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The Integration And Recruitment Of Women To The Irish Defence Forces

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CHAPTER FIVE

The integration and recruitment of women to the Irish Defence Forces

5.1 Background

Having examined the trend for a greater integration of women in the international military, it is intended in this chapter to examine the integration and recruitment of women in the PDF. This represents the beginning of the main focus of the study. The documentary, statistical and interview data presented in the next four chapters form the bulk of the analysis of the status and roles assigned female personnel in the PDF. The analysis of status and role of women within the organisation is organised in the subsequent chapters as follows:

1. Role of female personnel

It is intended to establish whether or not a gender division of labour exists within the ranks of the defence forces. As stated in the chapter on methodology, I intend to focus on the deployment of female personnel over the core, (combat, combat support) and peripheral (administrative) tasks of the organisation to establish if a segregation of the workforce on the basis of sex exists. The pattern of employment of female Officers, Non Commissioned Officers, (NCOs) and other ranks, (Privates) will be considered against the background of current international trends in the deployment of female military personnel provided in chapter 4.

2. Status of Female personnel

I intend to examine the status of female personnel in terms of rank, and appointment within the force. It is also intended to examine the collective status, or 'critical mass' of female personnel within the organisation in terms of recruitment, numbers, and visibility. I hope to analyse their impact in terms of rates or advancement, profile, and power within the organisation to influence policy (Adler 1994, Reskin and Padavic, 1994). I intend to examine PDF policy on female personnel and any proactive or progressive policy that may or may not exist. It is my intention to examine the manner in which policy (in relation to recruitment, training, dress, deployment, overseas service and promotion) impacts on the working lives of female soldiers. This will in effect amount to an 'equality audit' of the PDF as defined by the EEA (1995); Neal (1998); Rees (1998); and Shaw (1995).

In focussing on female personnel, I do so from the position of the theoretical perspectives outlined in chapter three, in light of the following established facts:

- (1) The reality of women as combatants in modern conventional warfare
- (2) The reality of women as combatants in modern non-conventional and low intensity operations
- (3) The reality of women as combatants in counter insurgency, anti-terrorist, and 'Black' operations

These points refer to the precedent or *de facto* 'experience' of women in combat. The next part of the thesis constitutes a journey into the gender-mediated aspects of the culture (beliefs, assumptions, behaviour) of the defence forces, where the status and roles assigned female personnel are examined in some detail in light of the theoretical perspective articulated in chapter three.

This chapter and the three following chapters examine the integration and recruitment of women to the PDF, training, deployment, and promotion, in order to give a detailed picture of women in today's Irish defence forces. This chapter will address the background to the integration of female personnel to the PDF in light of the concept of a 'Women's Service Corps' as envisaged by the military authorities in the late seventies and early eighties. The integration of the first female troops is then examined in terms of the uniform chosen for these women by the military authorities in a section on the visual code generated by the female pattern uniform. There then follows a section on issues generated by the female pattern uniform and associated equipment provided by the PDF today. This section is included here as it extends the discussion on the symbolic and practical impact of the female pattern uniform begun in the previous section. It consists principally of data gained at interview with female personnel.

The chapter concludes with a comprehensive examination of the recruitment of women to the PDF from 1982 to date. This examination considers the recruitment of women at all entry levels to the organisation, officers, N.C.O.s and other ranks. This part of the chapter draws extensively on statistics and recruitment figures supplied by the military authorities and the Department of Defence. There is also an extensive use made of data obtained at interview. The chapter provides an overview of the PDF workplace as it applies to the recruitment of women. It gives an indication of a "women's effect" (Howes and Stephenson, 1993:51) and

“commitment” (Reskin and Padavic, 1994:87) in terms of numbers of women in the organisation and “critical mass” as discussed in the theory chapter.

5.2 The concept of a Women’s Service Corps

A detailed account of the advent of the integration of female personnel into the PDF is dealt with in Clonan (1995:21-41). The following is a very brief account of their integration and of the development of the female pattern uniform. This brief account is necessary in order to give meaning to and accommodate the new data gathered at interview.

