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ARTICLE



## 'War-fighting and left-wing feminist agendas': gender and change in the Australian Defence Force

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### ABSTRACT

Western military institutions are reforming to enhance gender inclusion. This imperative is driven by the need to sustain a volunteer force in a society with rapidly changing values coupled with a recognition that sustainability and legitimacy requires diverse representation from the community from which they draw their human resources. Our recent research has considered the changing character of the Australian Defence Force (ADF)'s disposition towards women, and discourse of gender and gender reform. In this paper we critically evaluate these discourses on gender equality across the ADF and outline the salient ideas and claims within institutional reviews and in academic papers written by ADF soldier-scholars. Our purpose is to interrogate current ways of framing and articulating key ideas on gender, sexuality, and equality to scrutinize the implications for the ADF's stated purpose of creating a gender-inclusive workplace. We find that the driving functional imperative of military effectiveness limits and shapes the extent to which the ADF can become a genuinely gender-inclusive workplace.

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## Introduction

The question of women's participation in Western militaries has been an enduring point of public debate. Spanning different cultural and political discursive realms, it is an issue that highlights the boundaries and contours of significant areas of cultural relations, especially gender, violence and the state, civil society, and military relations. This is a contentious change for the traditional military subject and one that has electrified the debate on women's right, and capacity, to serve, with safety and with equal opportunity. Militaries across the globe are struggling with similar policy issues, partially shaped by institutional sustainability into the twenty-first century and partially by the persistent incidence of male violence or prejudice towards their female colleagues. In both cases the question of diversity looms large. Sociologically, the question of why and how this particular kind of institution is liberalizing, in this particular epoch, is also of particular interest. We focus on two key

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points: what are the generative mechanisms that create women in the military as an issue of significance, and what does the Australian Defence Force (ADF)'s disposition towards women and wider cultural diversity tell us about their journey to organizational diversity?

We begin with a selective history of women in the ADF, outlining women's progressive incorporation into the ADF. We then describe the historical public concerns with military culture and military misconduct, outlining the broad context within which gender change is currently considered. Following Basham's (2009b) point that we focus on how the military organization conceptualized diversity and reform, we take these discussions to make some initial mapping on the question of how women's participation in the ADF is conceived. We argue that there is evidence of change in organizational accountability; the shift away from inferiority and difference to homogeneity, cohesion, and sameness demonstrates a limited progression in how the ADF conceives of gender equality and women's participation.

## Researching gender and the military

In September 2011, the Australian government and the ADF command removed all gender barriers to military employment, potentially enabling women to fully enter the male bastion of combat roles. This announcement coincidentally followed revelations of the 'Skype sex scandal'<sup>1</sup> (Wadham 2016), the 'trigger' that exposed a litany of abuse scandals that have plagued the Australian military. At the time the then Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith, launched a series of wide-ranging inquiries into the ADF, beginning a period of organizational 'cultural review' and reflection. The focus was on military culture, and included reviewing traditional military practices of homosociality and violence, substance abuse, intense male fraternity, and the treatment and opportunities of women in the ADF. This incident in 2011, and its associated cultural activity, is a landmark event bringing the tensions and challenges of military culture in Australian liberal democracy to the foreground.

In 2013, alongside a series of reports into organizational culture, the ADF launched the Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2012–2017. The focus on diversity and inclusion is an evolution of earlier institutional approaches employing the ideas of equity and equal opportunity. The military institution since around 1970 has increasingly been asked to become a reflexive organization – to look back on itself and its traditions and practices.

The aim of this paper is to provide the cultural and discursive context within which recent reform has taken place – in this sense, this paper provides the general frame in which further, more detailed work can be undertaken. It is worth noting that while there has been much work on the social construction of gender within the military, there is little on the Australian experience (Duncanson and Woodward 2016).

As observers of military institutional attempts to manage the challenges of male dominance and male fraternity, the processes of organisational diversification and reform illuminates particular institutional dispositions to gender change (e.g resistance, indifference and engagement). After all, these changes represent a significant scrutiny of the hegemonic and martial masculine organization. The ways that gender reform is described are a window into the gender politics of the ADF and the historical and contemporary ways of understanding and doing 'gender' (Ahmed 2012). In this paper we ask: 'What is

the contemporary principal disposition to gender and gender reform in recent organizational reform policy, planning, and research in the ADF?' This gives us some broad sense of how the character of the ADF is shifting as it attempts to negotiate change.

