted for problem-solving in the Australian Army. In a Norman Dixon-esque quest for perfection, process is implemented to try to eliminate error and poor judgement. Consider how many staff officers and processes sit between tactical commanders in Afghanistan and the Chief of the Defence Force in Canberra, how many overlapping command chains and stakeholders all require routine reporting. This bureaucratisation has also been driven by wider cultural trends at play in advanced militaries around the world, including the shift from institutionalism to occupationalism. US researchers found that by using common civilian management policies and techniques the US Army ‘turned into a bureaucracy where people were focused on technique, not goals; on self-advancement, not group loyalty; on the career, not tradition and on their own futures, not policy.’ In addition, a risk-averse bureaucratic culture has also shaped the nature of many of our staff jobs. I have seen decorated combat officers who have led companies in Afghanistan struggle to muster the authority to make a room booking in their subsequent staff posting. Our military has a higher ratio of senior officers to soldiers than peers in the US, UK, New Zealand or Canada. Bureaucratisation is reflected in the way our officers write — seldom and carefully to avoid the possibility of being wrong. Increasing bureaucracy in Army is deadening the skills of many of our officers, pushing them into postings where they perform largely menial and clerical tasks and forget their core professional skills of risk assessment and action. And the demand to shift Army officers into bureaucratic postings is relentless; the ADF now has enough headquarters office space in the ACT alone to fill half the Pentagon, yet it is 3% the size of the US military. Creeping bureaucracy across the ADF is making our officers even greyer.

So what to do about it? The first thing to do is to confirm whether the culture of the officer corps is in fact changing. These initial observations of current officer culture need to be tested using data analysis, interviews and self-assessment by officers. Second, the Australian Army should decide whether its officer culture should be changed and determine how this can be achieved. Changing a military culture is difficult, but not impossible. After disastrous errors in officer judgement contributed to Dutch military inaction in the face of the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, the Netherlands reviewed its officer culture in detail. It concluded that an ‘up or out’ promotion policy was essential to ‘renew the officer corps and change some aspects of the current culture such as risk-avoidance, conservatism and
bureaucracy’. Samuel Huntington outlines five touchstones by which military professionalism can be gauged: entry standards, promotions, character of the military education system, the nature of the military staff, and the esprit and competence of the officer corps. It is at these touchstones that any serious effort to accurately gauge the essence of an officer corps culture should begin, and where any effort to reform the culture should be directed. Our long-held belief in egalitarianism, the prevalence of the natural soldier myth, and the march of bureaucracy are all combining to shape an increasingly formatted culture within our officer corps. Our officers are returning from operational service with little tolerance for poor performance to find a service in which ‘being grey’ is perfectly satisfactory. Left in its current state, officer culture can continue to be shaped by largely unexamined factors — or, better still, the Australian Army should shape the kind of officer culture it wants to have a decade from now.
THE AUTHOR

Captain James Brown is a Research Fellow at the Land Warfare Studies Centre and Military Fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Policy (defence@lowyinstitute.org).

ENDNOTES

1 Data provided to author by Defence People Group indicates that 4764 (78%) of Australian Army officers have no degree, 22% have a graduate or post-graduate degree, 13.6 years is the average length of service, and between 2003 and 2013 an average of 15% of officers were drawn from the other ranks (57% joined through ADFA/RMC, 17% from the Reserve). Email Defence Media Ops to author, 4 April 2013.


4 Schmidtchen particularly cautions that this should be carefully assessed in David Schmidtchen, 'Generational Differences and Other Marketing Myths', Australian Army Review 3, 2006, pp. 179–96.


9 Ibid.


12 Author's analysis.

CREATIVE WRITING

Lost in Translation – Plight of the Embed

Author known only as ‘Airman Skippy Zed’
CREATIVE WRITING

Lost in Translation – Plight of the Embed

So I take a call one Friday from a panicked guy up in HQ
‘Can you go somewhere Monday? Our Plan A bod’s just fallen through!
You’ve got everything we need …’ ‘Ok, where’ve I gotta be?’
Of course the last thing Jackman said was ‘and the unit’s all ARMY.’

I am an Air Force member — yes a part of the ‘TEAM RAAF’
So while I’m working here with you expect me to make a gaffe.
Maybe that’s optimistic. Unrealistic too?!
But I’m here as your specialist. It’s my job to support you.

Yes I speak a different language and my uniform is blue
When we are all in cams that really is still true.
Who on earth is Asod? What’s wrong with my baseball cap?
You know a few of us wear berets instead of that!

Guess Air Force focus more on getting planes into the air
Than worry what other services use to cover up their hair.
Yes it’s really Air Force uniform — you can take it up with CAF.
Were roles reversed no RAAF CO’d ban you wearing your slouch hat.

I’ve bigger fish to fry, like the detail in your missions
Than talk FOD’ or the second oldest Air Force’s traditions.
Er okay, so she’s a Lizard, and over there’s a Bear …
Names of footy team supporters? Not much time to care.

So a C-S-M’ll fix it — must be a special type of wrench.
And how can a chicken help set up my computer bench?
Green slime? Suddenly I must talk to some primordial goo?
I need L group, you know, LOGISTICS? Right — to you it’s known as ‘Q’.

