

Recruit experience: re-introduction of mixed gender basic training

SAS – 137 Integration of women into
Ground Combat Units Symposium

5 – 7 Feb 2019

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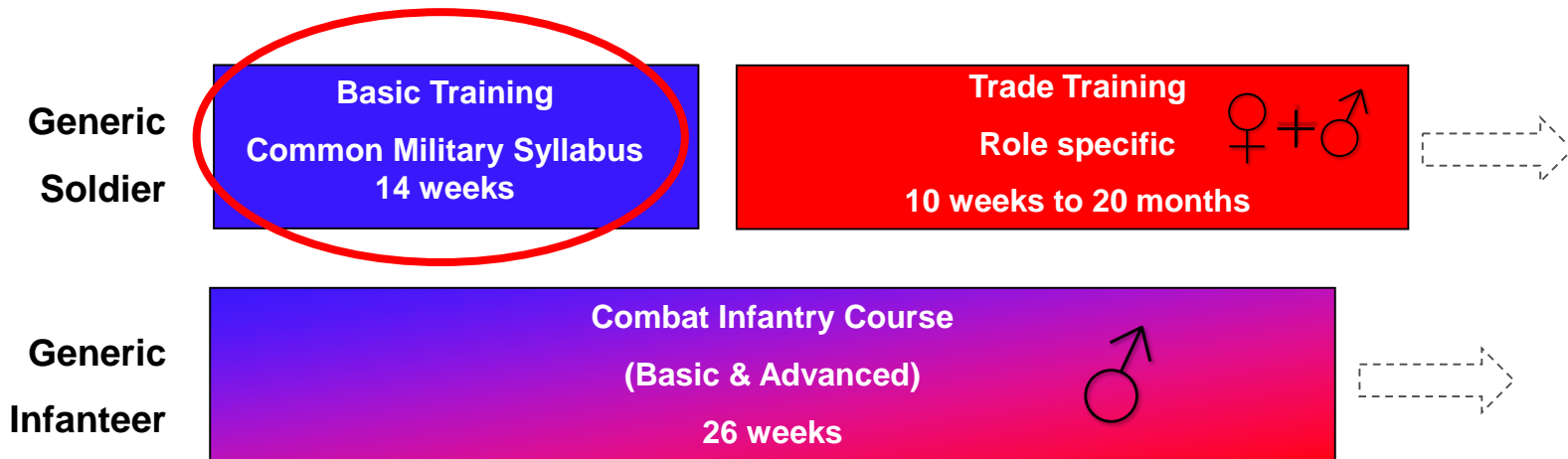
British Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command

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BACKGROUND

British Army Year to March 2018 intake:

Male soldiers: 5,442
Female soldiers: 539
5,981
Infantry: 1,438 (all male)
Non- Infantry: 4,543



2019 watershed year for the British Army as women allowed to apply for combat roles from April 1.

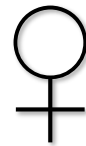
RE-INTRODUCTION OF MIXED GENDER BASIC TRAINING

BACKGROUND

Female Rcts
9X more
likely to
injure

2006

2018



Single gender training introduced in response to findings that female rcts > risk of injury

Inclusion question was raised: train together - fight together?



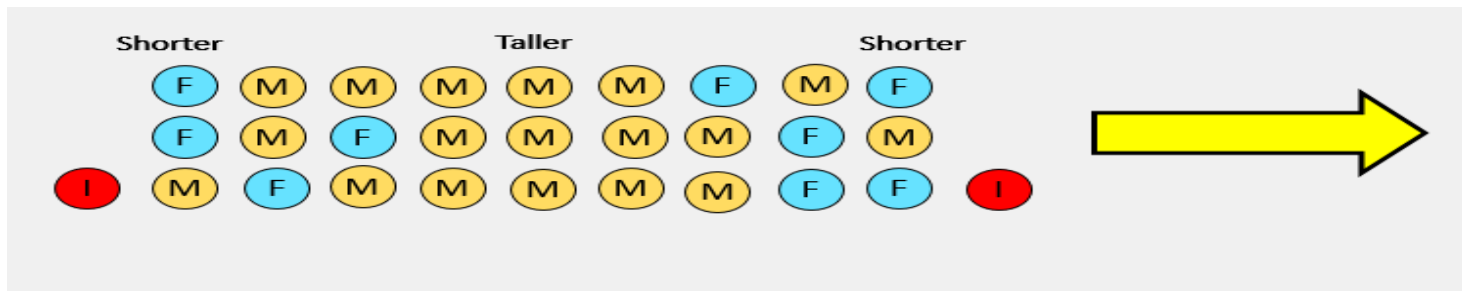
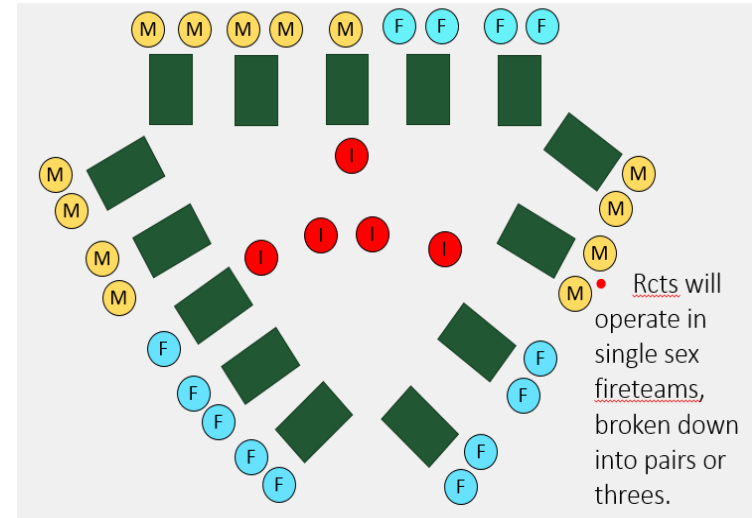
Campaign demonstrates the broader thinking on diversity beyond the stereotypical Army recruit.