I am convinced that it is only in the fullest practicable sense of participation in defence activities that the aspiration and activities of women who elect for a military career will find adequate expression. Accordingly, apart from the fact that they will be non-combatant, it is my intention that women will be employed in a very comprehensive range of duties.
(Extract from a Dáil speech by Mr. Robert Molloy T.D., Minister for Defence, October 1979)

In July 1977 the then government decided to form a Women’s Service Corps for the PDF. This corps or W.S.C. was originally conceived of as being a separate and non integrated entity whose functions would be limited to non-combatant duties in the following areas:

- a. Clerical duties
- b. Driving of light vehicles
- c. Observer Corps duties
- d. Welfare duties
- e. Miscellaneous

(Memo from Secretary, Department of Defence to Chief of Staff, Jan 1978, Para 2 – Courtesy, Military Archives, Unclassified)

The Women’s Service Corps was initially intended “to release male soldiers from certain duties in order to fill more active military functions”. (Ibid., Para 3)

The General Staff, in 1978, faced with the prospect of recruiting and training women, formed a “committee on the establishment of a Women’s Service Corps”. The committee submitted its confidential report on 10 February 1978. In today’s climate of political correctness its contents would be considered provocative to say the least. On the subject of pay:

After full consideration of the matter, the majority of our members recommend that the basic rates of pay of members of the WSC should be less than those payable to men.

(Page 11, Para. Iv., 'Pay'. Confidential)

On pregnancy,

We are aware that pregnancy is not a ground for termination of service in the (...) Ban Garda and the Public Service generally. Nevertheless in view of (...) the fact that all Military employment is of its nature physically demanding and requires a minimum standard of fitness at all times (...) we recommend that pregnancy should be included in DFR's as a reason for automatic termination of the service of members (...) for both officers and other ranks.

(Page 9, Para iii, 'Pregnancy', Courtesy Military Archives, Confidential)

The enactment of equality legislation in the 70's and 80's however forced the hand of military planners and the W.S.C. was not established. The Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act of 1975, the Employment Equality Act of 1977 and the 1981 Maternity Protection of Employees Act put paid to the Committee's aspirations for a WSC. Significantly, this pressure, (as in the case of the first suggestion of the enlistment of women), was from without.

5.3 The female pattern uniform as visual code

As a direct consequence of the advent of female troops in the PDF in the early 1980's, it was necessary to develop a uniform for these "new" personnel. The choice of uniform proved interesting from a semiotic viewpoint.

Clothes, badges and forms of decoration (...) have a powerful effect on the perceptions and reactions of others.
(Argyle, 1978: 323)

Uniform, and its signage is crucial to the perceptions of superiors, peers and subordinates within the military. This holds true in all walks of life and the link between status and clothes is emphasised by Argyle. "Status is one of the most important sources of variation (...) where two groups wear different clothes, this often indicates the existence of different roles".
(Argyle, 1978: 331-332)

The choice and manner in choosing of uniform for female personnel by the General Staff give a unique insight into their mindset and their construction of these 'new' personnel. I contacted the original designer, Ib Jorgensen, in 1995, to find out a little on its design criteria. His answer was of relevance and interest to the concerns of this thesis, and I include the following summary of our discussion here:

The uniform was supplied and designed by Mr. Ib Jorgensen of Jorgensen Fine Art in Molesworth Street, Dublin. I spoke to Mr. Jorgensen about the design criteria he used for the uniform. I wanted to know what kind of image he had sought to portray and if he had been given any specifications by the military authorities. Quite simply he informed me that a senior officer at that time had admired the uniform of the air hostesses in Aer Lingus. He thought it would be ideal for female military personnel. He knew that Jorgensen had designed the Aer Lingus uniform and approached him directly on the matter. He wanted a uniform that would be "attractive" and "glamorous" based on the air hostess' uniform. These were the only criteria given to Mr. Jorgensen. Therefore the "subservient and submissive, smiling image of the air hostess", (Hurwitz, 1993) with all the attendant notions of femininity and service was to be the model for the token female soldier whose function was to be "glamorous and attractive".
(Clonan, 1995: 30-1)

The eventual acceptance and issue of the female pattern uniform came under the aegis of DFR Q '2'. The 'Q' table of issues included handbag, skirts, tights and court shoes. The selection of this uniform for female soldiers, complete with a highly gendered set of accoutrements appeared to suggest a highly gendered vision of their role in the organisation.

Certainly, from the point of view of marching, the choice of skirt and slip-on shoes was an impractical one. From the 1980's until as recently as 1991, female personnel were barred from all ceremonial duties. Ceremonial, with its ritual and stylised symbolism is central to military culture. Due to difficulties in marching, and the lack of a uniform appearance caused by the choice of the female pattern uniform, female troops were, in effect, denied the "strong feeling of dependence and togetherness (...) collective enthusiasm for the goals of the movement" (Argyle, 1978: 193) provided for in ceremonial. With the advent of Mary Robinson's election as President, and Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces in 1991, this policy was overturned, and women were permitted to participate in ceremonial duties. I believe it is significant to note such a change in policy came about as a result of pressure of events outside the organisation.

