



Defence Academy
of the United Kingdom

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DA-CMT Annual Research and Consultancy Programme
Cross Cultural Issues in the Four Services
Dr Charles Kirke



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DA-CMT Annual Research and Consultancy
Programme

**CROSS CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR
SERVICES**

Final Report

18 May 2012

Dr Charles Kirke

Executive Summary

The Study

Cranfield University carried out a study funded by the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom into the organisational culture of the four Services (Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, and Civil Service), and in particular how these cultures affect synergy in the conduct of MOD business. The base discipline was Social Anthropology.

'Culture' as used in this report is the product of the attitudes, expectations, assumptions and the consequential conventions of behaviour that are shared within a group of any size. It arises naturally between individuals and groups living and/or working together and forms the basis for what the people involved think of as 'normal' and 'appropriate' and therefore affects all parts of daily life.

A common effects of culture is the spontaneous differentiation of groups from other groups through the creation of stereotypes and caricatures, called in the Social Science literature 'constructions of "the other"'. Such constructions lead to the setting up of obstacles to cooperation and collaboration.

The MOD comprises four distinct Services (Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force and Civil Service) each of which are further divided into professional branches, and/or into cap badge groups in the case of the Army. All of these groupings have developed different traditions and organisational cultures. In the study, particular focus was placed on the positive or negative effect any cultural differences might have on the conduct of MOD business, at any level. This research was conducted exclusively among officers at middle-management level, the level at which most detailed MOD business is conducted.

This study was in two phases, both interview-based. In the first, the investigation was directed exclusively at MOD Head Office, at the request of the Defence Reform Unit so that it could provide input to their immediate work in gathering evidence for the Levene Study in to Defence Reform. The second phase was carried out at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom and the collocated Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre, which provided a different set of research contexts.

The aim of this report is to present the key findings of the Directed Research Study into cross-cultural issues between the four Services and their effects on the conduct of MOD business, making recommendations on how to maximise the synergy between them in the context of putting 'Defence First'.

Findings of the Study

Cultural differences exist within each Service at professional branch/cap badge level, and between the four Services. This was not a surprising conclusion, as the anecdotal evidence is powerful, but this issue had not been investigated before in a systematic study.

At the lowest organisational level, small team cultures exist where members of the team engage in face-to-face working (either within a single Service, or across two or more Services). These cultures tend to privilege cohesive behaviour and co-operation regardless of the cultural composition of the teams.

There is potential for a local overarching culture (a 'site culture') to emerge in a particular social and geographical environment, cutting across the individual Service cultures. Thus, for example, MOD Head Office has a site culture, as does the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC).

There are elements in each level of culture that have the potential to affect the conduct of MOD business, both positively and negatively.

- Where inter Service and inter branch/cap badge differences are expressed as stereotypes or constructions of the 'other', the potential for synergy between groups is limited and the search for consensus between those groups (reported by the participants as the favoured policy in Head Office) is likely to fail. Firm direction is more likely to be needed under those circumstances.
- On the other hand, active and positive co-operation arises when members of the same group (whatever their origin) are committed to a common cause, particularly when they work face-to-face. Furthermore, the combination of expertise from those with different Service and branch/cap badge backgrounds is seen to add positively to the effect achieved. These positive processes were reported by many of the participants as present and active at PJHQ.

A persistent feature throughout the research population was the phenomenon of 'banter', the exchange of at least ostensibly jovial insults between individuals who identify themselves in some way as different from each other. This appeared to have social significance but it could not be investigated within this study.

Individual officers experience a 'developmental cycle' which profoundly affects their perceptions. In the course of this cycle they acquire group cultures by participating in particular groups, and they experience these cultures against a background of changing external factors (the ending of the Cold War, for example, and the subsequent extended period of expeditionary operations). For members of the Armed Services in particular the early part of this developmental cycle involves a prolonged period of Single Service experience during which they form deep seated attitudes expectations and assumptions (amounting to stereotypes) about other parts of their own Service and about the other Services. An important part of this cycle is promotion, which for most officers is managed by Single Service boards.

For many in the Armed Services it is not before they reach OF3 that they begin to interact on a regular basis with members of the other Services, and, in the case of many of the members of the Army, with those of other cap badges.

Recommendations to Enhance Synergy in the Carrying-out of MOD Business, and to Allow a 'Defence First' Attitude to Develop

- Increase the occasions where significant decisions are made by groups that privilege cohesive behaviour and cooperation regardless of their composition, and give high priority to Defence rather than to Single Service or branch/cap badge issues.
- Exploit the synergy that arises within cross-cultural teams by creating more of them.
- Study the site cultures which show signs of Defence level thinking and behaviour, with a view to creating the same conditions elsewhere. In this respect PJHQ may well be an instructive case.

- Increase face-to-face contact across Services and branches/cap badges wherever possible. For example, incorporate Joint work between the various Interim Command and Staff Courses, all of which take place at Shrivenham.
- Reduce the value placed on consensus in favour of firm direction at the Defence level of staff work. The Levene Report has set in train a reform on these lines at the top of the MOD, but it would also be of advantage to create similar decision-making structures at lower levels.
- Manage the developmental cycle of officers of all the Services in the interests of Defence. Revise the current promotion system which is by Single Service boards at all but the most senior levels, to reduce Single Service influence on an individual's career. In addition, early career mixing between the Services should be considered, to promote better mutual understanding during an officer's formative years.

Next Steps

MOD action (MOD to decide priority):

- Develop new career patterns for military officers so that they are less dependent on Single Service promotion boards at the level where their work affects Defence.
- Develop new organisational structures, especially in Head Office, where the search for consensus is replaced by firm direction. Particular attention will need to be paid to ensuring that the views and concerns of all Services and other MOD interest groups within them are heard before the firm direction is instigated.
- Consider how face-to-face contact between individuals and groups of different Services and branches/cap badges can be created and managed to best advantage for Defence.
- Consider how more cross-cultural teams can be formed and where they can best be deployed to put Defence first.

Academic Research (in order of priority):

- Research into the Joint synergy that takes place at PJHQ as a cited example of best practice.
- Research into understanding the phenomenon of banter and its effect on synergy within and between the Services.
- Research into site cultures.

Joint Academic/MOD Research:

- Develop a better understanding of how groups operate in Defence, and the organisational measures that may be taken to create more groups that can be encouraged to put Defence first.

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DA-CMT Annual Research and Consultancy Programme Cross Cultural Issues in the Four Services Dr Charles Kirke

CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Cranfield University carried out a study¹ funded by the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom into the organisational culture of the four Services (Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, and Civil Service), and in particular how these cultures affect synergy in the conduct of MOD business. 'Business' in this context is defined as purposeful activity in the MOD environment towards ends that are related to Defence in the widest sense.

The principal investigator (and sole researcher) for the project was Dr Charles Kirke. Dr Kirke is a Social Anthropologist with 36 years' commissioned service in the British Armed Forces² who specialises in military culture.

'Culture' in the sense in which it is used in this report is taken as the product of the attitudes, expectations, assumptions and the consequential conventions of behaviour that are shared within a group of any size. Culture arises naturally between individuals and groups living and/or working together³ and forms the basis for what the people involved think of as 'normal' and appropriate behaviour and therefore affects all parts of daily life. Furthermore, its effects seem so natural and normal to group members that they are normally unaware that it is affecting what they think and do. It is learned, reinforced and perpetuated in the daily practice of those in the group⁴. The term 'Organisational Culture' refers to those attributes insofar as they are shared between members of an organisation (and/or of groups within an organisation) in the context of that organisation.

One of the most common effects of culture is the spontaneous differentiation of groups from other groups through the creation of stereotypes and caricatures, summed up in the Social Science literature as 'constructions of "the other"', the blanket assignment of certain characteristics and behaviours to external groups ('out-

¹ The research on which this report is based is entitled 'Investigating cultural differences between the four Services, and to what extent these affect the conduct of MoD business: A pilot study', MOD Research Ethic Committee Protocol No: 170/GEN/10.

² A short period in the Royal Marines followed by the British Army.

³ See, for example, Eriksen, T. (2001) *Small Places, Large Issues*, (London: Pluto Press); Schein, E. (1984) 'Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture', *Sloan Management Review*, (Winter 1984) pp. 3-16.

⁴ Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, (Cambridge: Polity Press) *passim*.

groups')⁵. Such constructions lead to the setting up of obstacles to cooperation and collaboration (see, for example, Rapport and Overing's *Social and Cultural Anthropology*⁶). The 'we' or 'us' that represents the group in the members' own minds is opposed to a conception of 'them' – outsiders and members of other groups.

The MOD comprises four distinct Services (Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force and Civil Service⁷) all of which have developed different traditions and organisational cultures, each of which may themselves be further divided into branches. The purpose of the research underpinning this report was to investigate the nature of existing cultural differences between and within the four Services, as expressed in their attitudes, expectations and assumptions, and manifested in their behaviour. Particular focus was placed on the positive or negative effect any cultural differences might have on inter-Service business conduct. This research was carried out exclusively among officers at middle-management level as it was deemed that this was the level at which most of the detail of MOD business was conducted. It should be noted that this restricted the research to officers only and that none of its conclusions are relevant to non-commissioned personnel.

This research was in two phases. In the first, the investigation was directed exclusively at MOD Head Office, at the request of the Defence Reform Unit (DRU), so that it could provide input to their work in the short term, work that was used as evidence for the Levene Report⁸. The Executive Summary of the Phase 1 report is at Annex A. The second phase was carried out at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, and the collocated Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre, which provided a different set of contexts in which to investigate these cultural issues, separate from the particular environment of Head Office. There are differences between the interview material in the two phases, which are described below.

The research for this project was interview-based, using techniques established in Social Anthropology. The research sample and research design (including the ethical framework) are described in Annex B. It was essentially a 'bottom-up' analysis, using the data provided by individual interviews and small focus groups to investigate the working-out of culture in the conduct of MOD business. In Phase 1, 49 interviews were carried out, and 33 in Phase 2, making a total of 82 interviews. Twenty interviews each were carried out with Royal Naval, Army, and Civil Service personnel and 22 with members of the RAF. There were 14 focus group sessions with four or five individuals taking part. Such a study has not been carried out before among the four Services.

⁵ See, for example, Krumm, A. J. and Corning, A. F. (2008) 'Who Believes Us When We Try to Conceal Our Prejudices? The Effectiveness of Moral Credentials With In-Groups Versus Out-Groups.' *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 6 (148) 1 December 2008, pp. 689-709; Turner, J. and Oakes, P. (1986) 'The Significance of the Social Identity Concept for Social Psychology with Reference to Individualism, Interactionism and Social Influence', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25 (3) pp. 237-252.

⁶ Rapport, N. and Overing, J. (2007) *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*, (London: Routledge).

⁷ 'Civil Service' in this study refers exclusively to those working with MOD. No non-MOD Civil Servant was interviewed.

⁸ Levene, L. P., et al. (2011) *Defence Reform: an Independent Report into the Structure and Management of the Ministry of Defence*, MOD. http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/B4BA14C0-0F2E-4B92-BCC7-8ABFCFE7E000/0/defence_reform_report_struct_mgt_mod_27june2011.pdf (accessed on 5 May 12)

No person is to be identified or be identifiable in this report or any other work arising from the research. This is in line with the policy of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA)⁹ and was a condition of the MOD Research Ethics Committee's (MoDREC) approval for the research.

AIM

The aim of this report is to present the key findings of the Directed Research Study into cross-cultural issues between the four Services and their effects on the conduct of MOD business, making recommendations on how to maximise the synergy between them in the context of putting 'Defence First'.

The term 'Defence' refers to the highest conceptual and organisational level within the Ministry of Defence, excluding single Service, lower level interest-group, and personal issues.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question for the whole research project is:

'Do cultural differences exist between the four Services, and if so, to what extent do these differences affect the conduct of MoD business?'

MAIN FINDINGS TO ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTION

INTRODUCTION

The main findings of the study were that:

- Without doubt cultural differences exist within and between the four Services. The members of each of them displayed and described distinctive sets of attitudes expectations and assumptions and held opinions about their own Service, other Services and other branches of their own Service, some of them amounting to stereotypes or constructions of the 'other'. In itself this was not a surprising conclusion, as the anecdotal evidence is powerful, but such evidence had not been investigated before in a systematic study.
- At the lowest organisational level, small team cultures were found to exist where members of the team engaged in face-to-face working (either within a single Service, or across two or more Services). These cultures tended to privilege cohesive behaviour and cooperation regardless of the composition of the teams.
- At the other end of the scale, there is potential for an overarching local culture to emerge, cutting across the individual Service cultures. This is given the name here of 'site culture'. Thus, for example, MOD Head Office has a site culture, as does the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC).
- There were elements in each level of culture that had the potential to affect the conduct of MOD business, both positively and negatively.

⁹ Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice, <http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml> (accessed on 5 May 12)

- Finally, other important contextual factors were identified that affected the way that the cultural differences were being played out in everyday MOD business.

CULTURES IDENTIFIED IN THE STUDY

This section summarises the cultures identified through the transcripts of the research interviews and is illustrated where appropriate by extracts from those transcripts. It is not possible, because of practical restrictions of space, to produce all the statements relating to a particular issue.

The Existence of Separate Single Service Cultures

All four Services have different organisational cultures, incorporating different sets of attitudes, expectations, assumptions and different ideas about normal working practices. They value different aspects of their organisational lives, or value the same elements in different ways. These differences appear to be related to the different Single Service working environments and practices which dominate their members' early and mid careers. The main significance for this study is that Service identities are deeply felt and held to be personally very important. At no point, for example, did any interviewee try to deny their Service cultural origins or speak of them disparagingly, and all identified differences between their own Service and the other three.

It is not within the scope of this report to provide a detailed description of the four Service cultures, or those of the branches within them. Each would require a book in its own right, as the author has attempted elsewhere for the Army.¹⁰ On the other hand, because this report concerns 'cross cultural issues' it is necessary to outline the cultures across which these issues emerge, and across with Service members work with or against each other. Such boundaries exist between Services and within each Service (between the branches of that Service). Brief consideration is also given to the generic operational environment in which many of the interviewees described themselves and the other Services operating, as there was a consistent appeal to these environments in explaining or speculating about the different organisational cultures.

The Royal Navy

It is a limitation of this study that the Royal Marines, who are fully part of the Naval Service, formed too small a proportion of the research sample¹¹ to be included in this report. What follows, and in other places where interviewees are identified as belonging to 'the Royal Navy', the term is specific to the Royal Navy itself and not to other elements of the Naval Service.