TRIALS INITIATED WHICH MITIGATE PHYSICAL RISK

- Mixed gender trial initiated in March 2018.

- Physical injury risk mitigation applied through:

- Reduction of junk miles
- Single gender march around camp
- Single gender PT
- Single gender fireteams (within a mixed gender section)
- Reduced stride - 26inch
- Shortest at front and back of drill
- Programmes and activities are to be planned to minimise the risk of over-exertion caused by any direct competition between male and female recruits



TRIAL 2

Second mixed gender trial: 21 May – 24 Aug

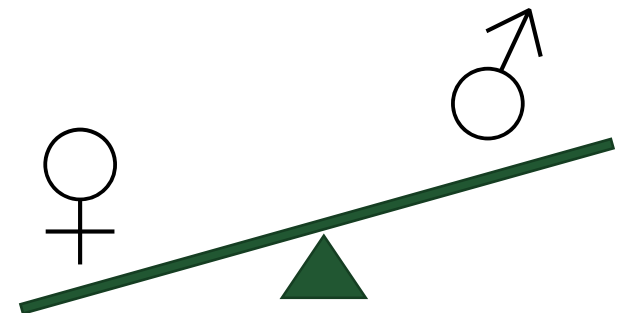
18 Male recruits loaded - 14 completed

22 Female recruits loaded - 22 completed



Occupational Psychology Team asked to monitor behavioural impact:



- Focus groups – separate male and female recruit focus groups
- Focus groups with training staff
- Focus group with Welfare team
- Review of trainee survey data



FEMALE FOCUS GROUPS

- Encouragemnet
 - “the lads push you to their level”, “lads will better encourage you”
- Chauvinism observed but reduced over time
 - “some lads too helpful” “at the start disrespectful but now less so.”
- Emotional support
 - “lads will go to the ladies [on emotional issues]”, “ we helped mentally prepare each other”
- Separated PT and marching is detrimental
 - “separate PT makes the girls feel they can’t keep up” “separate marching splits the groups and inhibits mixing”

MALE FOCUS GROUPS

- Encouragement 
 - “during PT the lads had to egg [encourage] the girls on”
- Presence of female rcts had a calming effect.
 - “girls seemed to calm the behaviour of the lads”
- Emotional support 
 - “some of the ladies always played mother hen” [provided in a positive light]
- Gender context dissonance - female assertiveness in military
 - “some of the girls were a nightmare – they seem to think they know it all”, “there were some very head strong personalities in the ladies”
- Gender context affirmation – female rcts treated more leniently
 - 12 of the 14 agreed the girls were treated differently, “Girls don’t seem to get punished - it was obvious/noticeable” “The ladies were better treated - different responses to the ladies”, “Discipline has dropped”

WELFARE TEAM & TRAINING TEAM

Welfare Team

- Perception fewer welfare issues arising
- Opposite gender has a moderating effect
 - Compared to single gender training courses – less animosity aired
 - Fewer issues with infighting
- Better Teaching dynamic
 - More positive dynamic in the classroom noted

Training Team

- More inclusive training culture but separation makes it less so.
- Males are calmed down, females are less “bitchy”
- Mixed views on team performance.
- Some cross pollination in knowledge and skills.
- No worse or better prepared for the next stage of training.

