SPECIAL REPORT

Towards inclusion
Language use in the Department of Defence

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In the past few years, the Defence organisation has faced a number of well-publicised incidents of unacceptable behaviour. After various inquiries, it has made a range of organisational changes and policy innovations that are having positive effects.[1] But so far there hasn't been a systematic look at the organisation's 'cultural construct', which underpins its norms of social practice, such as behaviour and language use.

Knowing more about a particular culture explains why an organisation is like it is, and why people behave and talk the way they do. Bringing about lasting cultural change requires an understanding of why the organisation exhibits *this* set of behaviours and not *that* one. One important factor that perpetuates behaviours and makes change difficult is the use of language within the organisation. Simply put, to change the way people behave, sometimes you have to change the way they talk.

This special report summarises a research project titled 'Battling with words: a study of language, diversity and social inclusion in the Australian Department of Defence'. The project was sponsored by the Secretary of Defence Fellowship program, which called for research responses to the question 'Representing the community we serve—diversity in the Defence workforce: how do we make an impact now?'

Members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Defence civilian workforce come together outside Russell Offices in Canberra. Photo courtesy Department of Defence.

Homogeneity and heterogeneity

Defence remains a homogeneous organisation of mostly Anglo-Australian men, despite the fact that the community it serves is diverse and heterogeneous.[2] This is a problem for three reasons. First, a military that doesn't reflect the composition of its society risks losing the trust and confidence of that society.[3] Second, a lack of diversity limits the ADF's ability to recruit and retain enough personnel to maintain capability.[4] Last year, Defence met only 78.5% of its recruitment target.[5] Third, more diversity leads to a more adaptive and innovative workforce better able to respond to the challenges of intercultural operations. A more supportive and inclusive workplace culture will also help Defence to remain competitive in the labour market.[6] In short, diversity is a force multiplier—it increases the probability of successful mission accomplishment. A more heterogeneous Defence would be better able to do its job.

Building a more inclusive and heterogeneous organisation requires an explanation of its culture—especially the factors that motivate individuals by rewarding them with status and authority. Those factors are inevitably constructed in the language of the organisation, which in turn reinforces the culture.

Like most tightly-knit organisations, militaries normalise exclusionary behaviours—creating 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'. This is also true of subgroups within Defence, such the Navy, the Army, the Air Force and the civilian members of the Australian Public Service (APS) working in the department. Exclusionary behaviours include language behaviours. Formal and informal language use supporting social norms can both resist and enable social inclusion. Sometimes that's good, as it produces a strong culture able to negotiate extremely demanding circumstances, but sometimes it leads to exclusion for no good reason.

Defence culture can be categorised into *codes* according to social behaviour. These codes are based on different principles of legitimisation that underpin the right to power, status and authority. They're derived first from the way people in social groups or cultures relate to each other (whether on the basis of *trained*, *cultivated* or *social* relations) and second from the way they relate to knowledge, work practices or both in their cultures (whether on the basis of *situational* or *doctrinal* insights).[7]

Different codes favour different kinds of relations, and set up different sets of unconscious 'rules of the game' (the norms or *habitus*) of the culture—the unseen, automatic, unconscious behaviours that the members of the group (or at least the successful ones) consistently exhibit.

Based on an understanding of *why things are as they are* in Defence, this study considers how people considered to be outside the dominant group fare and what advice they can offer the leadership on future strategies and policies of social inclusion. The study brings the implications for policy development in the areas of intercultural awareness, language practice and education and training to the fore.

So, what is Defence culture like?

The Defence mission is '… to defend Australia and its national interests'.[8] This collective mission is broken down into two discrete missions, one for the ADF and the other for the APS:

- ADF: '… to deter or defeat armed attacks on our territory'[9]

- APS: '… to develop a highly capable workforce and efficient, value-adding operating models so we can help you deliver your outcomes'.[10]

Essentially, the ADF is the defender, while the APS is the enabler. The two functions are of equal importance. The Secretary of Defence has said that some see Defence civilians as a 'back-end' supporting the ADF 'front-end', but this is not the case because the APS performs essential tasks that directly affect operational capability.[11] This combination of personnel who *defend* and *enable* gives Defence its unique character.

Thus Defence is made up of two different kinds of codes that together enable the organisation to achieve its collective mission: the *knower code* in the uniformed services and the *knowledge code* in the APS. While Defence's military and civilian workforces both display elements of both codes, the APS is more of a knowledge code than the ADF, while the ADF is more of a knower code than the APS.

The difference between the two codes is a matter of mission and the effect of rank versus specialisation on the social norms of each group. It rests on whether people's relationships are built around the *trained* expertise of the knowledge code or the *cultivated* attributes and dispositions and the *social* role or function that's typical of a knower code.

In addition, there are three varieties of the military code—the Navy code, the Army code and the Air Force code—distinguished by different communities of practice.[12] The presence of different codes in the one organisation ensures that Defence is an *intercultural* organisation: it operates monoculturally in service-specific contexts but also interculturally in joint contexts on an everyday basis.