The women of Cumann na mBan marched side by side, in uniform, with their male colleagues 76 years previously at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa. This event had been carefully choreographed by James Connolly and presented to the public the image of a struggle that was being undertaken by men and women together. (This was despite the fact that female volunteers at that time were assigned subordinate status and roles within the organisational structure that existed between the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan). It is interesting to note that it took another 76 years and the election of a woman as President of Ireland for Irish men and women to parade together in public as 'comrades in arms'.

5.4 The female pattern uniform: Dressed to Kill?

The semiotic analysis of the visual code contained in the choice of uniform for female personnel which forms part of the introduction of this chapter links in to a discussion of uniform, including the 1999 issue of disruptive pattern material (DPM) combats for female personnel which arose at interview. For this reason, I have included this data at this point. The discussion reveals something of the patriarchal dynamic described in chapter three in terms of the 'male as norm' construct of PDF employees as evidenced by the design of combat uniform. (Barrett and Phillips, 1992: 120-37)

1999 saw the introduction of a new 'system' of clothing issues for the Defence Forces. First worn by the PDF on its departure for service with KFOR in Kosovo (29th August 1999), the new "DPM" (Disruptive Pattern Material) combat uniform went on general issue to all personnel in October 1999. The new camouflaged uniform is to be worn by all ranks at all times and will replace the woollen "bulls wool" trousers and skirts of the present "working dress" code. This should ease some of the issues raised in relation to the question of the uniform drawing attention to the sex of the wearer. From February to September of 1999, during the conduct of interviews with female personnel, the issue of the female pattern uniform arose. In addition to the advent of the DPM uniform, the military authorities are at present considering a new design for the 'No. 1' uniform for females to be worn on parade.

As part of the emergent interview schedule, the question of uniform, both combat and No.1, arose in discussion. From the sixty female personnel interviewed, the following observations were made. Of the sixty women questioned, only one was consulted on the new uniform for women. She remarked that she had been shown the new skirt which had a pleat to the rear, "which would make marching difficult". (Interview No. 19, 22/7/99) The remaining 59 were not consulted in any way.

In relation to the hat, designed by Ib Jorgensen, of the sixty interviewed, fourteen of the women expressed satisfaction with the hat. The reasons given were varied. Interviewee number 32 (31/8/99), a captain, expressed the opinion that the hat was "quite smart". Interviewee number 15, (20/4/99), observed that the hat was "easy to keep clean for inspections – it doesn't collect fluff the way the beret does". The vast majority of the women, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the hat. Forty-six of the women interviewed indicated that they would have preferred to see the female pattern hat withdrawn. Their

reasons varied, but most cited aesthetic reasons for its abolition. The hat was referred to variously as “the piss pot”, (Interview No. 12, 19/4/99), “the bed-pan”, (Interview No. 23, 10/8/99), “poxy”, (Interview No. 2, 13/8/99) and “the ashtray”, (Interview No. 42, 11/9/99).

More interestingly, many of the interviewees cited reasons of uniformity and status-related issues in indicating a preference for berets and peaked caps as a replacement for the female pattern hat. Of the sixty women interviewed, 46 women said they would prefer to wear a beret with working dress. One interviewee (Interview No. 20, 28/7/99), indicated that if she were the G.O.C., she would ban all headgear bar berets in the interests of uniformity. Of the 19 officers interviewed, 14 indicated that they would prefer to wear peaked caps like their male peers. All of the officers interviewed cited issues around status as the reason for this preference. One interviewee (Interview No. 24, 11/8/99), a captain, stated the following:

Officers is officers is officers. We should look the same (...) the uniform, the hat. I mean why add to the problems of perception that some people have? Look at the Gardaí, they all wear the same gear.

Interviewee No. 18 (23//7/99), also a captain, echoed these sentiments:

The female officer should have a different head-dress to the other ranks. In other words, we should wear a peaked cap as an indication of rank, just like the guys do. It's so much easier to see who's in charge, to spot the officer, so to speak.

These responses are typical of the vast majority of female officers in expressing a preference for a peaked cap.

In relation to the issue of skirts and trousers, the vast majority of those women interviewed expressed a preference for the choice to wear trousers. Of the sixty women interviewed, fifty three women indicated their dissatisfaction with skirts as part of their “No. 1” pattern (ceremonial) uniform. Of those who expressed satisfaction with the skirt, two felt they should be compulsory for female personnel.