Royal Navy interviewees usually described their lives in terms of sea going service, indicating that a dominant identity in that Service is that of a group for whom the significant parts of their lives are spent in a ship at sea. Most of the Royal Navy interviewees pointed out that under such circumstances all those on board share the same risks and pressures of operational service and exist as a single corporate

¹⁰ Kirke, C. (2009) *Red Coat Green Machine: continuity in change in the British Army 1700 to 2000*, (London: Continuum).

¹¹ Two out of the 20 interviewees from the Naval Service, all the others being in the Royal Navy.

group on the sea. As one Royal Navy interviewee put it, 'When the Captain says "Starboard 30" we all go Starboard 30'. Similarly, a dominant phrase by Royal Navy interviews was 'all of one company'¹².

Royal Navy interviewees all described the component parts of the Royal Navy along two different axes. The first of these is professional specialism, for example the Warfare Branch, the Engineering Branch, or the Logistic Branch. These branches are themselves subdivided: the Engineering Branch has within it, for instance, Weapon Engineers, Marine Engineers, and Air Engineers. They do not have equal status within the Navy: command of a ship and high rank (3 Star and above) are exclusively the preserve of the Warfare Branch, and this is reflected at lower levels in the promotion system, where Warfare Officers are perceived as more likely to be promoted into prestigious or influential posts than their counterparts in other branches.

The second axis is the arm of the Service: submarines, small ships, large ships, aviation, the Royal Marines, and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. This axis, too, is subdivided: large ships can be separated between capital ships and frigates/destroyers, small ships include mine countermeasures vessels and fishery protection vessels, and submarines can be divided between fleet submarines and ballistic missile submarines.

The majority of officers serve on several types of ship during their careers, so their identity as, say, a 'big ship' or 'little ship' person is unlikely to be permanent (as opposed to their Branch specialism, which is). There are two possible exceptions, however, in that it was observed during the study that submariners and those involved in aviation tended to project that identity as far as possible even when it was not necessarily related to their current employment by, for instance, wearing particular badges on their uniforms. There are also indications in the research material, albeit in the margins of the study, that submariners and aviators may believe they have higher professional standards than the others. Such perceptions may be reinforced by the receipt of Special Service Pay.¹³

None of the Royal Navy interviewees considered that they were still a member of their last ship, or any other in their service. The act of leaving a ship effectively ended their affiliation with it, except perhaps while reminiscing with those who had shared their experience at reunions. A Royal Naval interviewee said, for example, 'We all serve in the best ship in the Navy. You join another ship and that's then the best ship in the Navy and the people that you've left are a bunch of tossers and we all laugh about it, you know ... they're no good at this and they're no good at that and we give them grief. That's the difference and we pay off ships and they're gone and they could be gone forever and we don't think twice about it.'

These axes, and the divisions within them, create a large variety of potentially separate identities, and thus groupings. For example, an individual might be a Weapons Engineer in a submarine, which would distinguish them from being a Warfare Officer in the same submarine or a Weapons Engineer in a large ship, and so on. The existence of such separate identities inevitably sets up the conditions for the creation of in-groups and out-groups and the related stereotyping of 'the other'.

¹² This phrase was used so often in interviews with Royal Naval personnel that it appeared to represent an iconic thought in the self-image of their Service. However, the research sample was not large enough finally to establish this as a research conclusion.

¹³ This issue emerged in informal interchanges with Royal Navy officers outside the interview material and should be treated with caution until it is confirmed by further research.

Above these levels, Royal Navy interviewees talked about what has elsewhere been called a 'residual focus of loyalty'¹⁴, a permanent background identity which dominated in the absence of any groups with which to compare themselves. This was always set at the level of the Royal Navy, rather than any professional specialism or ship or shore establishment.

The Army

The Army interviewees all restated the well known dominant organising principle known as the Regimental System. In this system each member belongs exclusively to a particular Regiment or Corps, identified always by their cap badge and sometimes by other signs and symbols worn on their military clothing. Attitudes towards the cap badge as a symbol are so powerful that it is used as shorthand for identity: individuals are thought of and described as being 'of' a certain cap badge. Furthermore, unlike the Royal Navy, it is this level, rather than the institution of their Service as a whole, that provides the residual focus of loyalty so that individuals feel a sense of belonging to their cap badge more strongly than to the Army.

The subdivisions of each Regiment or Corps provide further potential focuses of loyalty and identity. For example, the Royal Regiment of Artillery is divided into a number of units (somewhat confusingly also called 'regiments'¹⁵), Infantry Regiments are divided into units called 'battalions', the Royal Armoured Corps is composed of 'regiments', as is the Corps of Royal Engineers. Below that level are arrays of subunits (variously companies, squadrons, and batteries), each of which is subdivided again, and so on. Powerful loyalties and feelings of identity can be focused at any of these levels, the level of the moment being determined by the group with which the individual's is being compared. Thus, a soldier in the Infantry can be expected to express his loyalty to his company in the face of other companies of the same battalion, or to his battalion in the face of other battalions of the same Regiment, and to his Regiment in the face of anybody else.

A persistent element in Army culture is the identification of the group of which the individual is exercising his or her membership at any one time as 'the best', even in the presence of information that suggests the contrary. Thus for an individual in a particular battalion, his battalion is 'the best', and for those in the Infantry their ethos and practice is 'better' than those of other parts of the Army.

As a result, most interviewees would not accept that their part of the Army was of lower status than others, although some felt unjustly looked down upon by those who felt they were high status (notably the cavalry and 'smart' infantry regiments). The same individuals, however, did consider their cap badge to be of higher social status than others or to have an importance that transcended social status. They remained, as they presented themselves, members of 'the best'.

The Army as an institution fills its highest posts with those from the equivalent of the Warfare Branch in the Royal Navy, known as the Combat Arms (such as the Infantry and the Royal Armoured Corps) and the Combat Support Arms (such as the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery), leaving those who carry out combat service support (such as the Royal Logistic Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical

¹⁴ Kirke (2009) *op.cit.* p. 96.

¹⁵ In this report, the convention is to use an initial capital ('Regiment') when referring to the cap badge level and a lower case initial letter ('regiment') when referring to unit level within a Corps or Regiment.

Engineers) to have an effective ceiling at Two Star rank or below unless the individual has exceptional experience or skills.

Beyond the groupings inherent in the Regimental System, it is frequently necessary for members of different cap badges to team up to comprise an all-arms team to deliver military effect, the unit level of which is known as a 'battle group'. In that case it is the common purpose of the group that provides identity rather than the cap badge. Such groupings will only exist, however, until the military task comes to an end. In contrast to their membership of Regiments or Corps, interviewees hardly mentioned their service with battle groups at all.

Whereas the dominant operational image of the Royal Navy is the self-contained ship moving over the sea, for the Army it is the regiment or battalion deployed on operations or being prepared to deploy under hostile conditions. Although deployment may or may not be rapid, there is an inherent assumption of mobility, of geographical transience, with the footprint of the unit moving from one place to another to engage in military operations from a base that has been secured and/or created in alien territory. Their social and operational stability is therefore provided by the unit and the people within it, rather than being centred on the equipment that they man.

The Royal Air Force

In sharp contrast to the Army (where there is a common self-image within each of its component parts of being 'the best'), the Royal Air Force interviewees of all branches¹⁶ showed a consistent recognition of a stable hierarchy of prestige within their Service, and accepted it.

At the highest level of this hierarchy is the air crew. For example, an RAF engineer said, 'In terms of the function of the Air Force the aircrew are the most critical asset. They lead us. They are better remunerated for that and their skill set, in terms of what the Air Force needs to do, is much more broadly attuned to our overall aim.' Within air crew, there is also a widely acknowledged pecking order: pilots (often called 'the two winged master race') come first, and navigators come second, and there are further grades of prestige among the pilots. Single seat fast jet pilots come at the top, then those that fly two-seaters. Below them come the helicopter pilots and at the bottom those who fly multi-engined aircraft such as the Hercules or the TriStar.

It was also accepted among the RAF interviewees that the senior posts in their Service were the preserve of the air crew, as those who best understood air warfare and the wielding of air power. The interviewees not only talked about the superiority of air crew but pointed out that there were other hierarchies among those who worked on the ground (the 'ground pounders'). Engineers, for instance, were acknowledged by most RAF interviewees as being in the most significant of the ground trades ('aircraft won't fly without them'), with those who deal with administration and personnel much lower down. The following quote from a RAF interviewee (an engineer) illustrates the point: 'The pecking order is Pilots first, Navigators, Engineers, Logisticians, and then we suffer Administrators, and then really nobody else counts...'

¹⁶ The term 'branches' reflects the all-officer RAF research population. Non-commissioned members of the RAF refer to 'trades' to describe this level of organisation.

When interviewees spoke about grouping and identity within the RAF, their prime axes were by branch of the Service and, like the Royal Navy, their corporate identity as part of the Royal Air Force. Membership of particular squadrons did not seem to count for much in the long term, in the same way as the Royal Navy interviewees said that their ships were only an important identifier when they were part of the ship's company.

A common image projected by RAF interviewees was that the purpose of their Service is to wield air power and that their organisation and their collective effort exist to put a small number of people in the air to carry out that operational role. All flying missions are operational. This means, for instance, that the Engineers' task is to deliver safe working air frames for the pilots to fly. This can only be achieved by careful methodical following of engineering processes by a sufficient number of people who are properly trained and equipped, and in a fit state to work. This, in turn, means that the individuals need to know the relevant processes and follow them strictly under an effective level of supervision and, as far as possible, to be organised into a shift system that allows them to be fresh on the job.

Another important feature of the RAF environment is that the aircraft are normally operated from large static bases, many of them in the UK. Under these conditions, compared to the Army, there is less need for close social and personal integration in the face of an enemy, and compared to the Royal Navy there is no equivalent of the image of 'all of one company on the sea'. Although, therefore, there are discernable cultural groupings within their Service, the weight given to them by RAF interviewees was not as strong as in the other two Armed Services, except at the level of the Service itself, where they showed a strong corporate identity. One RAF interviewee summed up this concept when he picked his hat up, pointed to the badge and said that there was only one in his Service and all members shared it.

The Civil Service

The Civil Service (all MOD – see footnote 7) interviewees showed a strong self-image as being members of that Service, seeing themselves as different from members of all the Armed Services. The material, however, showed a number of different axes of identity within that corporate identity, for example,

- By career trajectory. The majority of Civil Servants joined at junior grades and made progress up the grade structure over an extended time. Others were given accelerated promotion under two different systems. The 'Fast Stream' individuals undergo managed careers in which they are passed through a number of posts comparatively quickly so that they can gain a wide range of experience. 'The Means of Identifying and Developing Internal Talent' (MIDIT) scheme provides the possibility of accelerated promotion but generally not as rapid as those who are successful in the Fast Stream.
- By functional competence, equivalent to the branches of the Royal Navy and the RAF. These competencies include, amongst others, Secretariat, Finance, Commercial, and Engineers.

- By role – Administrators and Executives, usually linked to grade in that the Administrators were in general¹⁷ at the junior end of the scale and the Executives at the senior.
- By geographical location. Those in Head Office in London, for example, consistently described themselves as more competent than those at Bristol in DE&S.
- By Armed Service affiliation. This entirely depended on their previous experience, but in many cases those with prolonged experience with one of the Armed Services felt themselves to be different from those who had similar experiences with the others.

They also reported that, apart from the Fast Stream, they tended to stay in post longer than members of the Armed Services. This differentiated themselves from all military personnel and they had a consistent self-image as exercising an important role in providing continuity and in being the proponents of proper process in the face of endemic haste displayed by military officers. As in the Armed Services, it seems that these key elements in their self image are related to the physical and organisational environment in which they work. In this case it consists generally of large organisations in geographically fixed establishments whose purposes are best achieved through accurate, precise and unbiased staff work. This includes work in operational theatres: seven out of the 20 Civil Service interviewees had served in headquarters in Iraq and/or Afghanistan since 2002.

Single Service Images of the Other Services

As described in the Introduction, a commonly-found cultural element in any part of the world is the tendency for members of a group to compare other groups unfavourably with their own. A consistent theme in many cultures is to perceive this 'other' as inferior in some way to the home group, which can lead to the formation of negative, or at least critical, stereotypes and mutual misunderstandings between groups. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that negative or misleading stereotypes can grow up between members of different Services and between members of different branches within them.

In the course of the interviews during both phases of the research, members of each Service were asked how they saw the other three, and how these perceptions compared with their own service. The overwhelming majority saw significant differences, many of them amounting to negative stereotypes that appeared to provide the bases for mutual misunderstanding. For example:

Members of the Civil Service saw a clear difference between themselves and the Armed Services. The main points of difference included:

- The Armed Services in general were more output-focused than the Civil Service.
- Armed Service people often appeared to be in a hurry and less willing than Civil Servants to respect procedure and process.
- The Armed Services were more overtly rank-conscious than the Civil Service.

¹⁷ Although the interview material showed this distinction in the minds of Civil Service interviewees, this is not to say that 'administration' is the exclusive preserve of the junior grades. Some very senior civil servants have important administrative roles.

- Some of the Civil Service interviewees saw distinct differences between the different Armed Services' ways of doing things while others saw the main distinction as between the Armed Services - a single entity - and the Civil Service.
- Half of the Civil Servants interviewees considered army officers 'arrogant'.

The majority of Armed Service interviewees reported a range of differences between themselves and the other Armed Services, while uncompromisingly identifying with their own Service. None showed any inclination to consider any other Service better or more desirable than their own. There was general agreement that the two most distant from each other are the RAF and the Army, with the Royal Navy in an intermediate position. There was recognition, for example, by RAF interviewees that they and the Royal Navy shared a concern with technology ('manning the equipment') compared with the Army's concern with their people ('equipping the man'). When asked about their feelings towards the other two Armed Services, no Army officer expressed themselves as feeling closer to the RAF than the Royal Navy, though one said that the RAF and the Army were growing closer together than hitherto because of recent operational experience.

The main points of difference between the Army and the RAF were described by Army interviewees as:

- Class differences, with Army officers seeing the RAF as of lower social status including dress codes, educational background, and officers' mess customs and behaviour.
- In their attitudes to operational conditions the RAF were seen as softer in their outlook. For example, they had a long tradition of seeking civilian-style comfort on operations, compared to the hard realities of war, and they insisted on a three-shift system giving each individual an allocated time for rest. Similarly, they had a more restrictive attitude to the way they worked, exemplified by a reluctance to exceed what they saw as legitimate working hours and legitimate tour lengths (which were seen as far shorter in the RAF than in the Army).
- An attitude by the RAF towards clearance of aircraft to fly that was over-cautious and over bureaucratic compared to their Army equivalents, and more process-oriented.
- RAF pilots tended to value their aircraft above their Army passengers. For instance, several Army interviewees cited cases where they had been dropped by RAF helicopter too far from the expected location because the pilot felt it was safer. This was seen as a sharp contrast to the Royal Navy whose pilots would take every possible measure to put them down in the right place.
- Because of their generally cautious and bureaucratic attitudes the RAF needed more personnel to carry out the same tasks compared to the Army and the Service was therefore overmanned.