ADF members: Do as I say because I am who I am

The ADF mission requires work that's sometimes stressful, high risk, dangerous, lethal or any combination of them. To do that work, the habitus of the ADF:

- bases the right to power, status and authority on social relations of hierarchy
- uses work practices that are planned, procedural, routinised and practised.

Social relations that are based on hierarchy are typically of two kinds (*cultivated* and *social*), while work practices that are routinised are typically *doctrinal*.

These social relations and work practices are inculcated through military professional education and training by:

- removing the individual from their usual context and influences
- employing intensive, prolonged, *whole-of-life* immersion
- modelling a master–apprentice approach as a community of practice
- employing strong socialisation that cultivates and re-forms attributes and dispositions through surveillance and discipline
- emphasising procedural knowledge
- building loyalty to the institution, and to the team, while valuing self-sacrifice for the greater good.[13]

This kind of habitus manifests as a knower code and thus normalises the behaviour of uniformed members in the following ways:

- *Cultivated* social relations
  - All ADF members understand and accept their role as defenders of the state and its citizens, including by accepting 'unlimited liability'.[14]

  - Members physically embody military behaviours, including ways of marching, walking, standing, parading and saluting and, importantly, enact these behaviours in teams.
  - Selection into the ADF depends on the member's eligibility and suitability ('job fit', motivation, compatibility, training potential and personal situation).[15]
  - The member accepts induction into military life, aligning and bonding around the values and behaviours of their particular service. In particular, team-building exercises are emphasised. The member strives to emulate military ideals and values through models of leadership and self-sacrifice, building *esprit de corps*.
  - Members bond very strongly with each other in their teams and have behavioural expectations of themselves and others.
  - An annual performance appraisal report assesses performance in terms of the member's personal attributes, dispositions, skill sets and on-the-job performance.

- *Social* relations
  - ADF personnel are subject to the *Defence Act 1903* and the *Defence Force Discipline Act 1982*.[16]
  - They are organised into two strata of ranks: officers and other ranks. Officers are commissioned; other ranks are enlisted.
  - They accept the authority of senior ranks and the need to conform and obey to get the job done.
  - They wear uniforms that display their social position and career history through markers of service, unit, rank, function, awards, qualifications and so on.
  - They use military ways of talking, including registers of command and control, such as signals and orders, and informal registers of everyday casual conversation, which are heavily punctuated with vocatives of respect (Sir, Ma'am), truncated military terms and acronyms.

- *Doctrinal* work practices

  – ADF members follow prescribed strategic, operational and tactical workplace practices such as doctrine, Defence Instructions, military appreciation processes, and training systems such as the Defence Training Model.

  – Military capability is enabled through teamwork that enacts routinised and practised *communities of practice*—joint enterprises that bind members together into a social entity with a shared repertoire of routines, sensibilities and styles that have been developed over time.[17]

These characteristics enable the role of defender. The hierarchy of rank controls the social relations of people engaged in high-risk, dangerous work that's procedural and practised. In a nutshell, the military code is a knower code that operates on the basis of *do as I say because I am who I am.*

APS members: Do as I say because I know

In contrast, the APS mission requires a habitus that:

- bases the right to power, status and authority on the individual's specialisation (their experience and qualifications)

- uses work practices that are mainly problem-solving and situated in areas of expertise (such as guidance, compliance, policy development, research and so on).

Social relations that are based on expertise and specialisation are typically *trained*, while work practices that are problem-solving are typically *situational*. This kind of habitus typically manifests as a knowledge code.

The APS thus displays trained social relations and situational approaches to work practices while at the same time operating in the Defence context, which requires cultivated, social and doctrinal approaches as well. The habitus of the APS in Defence produces the following kinds of normalised behaviours:

- *Trained* social relations

  – Selection into the APS is based on merit. Personal attributes also play a part, but more emphasis is placed on skill sets, qualifications, experience and knowledge.

  – Promotion is typically achieved by merit-based transfer into higher positions.

  – APS members are classified into professional workplace levels and reporting structures, with job descriptions detailing what kind of work they do and at what level of complexity.[18]

  – The performance of an APS member in Defence is measured annually through the Performance Feedback Assessment and Development Scheme against 'key expected results' that are linked to business unit plans and evaluated based on the Defence APS Core Capability Framework.

  – Members are motivated more by their professional specialisation, personal interest and individual sense of responsibility than by values and ideals.

  – Social bonds in the APS are built on polite, professional interaction with a tolerance for individual styles and even eccentricities. Formality gives way to informality as relationships develop.

- *Cultivated* social relations

  – The behaviour of APS members in Defence is controlled by the APS Values, a code of conduct and the Defence Enterprise Collective Agreement. Inculcating the values and maintaining adherence to them is an ongoing challenge.[19]

  – While members work in teams, those teams form and re-form based on individuals' contributions and specialisations. Their members do not typically have a strong affiliation to the team.

- *Social* relations

  – Public servants are subject to the *Public Service Act 1999*, the Public Service Regulations 1999, the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2013, the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Fair Work Act 2009*.[20]

- *Doctrinal* work practices

  – When conducting administrative work such as policy guidance, surveillance and compliance, or working within military processes, APS members

follow routinised work practices using registers of administrative control and military forms of writing as prescribed in the *Defence writing manual 2014*.