We have a skirt, a different tunic and a distinctive hat. I've no problem with it. We're different anyway, we should look different.
(Interview No. 10, 16/4/99)

Interviewee No. 11 echoed this sentiment:

The female pattern uniform is fine. You should be able to see the difference. You should be able to pick out the women.
(Interviewee No. 11, 19/4/99)

The remaining 53 women, however, expressed many reservations about the wearing of a skirt as part of the No. 1 uniform. Many cited aesthetic reasons as the source of their dissatisfaction. One interviewee remarked that the female uniform “makes us look like air hostesses, not soldiers” (Interview No. 23, 10/8/99). Interviewee No. 29 (26/8/99) felt that due to problems with the design of the uniform, “it makes us look like a sack of spuds”. Interviewee No. 28 (25/8/99) felt the uniform “should be totally redesigned”. Interviewee No. 34 (06/9/99) felt the uniform was old fashioned and “grannyish”, and interviewee No. 40 (11/9/99) declared: “the uniform stinks”.

Other sources of dissatisfaction with the uniform cited were practical. Several complained about the pleated skirt which made it difficult to march.

(T)he skirt has an inverted pleat which makes it difficult to march, so now we wear trousers.

(Interview No. 4, 14/4/99).

Interviewee No. 25, (12/8/99) reflected the view of many that the No. 1 uniform was impractical for work and uncomfortable on parade: “Our No. 1 uniform for parade is not suitable”. Interviewee No.38 (8/9/99) simply remarked that the skirt was too cold for ceremonial duties in inclement weather:

I’d prefer if we had trousers on parade. Especially for Guards of Honour, you know, in the winter, with all that standing around, waiting, the skirts just aren’t warm enough.

Interviewee No. 44 however summed up the overall view of the women in relation to the ‘female pattern’ uniform:

My opinion is, trousers, boots, berets, for everyone. Period. The skirts and hats just make you stick out.
(11/9/99)

On being allowed exercise the choice of wearing trousers or skirts, (this policy varies by Brigade, and by individual Commanders), 58 of the 60 women endorsed such a choice. Only two, as mentioned previously, felt skirts should be compulsory. In relation to the wearing of the standard issue 'female' shoe, (a slip-on, 'court' type shoe), 54 of the sixty women expressed dissatisfaction. Almost all of those interviewed cited difficulty with marching as the main reason for this dissatisfaction. Most called for a more practical design of shoe, with laces.

Interviewee No. 35 described the situation in relation to the footwear as 'scandalous'.

(7/9/99) Interviewee No. 28 went so far as to suggest:

The shoes would break your neck. They're like what a hooker would wear down on Leeson Street.
(25/8/99)

Another significant factor in relation to footwear was the general dissatisfaction amongst female personnel regarding combat boots. Of the sixty women interviewed, only three expressed complete satisfaction. A total of 57 complained about not being able to get their size in the new combat boot. Many of the women I spoke to were actually wearing boots one or two sizes too big for them. One woman I interviewed in Lebanon was wearing two pairs of socks in order to keep her boots on. Interviewee No. 32 complained bitterly about this phenomenon:

I can never get combat boots to fit. I have to wear two pairs of socks.
On route marches and terrain walks, I get blisters. My feet are in rag order.
(31/8/99)

One interviewee, No. 7, expressed her frustration at this ongoing problem with boots:

If you go into the "Great Outdoors", you'll find plenty of boots and equipment designed for women. The army should follow suit.
(15/4/99)

In relation to the combat uniform, fifty-four of the women expressed dissatisfaction with the tailoring or 'cut' of the uniform. Interviewee No. 38 summed up the problem:

When I buy a pair of jeans, I don't go to the man's section. The combats we have are designed for men. We should have an allotment for women.
(8/9/99)

Some of the other design features of the 'female pattern' combat uniform were also questioned. Interviewee No. 9, for example, was puzzled by the fact that the female combat shirt had no breast pockets:

The kit issue is not up to standard. We're not allowed have breast pockets in shirts. Could someone explain that to me? We're still seen as non-combatant, and the kit issue reflects that – We're not being consulted on the new uniform. In my thirteen years in the army, I've never been consulted on anything relating to women in the army, dress included.
(16/4/99)

Given the levels of dissatisfaction expressed by the women interviewed at those aspects of the uniform discussed, it is significant to note, that of the sixty women I spoke to, only one was ever consulted on the choice of uniform for women. While the advent of the new DPM uniform is to be welcomed, the interviewees' responses indicate that any new scale of clothing issues for female personnel would be best undertaken in consultation with female personnel.