This is an initial paper on the wide-ranging assessment of cultural reviews including subjects such as the military covenant, the treatment of women, alcohol use, and physical and sexual abuse within the ADF. Media interviews and reports, and academic literature on women, diversity, and the military form the basis of a discourse analysis of women in the ADF, 2014.

Cultural texts provide a deep understanding of the social and power relationships within which 'women in the ADF' is (re-)produced. By interrogating policy, reviews, and articles within this domain from a cultural and historical perspective, we are able to understand the determining forces that shape the ideal and reality of women's service as well as the potential for gender reform in the military institution. Language is the primary medium of cultural production and textual analysis provides an assessment of cultural relations (Hall 1997). We draw upon the traditions of Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault 1978) to undertake this task focusing on the ADF's social construction of militarism, gender, and culture.

We have considered a wide range of media, including policy and media interview data since 1969, although our utmost focus is on the period 2011 to the present. We argue that the 'functional imperative' driven by the preoccupation with military effectiveness frames women's participation in the ADF as an issue of capacity rather than rights, and therefore privileging 'sameness' rather than supporting difference. Given that social cohesion (or combat effectiveness, to use military terminology) is central to contemporary ideas about military effectiveness, and recent institutional responses have marked the current disposition to social cohesion as overly tribal – two significantly homogenizing ideals – we are interested in the extent to which a military organization can address the foundational matter of masculinist hegemony.

## **Men, military culture, women, and change in the Australian context**

Efforts to enable the substantive participation of women in the military have their roots in the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The growing stature of second-wave feminism, alongside other key movements such as the anti-Vietnam War movement, gay liberation, indigenous rights, and various worker movements, contributed to a growing scepticism towards the white masculinist state which saw the emergence of the post-modern age (Nicholson and Seidman 1995, 12, Morrison 2013; Smith and McAllister 1991, 371). Women's participation grew in government and public services such as health, education, policing, and the military (Eisenstein 1991, 1990; Sawer 1990; Franzway 1986). Traditional forms of state discrimination diminished, to some extent, including the lifting of the marriage and pregnancy bars in 1969 and 1974, respectively.

Preceding the advent of the all-volunteer military force, citizenship and military service were heavily interdependent. After the Vietnam War and the end of national service, this relationship diminished (Smith and McAllister 1991, 371). In the decades leading up to 1980 other reforms were contributing to changes in the ADF's workforce. Between 1967 and 1971, members of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) served in Vietnam (Biederman et al. 2001). The ADF also underwent

significant reforms under the establishment of the defence diarchy – the restructuring of the ADF around the Minister, the Chief (ADF) and the Secretary (Department of Defence) of Defence) in 1975. Interestingly, this year was declared by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly as the International Year of Women, prompting the Chiefs of Staff to form a Working Party to examine and report on the role of women in the ADF. Four years later (1979), women were permitted to train alongside male officer cadets in the Navy at HMAS Creswell, Jervis Bay, and equal pay was granted to all women in the service – seven years after it was granted in the rest of Australian society.

In 1980, the Australian government ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but this was conditional on exemptions for women's inclusion in combat and combat-related duties. In 1984 the Sex Discrimination Act was passed, compelling the ADF to engage more deeply with the question of women's access and participation. While the passage of the legislation resulted in the opening of 17,000 ADF positions (23.5%) to women, in competition with their male counterparts, it also had a retrograde effect in some aspects of women's employment within the military. The Act defined combat roles as 'those requiring a person to commit, or to participate directly in the commission of, an act of violence against an adversary in time of war', and thus women's support to combat troops in the fields of transport or engineering was retracted. By the mid 1980s, all woman-specific services had been mainstreamed (Oppenheimer 2008).

When Australia entered the Gulf War in the early 1990s, the character of warfare was notably changing (see Higate and Hopton 2005, 435), and for the first time Australian servicewomen could serve directly in a war zone. Women constituted 11.4% of the ADF at this time, serving as medics, nurses, logistics and supply operators, military police, intelligence analysts, drivers, and movement operators (Evans 2013, 43; Smith and McAllister 1991, 371). In 1992 the 'Halfway to Equal Report' (*Report of the Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia*) recommended that defence exemptions under the Sex Discrimination Act (1984) be rejected (Lavarch 1992).