- *Situational* work practices

    – When conducting financial and human resource management, policy development, learning development, research and governance, APS members engage in problem solving to achieve results. Specialisation plays an integral role in these processes.

These characteristics are required for the role of enabler. APS members' specialist, expert skills and knowledge earn them status and respect. They are organised into peer relationships and engage in problem-solving in novel and situation-specific ways. In short, the APS code is a knowledge code that operates on the basis of *do as I say because I know.*

The uniformed services: the Navy, Army and Air Force

While the uniformed services all share knower code characteristics, they differ in the degree to which they inculcate their codes in their members.

Inculcation begins with initial training (Table 1), the length of which varies from service to service and according to the trainee's rank (officer or other ranks). Army officer training takes the longest, in order to ensure that graduates can perform a broad range of tasks before specialising, whereas the Navy and Air Force rely on specialist training for employability. The Army also trains other ranks for three weeks longer than the other two services.

Table 1: Length of inculcation for officers and other ranks, by service		
	Officers: initial training[a]	Other ranks: initial training
Navy	11 months	11 weeks
Army	18 months	14 weeks
Air Force	4.5 months	11.5 weeks

[a] Does not include additional time spent at the Australian Defence Force Academy in professional military education.

Communities of practice—teams

The three services differ in their missions, operational domains and military capabilities. This produces different *communities of practice*. A community of practice situates learning within the work context or a simulated context during training and, importantly, the identities of the participants in the community are constructed during participation.

The services all train their members through practices that expose personnel to ideal values, outcomes and exemplary models through prolonged classroom teaching and master–apprentice methods. Ways of being, doing and approaching things are shared and practised over and over again, binding people together in relationships of trust. This kind of values-based orientation is a *cultivated* approach to the habitus of personal relationships.[21]

The types of instruments of war used by a service affect the social relationships, and hence the communities of practice, in that service. In general terms, the Navy's main instrument of war is the ship, the Army's is the unit or formation of soldiers, and the Air Force's is the aircraft. Navy personnel fight as members of a ship's company. Army personnel fight as members of teams organised into sets of larger teams (section, platoon, company, battalion, and so on). Air Force personnel fight mainly as squadrons, which are made up of aircrew and ground crew.

The services' team configurations set them apart from each other.

The Navy forms, unforms and re-forms two kinds of teams with different work practices

For Navy personnel, the ship is for warfighting and therefore must be seaworthy. The ship's company works as one to ensure the success of the mission (warfighting) and the safe return of the ship (seaworthiness). The safety of the entire crew is the responsibility of every member.

Navy teams are based on the skills required for living in close quarters for long periods and sharing the work while managing individual work responsibilities. This builds strong, inwardly focused teams. A former Chief of Navy notes that 'we often work within the confines of our own ship and as such we can sometimes become a little insular'.[22] Indeed, Navy personnel are steeped in life at sea. They're always 'on board',

regardless of where they are: Navy bases are named the same way as ships, and transport off base is a 'liberty' boat and so on.

Sailors' interest in the ship and its safety affects relationships in the Navy. On board, rank is respected but so is the right of all crew to speak up to ensure both safety and the success of the mission. This creates a hierarchy of relationships that's strongly bonded but tolerates challenges, much of which is achieved through the use of humour. The sailor thus identifies as a member of the group before they recognise their own particular function in the group. If you ask them what they do, they'll answer with something like 'I'm in the Navy.' Their identity is linked to the social entity of their service—the ultimate team of Navy. The Navy even characterises itself as 'a team of teams'.[23]

This combination of domain (sea) and instrument (ship) produces a community of practice that forms, unforms and re-forms two kinds of team while at sea. Apart from the warfighting officers, most of the crew have both a warfighting role and a trade or professional role (such as medic, engineer, mechanic, electrician, chef, radio communications, or so on). Consequently, they form teams for damage control when the ship is at risk; otherwise, they unform and re-form into their trade or professional teams, illustrating that '[t]he ship is paramount and the ship's company both shapes and is shaped by the ship'.[24]

A damage control team is formed around strict protocols or standard operating procedures (SOPs). The team practises until it can perform the procedures to the required standard. Once all the competencies have been met, it's the ship, not the individuals, that's considered to be mission ready.

The emphasis on SOPs is an example of a procedural or *doctrinal* orientation to work practices that's concerned with *how* to do something (how to perform a procedure). This contrasts with the orientation of trade and professional teams, which tend to rely less on procedures and more on *situational* contexts and problem solving. For example, diagnosing a breakdown requires joint problem solving and trade or professional expertise. This *situational* orientation is concerned with the *what* of a situation.

Doctrinal approaches are more representative of knower codes, while situational approaches are more representative of knowledge codes, as they provide for more freedom of

action.[25] Navy teams thus tend to form and re-form based on knower or knowledge motivations, depending on the kind of work to be done.