The view from RAF interviewees concerning the Army was similarly critical:

- Army officers tended to be arrogant.

- Rank and prestige in the Army went with social privilege, in contrast to the RAF where the only criterion for promotion was merit.
- The Army rank system could get in the way of good practice because those junior in rank were not expected to challenge more senior people.
- The obsession in the Army with 'Regiment' and 'Corps' got in the way of good sense.
- The Army had less respect for formal rules and process than the RAF, being more focused on the goal to be achieved.

The interviewees from the Royal Navy generally held an intermediate position when talking about the Army and the RAF. For example, some saw the Army as having a tendency to be proactive and end-focused, which could get the task done but carried a greater risk than the RAF's steadier approach. Again, some said that the RAF were better at detailed planning than the Army but sometimes limited themselves by wanting rules and terms of reference for any undertaking.

Members of the Armed Services saw the Civil Service generally as preoccupied with the carrying out of due process, averse to making decisions, and happy to get the procedures right at the expense if necessary of achieving the purpose to which those processes were supposed to lead. This could appear as a lack of urgency which Armed Forces individuals found frustrating.

Different Organisational Cultures within Individual Services

The necessary existence of different organisations and functional groupings within each Service, as identified in the cultural summaries above, creates by its nature the potential for group identities to emerge, and thus differences in attitudes expectations and assumptions. Such differences may be viewed as constituting separate cultures within the overarching Service culture. As a result there is scope for stereotyping and constructions of 'the other' across the boundaries of these groups. The following is a summary of the research results in this area.

The Royal Navy

In the Royal Navy the different professional specialisms (for instance, the warfare officers, the engineers, the logistics officers, and the hydrographic and meteorology specialists) and the different functional groupings (into submarines, small surface vessels, large surface vessels, capital ships and naval aviation, and so on) provide a wide array of significant groupings. According to the interviewees, all of these groupings could find themselves opposed to each other in the absence of anything to bond them together. On operational deployment, however, as we have seen, the overwhelmingly important grouping is the ship at sea, incorporating members of all relevant branches, and each ship has its own organisational culture around the concept of 'all of one company'. A possible exception is the case of the aviators, who have membership both of their parent squadron and the ship, and often return to their squadron bases ashore during the deployment of the ship.

No Royal Navy interviewee mentioned any serious difficulties between branches, though many mentioned minor difficulties or irritations. For example, some mentioned the potential for friction between Warfare Officers, who had a watchkeeping role on the ship in addition to their other duties, and the members of other branches who did not. The Warfare Officers saw themselves as having to work harder: the members of other branches saw them as a privileged breed qualified for

higher rank than themselves. Two of the non-Warfare Officer interviewees confessed to feelings of frustration and resentment because their professional speciality was, in their view, unfairly looked down upon.

The Army

In the Army, on the other hand, the inter cap badge issues provide plenty of scope for stereotyping and constructions of 'the other', which could potentially cause more serious difficulties. For example, the ascendancy of the 'teeth arm' Regiments and Corps (the combat arms and the combat support arms) in senior posts is part of a phenomenon known within the Army as 'teeth arm snobbery'¹⁸, where those who provide combat service support are looked down upon. These three quotes are from non-teeth arm individuals,

'Well, let's just say that Teeth Arm snobbery is alive, well and kicking! ... I had an ambition to be a DCOS¹⁹ but absolutely no bloody way in the world, with my cap badge, would I ever have made a DCOS. Of an armoured brigade anyway.'

'There seems to be third class, you know, first, second, third class and there's almost a sort of class-like society in there. "I'm an Infantier, therefore I look down on an Engineer" ... and the professionals within the Army are regarded as third-class citizens rather than actually being the, you know, the brightest and the best going that way. You know, if you're bright and you're going places, you tend to be an Infantier, you know. If you're, you know, if you're... if you're maybe not so bright and didn't do as well at Sandhurst, you go and join the RLC, you know. Well, actually, the RLC do things like EOD and all this sort of stuff and there seems to be this "I look down on him", and I can't abide it.'

'I got that [*teeth arm snobbery*] at Staff College. So I would be expanding on tank tactics and a tankie would go "Well, what do you know about it?" to which my answer is "Obviously more than you, mate. Since I've read about tank tactics, I'm interested in military history" and, you know. But that's a bit confrontational. I got into trouble for doing stuff like that. So it's very definitely, you know, "You're a blanket staker"²⁰. What do you know about it?"

Apart from teeth arm snobbery, there is also rivalry between members of different cap badges, for example,

'I think the EOD Bomb Disposals is an interesting area because there are a massive frictions and they still exist to a certain extent (they are not as bad as

¹⁸ These terms were used by the Army interviewees although they have been officially superseded by the classification into 'combat arms', 'combat support', 'combat service support' and 'combat command support' (see, for example, MOD (2010) *Army Doctrine Publication: Operations*, <http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/41903E11-B6F4-4351-853B-2C1C2839FE1B/0/ADPOperationsDec10.pdf> (accessed on 5 May 12).

¹⁹ A posting as a 'Chief of Staff' (COS) or 'Deputy Chief of Staff' (DCOS) is a key appointment for young majors in the Army, and a significant advantage for further promotion.

²⁰ Nickname for a member of the Royal Logistic Corps (previously the Royal Army Ordnance Corps).

they were) but there are massive frictions between the Royal Engineers and the RLC.’

As another example, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that members of the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers are proverbially known not to get on, as in this quote from a Royal Engineer officer ‘...generally, I found the Gunners a bit tedious. Very serious and a bit boring, to be honest.’

The RAF

The interviewees from the RAF, like the Royal Navy, showed a stronger sense of belonging to a Service than those in the Army did. Like the Royal Navy, therefore, RAF interviewees showed less scope for internal division, though it was not completely absent. The main axis of difference is the significant organisational and thus cultural separation between those who fly (the ‘two winged master race’) and those who do not (the ‘ground pounders’).

An engineer: ‘[Air crew] have got a very shallow understanding of what goes on to produce that aircraft at the front line that they fly. All they see is the aeroplane, sign [for] it, get in it and do it. They do not really understand how much is involved getting to that point, if you like. Some of them do understand a bit more but, I think, their job is very demanding. It takes an awful amount of brainpower to do it.’

An engineer: ‘Yeah. It is... I mean, you know, for the Air Force... the Air Force is run by pilots and they have the, kind of, arrogance that goes with that sometimes. Especially the Fast Jet, you know, pilot guys’.

A pilot, having a minor disagreement with a member of the Administrative Branch: ‘No brevet no vote’, which closed the conversation.²¹

A personnel support officer: ‘Within the Air Force the division is, Air Crew and others. The two winged master race. Bog standard joke, “how do you know there is a pilot in the bar? He will tell you”’.

An engineer: ‘Aircrew have more money. They’re young and reckless, and Engineers are more sensible, studious and professionally trained.’

Other axes of division and disagreement exist to a lesser extent between the professional groupings among non-flying personnel (engineers, for example, the Royal Air Force Regiment, air traffic controllers, fighter controllers, and so on). These do not usually, however, form major barriers to cooperation, but rather sources of irritation and minor frustration.

An engineer: ‘You could have engineers at [warrant officer] level asking something from Supplies at corporal level and getting not the right answer and fallouts. So then that will go to the JENGO²². The JENGO will speak to me²³. I’ll speak to OC Supply who will go “No, John, it’s this. This is the reason why.” “Oh right mate. Understand”. Then I’ll go back down my side

²¹ The ‘brevet’ is the winged badge worn on the uniform by qualified air crew.

²² ‘Junior Engineer Officer’.

²³ The speaker was the Senior Engineer Officer in this case.

and explain it to them because these people at this level aren't capable of actually talking to each other.'

A personnel support officer reflecting on the stereotype attached to her professional specialism: 'And as an Administrator we are the most obstructive ground trade in everyone else's opinion because we pay, we cock that up frequently for them, we don't pay their allowance... We don't allow them to take their car to go to a meeting, they must go by Public Transport and that's all me. I personally do that to them to wind them up!'

The Civil Service

The different groupings and identities within the Civil Service that were described above also provide opportunities for division and stereotyping, but not to the same extent as in the Armed Services. For example, some Head Office Civil Servants said that the staff at Defence Equipment and Support in Bristol were not as capable as those in London, and some spoke disparagingly of those with other professional specialisms.

A Commercial specialist, 'I mean, in Commercial, you're looking for value for money. That doesn't necessarily mean the lowest price but a financier is probably looking for the lowest price and doesn't really take into account other factors.'

A Secretariat specialist, 'I've met quite a few Scientists and so on that tend to be, perhaps, a little bit more difficult sometimes to deal with and come to terms with because they're not really interested in anything other than their specialist area and the fascination of it to them. Which is a fascination not shared by those that don't understand it, perhaps, or aren't interested in it or whatever it may be.'

The one most talked about was the difference between the Fast Stream and the rest. A few of the interviewees showed some resentment at their rapid promotion:

'I, perhaps, see a bigger division between the Fast Stream and the rest. And the Fast Stream classically are Oxbridge type background, often public school, not always, but often public school and given that they are successful through a system where the posts number hundreds and the applications number hundreds, if not thousands.'

'Within the Civil Service there's some kind of "them and us" thing about Fast Stream versus non-Fast Stream. I wouldn't call it resentment as such but I think it's probably a recognition that the divide is sort of they're a bit...[*sentence unfinished*].'

'They are the crème de la crème in terms of intellect and such like and there comes a degree, perhaps, of arrogance and impatience associated with that. The impatience may be a good thing in many respects but it makes them, perhaps, slightly more difficult to get on with sometimes, for the main stream.'

Functional Team Cultures

All the groupings and cultures considered so far arise from Service organisations: the Services, the branches, the arm, the cap badge and so on. Another significant set of

groups was regularly described by the interviewees, consisting of those brought together from diverse sources to perform a function. Obvious examples are functional groupings such as project teams at Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), MOD branches within Head Office, and the various subdivisions of the Defence Academy - College of Management and Technology (DA-CMT). The common characteristics of such teams are that they are usually small (less than 20) face-to-face groups with a common purpose in which the members have routine daily contact with each other, and that they are composed of individuals from any functionally appropriate origins within the Services. If they are formed for a single Service purpose they may consist mainly of members of that Service (though many Armed Service groups will have a Civil Service presence within them), but the most common case involves members of more than one Armed Service and the Civil Service.

Such groupings can vary in terms of longevity over a large spectrum. At one end they can merely be temporary working groups formed of members from various MOD origins to address specific issues on an occasional or short term basis, while at the other they may be fully established for a long term purpose, as for example, MOD policy branches are.

There was a clear difference between what the interviewees said about the other Services as a whole, and the other branches of their own Service (the stereotypes outlined above), and what they said about members of other Services or branches within their own small team, particularly if that team was well established with a reasonable life expectancy. Whereas the stereotypes were generally hostile and disapproving, it appears that interviewees did not usually connect them to the individuals with whom they actually worked on a permanent basis. Rather, they developed a fellow-feeling as members of the same team with a shared purpose and common ways of doing things,

Civil Servant: 'For your own benefit and the benefit of the team you need to take onboard the team ethos and move on and that's part of you developing, because you are going to struggle in the workplace no matter who you work for if you keep going along with your own ideas and don't embrace the team culture working together, and diversity and all that sort of stuff...'

Royal Navy Officer: 'And I worked in a Joint job in policy and it was ten of us from different services all pretty good at what we do. You couldn't get a cigarette paper between us.'

RAF Officer: 'My personal experience as an SO2 with five layers above me is that our Quad Service..., works well within our team. There is no one weak link.'

Army Officer: 'Although stereotypes exist once you get to know the people they disappear.'

This led to the conclusion that such functional teams develop their own organisational cultures. In such cultures, membership of the team can transcend membership of any particular Service or branch of their Service and co-operation is privileged over Service differences when that is appropriate for their function. Given the day-to-day and face-to-face nature of these teams, their cultures can be close and bonding.

Site Cultures

In Phase 1 of the study, carried out exclusively in MOD Head Office, it was common for the interviewees to talk about aspects of their lives that directly concerned their experiences in the building that were shared across the interviewee population. These amounted to a common set of attitudes assumptions and expectations that were assessed as indicators of a Head Office culture that was unconnected to Service or functional team cultures.

Elements in this culture included, for example, a self-image among interviewees across all the Services as belonging to a bounded group: those who worked in Head Office. The characteristics of this group included a further self-image as being of high quality, specially selected for their role, producing first rate work and following best practice,

Civil Servant: 'In terms of dealing with the people around here, you'd have a general expectation that people in this building will be of a certain quality.'

Royal Navy Officer: 'You tend to find - and please don't see this as a reflection of me - very good people are here in the Ministry of Defence so the intellect and the tempo is very high here I would suggest, and that's the Civil Service as well as my other colleagues.'

It was also generally accepted that newcomers (especially those in the Armed Services) needed to undergo a significant transitional period of 'culture shock' before becoming fully effective members of this group. For example,

Civil Servant: '... some of the desk officer personnel you know, like the SO1 type level where they might be new to the building. You know, I found it was often a culture shock for them.'

Head Office members also drew identities (irrespective of Service) from the geography of the Head Office building, chiefly by which floor they worked on, but also occasionally which side of the building (the 'Whitehall Side' or the 'Embankment Side'²⁴).

Civil Servant: '...when the river side of the building lets the Whitehall side fight amongst themselves.'

Royal Naval Officer: 'The need would be endorsed on the second floor in the Cap area.'

Civil Servant: 'So you know, there are sub-sets of Civil Servants and that's absolutely true and do you know what, if you really want to break this down, there are cultures between the fifth, third, and fourth floors of this building and the second and the first.'

RAF Officer: [*In answer to the question 'Do you think the Services have less high quality officers in Head Office?'*] 'Not on the third floor. We can't, couldn't survive. But I've worked on the seventh floor and, yes.'

²⁴ This trait was particularly noted on the Fifth Floor where members of the Single Service branches contrasted themselves with the Ministers and their staffs.