By the 1990s women's participation extended to 87% of employment roles in the military, and this was up to 93% by the next decade. As a result, women served in support roles in traditionally combat or arms corps functions. As women's participation increased, stories of 'sex scandals'<sup>2</sup> in the military emerged in the national media. The first major media scandal involving women occurred upon the HMAS *Swan* (see Epis 1992). A Navy medical officer was subject to a culture of sexual harassment, predominantly the lewd and lecherous masculinity of the wardroom. This led to the tabling of a Senate Inquiry's findings in 1994 (Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade 1994) which revealed systemic physical and sexual abuse alongside the indication that women, subject to masculine fraternal culture, feared retribution for reporting and were likely to remain silent. The HMAS *Swan* incident was one of many in the ADF's litany of sexual misconduct scandals and associated reports and inquiries. Interestingly, scandals prior to the HMAS *Swan* incident centred around men violating other men – bastardization.

Between 1995 and 2014 there were 13 inquiries into military culture prompted by scandals (see Wadham and Connor 2014), invoking media scrutiny, civil society concerns, and governmental and organizational reviews. The first of these was an investigation into the cultural, social, and institutional barriers that impede the competitiveness of women in the ADF, led by Clare Burton, previously the Head of

the New South Wales Equal Opportunity and Public Employment Office (Burton 1996). In 1996, Major Kathryn Quinn (Quinn, 1996) conducted the first Sexual Harassment in the ADF Survey. This survey and report marked the early years of an organization beginning to develop reflexivity about diversity. Two years later, in 1998, the Director of the newly established Defence Equity Organisation (DEO), Bronwyn Grey, was employed to review the policies and practices dealing with sexual harassment and sexual offences at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). Collectively these resulted in significant reforms, with the abolition of a cadet rank hierarchy, and the introduction of training in equity and diversity for cadets and staff. They were also significant because the reports began to recognize and report upon the intensely masculinized culture of the ADF. Notions such as gender, equity, and diversity began to infiltrate the hermetically sealed men's fraternity of the ADF. Despite earlier bastardization scandals being persistent and embarrassing for the ADF, these had never been articulated in terms of gender – or about men. The presence of women, and the persistence of male predatory and sexualized practices, calls for a language and a framework to understand men's tribalism. The civic machinery of sexual harassment prevention and equality opportunity promotion are subsequently employed by the ADF to meet these new challenges.

In 2000, an ADF Personnel Study, drawing on CEDAW, recommended the lifting of the ban on women serving in direct combat duties – a move resisted by the National Interest Analysis (April 2000). According to the Department of Defence's Annual Report (1999–2000), women made up 12.8% of the permanent ADF (6507 women compared to 44,248 men). Even though over the next 13 years there has been an intense engagement of women in the ADF in operational activities, there has been little movement in women's service rates, standing at around 14%. While women can serve in combat support roles, only about 10%, over the course of recent conflicts, have been deployed overseas (Evans 2013).

As warfare has become predominantly asymmetric, women have been increasingly exposed to combat-type activities regardless of being designated to roles that restrict them from doing so (Carroll 2014; Evans 2013). ADF personnel, despite their trade or corps designations, are soldiers first, so every member of the ADF is expected to be combat effective. Key theatres of operation over the past decades have included East Timor, Iraq, and Afghanistan, which have seen women engaged in 'outside the wire' activities such as patrolling and security piquets, as well as community engagement. Even in peacekeeping and humanitarian work, combat roles are ill defined with conflict always possible.

### **Civil society, military, state: gendered discourse**

As of 1 April 2015, 15.4% (8823) of the ADF permanent workforce were female: Navy, 2637 (19.0%); Army, 3517 (12.0%); and Air Force, 2669 (18.7%). Two hundred and sixty-six women are serving on current overseas ADF operations, representing 14.9% of the total deployed force. What is evident is that despite proving their worth, during this entire period of women's integration in the ADF, the legitimacy of their service continues to be questioned. The ADF has failed to generate any critical mass, even in areas such as aviation for example, where employments have been open to women since

the 1990s. There are few women pilots and none flying fast jets (Bridges 2014). As far as we are aware, women have not served as members of infantry battalions, navy diving clearance teams, or similar combat-specific units – what has been described as the last 7% of military employment roles.