The Army forms one kind of team with one kind of work practice

In the Army, the effect of the service's domain and instrument of war on the soldier can also be understood from a code perspective. The soldier is inculcated to be a warrior and trained in the skills of soldiering, which are built up through teamwork. The warrior team is the instrument of war. Soldiers are required to have shared skill sets in the art of war and other skills in areas such as radio communications, first aid and basic engineering. At any point during the mission, a soldier may be asked to step up and take someone's place. They are thus trained as generalists first and specialists second.[26]

Soldiers are aware of their team members and are trained to act under stress in high-risk situations in routinised ways through SOPs and to protect each other, even at risk to themselves. They're bonded very tightly, and team membership is crucial. They share their socialisation and a strong interdependence of functions and take their individual responsibility as effective team members very seriously. Injury and mistakes are not tolerated in this context.

Knowing *how* to do something in high-risk situations is critical, so soldiers are primarily procedurally oriented. If you ask a solider what they do, they'll answer with something like 'I'm a soldier.'[27] Their identity is linked to being a *cultivated* individual, working in a tightly bonded team motivated by values, duty and sacrifice.

In other words, Army warfighting teams are *doctrinally* oriented. They are motivated and underpinned by interpersonal relations and workplace practices that are indicative of a knower code orientation. Army personnel work in one kind of team with one kind of work practice.

The Air Force forms two kinds of teams with two kinds of work practices

In the Air Force, the community of practice is divided into two distinct types of teams within the squadron. There is the small, elite group of aircrew whose roles are to fly and engage in warfighting. Only a very limited few literally 'go to war'. This

group is engaged in high-risk activity and, as in the Navy and Army, it enacts the *doctrinal* procedures of a knower code. However, aircrew teams and the other kind of team—the support crew, who have the task of keeping an aircraft and its technology in a state of readiness—also require expertise and specialisation. According to the Air Force Director General Personnel, 'He who knows first, can see first and therefore shoot first'.[28]

In this sense, the social entity of the Air Force consists of two professionally and technically *trained* specialist groups that manifest both *doctrinal* and *situational* orientations in work practices. In contrast to the Navy, however, there is no forming, unforming and re-forming into teams of different code orientations. Rather, the teams are stable, and both the aircrew and the support crew manifest the orientations of both a knower code and a knowledge code.

Not surprisingly, due to the level of specialisation required to keep high-tech aircraft flying, Air Force people tend to identify with their profession over their service: '[t]he Air Force tells me I'm an Air Force officer first and a pilot second; I say I'm a pilot first and a pilot second.'[29] This extends to the airmen and women, for whom '[t]rade specialisation overshadows the inculcation of the military persona. Engineer first, troop second.'[30] In sum, the Air Force forms two kinds of teams—the aircrew and the support crew—and uses two kinds of work practices.

Codes, diversity and social inclusion

The varying degrees of influence of the knowledge code in the three varieties of military knower codes are shown in Table 2. The Army exhibits knower code orientations in its teams, while the Navy exhibits knower code behaviours in damage control teams and knowledge code influences in specialist/ trade teams. Air Force teams of aircrew and support crew, on the other hand, show stronger knowledge code influences than the other two uniformed services and share similarities with the APS in the value they place on specialisation.

This explains why the Navy and Army often identify more strongly with each other than with the Air Force and why the Air Force does indeed have a different kind of military habitus—one that's often considered comparable to civilian life.

The influence of knower codes, knowledge codes or both in each of the services has implications for diversity and social inclusion. The knowledge code is typically more responsive to diversity because, as long as a person has the right qualifications, skills and experience, they can be selected for team membership. In contrast, the knower code is less responsive to diversity because the attributes and dispositions of individuals are part of the selection process. Selection relies more on physical, psychological and moral attributes and dispositions.

Table 2: Codes and team differences in the ADF						
Team	**Navy**		**Army**	**Air Force**		**APS**
Code	Damage control team	Specialist / trade team		Air crew	Support crew	
Knowledge code orientations						
Situational work practices		✓		✓	✓	✓
Trained relations				✓	✓	✓
Knower code orientations						
Cultivated relations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Social role	✓	✓	✓			
Doctrinal work practices	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Selection on the basis of attributes and dispositions over qualifications and knowledge is potentially vulnerable to exploitation. In some situations, attributes such as sexual orientation, gender, heritage, religious belief, physical disability and so on can be inappropriately considered as barriers to inclusion and team membership. Because the team-based work of the uniformed services is conducted in high-risk, dangerous environments, the group bonds are necessarily stronger, so there is potential for exclusion on the basis of attributes and dispositions of sameness (that is, the unconscious bias of affinity[31]). The higher the risk to safety, the more tightly bonded the team needs to be, and the tighter the bond, the more likely exclusion is to occur.

Lining up the diversity group statistics of the APS, Army, Navy and Air Force shows the APS's greater ability to accommodate diversity and therefore foster social inclusion (Table 3). Of the diversity groups, only Indigenous Australians are better represented in the ADF than in the APS (thanks to concerted efforts by both the Navy and the Army to support their recruitment).

How does language support or resist social inclusion?

In an organisation that's dominated by knower code influences, such as Defence, values and core behaviours are key resources for constructing cultivated social relations, which produce the kind of people Defence needs to engage in risky, dangerous work. Although knowledge code practices are operating in the organisation, values-based employment, which is typical of knower code contexts, also underpins the expected behaviours of both ADF and APS personnel.

