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DEVELOPING THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN GROUND CLOSE COMBAT

The Right to Belong

1. *'If it were a question of having a Marine Corps of 5,000 whites or 250,000 Negroes - I would rather have the whites'.¹ Many, if not all people who hear or read that these days will react with dismay. Unfortunately, similar beliefs and opinions are prevalent within military society when we look at women in ground close combat.*
2. It is time to say 'Enough'. Loud enough so that everyone can hear. Loud enough to act on it. No one can have the ability to say that unacknowledged or unchallenged bad behaviours has enabled them to continue with their old-fashioned notions. 'The games have been played, the studies completed, glass ceilings have been broken.'² In the words of the former Chief of the Australian Army, General David Morrison *'on all operations, female soldiers and officers ... are vital to us maintaining our capability now, and into the future. If that does not suit you, then get out!'*³
3. There is no place in today's Army for old fashioned notions, ignorance or denigration of any element of our society from which we draw our recruits and soldiers. While the author does not hold female integration as higher priority over LGBT+, race or gender issues the direction of the paper was to focus specifically on WGCC. With consideration, the elements recommended within this text may be employed to include all elements of society within the military world.
4. The UK Armed Forces bi-annual diversity statistics (1 April 2020) have recorded the following key points regarding female representation in the UK Reserve Forces.
 - a. Female representation in the Future Reserves 2020 is 14.9% This has increased by 0.3% in comparison with 1 April 2019.
 - b. Of the total intake into both Regular and Reserve Forces 12.6% of the 15% female intake target set in 2017 was achieved.
5. Target monitoring began in 2016, the same year GCC roles were opened up to females. There has been an increase of 1.4%, while remaining stable at 12%, the Army Reserve (AR) has yet to meet the proposed 15% set in 2017. The AR are recording a 4% increase over the UK Regular Forces recruiting statistics, and female recruit numbers are increasing faster than the males. It would be interesting to compare the Regimental statistics to the National Statistics.

Society.

6. Regardless of the numbers, it is disheartening to hear of negative lived experiences as far back as 2013. Words to the effect of *'If she wants to play with the big boys, she needs to learn to take it like one.'* (supporting documents available on request). This experience resulted in a serious injury requiring immediate medical intervention and is now having an effect on day to day activities. Unfortunately, there was no satisfactory outcome for the female soldier involved.
7. The primary issue in this all too common situation, is the Bystander Effect or Pluralistic Ignorance. In social psychology - pluralistic ignorance occurs in a situation where a majority of group members privately reject a norm. But they go along with it because they assume, incorrectly,

¹ Major General Thomas Holcomb, Commandant of the Marine Corps, WWII, *The Right to Fight: African American Marines in WWII* (Basic Racial Policy)

² It's time to stop 'rethinking' women in ground close combat. www.wavellroom.com

³ General David Morrison, Chief of the Australian Army, 2013

that most of the others in the group accept it. This can also be described as ‘no one believes, but everyone thinks that everyone believes’. The bystander effect can be thought of as inhibiting the influence of the presence of others on a person’s willingness to help someone in need.

8. The bystander effect became a subject of interest following the murder of American woman Kitty Genovese in 1964. As reported in the New York Times over 2 weeks later, for over half an hour 38 respectable people heard or saw parts of the attack, yet no one offered assistance or called the emergency services. The story of the attack has become a modern parable for the psychological effects of the presence of others, an example of how behavioural tendencies are greatly influenced by the situation, or other people around.

9. According to Latane and Darley⁴, before helping another, a bystander must work through a five-step decision making process.

- a. Identified that something is amiss.
- b. Define the situation requiring assistance.
- c. Decide whether they are going to personally act.
- d. Choose how to help.
- e. Implement the chosen help.

Failing to notice, define, decide, choose and implement can lead a bystander to not engage in helping or correcting behaviour.

The biggest challenge here is to decide to go against the norm, or in layman's terms the attitude set by those in positions of authority and management. Which in a culture that is built on rank structures and discipline requires a very confident individual to call out poor behaviour of a superior.

10. In the example given earlier at para 6, the activity was being overseen by the SSM and SSgt. Junior members raised concern over the comments and the heavy tackling to the individual involved, but none of the management stepped in to challenge the behaviour, giving the impression it was condoned and possibly even encouraged.

11. The complainants' efforts at receiving an apology also went without satisfactory completion due to the attitudes and behaviours of the senior management, who were also in their direct chain of command. Being directly responsible for ensuring not only a duty of care but to close the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. There are many more lived experiences which could be discussed at a later date, using reverse mentors (to come later) and role play training from incidents that have actually occurred.

12. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe has highlighted how:

‘Women bring added value to the military as their presence enables a more diverse unit composition, additional perspectives in decision-making, a different communication style, different analytical skills and other attributes which can improve teamwork.’