RE-INTRODUCTION OF MIXED GENDER BASIC TRAINING

TRAINING SURVEY

Comparison of trial survey data with previous data from same location with single gender courses	SE83A-Female (n =22)	Single Gender Benchmark Female (n=64)	SE83A-Male (n =14)	Single Gender Benchmark Male (n=157)
Overall course satisfaction (Very satisfied & Satisfied)	95%	79%	93%	81%
Extent to which recruit was treated fairly (Always & most of the time)	87%	81%	92%	85%
Extent to which all trainees were treated fairly. (Always & most of the time)	65%	71%	86%	83%
Extent to which training was conducted without sexual or racial harassment. (Always & most of the time)	100%	90%	100%	96%
Agreement on feeling prepared for next stage (Strongly agree & Agree)	83%	89%	100%	91%
Agreement on enjoyment of this phase of training (Strongly agree & Agree)	77%	73%	86%	81%
Hopes for the future - stay intentions	96%	94%	93%	91%

All scores are comparable in nature to single gender programmes

CONCLUSION +VE

+ve Impact:

- **No detriment in experience** compared to benchmark single gender training
- **No detrimental impact on training programme**
- **Improved behaviour regulation in male rcts:** gender context dissonance not expressed in behaviours experienced by female rcts
- **Positive experiences of the “other” gender** for both genders: emotional support, encouragement
- **Fewer welfare issues** emerging in programme
- **Deflate intra-group conflict.**

CONCLUSION -VE

-ve Impact:

- Separation:

- Increases salience in differences
- Re-affirms out-group
- Re-affirms contextual stereotypes
- Undermines self efficacy
- Arguably undermines cohesion

Cohesion factors*:

- ~~1. equal physical capability~~
- ~~2. equal skill and knowledge~~
- ~~3. equality of treatment by the organisation~~
4. Early membership to the group, shaping sub-culture and behaviours.
5. Early membership to the group developing interpersonal trust and shared experiences.

* Based on a review of two papers:

Berkshire Consultancy, (2010) “*Study of Women in Combat*” produced on behalf of the British Army

DSTL, (2009) “*Women in Ground Close Combat Roles: the experience of other Nations and a review of the Academic literature.*”

NEXT STEPS

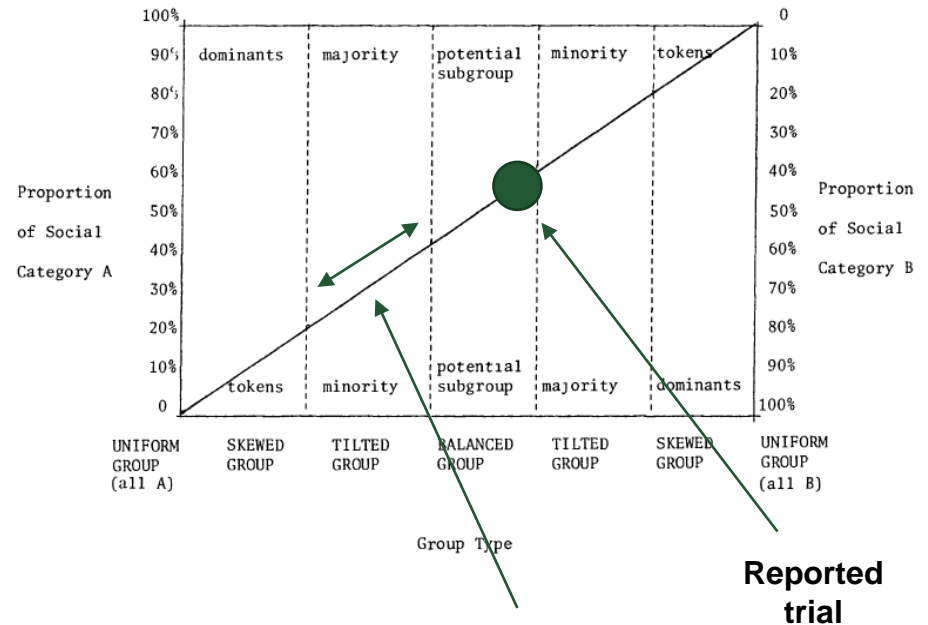
- **Continue behavioural impact monitor for two more trials.**
- **Physiological impact monitoring to continue indefinitely**
- **Reduce Separation**
 - Now marching together sooner
 - Now mixed gender fire teams
 -
- **Reduce impact of separation:**
 - Better educate Rcts on reasoning (and staff to re-inforce)
 - Explore move to tiering by ability (clear that some female recruits would join the top tier, and some males the lowest tier)
- **Monitor impact of shift in gender proportions** - this trial not necessarily reflective of future programmes.

PERSONAL INTEREST – WHAT INFLUENCE PROPORTIONS?

Behavioural consequences per Kanter (1977)

- **Higher visibility** - disproportionate share of group awareness.
- **Additional scrutiny, symbolic consequences**, double the effort for recognition, don't embarrass the men, greater performance pressures.
- **Polarisation** – tendency to exaggerate stereotypical and actual differences between males and females.
- **Assertion of the masculine culture** - Men act more masculine and efforts to create greater differentiation established norms..
- **Role entrapment** – Stereotypical assumptions and mistaken attributions: Mother hen, iron maiden, seductress or ice queen.

Skewed Sex Ratios and Token Women



Subsequent trials & likely status quo in mixed gender training

Kanter, R. M., (1977), Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women.



Questions?