In any workplace, language is used to support the desired values and behaviours of the organisation and to resist others. It therefore plays a key role in maintaining social norms, particularly those of the dominant group within the culture. Defence is no exception. Implicit within the language practices of Defence are normative mechanisms of the dominant group, which prize specific identities and thwart diversity and greater social inclusion.

Particular language choices in both the formal, officially endorsed language of the leadership and the informal, everyday talk of the workplace maintain the hegemony of the dominant group. Until these linguistic strategies are clearly understood so that they can be deliberately recast in more inclusive ways, systematic exclusion will remain in Defence. It isn't possible to 'walk the talk' of cultural change without first fixing the talk.

Formal, officially endorsed language

The officially endorsed language of leadership, such as in Defence's values statements, constructs exclusive, ideal attributes and heroic identities around which personnel are encouraged to rally and bond.[32] The normative language practices of each service prize some values more than others, and the organisation as a whole iconises certain kinds of people more than others. These are systemic cultural practices: they're not the responsibility of a few 'bad apples', but of all and, particularly, of the leadership.

This becomes visible through a semantic analysis of the five sets of values within the organisation (Table 4): the Defence-wide values, known by the acronym *PLICIT*; the APS Values, *ICARE*; and the Navy, Army and Air Force Values. The

Table 3: Diversity groups in Defence					
	APS	ADF	Navy	Army	Air Force
Women[a]	40%	14%	18.44%	10.36%	16.97%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander[a]	0.67%	0.97%	1.09%	1.12%	0.55%
Non-English-speaking background[a]	14.11%	5.41%	4.41%	5.9%	5.38%
Born overseas[b]	28%	17%	Not available	Not available	Not available
Disability[b]	14%	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

a Statistics from Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2012–2017, DOD.

b Statistics from the 2011 Defence Census, Department of Defence.

analysis identifies and quantifies the kinds of meanings these statements make salient and their emphases on different kinds of behaviours. The meanings fall into five categories of judgement: specialness, capacity, tenacity, honesty and ethical propriety.

While ethical propriety has a common salient meaning across the organisation (ranging from 29 -37.5% of meanings within the Values Statements), the services give different salience to the rest depending on the service's mission. The Navy is more about honesty because of the intensity of life on board ship, and the Army is more about tenacity because the soldier is its instrument of war. The Air Force is more about capacity because of the high-tech nature of its aircraft, and the APS is more about honesty.

Importantly, APS behaviour is codified in both a values statement and an employment principles document. Semantic analysis of the principles document produces additional saliences of capacity and ethical propriety. The APS is thus about being honest, capable and ethical in its role as the *enabler* of the overall Defence mission.

Preferred values

The ideal attributes of the different services' personnel are thus those values that fall into the service's salient semantic categories. By implication, emphasising values expressed in terms of the salient meanings de-emphasises values that are expressed by other meanings. Table 5 illustrates this.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of judgement across tokens in Defence value statements					
	PLICIT	Navy	Army	Air Force	APS *ICARE*
Specialness (How special?)	0.00	4.20	7.50	3.35	0.00
Capacity (How able?)	**32.35**	8.40	17.50	**32.10**	24.50
Tenacity (How resolved?)	23.35	13.95	**37.50**	21.25	21.50
Honesty (How truthful?)	14.66	**36.95**	0.00	9.60	**37.00**
Ethical propriety (How ethical?)	29.63	36.40	37.50	33.75	17.50

Table 5: The salient meanings and emphasised values across Defence					
Values:	PLICIT	APS	Navy	Army	Air Force
Meanings:					
Capacity	**Teamwork** **Professionalism** **Innovation**			*Teamwork*	**Teamwork** **Agility** **Excellence**
Tenacity	*Courage* *Loyalty**	*Committed to service*	*Courage* *Loyalty*	**Courage** **Initative**	*Dedication*
Honesty	*Integrity*	**Accountable**	**Honesty** **Integrity**		*Integrity*
Propriety	*	**Impartial** **Respectful** **Ethical**	**Honour**	**Respect**	**Respect**

* the value, Loyalty in PLICIT contains meanings of tenacity and propriety thus the propriety meanings are counted in the propriety row.

The **bolded** values are emphasised, while the *italicised* ones are not. What this means is that some values are considered more ideal or desired than others. For the Army, the values of courage and initiative (expressed by meanings of tenacity) and the value of respect (expressed by meanings of ethical propriety) are more highly prized than teamwork. The soldier is thus rallied around the qualities of tenacity and ethical propriety. For the Air Force, rallying is around values of capacity; for the Navy and the APS, it's around meanings of honesty.

Preferred heroes

This language mechanism creates the desired, ideal Defence hero. Heroes are typically selected from the dominant social group, so in Defence it produces a hero who's typically an Anglo-Australian male soldier, renowned for acts of courage in battle. This excludes other values and other kinds of people. For example, the Defence hero isn't someone with, say, a Chinese heritage background; nor is it a woman, a sailor or an Air Force ground crew member. The heroic act isn't in defence of, say, integrity, and it isn't in contexts of training or the office.