5.5 The recruitment of female personnel to the defence forces

In this section of the chapter I intend to examine the manner in which female personnel are recruited to the defence forces. The enlistment of female soldiers to the ranks will be considered along with the recruitment of female officer cadets.

The section begins with a brief description of the manner in which personnel are recruited into the Defence Forces – the various entry levels and the mechanism for entry. The enlistment of the category of non-officer personnel, referred to in the PDF as 'other ranks' is then considered. The recruitment of other ranks is considered against the background of recruitment to other areas of the public service. The recruit campaigns of 1982, 1990 and 1994-1999 are considered in some detail with figures obtained from Enlisted Personnel Section at DFHQ. These numbers, in conjunction with the numbers of women recruited by cadetship are then considered in tandem with the interview responses of the sixty women interviewed. The issue of the numbers of women being admitted to the PDF along with the manner in which they are recruited is discussed in terms of women's visibility, numbers and consequent impact on PDF work place culture. With regard to the recruitment of personnel into the army, entry into the PDF is by one of three ways: enlistment, cadetship and by direct entry.

1. Enlistment

This is the manner in which ‘other ranks’ or privates enlist in the army. On enlistment one trains as a recruit until passing out as a ‘three-star’ private soldier. Enlisted personnel are referred to as ‘other ranks’ until promoted to the rank of Non Commissioned Officer or NCO. NCO’s are divided by rank into two categories. Those at the rank of sergeant and below are referred to as ‘Junior NCOs’. Those above the rank of sergeant are referred to as ‘Senior NCOs’.

The following table, table (i) shows this rank structure. The table represents the ascending order of enlisted ranks in the right hand column. The left-hand column indicates the separator in rank (private) between other ranks and junior NCOs and (sergeant) between junior NCOs and senior NCOs. The table indicates the progression of enlisted personnel through the ranks as follows. From the rank of Private, one can advance to NCO or Non Commissioned Officer level. The NCO ranks advance as follows. From Private, one is promoted Corporal. The next rung on the promotion ladder is the rank of Sergeant. Once the rank of sergeant has been obtained, one competes for promotion to senior NCO rank. The senior NCO ranks consist of Company Quartermaster Sergeant, or CQMS, followed in ascending order by Company Sergeant or CS. The next rank above CS is that of Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant or BQMS. The highest rank obtainable at NCO rank is Battalion Sergeant Major or BSM.

Table (i): Senior NCOs, Junior NCOs and Other Ranks rank structure:

Senior NCOs	Battalion Sergeant Major (BSM)
	Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant (BQMS)
	Company Sergeant (CS)
	Company Quartermaster Sergeant (CQMS)
Junior NCOs	Sergeant (Sgt)
	Corporal (Cpl)
Other Ranks	Private (Pte)

Source: Table (i) supplied by Enlisted Personnel Section, DFHQ, July 1999.

2. Cadetship

This is the avenue by which the Army recruits its officers. Cadetships are advertised annually. Table (ii) shows the progression through the ranks for officers. The ascending order of officer ranks are shown on the right-hand side of the table. The left hand-side of the table indicates the categories of officer rank with junior officers from 2nd Lieutenant to Captain and

senior officers from Commandant to Lieutenant General. It shows that from the rank of 2nd Lt, one advances to Lieutenant, Captain, Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General, Major General and Lieutenant General.

Table (ii): Officers Rank Structure:

Senior Officers	Lieutenant General (Lt-Gen)
	Major General (Maj Gen)
	Brigadier General (Brig-Gen)
	Colonel (Col)
	Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col)
	Commandant (Comdt)
Junior Officers	Captain (Capt)
	First Lieutenant (Lt)
	Second Lieutenant (2 nd Lt)

Source: Table (ii) supplied by Officers Records, DFHQ, July 1999.

3. Direct Entry.

This is the method by which the PDF fills many of its technical and professional vacancies. Direct Entries, or 'D.E.'s' comprise Dental, Medical and Engineering officers. Those candidates wishing to become Medical Officers, (doctors, dentists and pharmacists) or Engineering Officers within the Defence Forces apply for interview on completion of their specialist training. Such competitions are held from time to time as vacancies arise within the Defence Forces.

5.6 The enlistment of other ranks (Female)

Unlike cadetships, recruitment campaigns do not occur annually. From 1988 to 1994, there was almost no recruitment to the PDF. To date, there have been seven recruitment campaigns that have involved female personnel.