Army Officer: 'My own boss who is himself extremely broad-minded and extremely keen always to challenge and always to get to the bottom of why we do what we do, and who is naturally inclined not to take instructions from the fifth floor.'

A persistent thread in the interview material is the search for consensus between the various elements in the building, for example,

Royal Navy Officer: 'I think going again to what we spoke about before, as a team we're talking about consensus here. And trying to get a decision, I find that all really frustrating.'

Civil Servant: 'Because what sometimes I think we are, this is everybody, in the Main Building perhaps, are too nice too each other and what we try to do is, almost make a decision by being a democracy and almost compromising.'

Army Officer: 'To then come here there is often a kind of frustration that things have taken an awful long time and everything... there has to be, you know, total consensus on everything.'

Civil Servant: 'We strive for consensus which means you end up with the lowest common denominator.'

There are also concrete manifestations of membership of Head Office in the administrative arrangements in the building. For example, members are physically and electronically separated from outsiders by their comparative ease of access with their own pass compared to 'visitors' who have to queue and obtain day passes and have their luggage electronically scanned. Membership is also played out in the catering arrangements, where insiders and outsiders have different systems for paying.

This identification of a 'site culture' matched a provisional finding in the author's previous work in DE&S,²⁵ where there was a low-key acknowledgement that there was an overarching working community at 'Abbey Wood' and many members shared in communal activities that transcended Service and functional team boundaries. People from across the establishment, for example, participated in 'dress down Friday', and collected one day a week for a communal breakfast.

This concept of site culture was further explored at Shrivenham in Phase 2 of the study. No trace of such a culture was found at the highest organisational level of the Defence Academy, but indications of shared attitudes expectations and assumptions were found at lower levels in some of the institutions on the site. For example JSCSC appeared to have a corporate identity and practices that were shared among the members, as did the Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC). In the case of the JSCSC, the main point of agreement was that the establishment promotes 'defence' or 'purple' thinking and the various Services were expected to live with and learn from each other. In the case of the DCDC the main theme was that the members were there to think 'Defence' rather than Single Service and to produce concepts and doctrine that served 'Defence'. In this case, therefore, it is likely that 'site culture' exists at Shrivenham, but only in some of the site's components in the absence of a 'whole site' culture. This finding must be regarded as provisional, however, as the evidence is slight. Further research is needed.

The existence of site cultures may provide an opportunity for cooperation across Service and intra-Service boundaries. For example, all 20 interviewees who had served at the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) mentioned it as a place where the atmosphere was Joint rather than Single Service. Site culture and its potential to encourage 'Defence first' thinking should be the subject of further research.

THE PHENOMENON OF 'BANTER'

A persistent cultural theme across the interview material is the subject of 'banter', discussed in 56 out of the 82 individual interviews. This theme was so widespread that it is worthy of separate attention as a shared cross-cultural issue that runs across the Services. It takes the form of what appear on the surface to be insulting remarks between Services and between professional specialisms and cap badges. This interchange between a pilot and an engineer during a focus group session with RAF interviewees gives an example of banter taking place

Pilot: 'And broadly, you can chuck a bunch of RAF Officers in a room and they're not that dissimilar.'

Interviewer: 'Do engineers and the pilots see life the same way?'

Engineer: 'Early on they don't but after a time you understand each other, I think.'

Pilot: 'Obviously, pilots are slightly better than engineers but apart from that...'

Engineer: 'We're slightly different.'

²⁵ Kirke, C. (2007) *Pilot Study - Organizational Cultures in DE&S*, unpublished report by Cranfield University, for DE&S Learning from Experience.

Pilot: 'You understand each other and once you understand each other it's fine.'

Interviewer: 'And how long does that take?'

Pilot: 'A lifetime.'

Engineer: 'No, I think a tour.'

Pilot: 'Three years.'

Engineer: 'As an engineer, once you've done your JENGO tour [*Junior Engineer Officer*] then you, sort of, understand... if you've done three years on a combat squadron as the bloke having the piss taken out of him on a daily basis by the aircrew.'

The main participants in banter were reported to be members of the Armed Services, with Civil Service interviewees talking about what they had observed, rather than what they had actively partaken in,

Civil Servant (recalling when Royal Naval personnel had been taken prisoner by Iran): [*Royal Navy colleagues*] were absolutely devastated that they felt a huge loss of face for their Service. My Army colleagues were rubbing their hands with glee and making all kinds of jokes and so on at the expense of the Navy. A lot of which was terribly good-natured. Some of which was a bit nasty on occasions as well and it was as though the Navy were the foes rather than the Iranians or whoever else it may be.

A few Civil Servants reported banter directed at them, but these were in a small minority

'Civil Servant: if you've got a Civil Servant that's worked in a very, very traditional 9 to 5 with an hour lunch, because the Military here work a very different culture, they tend to work very long hours and sometimes you can get raised eyebrows and, you know, almost snidey comments if you listen carefully enough. Accusations of being part-timers.'

The uses of banter as described by the interviewees showed that it covered a number of different cultural elements. The most common appeared to be a mark of group identity, highlighting the boundaries and differences between groups, whether across the Services or within them. Another was a restatement and thus a reinforcement of prestige hierarchies, particularly in the RAF. There was an element of this feature in the interchange between the pilot and the engineer above, but there were others, for example,

RAF Flight Operations Officer: But I think our subconscious is probably affected by this - what we call banter - but I think is a little bit more than banter. It's pecking order.

Royal Navy Officer: ...there is always this banter [*from the Warfare officers*] about Engineers and 'engineers speaking ones and noughts' and, you know 'they like to get dirty', but I don't, from my experience, I don't think there's a real gulf. I think their importance to ships is accepted and seen.

Banter in the Army between the cap badges does not reflect prestige hierarchies because members of the different Regiments and Corps do not generally accept that such a hierarchy exists in any real form. A member of the Royal Logistic Corps, for instance, might refer to a cavalry officer as a 'donkey wallopper', to the infantry as 'the feet', to a member of the Royal Artillery as a 'drop short', and expect to be called a 'blanket stacker' or a 'member of the "Really Large Corps"' in return. In this respect, banter within the Army can be seen as reinforcing the differences between its component parts.

Although the words used in banter appear to be insulting and on occasions malicious, it is usually described as amusing or friendly, and harmless.

Civil Servant: I have witnessed a lot of friendly banter between the services and most of the time that's what I've seen over the years.

Army Officer: The different stresses and strains on individuals at a lower level delivering tactical outputs are different and require, therefore, a different socialisation. And the fun, banter between the pilot in the hotel and the soldier and his trench and the sailor on his ship is exactly that.'

Royal Navy Officer: 'Because everybody has a role, they're proud in their particular role. So the banter is good-natured.'

RAF Officer: 'You can always banter back. So that has never caused me any work professional problems.'

Banter was even considered by some of the interviewees as a unifying cultural element, in that the act of jokingly insulting someone in a different Service or branch of the Service could result in closer bonding between them as they both knew what was going on and could share in the joke.

Royal Navy Officer: ...the differences lead, frankly, to - on occasion - greater cohesion in my experience... because it drives the banter. It drives the healthy tension and humour that, you know, are frankly is essential to a... to my mind, to the morale within a functioning unit.

RAF Officer: The inter-service banter I personally believe, because we are all adult enough to say 'Stop! Enough', actually helps meld the team, helps bring the team together because, actually, it's great to say "what do you know - you're a Crab!". "Well I know more than you do, I have done more than just live in a tent and eat out of a rat pack" and so on and so forth. And that actually does foster a little bit of team spirit.'

In summary, this study identified banter as a feature of Armed Service cultures and indirectly of Civil Service culture. Some aspects of banter appear to express and reinforce the divisions between and within the Services, while others appear to be a source of bonding and fellow-feeling. Because it is such a general aspect between Services, and contains contradictory themes it probably deserves further study.

EFFECTS OF THESE CULTURES ON SYNERGY IN THE CONDUCT OF MOD BUSINESS

Each of the elements in the array of groupings and cultures described above can potentially affect synergy in the conduct of MOD business positively or negatively. The negative aspects will be examined first, and then the positive.

Factors that Limit or Degrade Synergy between Members of the Four Services

From the description of the different cultural groupings above, it will be clear that in both loci for the research (Head Office and Shrivenham) there is a multiplicity of different Service groupings – Service, professional specialism, functional team, and site. The cultural boundaries of this array of groupings provide multiple opportunities for ways of thinking of ‘the other’ and this, combined with the existence of associated stereotypes, provides conditions for the development of barriers between individuals and groups, as expressed for instance in banter. The interview material indicates that these barriers have the potential to compromise synergy in the carrying out of MOD business, getting in the way of mutual understanding, cooperation and the exchange of information across boundaries that would be smoother if they were based on trust. Where this is the case it has the potential to cause waste of time and resources.

These conditions also encourage any individual or group to believe that no other Service, or part of their own Service, can understand what they see as their core skills and capabilities. Particularly in the case of members of the Armed Services these conditions can encourage them to pursue what they feel is their own core Service or professional interest rather than aiming at the good of ‘Defence’ as a whole. These conditions also encourage them to perceive their counterparts in other Services as doing the same and therefore constituting rivals or competitors rather than partners. As a result, a Defence view of key issues seems unlikely to be easily obtainable.

Of the two sites of the research, the evidence that these conditions are so deeply felt that they can seriously degrade synergy was stronger in Head Office than at Shrivenham. This is probably due to the local conditions in the two sites: in Head Office there was a generalised feeling among the Armed Services that each was under threat from the other two in some way, and that it was their responsibility to react to that threat. The following quotes are from Phase 1 (Head Office)

Civil Servant: ‘Yes, I have seen where the different outlooks of the different Services have been a disadvantage. It’s usually around equipment, and capability and it also, you know, the potential for it to get more as protectionism sets in due to manpower reductions and other things as well.’

Army Officer: ‘I find it enormously frustrating that people can get themselves into a position in this building [*Head Office*] very greatly where the... their stated aims are very easy... are very... overlap, quite obviously but they can’t because they’re overly loyal to the bit of the organisation that they come from that they can’t see that it overlaps. They can only see that it’s theirs.’

Royal Navy Officer: ... ‘you have got individual Service interests that aren’t necessarily where Defence needs to go in the future. You have the Army, for

example, developing their own UAV's, you have the RAF who want to... "if it flies, it's theirs" and developing [*a new system*], and things like that. The Navy who don't have anything in that environment, thinks "well how do we get on board with this?"

RAF Officer: 'Yes, and therein lies the problem, so that you don't get Jointery working well, because you might have a Joint room, but nobody's Joint in it.'

In contrast, none of the interviewees at Shrivenham mentioned inter-Service issues as a current problem for them. The majority worked in four-Service teams and said that they got on well with their fellow members of whatever Service. However, many of the Phase 2 interviewees had recent memories of inter-Service difficulties in other places, indicating that synergy can still be compromised by inter-Service issues

Army Officer: [*Commenting on the RAF custom of air crew wearing their flying suits in the mess in the evening*] 'Yeah and with a knife strapped to their leg, because they might have to cut their way out of a venetian blind if there was a fire alarm. Why are you wearing a flying suit? Why have you got a knife strapped to your leg? You know, yes, if you're flying. Don't bloody do it if you're not!

Royal Navy Officer: Well, interesting enough we used to drink with the Army in the Falklands and the RAF were very much on their own.

RAF Officer: ... there is that to an extent that, you know, that the culture of the Army needs to learn that actually a Flight Lieutenant has a valid point to make.'

Civil Servant: [*Of Army members of the Combat Arms*] 'I think because they're too quick to dismiss other people and to think that their way is the right way and it's... I was talking to, I think he's a Guards Officer, he's never worked with a J9 Policy or Political Advisor before and he sort of said "Oh, so, what do they do?" and then he turned and talked to somebody else and I thought, "Well, you're obviously not that interested!" and I think that's a stereotype for me in that dismissal.'

Particularly within the Head Office interview material a further issue emerged which has the potential to undermine synergy in an indirect and covert way, reflecting the power of single Service agendas within the Armed Forces. Although a military officer may belong to a Joint branch (and may even have reporting officers not from their own Service) in the final analysis it is what their own Service thinks of them that counts for promotion because promotion is by Single Service boards. Ambitious officers (and Head Office has a disproportionate number of them) can be distracted from their team effort by the need not to show apparent disloyalty to their own Service. This is particularly significant when agents of that Service attempt informally and in the margins to keep them 'on message', thus potentially creating conditions for a hidden single Service agenda in an apparently Joint team.

Civil Servant: '...when you look at the way Main Building operates, you'll have organisations which will be effectively Joint, so where we work is a Joint organisation. It's headed by a submariner and then you've got a range, you know, of different Services below that and each of the capability areas is run by a, you know, might be run by any one of the services but outside of that organisational structure, you then got dotted lines that run to various parts so,

what I tend to see a lot of is if you've got an RAF Air Commodore, who might be reporting to a Major General in his own structure but will spend a lot of time talking to the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff or to the Chief of the Air Staff and making sure that he's got his Single Service lines to take properly sorted. And I think from the civilian point of view there's definitely a sense that there are single services... Single Service agendas running quite strongly'

Army Officer: '...people being called in to make sure that they understand who, and what colour cloth they are wearing. I am aware of two where they were Dark Blue Officers. So Navy Officers [were] called up, and I think it was either First or ACNS personally who explained "you are in an important job, don't forget that you are wearing a Dark Blue uniform"'.

Royal Navy Officer: 'And you do see very Joint people become incredibly Single Service once they've been got at, and you see very Joint officers being trashed.'

Army Officer: 'People in the central staffs have a personal tension between acting in the interest of their own service and acting in a Joint way.'

RAF Officer: [*When asked if it was true that the RAF were expected to be 'on message'*] 'I would say it is 80% true'

This finding in the interview material should be set against that in the Levene Report on this subject

We looked carefully at the argument that single Service loyalties and influences can outweigh the interests of Defence as a whole, which is particularly important in Joint or corporate posts, and at senior levels. We found concrete evidence of this quite difficult to come by.²⁶

In this respect this report disagrees with that of Levene and his co-authors.

Factors that Promote Synergy between Members of the Four Services

On the other hand, in both phases many of the interviewees reported that effective synergy was common and widespread, in spite of the potential for cultural differences to act against it. The interviewees' statements on this area can be analysed into four main themes.

First, it was frequently observed that mixed-Service groups engaged in active and positive cooperation in spite of inter- or intra-Service cultural differences when committed to a common task towards the same end. For example,

RAF Officer: 'You know, when it's a Joint purpose, I think people work together jointly quite well.'