Language constructs this constrained kind of hero through a mechanism which is known as *linguistic iconography*. Hero stories work to exemplify the ideal values of the organisation in order to bond and align members of a community into groups with shared dispositions and shared endeavours.[33] These stories are understood collectively as the genre of *exemplum*.[34] They feature heroes who model the ideals and identities of the organisation, constructing a shared history that transcends time. The history is built up through descriptions and stories that exemplify and uphold the values and beliefs. The stories can be about individuals who demonstrate the values or about events and traditions that encapsulate the values. These are the *voices* of the Defence community. This sense of community is what the members of the organisation identify with and align to.

Collecting examples of Defence *exempla* is relatively easy. Examples are found in doctrine, in speeches by senior leaders, and so on. Of the 12 *exempla* listed in Table 6, all are about Anglo-Australian men, 11 are about uniformed personnel, 10 are about values of tenacity, such as courage, and 8 are about acts in battle. In other words, the idealised hero is repeatedly selected from the dominant social

group to enact the preferred set of values in the dangerous environment of battle. This is how a limiting, exclusive corporate identity is constructed. Linguistic iconography operates throughout Defence.

Formal, officially endorsed language plays a key role in perpetuating and maintaining social norms, particularly those of the dominant group within the Defence culture. Particular language choices that privilege some values and types of people over others conspire to build an exclusive identity for the organisation. That identity does not represent the community that Defence serves, which is far more diverse and inclusive. While Defence argues that the organisation is becoming more inclusive, the formal language of leadership appears to be maintaining and perpetuating the male Anglo-Australian status quo. Unless this is addressed, it will counter attempts at cultural change.

Informal, everyday talk

The informal realm of language use also exhibits normative language practices of exclusion. This occurs in everyday casual conversations in the workplace, the purpose of which is to negotiate social identity and interpersonal relationships. Because Defence is mainly a team-based organisation built around cultivated and social relations, team membership is critical to mission success.

Analysis shows that casual conversation in Defence is dominated by the kind of talk characteristic of the dominant group of Anglo-Australian men. With 86% of the Defence population being male, this group has a profound influence on socialisation practices across the organisation in general, and on team membership and acceptance in particular. The casual conversation of this group consists of chat about workplace performance and team membership transacted through humour, banter, practical jokes and nicknaming.[35] These practices function to align and bond people in teams, but they can equally marginalise and exclude people who don't meet the standards set by the dominant group.[36]

The current study involved interviewing volunteers from the different diversity groups in Defence to investigate how they've adapted to this kind of socialisation. The interviewees' most common reason for feeling excluded relates to being perceived as *different*.

Table 6: Hero stories

Source	Service	Iconisation	
Defence Magazine, No. 7, 2012, p. 10	Army	**Hero**	**Corporal Scott Smith**
			Killed in action, Afghanistan, October 2012
		Values	Selflessness, honesty, dedication
		Community	**… of the best junior NCOs … of our best soldiers**
Defence Magazine, No. 7, 2012, p. 11	Army	**Hero**	**Corporal Daniel Keighran**
			Victoria Cross recipient
		Values	Valour, gallantry, devotion to duty, dedication, humility and mateship
		Community	**… of esteemed Australians revered for their courage in combat**
Anzac Day speech to Australian Masters Rowing Championships by Vice Admiral Peter Jones, 25 April 2013	Army	**Hero**	**Captain Percy Herbert Cherry**
			Victoria Cross recipient in World War I and rower
		Values	Bravery, determination and leadership
		Community	**… of rowers who become heroes**
General Sir John Hackett Memorial Lecture by Lieutenant General David Hurley, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, 11 November 2010	Army	**Hero**	**General Sir John Hackett**
			Australian-born British general of the 1940s
		Values	Leadership, gallantry, cleverness and service—'the essence of service'
		Community	**… of the profession of arms and military leadership**
'Heroic actions recognised and crew honoured', *Navy News*, 14 March 2013, p. 3	Navy	**Hero**	**HMAS *Yarra IV***
			Sunk by Japanese force in World War II
		Values	Gallantry and valour
		Community	**…of heroes to the Navy**
'Tragic loss of gunnie', *Air Force News*, 25 April 2013	Air Force	**Hero**	**Wing Commander Ray Forryan**
			Killed in cycling road accident
		Values	Loyalty, integrity and professionalism
		Community	**… of respected engineers and the wider Air Force**
Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 00.6 Leadership, 2007	Navy	**Hero**	**Chief Petty Officer Buck Rogers**
			Killed in the collision of HMAS Melbourne and HMAS Voyager
		Values	Loyalty, courage and teamwork
		Community	**… of ADF way of leadership**
Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 00.6 Leadership, 2007	Air Force	**Hero**	**Petty Officer Middleton**
			Killed in action over the English Channel in 1942
		Value	Courage
		Community	**… of courageous officers**
Australian Army Land Warfare Doctrine LWD 0-2-2 Character, 2005	Army	**Hero**	**The Australian soldier**
		Values	Loyalty, courage, service, independence and mateship
		Community	**… of soldiers in the Anzac tradition**
Australian Army Land Warfare Doctrine LWD 0-2-2 Character, 2005	Army	**Hero**	**Lieutenant Reginald Saunders**
			The first Aborigine to obtain a commission in 1944
		Values	Hardiness, determination and resourcefulness
		Community	**… of hardened soldiers**
Navy News, 30 January 2014	Defence	**Hero**	**Dr Andrew Amiet**
			Defence Science and Technology Organisation
		Values	Achievement in defence science
		Community	**… of APS staff contributing to capability**
Australian Air Publication 1000-H, *The Australian experience of air power*, p. 75	Air Force	**Hero**	**Flight Lieutenant Bill Newton**
			Shot down by Japanese over New Guinea, captured and later executed
		Values	Courage, devotion to duty
		Community	**… of Victoria Cross recipients**