1. 1982

This was the first intake of female personnel (other ranks) into the PDF. The competition was open to females only, and the all-female platoon was trained as a single sex unit with a modified syllabus of training. These women did not undergo Section Tactical Training (offence and defence), did not undergo Counter Insurgency Training (COIN) or Aid to the Civil Power Training (ATCP OPs). They did however undergo an extended period of clerical training in Administration and Logistics ('A' and 'Q') accounting. A revised syllabus of training was drawn up for this purpose.

2. 1990

This recruitment campaign was similar to the 1982 intake. The all-female intake trained as a single-sex platoon and underwent a modified syllabus of training.

3. 1994

This recruitment campaign was open to both sexes under the guidelines of the Civil Service Commission, Local Appointments Commission. The enlistment was to be on the basis of equality of opportunity, and training was to be fully integrated with no modified syllabus for female personnel.

4. 1996

The 1996 campaign was run under the same guidelines as at (3) but with a change in the entry requirements, raising the height requirement for women to 5 feet 5 inches.

5-7. 1997, 1998, 1999

The 1997, 1998 and 1999 campaigns were run under the same guidelines as at (3) with the changing of the height requirement for women from 5 feet 5 inches to 5 feet 4 inches.

With the advent of the White Paper for Defence in February of 2000, recruitment to the Defence Forces has changed fundamentally. No longer is the recruitment of troops conducted in separate 'campaigns' but is conducted on an ongoing or 'rolling recruitment' basis. Since February of 2000, the Chief of Staff has been given the authority to recruit on an ongoing basis to the Defence Forces as needs arise. This ongoing recruitment does not require sanction from the Department of Defence who prior to the White Paper sanctioned and initiated recruitment campaigns.

A number of points arise from the recruit campaigns of the nineties. It is important to note that the government placed an embargo on recruiting to the Defence Forces between 1982 and

1994. The only exceptions to this embargo were an intake of 500 male troops in 1988 and an intake of 35 female troops in 1990. From 1994 onwards, with the lifting of the embargo, the Department of Defence sanctioned a number of recruitment campaigns. This gave rise to a large number of new recruits being recruited to the PDF. This lifting of the embargo on recruitment, combined with a 1992 policy decision at DFHQ to integrate recruit training for both male and female personnel paved the way for larger numbers of both men and women to enter the PDF. In total, since 1994, 2,267 personnel have been recruited to the Defence Forces. Of this total, 282 or 12.2% are female. This has effectively trebled the numbers of women in the Defence Forces and brought their representation within the force to around 3% of total strength. This large (by Irish standards) recruitment campaign, accounts for the increase in female personnel in the PDF outlined in this and later chapters in the study.

Prior to 1996, the height requirement for females entering the service was 5 feet 2 inches. The height requirement for males was 5 feet 7 inches. The average height of the Irish adult male is 5 feet 7 inches. The average height of the Irish adult female is 5 feet 3 inches. (Thomond College of Physical Education, University of Limerick) (Central Statistics Office)

For the 1996 recruitment campaign, the height requirement for both sexes was changed to 5 feet 5 inches (see Appendix 5). I contacted Enlisted Personnel Section in Army Headquarters in order to find out what was behind this change in conditions of entry. I was informed that the change had taken place as complaints had been made by male applicants who were below the average height of 5 feet 7 inches of discrimination on the grounds of height.

I pointed out that by raising the height requirement from 5 feet 2 inches, to 5 feet 5 inches, it meant that female applicants would have to be taller than the national average to be admitted to the competition. It seemed illogical to reduce the height requirement for men in order to facilitate shorter men on the grounds of 'discrimination', and to raise it for women.

The army's move to increase the height requirement was especially puzzling in light of events at that time.

The height requirement for fire fighters in Dublin Fire Brigade was removed this month because it was discriminatory against women, according to Dublin Corporation's Equality Officer, Mr. Vincent Moore. The stipulation that applicants be 5 feet 6 inches was removed following a labour court ruling against C.I.E., he said.

(The Irish Times, 21 January 1997: 8)

On the same page in the newspaper was an article, "mother rejected by Fire Brigade wins case". A Ms. Gillian Maxwell from Belfast settled her discrimination case against the Northern Ireland Fire Authority for being rejected as an applicant for a job on the grounds of being 3 inches shorter than the 5 feet 6 inches requirement. The Equal Opportunities Commission which brought the case welcomed the settlement and its legal officer, Ms. Petra Shiels, stressed its importance as a step forward for the rights of shorter people.