Over the aforementioned period, scholarly publications analysing gender integration in the ADF were sparse. However, significant changes to ADF policy concerning combat-related employments in 1990 brought with them an emerging body of Australian scholarly work from outside of the ADF (Smith 1990; Smith and McAllister 1991; Walbank [Agostino] 1992; Hancock 1993). The academic writing from this period argued that the combat exclusion served no operational purpose and limited the career prospects of women (Walbank [Agostino] 1992), contributed to structural inequalities (Smith 1990; Smith and McAllister 1991) and excluded women from a legitimate role in the state (Hancock 1993). Admiral Barrie, then a senior ADF commander, conversely took the position that women could not physically and psychologically perform adequately in combat and that attempts to include them would limit operational capability. His assertion that ‘any discussion on the role women should have in the armed forces must centre on the combat ability and preparedness of the force’ (1999, 5) flagged a concern that has subsequently dominated debate in the gender integration literature from within the ADF.

Scholars writing from outside the military in Australia did not primarily address military effectiveness but shed light on gender integration issues (Smith, Spurling, and Greenhalgh 2000); considered how women manage their gender in a masculine culture (Agostino 1998, 2000a); analysed feminist theoretical approaches to women, war and integration (Agostino 2000b); evaluated the likelihood of men being able to kill women in battle and the ability of women *as* combatants to kill (Hancock 2000); and placed women in combat in historical context (Hosking 2003). Literature written by scholars from within the ADF was primarily concerned with women’s employment in the combat arms and the operational effectiveness of both women and the ADF. These articles responded to claims that women ‘by their very presence diminish unit readiness, cohesion and morale’ (Davison 2007, 67). Whilst exploring integration problems and offering in-depth analysis of the work of both critics and proponents, this literature argues that the removal of the combat exclusion will increase the operational effectiveness of women and the ADF (Chapman 1999; Nemitschenko 2001) whilst illustrating how the combat exclusion failed to meet the goals of protecting women or preserving combat effectiveness (Davison 2007). The literature in this sense is broadly divided between concerns with the social and cultural context of women’s military service, and the internal literature on the question of maintaining military effectiveness – the social and the functional.

### **The state, the military, and civil society**

The last 30 years in Australian military affairs are marked by cultural disruption – in the sense that the institutional habitus of the white Australian male soldier is under scrutiny and in some ways erasure. The post World War II period saw a decline in citizen engagement with the Australian military. The move to an all-volunteer force after the Vietnam War further reduced the proximity of the military to the Australian



citizen. The increasing engagement with other cultural groups – women, indigenous Australians, and new Australians – has opened the ADF to civic engagement. From the establishment of the Defence Equity Organisation in 1997 through to the engagement with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to review the treatment of women in the ADF in 2012, the boundary between civil and military has become increasingly blurred. Understanding this – what has become known as civil–military relations – is central to understanding how the ADF conceives of equity and diversity. The military institution, it seems, is increasingly called upon to develop a reflexive disposition – to look upon its masculine and martial traditions and see how they place men and women in the military in danger.

The military is formed from a foundational violence – the violence that underpins the establishment of the sovereign, the state, and a scope of liberal freedoms. The ADF is located in structural distinction to civil society and the state governed by the conventions of the democratic control of the armed forces. The ADF's prevailing approach, like that of many Anglophone militaries, to addressing matters of women's participation, and its associated concern with 'military culture', is consequently heavily informed by the normative civil–military relations literature (see Eulriet 2012) and key ideas such as the democratic control of the armed forces or the scission between social and functional imperatives in militarism (see Huntington 1957). The ADF's disposition to civil society, state, and military relations is conservative and defensive, possessing a kind of scepticism and ambivalence about civilians and politicians – others.

For example, as a result of the Skype incident, a capstone Personal Conduct Review laid out a framework for a renewed professional ethos – one that is based upon *trust*, *inclusivity* and a *reporting and learning culture*. The report restates the principle of *service to the nation* over service to oneself, or to one's primary group. It is argued that military misconduct and the poor treatment of women arises from a kind of tribalism – an overreach of the principle of unit cohesion and brotherhood – that privileges men and their loyalties over others (Connor 2010). This tribalism starts with a foundational split between military and civilian – once you are a soldier you are no longer a civilian; you can no longer be a civilian. Major General Orme, the author of Australia's new military covenant, describes this tension by drawing upon the work of conservative writer Samuel Huntington:

The military institutions of any society are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from the threats to the society's security and a societal imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies, and institutions dominant within the society. Military institutions which reflect only social values may be incapable of performing effectively their military function. On the other hand, it may be impossible to contain within society military institutions shaped by purely functional imperatives. The interaction of these two forces is the nub of the problem of civil military relations (Huntington 1957: 2, cited in Orme 2011: 20).<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting the significance of Huntington to ADF command thinking in this area. Because of this conceptual split, the ADF command can separate concerns such as gender (social) from military effectiveness (functional). Gender is therefore only important inasmuch as it supports the functional imperative; gender becomes hypostatized: concretized, categorical, and auditable within the ambit of the functional imperative. Of course, the distinction is itself gendered, rendering the 'social' feminine and subordinate



to the masculinist 'functional' imperative of military effectiveness. Such a deep foundational conception of gender fundamentally frames the potential for equality and inclusion for women and others of difference. Such a deeply embedded worldview fundamentally shapes the way military personnel 'do' or 'reform' gender.

For example, women's participation has been historically constructed as a matter of capacity – either in terms of women's incapacity to do the work of male military personnel, or in terms of their inclusion on the basis they can. Former Chief of the Defence Force Admiral Chris Barrie's comments on the issue are illustrative:

I don't think the process [of getting women into combat units like the infantry] is gender related myself.... But I think what we have to focus on is, are the individuals capable of doing the job? (Barrie, cited in Nemitschenko 2001, 35)

Doesn't this fundamental divide re-centre institutional authority? Barrie, in a somewhat chivalrous manner, touts his progressiveness by displacing the expected concern with women's physical capacity, but in turn reinstates the white, male, and martial subject at the centre. This notion that discussions on 'women in traditional military roles' is not gendered presents a particular logic of equality that requires unpacking.

In the case of women's participation in the military, this logic establishes a series of binaries: women's rights versus capacity, integration versus transformation, and the functional versus societal dialectic. The focus on capability proceeds from arguments on the inferiority of the female body, psyche, and character (see Simons 2000; Van Creveld 2000; Woodward and Winter 2005; Woodward 2004). The forms of argument against women's inclusion have drawn on women and men's allegedly natural dispositions, which are socially constructed binaries. Women are weak; men are strong. Women are peaceful; men are violent. Women are naturally inclined towards the domestic sphere; men are naturally inclined towards the public sphere. Women are passive; men are aggressive. Women give life, men take life. According to this discourse, society (men) should protect women from the aggression of the public sphere and women should stay within the domestic sphere in order to be safe (ironically, from men) (Connell 2002; Goldstein 2001). The current framing of 'capability' using the mantra of 'as long as they can do the job' – often heard in relation to women serving in combat roles – is a speech act, an artefact of 'diversity talk' that says anyone is welcome as long as they can perform like those who currently do the job – white men. This gender blindness hides masculine privilege and primacy behind a masquerade of equality (Basham 2009a, Ahmed 2012). Two recent scholarly journal articles by female soldier-scholars highlight this tension between the social and the functional and raise questions about how gender is allowed to be seen and talked about in the ADF.

'Steyrs and Sheilas: The Modern Role of Women in the Australian Army' was written by Lance Corporal Hannah Evans, a female soldier of the Army reserve. Evans writes, in the *Australian Army Journal*:

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 ... rather than *the pursuit of female equality and political correctness*. (2013, 41, our emphasis)

Another article, called ‘Beyond Political Correctness: The Capability Argument for Removing Gender Restrictions from Combat Roles in the Australian Defence Force’, was written by Group Captain Dee Gibbon, a senior Royal Australian Airforce (RAF) Officer, and past Director of Workforce Diversity and Director of the Review into the Treatment of Women in the ADF. Group Captain Gibbon explains that her perspective comes from:

my own practical experience as a senior woman within the Australian Defence Force and my current research into the gendered nature of military institutions. From my experience, an important but often overlooked aspect of the ‘women in front lines’ debate is *that diversity is about improving war-fighting capability, not political correctness and left-wing feminist agendas*. (2013, 254, our emphasis)

What do Gibbon and Evans’ rejection of political correctness and left-wing feminism tell us about the organizational context of gender reform? Why use the politically loaded terms ‘left wing’, ‘feminist’, and ‘political correctness’? Is this a way of signalling that gender equity is about ‘real’ concerns, not ideological ones? Are their words a strategic attempt to lead gender change in a male-dominated environment where feminism is feared as an instrument of masculine disintegration? Why is it that the notion of equal rights appears to be devalued by these female military scholars?