Because difference poses a risk to team acceptance, the interviewees make normative use of humour to secure acceptance, which they can do if they're able to use humour and banter appropriately within the norms of the dominant social group. Control of humour and banter is their mechanism for minimising difference.

Banter can be used to include, provided that those who are the targets of the banter agree to play along by engaging with the proposition or by shifting the target back onto the instigator. Both moves result in acceptance. However, banter can also exclude. This occurs when the target doesn't participate because either they don't agree with the proposition or they don't understand what banter is and how it operates. Whether by intention or by accident, this can lead to exclusion.

The examples below were reported by interviewees, whose names have been changed.

Inclusive banter

In one form of inclusive banter, both parties agree with the proposition in order to mitigate a difference in gender:

> Alan: I'm only a simple man. I can't do two things at once, you know. Don't ask me these things.
>
> Rosemary: Yes, You're right. You're useless. You're a man.
>
> Alan: (Laughter)

In another form, the proposition is contested but in an inclusive way. One party uses the term 'gay' as a slang term equivalent of 'dorky' or 'lame', the other party, who is in fact gay, refutes the proposition good humouredly in order to mitigate a difference in sexual orientation:

> Tom: It's so gay!
>
> Harry: No it's not! If it was gay, I'd enjoy it.
>
> Tom: (Laughter)

Exclusive banter

In an example of exclusionary banter, Raj (who is of Indian heritage), arrives to audit the office, introduces himself, and asks Bob:

> Raj: What do you do around the office?
>
> Bob: I'm just the little blackfella around here.

> Raj: (Silence)
>
> Kirk: Good one, Bob.

If Bob had been on friendly terms with the auditor, his quip may have been received differently and laughter may have resulted. Bob might not have intended to offend, but he did. Kirk's response points this out.

Strategies for belonging

The interviewees talked about how they've managed their *difference* throughout their Defence careers. They want job satisfaction, followed by group acceptance and respect, so they have learned to mitigate difference through work performance and through banter. They understand that acceptance isn't just about the behaviour of others, and that they are equally responsible for gaining it. They use proactive strategies of belonging, including educating themselves in banter, doing their job better, being assertive in positive ways, adapting and learning from mistakes, being more professional by controlling their emotions, and being resilient.

In contrast to these proactive adaptive strategies, some interviewees also reported reactive strategies that relate more to coping than to integrating. In one sense, these responses show that some personnel accept the Defence habitus, even if they fear it. These strategies include self-sacrifice, tolerating what they don't like, doing their best to blend in (to be the 'grey' man or woman), going along with the majority, and (for women) using their gender to appeal to men in power through flirtation or 'batting their eyelids'.

Importantly, the interviewees indicated a desire to learn how to banter in order to succeed socially. It would seem far more productive and psychologically healthy to teach socialisation practices in Defence, rather than having those who experience marginalisation adapt by self-sacrifice and fear of the workplace.

Policy implications

Language socialisation practices in Defence aren't immutable. If the organisation wants to increase diversity and embrace social inclusion, it needs to question its exclusionary forms of institutional identities and socialisation.

Without a critical mass to drive alternative socialisation practices, it's unlikely that the current male Anglo-Australian

hegemony will change in the near future, but it's intrinsically unfair for the minority groups within Defence to do all the changing and adapting. This is the paradox facing Defence leadership. Should it just wait patiently for a critical mass to drive changes in socialisation while expecting minorities to adapt, or should it develop deliberate policies, such as a language policy that can acknowledge and engineer language change?

Among its other functions, a language policy can serve to create an environment which acknowledges language use as a component of capability, and it can explain how language can be put to use for maximum effect and also enable and support social inclusion. A language policy that advocates inclusive language and underpins reasons for teaching intercultural competence would offer all Defence personnel an opportunity to learn ways of being socially inclusive and to use language with greater sensitivity and awareness. It would also clearly promulgate the message that the senior leaders support diversity and social inclusion, both to improve teamwork and capability outputs, and to enhance social relations between and across the cultures of Defence.

A language policy could also provide leaders with a 'code of language practice', which could be a guide to identify talk, especially banter, that's being used to exclude. Leaders would then be equipped to monitor and manage exclusionary language use at the early stages of marginalisation, before exclusion and social isolation occur, and well before marginalisation becomes a capability issue. Another benefit would be better understanding and empathy between the four Services, particularly between the APS and the uniformed Services, but would also assist in raising more effective intercultural and international deployments.

Shifting away from a homogeneous workforce to a more heterogeneous one requires a shift in language use. To enable that change, the role language plays in the organisation's cultural codes needs to be brought to people's attention so that they'll come to value and prize its power.