Civil Servant: 'But once you start having a common goal and a team goal, I think the cultural differences disappear.'

²⁶ Levene, *et al.* (2011) *op. cit.* p. 60.

RAF Officer: 'And because again, this experience in here [*Head Office*] of getting together to get things done, is the ethos, there is no separation, we all recognise there might be procedures and there might be slightly different ways of doing business based on experience, but everybody recognises that the end goal is there, and how do we achieve that.'

Royal Navy Officer: 'We were to deliver this capability by this time and here were the scientists that could help us do it and because it needed to be fielded in an operational environment, it needs to be fit for purpose to be used by the RAF, by the Navy and the Army and so you were able to draw on each of those talents you had in those organisations to make sure that was delivered.'

Army Officer: 'You get a bonding and you work together and you form a team'

This theme must be considered in the light of the prevailing deployment of mutual insults in the form of banter. At first sight such banter, in marking out the boundaries between cultural groups and hierarchies of prestige ought to be a dividing cultural element but, as indicated above, many of the interviewees in general did not see it as divisive, and in some circumstances as a sign of shared culture. As stated above, this ambiguous aspect of Service culture deserves further study.

Another theme in the interview material is that the combination of different expertise from people with different backgrounds contributes strongly to finding a workable solution. The pooling of different experience and professional specialities adds value to create a group view that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Army Officer: 'Here [*a branch of DA-CMT*], I mean this is a perfect example where it works. We all get on very well. We all draw on each others' experience. Your experience is respected. Yeah. I would say this place works very well, on a quad-service level.'

RAF Officer: 'Didn't really matter what uniform you were wearing, you brought your expertise to the table.'

Civil Servant: '...just because it's a Joint environment, it doesn't mean that the individual service members of that Joint organisation should lose any of their service perspective, you know, because it's those different perspectives that provide, you know, like the added value in that environment'

Royal Navy Officer in reply to the question 'So bringing different cultural views is a good idea?': 'Oh hugely. It enriches the understanding, it creates a much wider base for decision-making, it allows you to have a better sense, ... it's understanding the business and understanding the context in which you're operating your business.'

A third recurring theme was that face-to-face contact lowered the cultural barriers significantly. Meeting members of other groups was very likely to ease cultural differences and overcome even the most stereotypical thinking.

RAF Officer: we in the Air Force have some very stereotypic... as I was saying, as I was saying earlier today, this afternoon, you know, we have in the Air Force to have stereotypical views of the Army and don't really kind of fade until you've met them. Come into contact with them.

Royal Navy Officer: 'I don't know where this service culture cuts in and the advocacy switches from operational output to single service agendas, because when you deal with the people on a day-to-day basis, personal basis, ... they're reasonable, rational, pretty broad minded by and large.'

Civil Servant: 'And actually what I found was... to a certain extent it comes down to relationships and, you know, the easiest way to get over these hurdles is to go and meet somebody.'

Army officer: '... the prejudices you have before meeting another individual should be an irrelevance frankly and you should guard against them.'

Royal Navy Officer: 'I got to know so many people in different Services and I got to be really friendly with them.'

A fourth theme was called by several of the interviewees 'creative tension'. This is the situation where people from different Services find themselves blocked by each other's contrasting views. Some interviewees talked, for example, about what one of them called the 'accelerator and brake effect', when Armed Service officers in particular wanted to achieve their aim quickly (conforming to the Civil Service stereotype of the military as always in a hurry) and Civil Servants wanted to follow correct procedure (conforming to the Armed Service stereotype of Civil Servants being preoccupied with the carrying out of due process irrespective of the time it takes). The creativity in the tension was, as the interviewees reported it, that it spurred all parties to achieve a more cost effective result. In discussing the Civil Service attitude to a particular urgent equipment project, for instance, one Army Officer acknowledged that although he had wanted it quickly the Civil Servant he was working with was nonetheless right in insisting that it should be properly costed and assessed as fit for the purpose it was intended for. Rather than a drag on process, he saw this action as a sheet anchor that kept him in the right direction. The same interviewee talked about 'the competing advice of different cultures which is what gives us strength.'

Royal Navy Officer: 'I think on a very broad scale that healthy tension between the services is why a Department of State or a Head Office can function. It has to function on something slightly more innovative than group think.'

RAF Officer: '... there's good tensions and bad tensions and the trick of any good commander or good leader is to draw those tensions to a position where they're creative tensions and, I think, with very few exceptions that that is managed very well in the MOD, deliberately or accidentally. ... But, you know, just to say that there are frictions doesn't mean they're harmful frictions. They could be creative.'

Army Officer: 'At times you need the Army "press-on and ignore" type approach but you need someone acting as your conscience to say "Well, actually, have you really thought about this?" you know, the safety implications, the engineering implications, whatever it might happen to be.'

Civil Servant: 'You know you are competing to be the best and to shine the brightest to achieve the most. It doesn't mean that you don't like each other -

it just means that you are naturally being pitted against one another and there is a tension in that, that doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing.'

FACTORS UNRELATED TO CULTURE

Two significant factors that were apparently unrelated to cultural issues were mentioned several times by interviewees, one perennial and one connected to the current political situation. The first is the effect of an individual's personality on their ability to work within or to lead a team. Just under half the interviewees (37 out of 82) mentioned personality as an important influence on behaviour. It was seen as an individual trait which was independent of culture and one that many of them suggested was more important in the fine detail of every day life.

Army Officer: 'I think the only thing that's ever stopped me working effectively with other people is personality clashes, which have not been cap badge driven.'

Civil Servant: 'And then the main variables in any particular situation are individual behaviours, personality, you know.'

Royal Navy Officer: 'That, yeah. I mean, there are obviously going to be different outlooks and I mean I have an individual that I didn't get on terribly well with but then nobody got on very well with him because he was a very, very arrogant man.'

RAF Officer: 'I see exactly the same behaviours that I saw 20/25/30 years ago. There is nothing new in this and I think it would be unfair to say that this is a Service issue. I don't think it is. I think it's all down to human nature and personality. I think that the structure of the Armed Forces and the, you know, our job and the demands we place on our people in terms of what we want to get out of them probably exacerbate those tensions.'

Individual behaviour is known as 'agency' in Social Science. Although the majority of people in any group observe that group's cultural norms, any person can exercise agency at any time. In principle, nobody is compelled by any natural law to follow their group's customs and practices and their acceptance or rejection of them is a decision for the person concerned as an individual agent. Thus individual choice can coexist and interact with culture. The existence, therefore, of behaviours prompted by individual personality may be viewed within a cultural framework without negating it. However, this finding is a reminder to researchers that culture does not explain all behaviour.

The second factor is the prevailing political conditions under which the study was carried out. Particularly at Head Office very large changes were being worked out that would deeply affect all three Armed Services, all of which were manoeuvring for position to conserve their numbers and equipment as far as possible. Given that there was a reducing amount of money available, everybody knew that further cuts were coming and each of the Armed Services appeared to be determined to take as few of them as possible. This condition of diminishing resources led to competition between them, and was frequently articulated and played out across Service cultural boundaries

Royal Navy Officer: 'I think we're at the point now where that [*financia*] pressure has become so significant that the squabbling is starting to break out from, you know, healthy tension, creative tension, to something more damaging, potentially.'

Army Officer: 'The real problem [*is that*] you are competitive here because the resources are so lean. And we have to be competitive because we all feel hard done by and everyone feels hard done by because there's not enough to go around. You see a huge amount of animosity...'

RAF Officer: 'The Air Force and the Navy relationship on the Fifth Floor, at the moment is poisonous. All because of the Harrier and the manning for the future aircraft on the Carriers²⁷. If there is one thing that would drive those two Services in front of the Treasury and be laughed at it would be that. Because we are still in argument of "what are we going do with the Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm".'

Civil Servant: '...if money wasn't an issue then, you know, that behaviour wouldn't be happening. No, you know, back in the early '80s, you know, defence, the expenditure was increasing in real terms year on year. So there was still not enough money to go around but it was a question of how much more money you were going to get and what you would have spent it on, rather than how much less money you had and how you had to, you know, cut your cloth accordingly. So the competition, whilst it was still fierce, you know, in the '80s was not the knife fight in the telephone box that it's become today.'

A Royal Navy interviewee summed up the position of all the Armed Services thus:

'...there's one phrase not in your summation of culture, which is politics. Not politics with a big P, politics with a small p. Whether it's the Services' position as a result of having a resource squeeze on it. Whether it's, you know, numbers of people wanting to do this type of operation. Because we're down to a level where services see a threat to their own existence. That's where some people sit. Now if you apply cultural difference and pour that oil on it, it flames away quickly.'

SUMMARY

The nature of the four different Services, their purposes and the different environments in which their cultures have grown up provide powerful levers and opportunities for both synergy and its opposite in the conduct of MOD business. Can things be so managed that synergy is privileged over disunity and lack of cooperation?

SERVICE CULTURES AND PUTTING DEFENCE FIRST

INTRODUCTION

²⁷ This argument is caused by the decision to cut the Harrier fasts jet as a savings measure.

This section considers the cultural study reported above in the light of some theories in Social Science, before examining its implications for the MOD towards encouraging its members to take a 'Defence' rather than a more parochial view.

THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

Although the research sample was large for a single researcher interview-based Social Science project, at 82 interviews and 14 focus groups²⁸, it still only contained 20 individuals from the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Civil Service, and 22 from the RAF. This was deemed by the designated MOD Scientific Advisory Committee (that of the Royal Navy) and by the MOD Research Ethics Committee to be sufficient for this study, and its conduct in two separate sites (Head Office and Shrivenham) provided a basis for comparison and thus a degree of control within the sample. The results reported above were obtained using a form of Grounded Theory²⁹, an established Social Science technique which draws theory from data rather than examining the data in any particular theoretical framework. Everything possible was therefore done to yield appropriate answers to the research question within budgetary and time constraints. On the other hand, it must be recognised that this study is a first systematic foray into this area and cannot be considered the complete and final answer to the issues it examined. It is a 'pilot' study, not in the conventional sense in Social Science of a feasibility study or a test of methods³⁰, but as an initial exploration of a highly complex area. It should be treated in due course as a means to identify further research to drill down into the detail that these results suggest. Areas for possible future research are included in the Recommendations.

CULTURE IN THE SERVICES

Culture

'Culture' was defined at the start of this report as the product of the attitudes, expectations, assumptions and the consequential conventions of behaviour that are shared within a group of any size. These conventions of behaviour form the basis for what members of the group think of as 'normal' and 'appropriate' and therefore affect all parts of daily life. But how do they arise, and how do they change through time?

Essentially, a group is composed of individuals and the group culture is only present in any significant way when these individuals share or agree on what is 'right' or 'normal'. This mutual agreement is hardly ever overt and is created at a subliminal level through patterns in the way that the group members relate to each other in daily life. Culture therefore exists and stays alive in what people do and say in the context of the group.

Culture can be thought of as providing the members of the group with 'rules of the game' for being together. Such rules are rarely coherent and straight forward and are never codified (even if social scientists may try to codify them by writing ethnographies). Neither are they fixed: although they may appear stable at any one time there is always the possibility that they will undergo change as individuals modify the way that they behave in relation to other members of the group, exercising

²⁸ These interviews were each about an hour long with the exception of three which were about an hour and a half. The focus group sessions were also about an hour long.

²⁹ First articulated by Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1968) *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

³⁰ van Teijlingen, E. R. and Hundley, V. (2001) *The Importance of Pilot Studies*, University of Surrey.

agency³¹. When enough of the members of the group find themselves in agreement about such modifications, then their culture has undergone change and a new 'right' or 'normal' has been established. Such change may be engendered by spontaneous collective (if undirected and unconscious) agreement within the group. For example, the idea of 'dress down Friday' appears to have arisen spontaneously from within DPA/DE&S between 2000 and 2006, without external influences. On the other hand, cultural change may come about in response to some outside influence that alters the environment of the group. Such an alteration in environment always has the potential to lead to cultural adaptation and thus cultural change. For instance, many elements in youth culture in the United Kingdom have arisen through the creation by external agencies of readily available new electronics in the form of music, games, and novel uses for telecommunications media.

In *The Constitution of Society*³² Giddings describes this process as a collective set of individual decisions by members of the group that result in change from one structure of rules of the game to a new one, calling it 'structuration'. Others have likened the progression of cultural changes to the genetic processes in reproduction. Biologically, as each new generation is conceived so there is a chance of spontaneous change through gene mutation and such changes form the myriad of steps in the evolutionary process. For culture, the term used is 'meme'³³. Conceptually, a meme is a tiny basic ingredient of culture originating either within the group (a new idea) or from an external influence. It may be embraced by the cultural group or be rejected. If it is embraced, then it becomes part of the culture by spreading throughout the group. If it is rejected it disappears. It is extremely difficult to predict the shape that any new form of a culture will take because of so many internal and external variables.

Furthermore, culture is not a uniform entity. Some elements of a group's culture may be volatile and easily changed, but others can be highly persistent. A frequently used concept in this respect is the idea of culture as like an onion – with many layers³⁴. The deeper into the onion, the more fundamental the cultural elements and the harder they are to change. Thus it is possible for some elements in a culture to persist over many years while others come and go. It is not possible, without observing the culture for some time³⁵, to be able to tell which elements are deep seated and which may be easier to change.

Cultural change is therefore a complex phenomenon and subject to a large number of variables, not least the members of the groups (the individual agents) and the external environment in which they operate. It is not subject to external direction with any precision at all.

³¹ See page 25.

³² Giddens (1984) *op.cit.*, pp. 1-34

³³ See, for example, Distin, K. (2005) *The Selfish Meme: A Critical Reassessment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

³⁴ See, for example, Hofstede, G. (1994) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, (London: HarperCollins) and Trompenaars, F. and Hampden-Turner, C. (1997) *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*, (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd.).

³⁵ The length of time will depend on the group being studied, but it should be reckoned as nearer months than days. Classically, an anthropologist goes into the field for a year, though a sociologist may attempt his or her analysis in a period of months.

The Service Individual's Cultural Trajectory

These concepts can illuminate the culture-related experiences of an individual member of any of the Services. Each person enters their Service and learns about it in their early, formative, years through absorbing its culture and that of their professional specialism or, in the case of the Army, their Regiment or Corps ('cap badge' for short). Members of the Armed Services in particular spend relatively little time outside their particular Service environment in the early stages of their careers and form ideas of 'the other' about other Services and different branches/cap badges of their Service. This can be thought of as the formation of fundamental attitudes expectations and assumptions – perennial memes close to the centre of the cultural onion – acquired by interaction with, and doing things with, their fellow Service and branch/cap badge members. Civil Servants in this situation may or may not be working extensively with the military but will in any case be learning the 'rules of the game' within their Service and professional specialism from their more experienced fellow Civil Servants.