### **Lefties, feminists, and the civil society: reifying the feminine**

Again, our assessment is that the primacy of the social/functional dialectic permits the engagement with diversity without threatening the originary violence upon which the military institution is established. This has larger implications for diversity given the way that British imperial forces raised Australia on the backs of the ‘convict class’, and the dispossession and murder of Aboriginal Australians. Historically, white masculinity remains at the centre of the Australian nation state, as much as it is the foundational identity within the ADF. The pejorative sense of left-wing political correctness draws attention to the inherently ideologically conservative character of the military. It is a political marker for right-wing, or neo-conservative, dispositions to the welfare state, to civil machinery that promotes or protects equality, equity, and diversity. The dominant military subjectivity is inherently conservative and is a standpoint that reflects an alignment with a conservative populism.

Political correctness in Australia was brought into public discourse through the reactive neo-conservatism of Prime Minister John Howard in the early 1990s (Markus 2001, 97–100). It is a term of symbolic opprobrium, providing release from the restrictive ideologies of noisy minorities, a catch-all term for denigrating the acknowledgement of difference. The ideologically conservative military perspective immediately tends towards the management of difference through the medium of sameness. Military effectiveness translates into a heavily determined sense of self that is disposed to the inferiorization or exclusion of others not representative of the military stereotype – the white straight Australian male (Wadham, 2013). It is a masculinized discourse that enables the masculine subject the freedom to roam, to live by the rule of the brother, or by the name of the father (Remy 1990; Pateman 1975).

As an example, there have been similar discursive moves in the field of racism (Wadham and Pudsey 2005) in the 1990s, and early 2000s;<sup>4</sup> for example, the move to a focus on sameness is akin to egalitarian racism (Lattas 2001, 108) or racism squared (Žizek 1994, 225–7). As Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) argue, this is a tactical adaptation of earlier visceral forms of racism in a time of aggressive neoliberalism. Migrants moving into the UK during the 1990s were resisted on the basis of their difference, through an argument of sameness – people of like disposition should stay together. In Australia, Hansonism<sup>5</sup> raised this spectre of cultural disintegration – to invite cultural others was to degrade the meaning of being Australian. The ADF discourse is not fundamentally different in its implications for cultural inclusion and safety. It represents a move from a preoccupation with difference to a preoccupation with sameness within a context of martial masculinities, aggressive neoliberalism, and the diversity audit culture.

### **The Broderick review: how are women treated?**

This instrumentalist logic of equality structures women's inclusion into the ADF in terms of rights/capacity or sameness/difference. This notion of equality has been critiqued by Guerrina (2001) and Meyerson and Kolb (2000). Scott (1994, 43) has argued that these approaches have generated an either/or or zero-sum ideal of equality and gender reform. Nentwich (2006, 503) further explains that: 'the concepts of gender equality seem to be given entities and are treated as given frames of analysis'. In the Broderick review interviews, personnel often represent gender as a 'given entity' at the expense of understanding it as a process.

The Broderick Review into the Treatment of Women in the ADF (2012a) raised a key point regarding the way women position themselves within the male bastion of the ADF:

ADF women strongly believe that when they are singled out, it makes it harder for them to fit in. Highly resistant to any initiative being directed solely at them, ADF women view identical – not differential – treatment as the path to delivering equality. This is most likely in part to avoid the backlash that inevitably trails any treatment perceived as 'preferential'. (2012, 2)

The ADF is 87% male; most workplaces in the ADF are male dominated and are defined around the male norm. Women are invited to embody an identitarian logic, one that itself subsumes difference beneath the altar of sameness. How then might women internalize the military cultural norm and respond to it, and how is this implicated in organizational modernization?

This organizational imperative for sameness is articulated as gender 'neutral', but is, of course, highly gender specific – the male norm is overwhelming. Interviews from the Broderick Review of the treatment of women in the ADF highlight this well:

On the one hand, there is an overwhelming organisational 'mantra' in the ADF to 'treat everyone the same'. Everyone wears the same uniform, is assessed on performance, is promoted on merit: Doesn't matter if you're male or female. If you do your job and do it well, then you're well respected. Last week I got one of the biggest compliments ... I was talking to the guys and I said something jokingly ... but I'm a chick and they went 'you're

no chick, you're just a cool dude with a pony tail' ... for me that was a compliment from my colleagues because that would mean that I'm not any different. (2012a, 86)

This 'cool dude with a pony tail' approach is representative of what Gherardi calls the symbolic 'slap on the back'. She gives an example from her research on women's integration in male-dominated engineering environments:

After rejecting the advances of her colleagues, the woman was marginalised and teased as an 'angry feminist'. This situation changed dramatically when her boss publicly praised her work and as a sign of appreciation, gave her a hearty slap on the back – something famously not done to a woman but to 'one of the boys'. (1994, 603)

The institutional imperative for sameness poses challenges for the notion of gender equity. The various reviews over time (Burton 1996; Grey 1998; Broderick et al. 2012a, 2012b; Bretag 2014) recommend equity strategies such as paying closer attention to women's promotional and employment pathways, or removing combat experience as a requirement for promotion to higher ranks. However, the impulse for all to conform to the ADF cultural norm predominates, creating on-going challenges for women's acceptance.

### **Diversity and dominance: how far can the ADF liberalize?**

This clear move from inferiority to integration raises the question of how far the ADF can go in incorporating and genuinely working from an ethics of diversity and inclusion. Moreover, it asks the question: Is this, as Ahmed (2012, 84) suggests, an expression of the neoliberal audit organization, in which 'equity and diversity' becomes a policy mantra, acknowledged by everybody but responsible to no one – a box to be ticked, a veneer of civilization for an organization of violence? Diversity is performed by the organization, but on-the-ground diversity is a battleground. Ahmed, studying the performances of diversity at Australian universities, explains that those whose responsibility it is to address diversity become the front line, caught in no-man's land between the ideals and promises of equity and diversity and the rhetoric and performativity of the institution (2012, 86).

Ahmed (2012) observes, when researching university constructions of diversity, that diversity 'work' in universities serves to maintain oppressive, white, male, and old hegemony while being seen to be 'doing the right thing'. This is instructive to our military case. To employ Ahmed's (2012) type of critique, we must ascertain whether there is change within the organization or if the 'success' is merely window dressing that allows the leadership to claim something is being done because there was a report/review/recommendation. She notes: 'One of the key mechanisms I want to refer to here is the use of diversity and equality as a credential in a specific sense: as that which entitles you to credit' (Sarah Ahmed, 10 June 2016, <https://feministkilljoys.com/>). The credit earned is the silencing of critiquing voices because 'something' is being done. Ahmed goes even further, referring 'to how activities that signal an attempt to diversify an organisation can be used by the organisation as evidence of diversity' (Sarah Ahmed, 10 June 2016, <https://feministkilljoys.com/>). Do the recruitment of diversity champions and the commissioning of reviews and reports achieve change? What does it mean for

the diversity officer to outline diversity in the military workplace? Who is responsible for diversity?

The ADF's embracement of the cultural reviews and 'pathways to change' is new. Traditionally, the matters of prejudice, violence, and exclusion have been explained away with variations on the mantra of a 'few bad apples' (Wadham 2013; Wadham and Connor 2014). However, recently (since 2011) the ADF has recognized that *military culture* is the core problem and has realized that it is a social/public problem that besets the military, and society. This is a move from the problem being located in aberrant individuals to a recognition that it is systemic and cultural. This is a significant change that fosters a sense that the institution may liberalize. But to what extent?

In recognizing the structural implications of militarism for women's inclusion in the ADF, the institution has gone some way to understanding its masculinized and martial culture. In response to violence within the military towards its own, the Personal Conduct report describes military culture as follows:

The military has been described as a 'tight' culture in which shared identity, clear norms and role requirements, strong sanctions for deviations, and social stratification are exercised in a predominantly male culture. Social stratification coupled with a male dominated cultural model tends to create various manifestations of 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. 'Insiders' are those who are socially dominant and conform to the cultural ideal, while 'outsiders' are those whose inclusion is perceived as posing cultural risks. 'Outsiders' are often cultural minorities, such as women, ethnic members or those with a non-mainstream sexual persuasion. (Orme 2011, 5)

The ADF acknowledges that its institutional character is established upon some principles that can encourage discrimination and violation. These principles of fraternity or, in other terms, fratriarchy – the rule of the brother – are both central to the tightness required of a military unit and also prone to prejudice because of the insularity or tribalism that is fostered. This cultural disposition is acknowledged by the ADF as highly masculinized, and almost exclusively male. These aspects of military culture raise the question: How can women integrate into and prosper in an institution that is 87% male, and intensely masculinized?