Understanding how language builds ideal attributes and identities and how it functions to build group cohesion is the first step in seeing how language perpetuates social norms. Sustainable cultural change in Defence is unlikely unless its language practices change in concert with other policy changes. Until then, Defence will continue battling with words.

Notes

1   Department of Defence, *Defence annual report 2012–13*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2013, Chapter 6.

2   According to the 2011 Australian Census, 53% of the community at large are third-generation-plus Australians, while in Defence the proportion is 86% (ADF Census, 2011). For every 100 females, there are 98 males in the general population, while males account for 86% and women 14% of the permanent ADF. Defence APS consists of 60% men and 40% women. More recently, 'At 30 June 2013, the representation of women in the ADF was 14.4%' (*Defence annual report 2012–13*).

3   *Multi-ethic armed forces*, Backgrounder, Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva, March 2006.

4   Defence Committee, *Pathway to change: evolving Defence culture, a strategy for cultural change and reinforcement*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2012.

5   Defence People Group, *Recruiting achievement*, intranet. defence.gov.au/people/sites/dfr/comweb, 2013.

6   C Silk, R Boyle, A Bright, M Bassett and N Roach, *The case for cultural diversity in Defence,* Defence Equity Organisation, Canberra, 2000, pp. i–ii.

7   A *trained* relation is one based on specialisation and education. A *cultivated* relation is one based on dispositions that can be further inculcated through practice and a *social* relation is one based on socially agreed categorisations of people. In terms of work practices, a *situational* insight is concerned with solving a problem via whatever method it takes to succeed. A *doctrinal* insight is concerned with *how* something is studied or problem solved using procedural routines. K Maton, *Knowledge and knowers: towards a realist sociology of education*, Routledge, London, 2013.

8   Department of Defence web site: Who we are and what we do.

9   Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2013, p. 1.

10 Australian Public Service Commission, *Leading and shaping a unified, high performing APS*.

11 D Richardson, Secretary's speech to Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 12 November 2013.

12 A community of practice is a joint enterprise that binds members together into a social entity with a shared repertoire (such as routines, sensibilities, styles and so) on that have been developed over time. J Lave and E Wenger, *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

13 See K Maton, 'The wrong kind of knower, education, expansion and the epistemic device', in J Muller, B Davies and A Morais (eds), *Reading Bernstein, researching Bernstein,* RoutledgeFalmer, London, 2004; and K Maton, *Knowledge and knowers*.

14 'The concept of unlimited liability in defence of national interests distinguishes members of the military from other professions. Furthermore, the military allows for the lawful killing of others in the performance of duty. Moreover, the responsibility of military leadership permits the sacrifice of soldiers' lives in order to achieve military objectives. The stark and brutal reality of these differences from normal society has traditionally been a distinguishing feature of military life, contributing to a sense of separateness, even superiority, in relation to the civilian population.' D Hurley, 'This is the happy warrior, this is he that every man at arms would wish to be', speech presented at the General Sir John Hackett Memorial Lecture, Kings College, London, 11 November 2010, p. 4.

15 Defence Force Recruiting, *Recruiting Policy 040 May 2013,* Department of Defence, Canberra.

16 Office of Parliamentary Counsel, Defence (Personnel) Regulations 2002, Canberra, 2013.

17 J Lave and E Wenger, *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

18 Department of Defence, *Defence classification manual 2010,* Department of Defence, Canberra.

19 C McGregor, *The Review of Employment Pathways for APS Women in the Department of Defence*, Department of Defence, Canberra 2011, p. 9.

20 Defence People Group, *Decision-maker's handbook for personnel-related decisions,* Department of Defence, Canberra, 2007, Appendix 3, pp. 33–35.

21 K Maton, *Knowledge and knowers*, p. 185.

22 'Looking to the future', *Navy News*, 14 March 2013, p. 2.

23 Directorate of Navy Platform Systems, *Business Plan 2008–2013,* Department of Defence, Canberra, 2008.

24 Commander John Wearne, personal communication, 21 January 2014.

25 K Maton, *Knowledge and knowers*.

26 N Jans, 'The real c-cubed: culture, careers and climate and how they affect capability', *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 143,* Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra 2002, p. 83.

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28 Director General Personnel—Air Force, personal communication, 22 January 2013.

29 N Jans, 'Comparative perspectives: Australia', in CC Moskos and FR Wood (eds), *The military—more than just a job?,* Pergamon–Brassey's, Elmsford Park, New York, 1988, p. 213.

30 Commanding Officer, No. 1 Recruit Training Unit, personal communication, 25 September 2013.

31 'Affinity bias' is a term used by Deborah May (May 2013).

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADF   Australian Defence Force

APS   Australian Public Service

SOP   standard operating procedure

About the author

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Following a 15-year career as a sociolinguist and language educator in the tertiary sector, Dr Thomson joined Defence in 2008 as the Director of Studies, Defence Force School of Languages. In 2013 she conducted research into the nature of Defence culture and language use as the Secretary of Defence Fellow. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Education, a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics and Bachelor af Arts in English and Linguistics.

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