It is only some time after individual Armed Service members acquire these fundamental attitudes expectations and assumptions that they begin to work with members of the other Services (including the Civil Service) to any significant extent. The interview material suggests that the first time for almost all of the Armed Service interviewees was at staff appointments. These come to a few in their late twenties or later in Grade 3 staff appointments in the rank of OF2³⁶ but to most at OF3³⁷ in their early thirties or later in Grade 2 staff appointments. This general lack of early experience across the Services appears to create fertile conditions for the growing of stereotypes between them. It might well be said that, as far as the Armed Services are concerned, an emerging property of normal career patterns is the generation and cultivation of inter-Service stereotypes.

This does not, however, explain the internal frictions across cultural boundaries within the Services. Members of different professional specialisms meet each other on a regular basis, at least in the Royal Navy, the RAF and the Civil Service (see below for the Army). The Service with the least difficulty in this area, as we have seen, is the Royal Navy with its 'all of one company' cultural theme. It seems likely that the need to coexist in a single vessel close to those of other specialisms engenders a fellow-feeling that reduces cultural barriers (though it appears not to eliminate them as was shown earlier).

In the RAF, although it can be expected that all officers on the same base will come into regular contact, yet the stark differences between air crew and the rest remains, as does the hierarchy of prestige between branches among those who work on the ground. It seems in this case that boundaries and barriers and prestige systems are treated as a normal part of life within the Service from an early part of the individual's career, and thus form lasting elements of their attitudes expectations and assumptions.

The Army appears different from the other three Services, in that it is possible for an officer to spend the early part of their career, at least up to the rank of captain, entirely within groups of his or her cap badge. This is not universal: members of the Adjutant General's Corps (AGC), for example, are posted as individual specialists to all types of unit, and members of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

³⁶ Lieutenant Royal Navy, Captain (Army), Flight Lieutenant RAF.

³⁷ Lieutenant Commander Royal Navy, Major (Army), Squadron Leader RAF.

(REME) can be posted as part of a REME sub unit into battalions and regiments to provide first line support for their equipment. Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery personnel regularly cooperate with other combat arms and combat support arms on exercise and operations. Furthermore, when a battle group is deployed on operations there will be a mixing of cap badges. But in spite of these exceptions, for many officers the first time that they come into regular and frequent contact with members of other Regiments and Corps is at the Interim Command and Staff Course (Land) (ICSC(L)) in their early thirties. This situation is likely to contribute to the internal stereotyping within the Army as there is little scope before ICSC(L) for the arrival of new cross-cap badge cooperation memes or for structuration that leads to increased cross cap-badge cooperation.

Army Officer: 'I think the reality for the students [*on ICSC(L)*], was... it's, I think it's a great eye-opener for many. Especially those, you know, who've been at regimental duty for 10 years and invariably because they've been a good regimental man had sunlight blown up their backsides by their Commanding Officers who said "You're best thing since sliced bread"'.

The Concept of the 'Operating Group'

If culture is the product of the attitudes, expectations, assumptions and the consequential conventions of behaviour that are shared within a group, what, then constitutes the 'group'? A bewildering array of different groups and combinations of groups can be identified and described even from the short summaries of the Service cultures described above. For instance, a Royal Navy officer may, at the same moment, be a member of the Royal Navy, of the Logistics Branch, of the submarine arm, and of a four-Service staff team in Head Office. If each of these groups has its own culture then which one does he exercise at any particular time? Expand this question to any officer in any of the four Services and surely the idea of studying 'cross cultural issues' implies a complex and chaotic research field that can only produce fragmentary and disconnected results?

A useful tool for framing an understanding of this problem and offering a way forward through the apparent chaos is the concept, or model, of the 'operating group'³⁸. This is a group of two or more people who are interacting in a particular context at a particular moment. While each individual is potentially a member of many other groups, they will only exercise membership of one group at one time. This group is called in the model the 'operating group'. Each operating group has its own distinctive assembly of cultural elements, the 'operating culture' that will influence the group's behaviour and thus its synergy with other groups. No matter how many groups he may be a member of, the Naval Officer in the example above, therefore, can be visualised as operating only in the group relevant to his present situation - be it a group of fellow Naval Officers, a group of submariners, fellow members of the Logistics Branch or of his staff team - and observing and playing out only the culture of that group.

This model can help in the understanding of some of the observations made above about the working out of synergy or lack of it in the carrying out MOD business. For instance, an individual, as we have seen, can hold hostile opinions about other Services and yet consider fellow members of their cross-Service staff team to be good operators. When feeling hostile or disparaging towards the other Services, this

³⁸ This concept is the author's and has been used successfully to describe, analyse and explain the behaviour of British soldiers at regimental duty.

individual's operating group is his or her own Service, but when that staff team is the operating group then divisive inter-Service issues are no longer relevant.

A further element in the model of the operating group is its potential volatility. As the definition of this group is defined by the context of the moment, so it can change to another group whenever the context changes for any of its members. For example, a Royal Navy member of the Directing Staff on the Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC) at JSCSC may play out the culture of his four-Service team during the afternoon but embrace his or her Service identity and culture at a dinner to celebrate the Battle of Trafalgar in the evening of the same day.

Different Perspectives on Change

A complicating factor in the research has been the different ways in which individuals and groups perceive change. Two processes appear to have been taking place. The first is the array of major changes in the environment in which MOD business is set. The two most significant in the interview material are the ending of the Cold War and the increasing number of expeditionary operations, and the more recent sudden reduction in Government funding for Defence.

The ending of the Cold War and the subsequent increase in expeditionary operations have brought about the need for much greater operational co-operation between all four Services. This has driven them together in a way that did not happen previously in the Cold War except at a very high organisational level.

Army Officer: 'I just think that the generation that is born of the Balkans and later, view defence outputs in a very purple Joint perspective, in a way that those born of West German plains and Northern Ireland where I started as a very, very young subaltern, you know, their perspective was very different.'

RAF Officer: 'In Afghanistan I never saw any inter-Service angst really because we were all pulling in the same direction, so I think Operations people will work with goodwill and get on and do it.'

Researcher's notes from a focus group of ACSC students containing members of all four Services: 'They all agreed that the theme of this course was "Jointery". This generation "gets Jointery". On the other hand, the more senior generation of officers are not so Joint. This is due to the prolonged operational experience in which most officers have grown up under Joint conditions.'

Whereas that first change has brought the Services together the current rapid reduction in Government spending on Defence has driven the Armed Services apart, increasing the likelihood of stereotypical attitudes and constructions of 'the other' along Armed Service lines, particularly in Head Office.

Royal Navy Officer: '...but if you feel cornered and that you feel - actually, as Single Service Chiefs might - that decisions taken in capability might drive or undermine the very future of their Service then, inevitably, there's going to be friction and conflict to maintain that Service alive. So there's an externality there. People who feel threatened will behave differently to people who feel secure.'

Army Officer: 'And we have to be competitive because we all feel hard done by and everyone feels hard done by because there's not enough to go around. You see a huge amount of animosity.'

Civil Servant: 'There's something that's going to be a big bun fight over a limited pot of money. I would characterise it as saying the Army will look at every tool in its inventory, including some which others wouldn't use, like leaking, back briefing, using influence channels that aren't necessarily ones that you would normally expect to be used. The RAF will try and articulate a reasoned case. The Navy will fall somewhere in the middle ... that dispute is not created by the fact there are three different Services. It's created by the fact that there is a limited pot of money.'

RAF Officer [*Speaking of the decision to remove Harrier, thus compromising the future of the Fleet Air Arm*]: 'That is largely a Navy view and we talked this morning about the Machiavellian kind of stuff that's gone on, we believe on the Fifth Floor³⁹. The Air Force and the Navy relationship on the Fifth Floor, at the moment is poisonous.'

The second process does not depend on events but rather on the way an individual's perspective alters as they go through their career and become more senior in rank and age. This sort of issue was first systematically explored in Social Anthropology in the early 1970s⁴⁰, using the concept of the 'developmental cycle'. It was observed that particular family groups change as they form, mature and replace themselves through time, and it is easy for researchers to see these changes in family structures as indicating cultural change. These apparent cultural changes, however, must be seen against the cultural background at a wider level. This background is separate from these family changes, evolving at a different rate, or indeed remaining stable over time. From the individual's point of view, therefore, significant change appears to have taken place as their perceptions alter with their particular stage in the cycle, but from an external observer's point of view any changes that have taken place may be seen differently. Similarly, people in different parts of the cycle may see the same things differently.

The career of any individual can be seen as following a similar developmental cycle. At the beginning, as we have seen, they acquire deep seated attitudes expectations and assumptions. They then progress through a career developmental cycle where they acquire more knowledge and exercise membership of different operating groups. This process of internal personal development is matched by moving from one perspective to another as their career continues, and as they do so their perception of what is happening changes. Promotion, a significant element in the developmental cycle, is managed by Single Service boards for the great majority of officers, as we saw above.

This is an important factor because the opinion formers in any MOD group have a disproportionate effect on the things that the group consider important, and thus in the group's culture. If the group's leaders or authority figures, for instance, are part of a cohort that spent its formative years in the Cold War they are more likely to see the Services as separate and therefore view them more as 'the other' than those in younger cohorts with more Joint experience.

³⁹ i.e. The Single Service Chiefs and their staffs.

⁴⁰ Goody, J. (1971) *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

In summary, perceptions of change, both current and future, need to be examined in the light of changes in the environment and from the point of view of those who are talking about it, which will be affected by their place in the developmental cycle.

'PUTTING DEFENCE FIRST' – IS IT POSSIBLE?

The Levene Report

The Levene Report⁴¹ is focused on the level of 'Defence' as a whole and its recommendations are structured to produce a more Defence oriented MOD than hitherto,

We believe that an effective MOD is one which builds on the strengths of the individual Services and the Civil Service, and does so within a single Defence framework that ensures the whole is more than the sum of its parts.⁴²

This implies that there must be more thinking at the overarching Defence level than at present. However, the report also acknowledges that inter-Service issues, particularly those between the Armed Services, can be a major source of conflict within MOD,

My past experience in the Department left me with an understanding of the unique nature of the Ministry of Defence as a Government Department. The uniqueness comes from the fact that it consists of two parallel groups of servants of The Crown, both made up of able, talented and determined people. What I found was that when they combine together well they are able to achieve some pretty remarkable and successful results. However, what we used to call "creative tension", can sometimes lead to internal disputes with the two groups appearing to be at odds with each other and often under close public scrutiny.⁴³

[*One of the key problems is*] the tendency of the single Services to favour capabilities they consider to be core to their outputs, particularly in resource allocation decisions.⁴⁴

The report correctly identifies that culture is a significant influence in these issues, 'We are conscious that people, cultural and behavioural issues are as important, if not more important, than structures'⁴⁵. What, then can this research report contribute to reducing the inter-Service tensions, and promoting the more desirable Defence level thinking?

Cultural Pressures Against Putting Defence First

To understand the cultural issues involved in putting Defence first, it is important to identify what the cultural pressures are against it.

⁴¹ Levene, *et al.* (2011) *op.cit.*

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

As we have seen, all four Services have different organisational cultures, incorporating different sets of attitudes, expectations, assumptions and different working practices, and all the Services identify themselves positively as different from the others. The attitudes of members of one Service towards other Services can amount to negative stereotypes and the bases for mutual misunderstanding, especially if external pressures are driving them apart, as the current reductions in Defence spending are. Within each Service there are internal groupings that are also associated with strong feelings of identity and the boundaries of these internal groupings are also potential fracture lines where synergy can be compromised.

This situation is, as we have seen, exacerbated by two environmental factors. The first is the shortage of resources as funds allocated to Defence are reduced, and the second is the place on the career developmental cycle on which the key leaders and opinion formers currently are. Have they had any experience that promotes Defence thinking, for example, or has the combination of their experiences and their history encouraged them to think Single Service? Do they feel that the interests of Defence trump those of their own Service? The evidence from the interviews is that the majority of the Armed Service members in Head Office did not feel inclined to consider Defence if by so doing they might compromise the wellbeing of their own Service, especially if the area of contention concerned iconic systems or capabilities. As a Civil Servant said

[*The Equipment Capability Secretariat*] 'was genuinely a purple organisation, all the way through until you hit something that is absolutely core to a Service interest, of which, in that case it happened to be carriers and the aircraft that flew from them, and that's when it became absolutely crucial to the identity of the Service and you started seeing, what I would characterise as bad behaviours. And by that I mean people being willing to distort the arguments or present selective arguments rather than giving out the full and candid overview of what the issues were.'

Further attention should be given to the subject of banter. The study was not able to draw any conclusion as to the advantages or disadvantages of the widespread use of banter. On the surface it appears divisive, identifying differences and playing them out in a jovial but meaningful way that sets individuals and groups apart from each other. On the other hand, co-operation and synergy appear to take place in an atmosphere where banter is in the air and it appears to be hugely enjoyed by at least some of the participants as an entertaining part of normal life. Further research is needed better to understand this phenomenon, its meaning for the participants and any social pressures to be seen to participate in it and to enjoy it.

Addressing the Difficulties

Could behaviour within the four Services be changed by a robust management issuing instructions that the people involved are to behave differently and put Defence first under all circumstances? As this would involve significant changes in attitudes expectations and assumptions it does not seem likely, given the nature of cultural change. As we have seen, such change does indeed take place but the cultural change process, visualised either as structuration or evolution through changing memes, is not amenable to direction. Decrees and orders to change culture in reality will only be embraced if the members of the cultural group accept them and incorporate them into the detailed structure of their lives. This is most unlikely to take place if the imposed change involves fundamental cultural elements. Measures imposed from outside may even appear to be adopted for a time, but the

group members generally go back to the old ways of thinking and behaving, as, for instance, was found in the early years of business process reengineering⁴⁶.

On the other hand, the interview material strongly suggests that synergy already takes place within current structures and a better way of promoting it would be by going with the flow of the existing cultures as identified in this report and building on the positive.

Six areas identified in the study appear promising ones for promoting synergy between and within the Services.