## Conclusion

Tribalism, or the dark side of military cohesion, has been identified as the root cause that ails the ADF's cultural reform. Military misconduct scandals have helped instigate a process of institutional reflection, and the opportunity has been taken by elements of the ADF leadership. Yet there appears to be a clear institutional blind spot, a structurally and ideologically framed worldview that camouflages (Wadham 2013; Wadham & Hamilton 2009) the potential of an institution established on highly masculinized imperatives of conformity and sameness to recognize and celebrate the authenticity of difference.

The military subject has come to appreciate the dialectic of military effectiveness and social responsibility, but the binary remains articulated on principally functional terms. The progression of women's inclusion in broader society is squeezed in a procrustean fashion into the masculinized military preoccupation with military effectiveness. Any kind of rights discourse is conceived as analogous with pejorative left-wing politically

correct feminism. This emasculates the reform processes by an unwillingness to engage with what has been, and clearly remains, the most potent frame for progressing institutional gender change: feminist theory and practice.

A consequence of this is the perpetuation of a discourse of women's participation structured on the ideal of the male norm. Militarism, in this sense, remains pervasively masculine and masculinizing. Scholars in critical gender studies articulate this awareness, which reasserts the importance of the 'societal imperative'. Australian scholar Kim Hosking (2003) points to the deep-seated historical roots linking gender relations in the military with the power of the modern state:

The association of masculinity with soldiering has historically been one of the most enduring features of the sexual division of labour. ... However, it was with the formation of states around the sixteenth century, and the corresponding centralisation of political authority, that this relationship was consolidated. (Hosking 2003, 62)

For Carole Pateman: 'of all the male clubs and associations, it is in the military and on the battlefield that fraternity finds its most complete expression' (1975, 49). The foundations of civil society, state, and military relations are structured around the fraternal social contract. These fraternal relations of the state and the military are the bedrock of patriarchy, embodied in the mythologies of the nation state and embellished through the rhetoric of mateship and the Australian New Zealand Army Corps digger. Eleanor Hancock (1993) explains that by increasing women's participation in the military – in the control and use of force – women's participation in maintaining and controlling the state will improve. In this sense, access to the military tribe will enhance access to the state/military tribe and the fraternal social contract. But will it, if the ADF can only see women's participation on masculinist terms – on the terms of martial masculinities? Stemming from this question is another: How can masculinist and martial institutions retain their intimate and possessive affair with military effectiveness while fully enabling their people to be different? Is it possible? Current arrangements place women within military discourse that expresses the primacy of masculine values under the guise of trans-historical and objective military effectiveness.

Consequently, for example, while the focus on cohesion, tribalism, or fraternity of predominantly young men permits the ADF to address unit cultures, it delimits the potential for wider cultural reform. Tribalism is an imprecise but ideologically comfortable expression for military phallocentrism (see Grosz 1989, 105). The fratriarchy of military misconduct is an expression of 'the demand of a group of lads to have the "freedom" to do as they please, to have a good time' (Loy 1995, 265) – the rule of brothers – at the expense of women, and others of difference. The extension of this through the chain of command is a host of broader military justice failures including the resistance to record, and the associated fear to report, incidents, and the covering up or closing of ranks over critical incidents, through to the argument that military misconduct is an anomaly: the work of a few bad apples.

The ADF, in a public sense, has changed its perspective and begun to accept the loss of control over its human resources three decades after the end of national service. Recent rhetoric from the senior leadership shows promise, if it goes beyond being seen to be doing something, to effecting change. Yet the contemporary conceptualization of gender equity and military masculine hegemony is tenuous and plagued by ideologies



that persistently demand masculine integration and certainty. The question of how far a military can go with gender equity remains central. From our initial but deep analysis of ADF activities and representations, there is still quite some way to go to extend the limits of tolerance for the inclusion of women.

## Notes

1. The 'Skype' scandal involved the non-consensual broadcast by the male protagonist to fellow male cadets of consensual sex between him and a female officer cadet at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). The (initial) lack of action taken against the offenders caused the female victim to speak out to the media and is widely perceived as a catalyst for a change.
2. Public scandals disrupt the trust placed in the relevant institutional context (Gamson 2001; Thompson 2000; Sherman 1978). Lawrence Sherman (1978, xvii) explains that scandals are not confined to the organization itself; rather they 'can encompass all those interests, groups and other organisations that have a stake in the conduct of the organisation in question' (1978, 66–7).
3. This is a predominant theoretical idea used by contemporary Western militaries.
4. Military organizations are slower to respond to broad social change.
5. Hansonism is an expression of contemporary global recuperative politics (angry white men).

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