Diversity awareness should not be seen as an attack on the white male but more an enlightening element for ‘treat me as you wish to be treated’ and I will do the same. As a formed unit, we must stop condoning negative behaviours either by unconscious support or active agreement micro behaviours.

⁴ Who were Latane and Darley? AP Psychology Bystander Effect Review.

13. We must create Regimental focal points or champions who can encourage all SP to react to changing society and be accepting of the benefits of the capabilities brought by diverse thinking, inclusive teamwork and recognising strengths in a more modern way. Being present and respectful will go a long way - inclusivity trumps diversity. If it becomes obvious that SP are present but serving in yesterday's Army then they should be invited to stay in the past and have no more input. *'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.'*⁵

14. The Chilcot Report states that we must ensure we do everything we can to ensure that all of the key lessons are learned, implemented and endured. That means not only looking at business structures and processes but also at how we *do* business - the cultures and behaviours. We should not allow old fashioned comfortable ways of working.

15. Integration is about the everyday - the big and the small. Any team improves by 50% when everyone feels included. We must embrace differences as strengths.

16. It is surprising to think that the environment we live and operate in that so many people do nothing. What is not significant for someone can be hugely significant to someone else and have a lasting and formative influence.

So What?

17. We don't need 'to do' Diversity and Inclusivity - we should just look after all our people and treat them the same. It must be remembered that this is one small element of our community, but to the individual when it is happening daily from all angles it is totally unacceptable.

18. However, there are a number of courses of action (COA)'s that we can consider. They are described below and elements from each could be considered on their individual merits.

COA 1.

19. As a priority activity we should look to raise social awareness and social responsibility along with personal confidence in order to call out behaviours that belong somewhere else - regardless of Regimental standing.

20. The Wigston Report was commissioned by the MOD to look into inappropriate behaviour (IB) in the Armed Forces in April 1999. It states we must do more to stop instances of IB occurring. We have to do better when instances of IB have occurred and we should establish an authority. The authority in this instance, would be a regimental responsibility that works to impart Defence policy and governance, holding all management information on IB, conducting assurance activities across Sqns and sharing leading practices. It requires authentic leadership, relentless engagement and consistent communication with everybody playing their part.

21. From the highest appointment we must operate according to our rank or grade. We must be informed, visible, vocal, active and most importantly ourselves. We must display these qualities on a daily basis and hold ourselves accountable if we misstep. An acknowledgement of an error is appreciated and put to bed, but a blatant ignoring is never forgotten.

22. The Regiment can mentor diverse talent and utilise Diversity Allies⁶ to notice what others are experiencing, offer mutual support, conscious of all minorities and display and educate our inclusive framework. Our Allies will set the tone, lift some rocks and encourage active integration bringing distinct groups together as one team. All this will be driven by strong leadership.

COA 2.

⁵ Lt Gen David Morrison, Cof A A 2011-2015

⁶ Training available from SO2 Diversity and Inclusion, Workforce Policy Branch Army HQ Andover (Army Pers-Pol-Diversity-SO2)

23. Remove he and she from reports and Orders. Use the Pronoun they. While this comes under Protected Characteristics 9, it also has a place here, with the removal of the gender pronouns we can move towards considering our SP as a collective trained force regardless of gender.

24. Banter is essential in our environment and society but unconscious bias must be considered and preconceived ideas challenged. If there is a learning point that can be reinforced with humour, change the he/she to they to create a learning environment without the appearance of bias or lack of inclusion.

COA 3.

25. Engage with subject matter experts. Encourage volunteers to be reverse mentors to comment on the lived experience for a regimental working group. Reach out to the World Faith Chaplains, employee support networks, Forces Diversity Networks, business in the community and Stonewall for best practice options, tool kits and resources.

26. Just start a conversation. Who are our Regimental D&I advisors and practitioners? Are they all Middle-Aged White Men? Should we encourage a more socially representative percentage of the cohort to train and practice?

27. Just start a conversation. What are examples of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, associative discrimination and perception discrimination. Repeated behaviour previously raised but not corrected is not acceptable and should be robustly managed.

28. Actively listen to the responses, concentrate, try to understand and respond remembering that you may have no experience of the issue.

COA 4.

29. Independent learning and CPD. There is a large choice of training practitioners who deliver Diversity and Inclusivity training. The author has enrolled on a government funded Level 2 Diversity and Inclusion certificate with Think Employment, funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, using the European Social Fund.

Conclusion.

30. Preventing issues from snowballing should be the priority while emphasising that everybody should be able to ask for assistance, be strong enough to challenge denigrative behaviours - regardless of appointment, and comfortable enough to return and sell our Regiment as forward moving and respectful of all.

'You cannot raise your soldiers as your NCO's raised you, because your NCO's raised you for an Army that no longer exists.' UNKNOWN.

1 December 2020

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