1. Create the Conditions where Decisions are made by Operating Groups that Think 'Defence'

Seek to increase the occasions where decisions are made by operating groups that give high priority to Defence rather than to single Service or branch/cap badge issues. This will involve in particular the creation of more Defence oriented groups in Head Office and Joint groups in operational command structures. The move to a Joint Forces Command recommended in the Levene Report (already in train) should help in this respect but it will be necessary to ensure that Defence is valued over Single Service by as many of the groups within this command as possible.

Where possible these operating groups should have a stable membership and stable structure for extended periods to increase their effectiveness. The more the members are together the more dominant their group culture will be. This idea is present in the Levene Report, but only at 'Senior' level⁴⁷. The research in this study indicates that there would be benefits in extending it to more junior levels, perhaps down to OF4.

2. Build on Cross-Cultural Unity Provided by a Common Purpose

Exploit the synergy found in this study within cross-cultural teams in both Head Office and at Shrivenham. The interview material shows unequivocally that single Service and branch/cap badge issues can be set aside when the members of a team are working towards a common, Joint, purpose. In this context, PJHQ was held up as a positive example of working jointly by all 20 of the interviewees who had worked there, with only two of them expressing reservations about low level areas of friction between the Services. This indicates that further research in that establishment would probably provide examples of best practice that could be applied elsewhere. Another example was JSCSC where both students⁴⁸ and staff reported finding that their concentration on Joint issues encouraged them to minimise single Service issues. The staff interviewed at the DCDC all reported that their common interest was at the Defence level without mentioning branch or cap badge issues connected to their current work.

3. Seek to Enhance Site Cultures where they are already Joint

Pay more attention to site cultures, especially where they already show signs of Defence level thinking and behaviour. Although Head Office culture was comparatively weak compared to single Service or team cultures and no signs of a

⁴⁶ Malhotra, Y. (1998) 'Business Process Redesign: An Overview', *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, 26 (3) Fall 1998, pp. 27-31.

⁴⁷ Levene, *et al.* (2011) *op. cit.* Key Recommendation 12, p. 57.

⁴⁸ The five students interviewed were all on ACSC.

site culture were detected at the level of the Defence Academy, on the other hand JSCSC and DCDC appeared to have a comparatively strong site culture and PJHQ was reported to have developed a stronger one still. Where sites contain substantial representation across the Services there are almost certainly opportunities to increase awareness, discussion, and participation in Joint issues. As people engage more with each other in these issues across a site, especially if they share a common purpose, there is a good chance that stronger more 'Defence First' site cultures will develop.

4. Increase Face-to-Face Contact across Services and Branches/Cap Badges

Exploit the positive results of face-to-face contact between branches/cap badges and between all the Services. This builds on the finding that face-to-face contact lowers the cultural barriers significantly and counters stereotyping. Examples found in the study were, for instance, Joint staff training, Joint operational service and membership of a Joint staff team, all of which were important factors in promoting synergy across what otherwise might have been significant social barriers. An important step in this respect would be to increase the amount of inter-Service contact between junior officers, which currently is slight, and especially between those being prepared to reach the status of middle management (OF3). Obvious forums for promoting such contact would be courses of any kind (of any length) with the integrated approach of ACSC as a model⁴⁹. In this respect an obvious action which should be considered is the bringing together of students and staff on the three single Service Interim Command and Staff Courses, all of which take place at Shrivenham, in some form of Joint and social activity as a routine part of their officer training. Further work should be carried out to identify other opportunities.

5. Reduce the Value placed on Consensus in Favour of Firm Direction at the Defence Level

Especially at Head Office, as described above, interviewees from all Services saw the emphasis on the need for consensus as counterproductive for Defence. This might have been expected, perhaps, from Armed Service interviewees as all their cultures value firm command, obedience and hierarchical subordination, but this view was also shared by Civil Servants where these features are less prominent in their culture. The search for consensus was often seen as promoting delay in the decision making process and a search for compromise at the expense of progress. This view is reflected in the Levene Report in its first recommendation - the restructuring of the Defence Board to give 'strengthened top level decision making'⁵⁰. However, the search for consensus appears to be a regular feature in Head Office culture at all levels and an assessment should be made as to how firm decision making and leadership can be encouraged at all levels.

6. The Management of the Developmental Cycle of Officers of all Services in the Defence Interest

Manage the careers and experiences of officers in a way that allows them to perceive Defence issues. Although Armed Service personnel receive annual reports on a common form backed by a common set of official instructions, and although the reporting officers may or may not be of the same branch/cap badge or Service,

⁴⁹ The function of bringing single Service members together in a common Joint environment is carried out very well in ACSC but that course comes well beyond the OF2/early OF3 stage in an officer's career and does not include the majority of officers.

⁵⁰ Levene, *et al.* (2011) *op. cit.* p. 20-23, this p. 20.

promotion and career management is largely the preserve of their individual Service. Civil Servants have a separate system, for a few via the Fast Stream or MIDIT processes but for the majority through applying for particular promotion posts themselves after qualifying as necessary at an Assessment Centre⁵¹. There appears to be little 'Defence First' planning at any stage in either Armed Service or Civil Service career management until possibly an individual is being groomed for a senior post outside his or her Single Service. This means that the developmental cycle of officers - the trajectory through different experiences and through the rank structure - is largely in the hands of their single Services. This fact is most likely to provide them, particularly those with ambition, with a bias towards their Single Service agenda. This was identified earlier in this report as a force that limits or degrades synergy.

The Levene Report proposed in its Recommendation 12⁵² that the process for senior appointments should be revised in line with a new 'Joint assured model' which involves what were hitherto considered outsiders to the selection and promotion system. This recommendation also proposes that senior appointments should be held for four to five years. Although this recommendation will cover the later parts of the developmental cycle of officers it will not affect the previous stages during which the individual's opinions and outlook are formed. Levene and his co-authors also recommend that career management remains with the Single Services and on that point the findings of this report disagree.

Consideration should be given to revising the promotion and career management systems for the Armed Services and the Civil Service to manage the developmental cycle of officers in line with the needs of Defence first and Single Service issues second. This finding will need to be investigated further to identify what areas single Services should retain unambiguous control over (command appointments, certainly, and in all likelihood an officer's early career up to OF3) but an obvious step would be the creation of Joint promotion boards above a comparatively junior rank level to be defined by further work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

This study has unequivocally established that separate cultures exist in all four Services, and that there are identifiable cultural groupings within each Service. The members of each of them displayed and described distinctive sets of attitudes expectations and assumptions and held opinions about their own Service, other Services and other branches of their own Service, some of them amounting to stereotypes or constructions of the 'other'. In itself this was not a surprising conclusion, as the anecdotal evidence is powerful, but such evidence had not been investigated before in a systematic study.

It has also established that, in parallel with Service cultures, small functional teams or staff branches within the MOD also have cultures that privilege co-operation and work towards a common purpose whatever the composition of the members.

Broader cultures were also identified, where those who worked together on the same site develop common customs, practices, attitudes, expectations and assumptions.

⁵¹ Qualification through an Assessment Centre is not necessary for every step in promotion.

⁵² Levene, *et al.*, (2011) *op.cit.*, p. 57.

Site cultures were found at Head Office and at various elements at Shrivenham but not at the Defence Academy level. The existence of site cultures may provide an opportunity for cooperation across Service and intra-Service boundaries and should be investigated further.

A persistent feature found throughout the research population was the phenomenon of 'banter', the exchange of at least ostensibly jovial insults between individuals who identify themselves in some way as different from each other. It is particularly present in the Armed Services but it is also present, at least indirectly, in Civil Service culture. Some aspects of banter appear to express and reinforce the divisions between and within the Services, while others appear to be a source of bonding and fellow-feeling. Because it is such a general aspect between Services, and contains contradictory themes it, too, should be the subject of further research.

A number of features of the different cultures identified were found to limit or degrade synergy between members of the four Services. The multiplicity of different groupings within and between Services – Service, professional specialism, functional team, and site – provide multiple opportunities for ways of thinking of 'the other' and this, combined with the existence of associated stereotypes can lead to constructing barriers to synergy. These barriers appeared to be more powerful at Head Office than at Shrivenham.

On the other hand, many of the interviewees reported that effective synergy was common and widespread. While some cultural issues have the potential to get in the way of mutual understanding and co-operation between members of different groups, four themes emerged from the data that were seen and felt as enhancing synergy:

- Bonding across all cultural barriers through active and positive co-operation when the members of a team were committed to a common task towards the same end.
- The combination of expertise from people of different Service, branch or cap badge backgrounds, which was seen as beneficial and adding positively to the effect produced.
- Face-to-face contact, which lowered cultural barriers considerably.
- 'Creative tension', where individuals and groups were opposed by others who saw the situation in a different way. Although these incidents could feel frustrating at the time this tension was seen as spurring all parties to achieve a more cost effective result.

The study also noted that some important non-cultural issues were affecting the carrying out of MOD business. The first is an individual's personality, which can affect their behaviour positively or negatively, irrespective of cultural norms and conventions with respect to synergy across group boundaries. The second is the prevailing political conditions which may have a significant effect on cross-cultural tensions. An example of the latter is the present reduction of funding available to Defence and the inter-Service tensions that consequently have arisen.

Culture in the Services

Cultural change is a complex phenomenon and subject to a large number of variables, not least who the members of the groups are (the individual agents) and the external environment in which they operate. Indeed, change is not subject to external direction with any precision at all.

Individuals acquire group culture by living with the group and participating in their daily process and practice. For an individual member of any Service the process starts at the beginning of their career. For members of the Armed Services in particular this involves a prolonged period of single Service experience during which they form deep seated attitudes expectations and assumptions (amounting to stereotypes) about other parts of their own Service and about the other Services. These ideas form the basis of their subsequent interaction with these other groups. For many of them it is not before they reach OF3 that they begin to interact on a regular basis with members of the other Services, and, in the case of many of the members of the Army, with those of other cap badges.

Any individual officer in any Service is likely to be a member of a large array of different groups, each with its own customs and practices and its own collective attitudes expectations and assumptions. He or she will, however, only play out the culture of the group that is dominant in the current situation, which can be modelled as the 'operating group'.

As an individual passes through his or her career their perspective alters as they gain experience and achieve promotion or seniority within a particular rank. They pass through a 'developmental cycle' which has a profound effect on their perceptions. At the start of any individual's cycle (the start of their career) they acquire the deep seated cultural elements described above and subsequently become members of different groupings, each with their own group cultures, as they gain seniority and experience. This cycle is experienced against changing external factors, for example the ending of the Cold War and the subsequent extended period of expeditionary operations.

Putting Defence First – Recommendations

The following measures are recommended to enhance synergy in the carrying out of MOD business, and to allow a 'Defence First' attitude to develop:

- Increase the occasions where significant decisions are made by operating groups that privilege cohesive behaviour and co-operation regardless of the composition of the teams, and give high priority to Defence rather than to single Service or branch/cap badge issues. (Page 35)
- Exploit the synergy that arises within cross-cultural teams by creating more of them. (Page 35)
- Study the site cultures which show signs of Defence level thinking and behaviour, with a view to creating the same conditions elsewhere. In this respect PJHQ may well be an instructive case. (Pages 35-6)
- Increase face-to-face contact across Services and branches/cap badges wherever possible. A particular example where this might be done to advantage is by incorporating Joint work between the various Interim Command and Staff Courses, all of which take place at Shrivenham. (Page 36)
- Reduce the value placed on consensus in favour of firm direction at the Defence level of staff work. The Levene Report has set in train a reform on these lines at the top of the MOD, but it would also be of advantage to create similar decision-making structures at lower levels. (Page 36)

- Manage the developmental cycle of officers of all the Services in the interests of Defence. In this respect, a revision of the current promotion system which is by single Service boards at all but the most senior levels should be carried out, to reduce single Service influence on an individual's career and thus the work s/he carries out to progress it. In addition, early career mixing between the Services should be considered, to promote better mutual understanding during an officer's formative years. (Pages 36-7)

Next Steps

MOD action (MOD to decide priority):

- Develop new career patterns for military officers so that they are less dependent on single Service promotion boards at the level where their work affects Defence.
- Develop new organisational structures, especially in Head Office, where consensus is replaced by firm direction. Particular attention will need to be paid to ensuring that the views and concerns of all Services and other MOD interest groups within them are heard before a decision is made.
- Consider how face-to-face contact between individuals and groups of different Services and branches/cap badges can be created and managed to best advantage for Defence.
- Consider how more cross-cultural teams can be formed and where they can best be deployed to put Defence first.

Academic Research (in order of priority):

- Research into the Joint synergy that takes place at PJHQ as a cited example of best practice
- Research into understanding the phenomenon of banter and its effect on synergy within and between the Services.
- Research into site cultures.

Joint Academic/MOD Research:

- Develop a better understanding of the workings of operating groups in Defence and the organisational measures that may be taken to create more of them that can be encouraged to put Defence first.

ANNEX A TO
CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REPORT
CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR SERVICES

30 Apr 11

**THE EFFECTS OF SINGLE SERVICE CULTURES ON THE CONDUCT OF
BUSINESS IN MOD HEAD OFFICE – MAIN ISSUES. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Introduction

This report covers the first phase of a Cranfield University study (funded by the Defence Academy of the UK) into Service cultures and their effect on MOD business. This phase has been exclusively carried out in Head Office, through 10 focus groups and 49 individual interviews. Interviewees were taken from across the spectrum of business areas. The principal stakeholder for this phase is the Defence Reform Unit (DRU), for whom this report is written. The base discipline for the study is Social Anthropology, using a low-level, small group approach.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the DRU consider the following in their design of a reformed Head Office:

- The creation throughout Head Office of stable, 4-Service teams at all levels, to promote the existence of culturally strong operating groups.
- The promotion of face-to-face contact between teams during the normal working day to reduce the effect of stereotypical thinking and consequent misunderstandings.
- The setting in place of strong authoritative leadership at the top of Head Office so that action can be taken where consensus fails.
- With respect to Armed Forces staff for Head Office, the preferential selection of individuals who have received staff training on ACSC or have had operational experience involving all 4 Services.
- No reform should compromise an individual's sense of Service identity.
- The reform of the joint reporting and promotion system for Armed Service officers to reduce the significance of Single Service selection boards in promotion.

Key Findings of the Study

Each of the 4 Services (Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force and Civil Service) has a distinct culture which comprises unique sets of attitudes, expectations, assumptions and consequential conventions of behaviour. These different cultures separate the 4 Services and can lead to the generation of negative and misleading stereotypical views between them and thus to mutual misunderstandings and a reluctance to cooperate. Within each Service there are further cultural divisions between professional specialisations and functional groupings. These too can be axes of division and misunderstanding.