Last time I heard ‘Somme’ was a mudbath in World War One.
Do Army here think the Afghan summer’s as much ‘fun’?!?
Cats? They are something, left two big sooks at home myself.
But aren’t the ones here feral? Is that why they need some ‘help’?

Thanks I don’t want Solo but I’d kill for a diet Coke
Cept I’ve just made myself a coffee. Sigh. No, don’t share the joke.
Hello, we haven’t met. So what exactly is it you do?
Just use my nickname — and small words. Please God, talk plainly too.
Now wait the BFA, I actually know this, ummm …
That’s the thingy that attaches to the barrel of the gun!
But why is it important here — I was issued with live rounds?
Oh man my head hurts, I need to just sit down.

Thank God I am an airman — other air force folks get me.
Regardless of our accents Coalition airspace’s dandy!
When I understand what you say I can easily translate
Your requirements into air support so it doesn’t arrive late.

Now as for dealing with blue politics — there I know the score
See I’ve a friend in the COD,² plus elsewhere on the CAOC³ floor
I trained with those two TREFies,⁴ that USAF knuck⁵ there too,
Canadian fish-heads,⁶ Aussie trash haulers,⁷ some JCS⁸ mates who

Will call other Whiskey⁹ buds in zoombags,¹⁰ and …
Your eyes have just glazed over. Guess I’m hard to understand.
So I really don’t mind much if you frequently make fun
We’re all part of one military, we are all Australian.

Laugh away, it’s clear I’ve no idea what you just said
It’s a team effort and here my failure could mean death(s) instead.
So while our skillsets and service cultures are certainly unique
For someone who’s never worked with Army this trip’s been pretty sweet.

I’m glad to go back to Air Force, sadly my time here’s nearly up.
Yet I’ve made some Army friends too. And with any luck
The next RAAFie that you’ll get has a great sense of humour!
They’ve never worked with Army either — or so goes the rumour …
ENDNOTES

1 Foreign object damage. Every airman’s worst nightmare — typically it’s a small object ingested into an aircraft engine causing catastrophic damage and/or failure at altitude.

2 Combat Operations Division.

3 Combined Air Operations Centre.

4 Tactical Reconnaissance Exploitation Facility, a UK term.

5 Fast jet aircrew, typically pilot, navigator, weapons system officer etc.

6 Maritime patrol specialist, typically aircrew but can include back-enders (surveillance systems experts) also.

7 Transport specialist, typically aircrew but can include loadmaster.

8 Joint Chiefs of Staff, US term.

9 Weapons specialist, US term for graduates of their year-long air weapons school.

10 Flying suit.
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editors of the *Australian Army Journal* welcome submissions from any source. Two prime criteria for publication are an article’s standard of written English expression and its relevance to the Australian profession of arms. The journal will accept letters, feature articles, review essays, emails and contributions to the *Point Blank* and *Insights* sections. As a general guide on length, letters should not exceed 500 words; articles and review essays should be between 3000 and 6000 words and contributions to the *Insights* section should be no more than 1500 words. The *Insights* section provides authors with the opportunity to write brief, specific essays relating to their own experiences of service. Readers should note that articles written in service essay format are discouraged, since they are not generally suitable for publication.


Please make sure your submission includes the following details:

- Author’s full name
- Current posting, position or institutional affiliation
- Full mailing address
- Contact details including phone number(s) and email address(es)

Please also include the following fields in your submission:

- 100-word article abstract (please see the following abstract guidelines)
- 100-word author biography (please see the following biography guidelines)
- Acronym/abbreviations list

The article must be presented in the following format/style:

- Microsoft Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf)
- 1.5 line spacing
- 12-point Times New Roman
- 2.5 cm margin on all sides
- Automatic word processed endnotes
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

General style
All sources cited as evidence should be fully and accurately referenced in endnotes (not footnotes). Books cited should contain the author’s name, the title, the publisher, the place of publication, the year and the page reference. This issue of the journal contains examples of the appropriate style for referencing. When using quotations, the punctuation, capitalisation and spelling of the source document should be followed. Single quotation marks should be used, with double quotation marks only for quotations within quotations. Quotations of thirty words or more should be indented as a separate block of text without quotation marks. Quotations should be cited in support of an argument, not as authoritative statements. Numbers should be spelled out up to ninety-nine, except in the case of percentages, where Arabic numerals should be used (and per cent should always be spelled out). All manuscripts should be paginated, and the use of abbreviations, acronyms and jargon kept to a minimum. Australian English is to be used.

Abstracts
The most immediate function of an abstract is to summarise the major aspects of a paper. But an excellent abstract goes further; it will also to encourage a reader to read the entire article. For this reason it should be an engagingly written piece of prose that is not simply a rewrite of the introduction in shorter form. It should include:

- Purpose of the paper
- Issues or questions that may have arisen during your research/discussion
- Conclusions that you have reached, and if relevant, any recommendations.

Biographies
Your biography should be a brief, concise paragraph, whose length should not exceed eight lines. The biography is to include the contributor’s full name and title, a brief summary of current or previous service history (if applicable) and details of educational qualifications. Contributors outside the services should identify the institution they represent. Any other information considered relevant—for example, source documentation for those articles reprinted from another publication—should also be included.