



UK INFANTRY PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATION

DR JOANNA HARVEY

ARMY PERSONNEL RESEARCH CAPABILITY, ARMY HQ, UK MOD

PURPOSE OF STUDY

- Understand perceptions and expectations
 - Across different cohorts – rank and gender
- Why?
 - Large scale cultural change
 - To help consider mitigations
 - Two-way dialogue – cultural change
 - Identify learning points
 - Aid planning

STUDY DESIGN

- 12 focus groups
- Psychology facilitators – civil servants
- March/April 2018
- Across 4 regiments – spread across UK Army
 - 2 line infantry, Parachute Regt & Guards
- 3 cohorts
 - Officers, SNCOs and attached females
 - 1 focus group with JNCOs
- 100 males and 23 females
- 1 hour duration

PRINCIPLES

- Cultural change – dialogue is key
- Can be a sensitive topic – openness and listening
- “I want your views – whatever they are, feel free to voice them”
- “I am not here to judge; no-one is here to judge”
- Format of focus groups:
 - Identification of issues – post it notes, themes, interactive
 - Information provision
 - Discussion

MALE PERSPECTIVE – KEY THEMES

- Politically driven
- Lowering of standards
- Females have less physical strength and stamina
- Greater injury risk
- Impact of pregnancy and subsequent gapping
- Risk of positive discrimination and dual standards
- Field administration and infrastructure
- Social cohesion and relationships
- Discipline and policy
- Combat effectiveness, will to fight and emotions
- Career longevity
- Army ethos – change the majority for the minority

FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Females attached to infantry units

- May have not been motivated to join a fighting Arm
- Some would have considered joining the Infantry initially
- General view – the more a female knows, the less likely she is to want to join the Infantry
- The vast majority were overwhelmingly negative.

FEMALE PERSPECTIVE – KEY THEMES

- Physical attrition, injury
- Physical standards and fitness required
- Team dynamics and cohesion
- Social issues and relationships
- Bias, being discriminated against or treated differently
- Pregnancy, maternity leave, motherhood
- Need to constantly prove themselves
- Emotional differences
- Harassment
- Career longevity
- Clothing, equipment and infrastructure

OVERVIEW OF PERCEIVED ISSUES

Male Views

- *Politically driven*
- Lowering of standards
- Females have less physical strength and stamina
- Greater injury risk
- Impact of pregnancy and subsequent gapping
- Risk of positive discrimination and dual standards
- Field administration and infrastructure
- Social cohesion and relationships
- Discipline and policy
- Combat effectiveness, will to fight and emotions
- Career longevity
- *Army ethos – change the majority for the minority*

Female Views

- Need to constantly prove themselves
- Physical standards required
- Physical attrition & injury
- Pregnancy, maternity, motherhood
- Bias, being treated differently
- Clothing, equipment & infrastructure
- Social issues & relationships
- Team dynamics & cohesion
- Harassment
- Emotional differences
- Career longevity

MORE SIMILAR THAN DIFFERENT

- Most of the issues are similar, with a slightly different perspective
- Common ground – shared solutions and mitigations
- Shared motivations to make integration work
 - Army are ‘do-ers’, will ‘get on with the job’
- Historical perspective of gender integration (pilots, RA etc)

- Homogeneity effect
 - Ingroup – we are more varied
 - Out group – they are alike
- But – variability across both genders.

NOW FOR THE POSITIVES.....

- Diversity and different approaches
- Improvement in Army fitness standards
- Opportunity and challenge for females
- Increase Army strength
- Equality as a principal
- Females support provision - caring
- Certain roles are better done by females

SOME MITIGATIONS

- Provide more information and facts
 - Planned communication strategy already – but needed
 - Perception of political decision
 - Scientific basis of PES
 - No quotas
 - Explain how PES are derived and measure performance
- Decouple PES (physical) from WGCC
 - WGCC is legal, ethical, social and politically based
 - PES is scientifically based
- Emphasise how existing policies and procedures can deal with issues
 - Discipline
 - Maternity cover
 - Equality, standards and fairness
 - Relationships

SUMMARY

- Overwhelming view was for women not joining the infantry – both male and female
- ‘Harder’ edge of Infantry regiments were more opposed than ‘line’ infantry
- JNCOs were more varied in their responses, with more being neutral

- The in-group discussions often moved the perceptions to being more open
 - Often initially defensive, but discussion and exploration positive
 - Discussion can be counter-cultural in the military
- Other males in the groups often challenged, gave examples
- Concerns over group identity – can be perceived as a ‘threat’
 - Realistic idea of numbers and capabilities of women joining
 - Examples of those they know who could be effective