A separate Head Office culture was identified, independent of the Service cultures. Two significant components were an overarching but weak set of cultural elements that identified the organisation's members as a group, and a strong set of team cultures at the working level which prompted strong bonding and collaboration at team level.

The presence of different Service cultural elements and the existence of associated stereotypes provide conditions for the development of barriers to synergy in Head Office business. In practice, however, certain other factors promoted synergy. These included:

- Teamwork to achieve a common purpose, which unites the members of the group, no matter how diverse.
- The combination of different areas of expertise, which is seen as beneficial because it provides conditions where the result is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Face-to-face contact, which eases differences and overcomes stereotypical thinking.
- Attendance at Joint Staff Training (at JSCSC) or experience of joint operations, both of which act against the promotion and maintenance of inter-Service cultural barriers.
- Creative tension between military and Civil Service staffs. It was recognised among experienced staff of all Services that there was strength in the tension between the military thirst to achieve the end and the Civil Service insistence on proper procedures and due process.

An individual member of Head Office can potentially belong to a wide array of groups, each with its own culture and thus its own conventions of behaviour. Where the group of the moment (the 'operating group') is a Single Service one, the individual will be more inclined to promote Single Service interests, even if their working team is Defence-related.

Single Service pressures can have negative effects on activity towards a joint, Defence, purpose. These pressures are particularly acute at the present time because of fierce competition for scarce and diminishing resources.

A particular source of distraction from Defence business for the Armed Services personnel is the reporting system, where promotion is decided by Single Service boards. An appearance of disloyalty to an officer's Service is thought of as bad for his/her career.

Three significant areas were identified where negative change might compromise allegiance to Head Office:

- The conservation of Service cultural identities
- The stability of teams.
- The mixing of Services within the teams.

ANNEX B TO
CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REPORT
CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR SERVICES

SUMMARY OF STUDY METHODOLOGY

This annex summarises the methods employed to investigate cross-cultural issues in the four Services.

Investigation was by semi-structured interview of a cross-Service sample of 82 officers at OF3 to OF6, viewed as 'middle management' of the MOD. Twenty interviewees each were taken from the Royal Navy, the Army and the Civil Service, and 22 from the Royal Air Force. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed by audio typists, and analysed by the Principal Investigator, Dr Charles Kirke. Analysis was carried out using NVivo8, a qualitative analysis software tool. Fourteen focus group sessions of four or five participants also took place.

The research was in two phases. Phase 1 took place between January and March 2011 in Head Office, out of which an interim report was written for the Defence Reform Unit to contribute towards Lord Levene's Defence Reform Report⁵³. Phase 2 was carried out in Shrivenham between July and December 2011, involving personnel from the Defence Academy and the Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre. In both phases a short list of interviewees was nominated by their departmental heads which were down-selected randomly by the Principal Investigator to limit selection bias.

All data collected were treated as confidential and both the individuals and their units were anonymised in the final report. This is a condition of the MOD Research Ethics Committee and is entirely compatible with the ethical guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth at:

<http://www.nomadit.net/asatest/ethics/guidelines.htm> (accessed 5 May 12).

Because the interviewees had been nominated, it was made clear to them before and during the interviews that they were not under any compulsion as far as the interviewer was concerned. They were entitled to stop the interview at any time and to leave whenever they wanted to, even before the interview had started.

Interviews were conducted in private, with the interviewees having management of the recording medium, with instructions to switch it off if they did not want what they said recorded. This method has been found useful in past research to ensure that the interviewee (or group of interviewees) feel that they are in control of the interview process. At least 24 hours before the interviews, each interviewee was given a participant information sheet (see Appendix 1). On the day of the interview the interviewees all signed consent forms (see Appendix 2). Dr Kirke took paper notes during the interviews to back up the recordings. No notes were taken during the times when the interviewees switched off the digital recorder.

The interviews were semi-structured using the questions listed in Appendix 3.

⁵³ Levene, *et al.* (2012) *Defence Reform: an Independent Report into the Structure and Management of the Ministry of Defence*. MOD.

The transcripts of the recordings were first typed into word files and then annotated as necessary by Dr Kirke, by the addition of observations (in a distinctive font, to separate these notes from the participant's words). Every transcript was further searched and analysed to explore the emergent themes through the computer package NVivo8.

There is always a risk of observer bias in a single-authored inductive study such as this one, and in this case it was increased by the previous military experience of the Principal Investigator in the Army (and briefly in the Royal Marines). This risk was mitigated by conscious self-examination by the researcher ('Am I being biased? What would an outsider anthropologist think of this? If I was being biased by my experience, what would my findings look like?'), a data-led approach based on Grounded Theory (if it is not in the data it is not to be considered), and by checking of the findings and approach of the research by an independent researcher working in a similar organisational area. More generally, although this was not technically 'insider anthropology' research, examples and techniques from the 'insider anthropology' literature were followed.⁵⁴

Nvivo8 is constructed to enable the identification and consideration of themes in unstructured data to be carried out quickly and simply. Raw data, which can be in the form of text, still images, video, or audio, can be searched, examined, grouped and organised within the computer package to enable the identification of patterns which can be assigned to codes. These codes can be grouped into concepts and categories, and so on. At any stage the researcher can search and manipulate the codes/concepts/categories, reorder the coding, delete it, copy it, change their mind, build alternative groupings and so on without altering the original raw data. Nvivo8 is fully described at the following websites:

<http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo8/NVivo8-Introducing-NVivo.htm> and
<http://www.qsrinternational.com/FileResourceHandler.ashx/RelatedDocuments/DocumentFile/289/NVivo8-Getting-Started-Guide.pdf> (both accessed 5 May 2012).

A copy of the final report is to be kept, with all other research material, in a secure archive at the Defence Academy for the statutory period of time.

Appendixes:

1. Participant Information Sheet.
2. Consent Form for Participants in Research Studies.
3. Topics and Example Questions for the Semi-Structured Interviews.

⁵⁴ For example: Cerroni-Long, E. L. (1995) *Insider Anthropology*, (Arlington, VA: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology); Collins, P. (2002) *Connecting Anthropology and Quakerism: Transcending the Insider/Outsider Dichotomy* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press); Jackson, A. (1987) *Anthropology at Home* (London: Tavistock); Labaree, R., V. (2002) 'The Risk of 'Going Observationalist': Negotiating the Hidden Dilemmas of Being an Insider Participant Observer', *Qualitative Research*, 2 (1) pp. 97-122 Forsythe, D., E. (2001) *Studying Those Who Study Us: An Anthropologist in the World of Artificial Intelligence* (Ed. David J. Hess), (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

APPENDIX 1 TO
ANNEX B TO
CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REPORT
CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR SERVICES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Information for Participants

Study title

Do cultural differences exist between the four Services, and if so, to what extent do these affect the conduct of MoD business?

Invitation to take part

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please read the following information carefully and talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you want to take part.

What is the purpose of the research?

The aim of this study is to find out what people like you think about members of other branches of your Service and other Services and how you personally see, or have experienced, any obstacles arising during your work for the MOD. The reason why it is needed is that the MOD is concerned that time and effort may be wasted in difficulties between individuals and groups from different organisational cultures in the MOD. Its results will contribute towards reducing the effects of these obstacles. In the same way, the MOD is very interested in taking advantage of the ways in which working with those of different organisational cultures can be advantageous.

Who is doing this research?

Dr Charles Kirke, Lecturer Military Anthropology and Human Factors, Cranfield University, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Shrivenham SN6 8LA.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you are part of the Middle or Upper Management of your part of MOD, and will have had experience dealing with members of other Services or branches of your own Service.

Do I have to take part?

No. You may choose not to take part.

What will I be asked to do?

You are being asked to talk to Dr Kirke about your experiences in doing business with and getting to know members of other Services or branches of your own Service. All the information you give will be in confidence during the interview and then made anonymous and will not be traced back to you. The audio typist who types up the interview will not know your identity.

What are the benefits of taking part?

There is no direct benefit to you, except that you know you will be taking part in an important project that will help the MOD improve the way it does its business.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The interview will take up some of your time. It is possible that during the interview you may find yourself remembering some upsetting times in your life or the lives of your friends. However this is not the purpose of the interview and it is unlikely.

Can I withdraw from the research and what will happen if I don't want to carry on?

Yes. At any time. You will be able to stop the interview at any time and you will not get into trouble for stopping the interview. You may ask at any time during or after the interview for the recording to be destroyed. Your Head of Department will not be made aware if you choose not to take part.

Will my taking part or not taking part affect my Service career?

No, either way. What you say will remain confidential. Your name will not be attached to the recording and any use of the material as part of the research will be anonymous.

Whom do I contact if I have any questions or a complaint?

Please contact the Principal Investigator Lt Col (Retired) Charles Kirke on tel: 01793 785381, e-mail ckirke.cu@defenceacademy.mod.uk. However, if you do not wish to complain to the Principal Investigator please contact the MoDREC (MOD Research Ethics Committee) secretariat email: SIT-StrategyCollabISTA2@mod.uk ; telephone 0207 218 2512).

What happens if I suffer any harm?

If you suffer any harm as a direct result of taking part in this study, you can apply for compensation under the MoD's 'No-Fault Compensation Scheme'.

Will my records be kept confidential?

Any information obtained during this study will remain confidential as to your identity. You may ask the researcher for copies of all papers, reports and other published or presented material. All information will be subject to the current conditions of the Caldicott principles and Data Protection Act 1998.

If you are affected by any of the issues raised in the interview and wish to discuss them further please do so in the way you have been taught (using welfare support, the padre, Chain of Command, Human Resources).

Data, including paper records and computer files, will be held for 100 years after the end of the study in conditions appropriate for the storage of personal information.

Who is organising the research?

The research is being carried out by Lt Col (Retired) Charles Kirke for the Defence Academy

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of the study will be compiled into a report for the Defence Academy, to help the MOD improve its business. An interim report specifically on the work at MOD Main Building will be given to the Defence Reform Unit in April 2011.

Who has reviewed the study?

All research on MoD/Service personnel is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee which has been engaged to protect your safety, rights, well-being and dignity. This study has been reviewed and approved by the MoD Research Ethics Committee.

Further information and contact details.

If you require any further information please contact the Principal Investigator Lt Col (Retired) Charles Kirke PhD, tel: 01793 785381 or email: ckirke.cu@da.mod.uk

Compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

This study complies and at all times will comply with the Declaration of Helsinki⁸ as adopted at the 52nd WMA General Assembly, Edinburgh, October 2000 and with the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, concerning Biomedical Research, (Strasbourg 25.1.2005).

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Investigator:

Dr Charles Kirke
Lecturer, Military Anthropology and Human Factors,
Cranfield University
Defence Academy of the United Kingdom
Shrivenham,
Swindon,
SN6 8LA

+44 (0) 1793 785381

APPENDIX 2 TO
ANNEX B TO
CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REPORT
CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR SERVICES

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Do cultural differences exist between the four Services, and if so, to what extent do these affect the conduct of MoD business?

Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee Reference: To follow

- The nature, aims and risks of the research have been explained to me. I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and understand what is expected of me. All my questions have been answered fully to my satisfaction.
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher involved and be withdrawn from it immediately without having to give a reason. I also understand that I may be withdrawn from it at any time, and that in neither case will this be held against me in subsequent dealings with the Ministry of Defence.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I agree to volunteer as a participant for the study described in the information sheet and give full consent.
- This consent is specific to the particular study described in the Participant Information Sheet attached and shall not be taken to imply my consent to participate in any subsequent study or deviation from that detailed here.
- I understand that in the event of my sustaining injury, illness or death as a direct result of participating as a volunteer in Ministry of Defence research, I or my dependants may enter a claim with the Ministry of Defence for compensation under the provisions of the no-fault compensation scheme, details of which are attached.

Participant's Statement:

I _____

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Participant Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed

Date

Witness

Name

Signature

Investigator's Statement:

I, Dr Charles Mackenzie St George Kirke

confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the Participant.

Signed

Date

AUTHORISING SIGNATURES

The information supplied above is to the best of my knowledge and belief accurate. I clearly understand my obligations and the rights of research participants, particularly concerning recruitment of participants and obtaining valid consent.

Signature of Principal Investigator

.....

Date

Name and contact details of Independent Medical Officer (if appropriate):

Name and contact details of Principal Investigator:

Dr Charles Kirke
Lecturer, Military Anthropology and Human Factors,
Centre for Human Systems
Cranfield University
Defence Academy of the United Kingdom
Shrivenham
Swindon SN6 8LA

Telephone: 01793 785381

Email: ckirke.cu@defenceacademy.mod.uk

Alternative Email: c.m.s.kirke@cranfield.ac.uk

APPENDIX 3 TO
ANNEX B TO
CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REPORT
CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE FOUR SERVICES

INTERVIEW TOPICS

TOPICS FOR THE GROUP INTERVIEW/DISCUSSION

The purpose of the group sessions is to stimulate discussion by the participants of areas of their experience that cross cultural boundaries between the Services and branches of their Service. The questions are designed to give the participants the opportunity to express their opinions and discuss them with their peers.

Example Questions:

- Do you think that there are differences in organisational culture between the Services?
- Who has worked in a team with members of more than one Service?
- If you have, how have the team members got on?
- If you do, in your opinion how would a complete stranger see them working out in your daily lives? What would be the signs?
- Do you think that these differences make your work any easier?

TOPICS FOR THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The semi-structured format is necessary because the details of the individuals' experience will not be known prior to the interview.

The first topic will be the interviewee's biographical data. The second will be their career so far. This has been found in the past to put most interviewees at their ease and the answers necessarily contain relevant biographical information.

Example questions:

- Tell me about your career so far. When did you join [your Service]
- Are you married?
- What posts have you held in the MOD?

The second topic will be the interviewee's experience in dealing with members of other Services and branches of their own Service.

Example questions:

- How much in your career so far have you dealt with members of other branches of your own Service?

- How much in your career so far have you dealt with members of other Services?
- What did you learn from these experiences?
- At what level did you interact with members of other Services? What was the purpose of the interaction?

The third will be the interviewee's personal view of these other Services and branches of their Own Service.

Example questions:

- What do you think of other branches of your own Service?
- What do you think of the other Services?
- Have you come across anything that has stopped you working effectively with members of other branches of your own Service, or with members of other Services?
- Have you come across anything that made working with members of other branches of your own Service or members of other Services easier than you expected?

Participants will be encouraged throughout the interviews to describe their experiences and to tell anecdotes connected to the subject to provide relevant illustrations for their opinions and experiences.

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Published By:

Defence Academy of the
United Kingdom