I rang Enlisted Personnel Section again and asked them in light of the above mentioned events to clarify the Army's position. The explanation I was given was as follows: The average weight carried in the 1990 pattern backpack, Marching Order, was 70 pounds. The Chief of Staff has decided that in order to safely carry a load of 70 pounds, one would have to be at least 5 feet 5 inches tall.

This explanation would appear questionable when one considers the range of everyday and routine tasks world-wide that require people under 5 feet 5 inches to carry weights of four stone or more. Many societies give 'heavy' work to women, as outlined by Mead (1950) in Oakley (1981: 55).

The new height requirement may also have handicapped applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds:

Height is also determined by social and environmental factors which can outweigh the sex difference, and the daughter of a professional worker is likely to be as tall as the son of an unskilled worker. The sex differential in height also varies between different populations.

(Oakley, 1981: 28)

According to the American Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces 1992, the average height of their 195,000 female personnel is 5 feet 3 inches. If the Irish entry requirements of the 1996 and subsequent competitions were applied in the U.S., these soldiers would never have been permitted enter the Armed forces, and the 31,000 women who served in the Gulf War would not have deployed.

This height requirement for women was subsequently reduced to 5 foot, 4 inches for the 1997, 1998 and 1999 recruitment campaigns. Another barrier to the enlistment of female recruits in earlier campaigns was the imposition of 'ceilings' or 'quotas' on numbers of female personnel to be accepted during recruitment campaigns. I had first hand experience of the existence of these 'quotas' in 1994. I was detailed through the Curragh Command Adjutant's office to act

as a substitute on the Curragh Command Interview Board. Whilst carrying out these duties I was present during the final allocation of vacancies. The mechanical allotment of marks gave rise to an order of merit among candidates. Our strict instructions, however, were to "pick the top twelve females" and fill the remaining vacancies with male applicants. The Command Manpower Officer at the time explained to me that the Command did not "have the resources at its disposal to refit accommodation and training areas to bring them up to the standard required for women". I was also reminded at that time that the matter was to be treated in the strictest confidence and that for future reference, the deliberations of the Board would remain confidential. The justification of the exclusion of women from the workplace for 'infrastructural' reasons, i.e. toilets etc. is identified in the literature as a classic ploy used by employers to justify discrimination. (Game and Pringle, 1983: 11)

The citing of infrastructural deficits as a reason for denying access to paid employment or promotion for women is listed as a form of discrimination by the Employment Equality Agency (EEA, 1998: Equality at Work – A Model Equal Opportunities Policy). The onus on employers to redress infrastructural deficits in such cases is stressed in a number of EEA and public service guidelines (EEA, Guidelines on Positive (Affirmative) Action in Employment, 1999; EEA, Guidelines on Equal Opportunity in Vocational Training, 1999; Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service, 1997; Eighth Annual Report on the Implementation of the Equal Opportunity Policy and Guidelines for the Civil Service, March 1997). The EEA and the relevant public service guidelines are explicit in this regard. Employers who cite infrastructural reasons for denying access to paid employment, vocational training, work experience or promotion for women are guilty of direct discrimination. This has been further emphasised in the recently enacted Equal Status and Employment Equality Acts.

This decision to implement such a quota system came at a time when most other armies were doing the opposite and opening up more posts and appointments to women. The UK Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, was presented with an Army Board Report on July 8 1996 recommending same (The Guardian, July 8, 1996: 3). In line with this trend on 3 April 1998, the British Ministry of Defence announced a new campaign to recruit "Females and Ethnic Minorities" to all three services (Sky News, B.B.C. News, 03 April 1998). In the autumn of 1996, the U.S. Army was also hoping to dispense with ceilings and quotas altogether.

Therefore there is probably less justification for any military service to maintain ceilings on women recruits, (...) the need for recruiting ceilings is less compelling than in the days of combat exclusions.

(Armor, 1996: 24)

As in the case of the imposition of a height requirement, by imposing a quota, the military authorities appeared to be at variance with international military trends in terms of recruiting policy. As part of my researches, when I spoke to Enlisted Personnel Section, they denied all knowledge of a quota system. They were extremely helpful and provided me with a full set of statistics for the 1994 to 1999 competitions. The table supplied by Enlisted Personnel Section in July of 1999 gives a breakdown of the numbers of male and female applicants for the 1994 to 1999 recruitment campaigns. The table consists of seven columns. The columns from left to right detail the year of each competition, the total number of applicants for each competition, the male and female breakdown of applicants, the total numbers recruited and a corresponding male and female breakdown of successful candidates. Each competition from 1994 is assigned a row in the table with the topmost row accommodating the data applying to the 1994 competition. Subsequent competitions are assigned rows in descending order. The bottom row shows the total figures for all competitions. The figures are interesting:

Table (iii): 1994 - 1999 recruit campaigns – Statistical breakdown (male/female) of applicants

Year	Total Applicants	Male %	Female %	Total Recruited	Male %	Female %
1994	9,381	7,956 (84.8%)	1,425 (15.2%)	555	490 (88.2%)	65 (11.8%)
1995	0	0	0	60	60(100%)	0
1996	1,806	1,496 (82.8%)	310 (17.2%)	184	161 (87.5%)	23 (12.5%)
1997	1,291	1,112 (86.1%)	179 (13.9%)	707	614 (86.8%)	93 (13.2%)
1998	1,579	1,329 (84.2%)	250 (15.8%)	716	620 (86.6%)	96 (13.4%)
1999*	903	771 (85.4%)	132 (14.6%)	45	40 (88.9%)	5 (11.1%)
Overall Totals	14,960	12,664 (84.7%)	2,296 (15.3%)	2,267	1,985 (87.6%)	282 (12.4%)

*Figures up to July 1999.

Source: Table (iii) supplied by Enlisted Personnel Section, DFHQ, July 1999.

It is clear from these figures that women are consistently underrepresented (proportionally speaking) amongst those candidates who are successful. Comprising 15.3% of the total of those who applied, only 12.4% of those successful were female.

What is more significant is the proportion of women applying compared to their proportion within the general population. Despite the fact that women comprise 51% of the population, only 15.3% of those applying for military service are female. This is probably due to a variety of social and cultural factors, some of which (involving the constructed masculinity of military service) were discussed earlier. What is also significant is the fact that in 1995, an all-male intake of recruits occurred.

These 60 recruits were drawn from the reserves of those applicants who had been unsuccessful in 1994. It is of course possible, (but highly unlikely), that no female candidates were still available by 1995. When I enquired of the Staff Officer at Enlisted Personnel Section, Defence Forces Headquarters (EPS, DFHQ) about this intake, he replied;

Oh, 1995 was an all-male intake, because the numbers were so small, there just wasn't the possibility, facilities-wise of taking in any women.
(S.O., EPS, DFHQ, July 1999)

One of the most notable features of recruitment campaigns over the last number of years is the drop in the number of applicants. The 1996 total of applicants comprised only 19.25% of the total of young people applying in 1994. The 1998 campaign saw a total which was only 16.8% of the 1994 total. This drop was attributed to four factors:

- (a) The conditions of service: Recruits being offered a five year contract only.
- (b) The lowering of the age requirement from 27 years to 22 years.
- (c) The changing of the height requirement.
- (d) The success (in terms of the abundance of alternative employment) of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy.

The change in the height requirement did not result in an increase in the numbers of male applicants. The change did not determine a change in the percentage of women who were successful in the competition. The change of height requirement achieved nothing. It merely reduced the numbers of women eligible to opt for a career in the military. The figures in relation to the Cadet competitions for the same period tell a similar story.

5.7 The recruitment of female cadets to the PDF

As outlined previously, the Defence Forces recruits its officers by means of an annual cadet competition. Table (iv) supplied by Officers Records gives a breakdown by male and female of applicants for the 1994 to 1998 cadet competitions. (Figures for the 1999 competition were not available at time of writing). The table consists of seven columns and six rows. The columns from left to right detail the year of each competition, the total number of applicants for each competition, the male and female breakdown of applicants, the total numbers accepted and a corresponding male and female breakdown of successful candidates. Each competition from 1994 is assigned a row in the table with the topmost row accommodating the data applying to the 1994 competition. Subsequent competitions are assigned rows in descending order.

Table (iv): 1994 –98 cadet competitions – statistical breakdown (male/female) of applicants

Year	Total Applicants	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total Accepted	Male (5)	Female (%)
1994	2016	1516 (75.2%)	500 (24.8%)	39	36 (92.3%)	3 (7.7%)
1995	1232	972 (78.8%)	261 (21.2%)	33	29 (87.9%)	4 (12.1%)
1996	1120	873 (77.9%)	247 (22.1%)	33	26 (78.8%)	7 (21.2%)
1997	1426	*	*	46	39 (84.8%)	7 (15.2%)
1998	854	*	*	58	51 (87.9%)	7 (12.1%)

*Breakdown by Male/Female not available.

Source: Table (iv) supplied by Officers Records, DFHQ, July 1999

The Cadet Competition figures show again that successful female candidates are seriously underrepresented in the total figures. On average, 77.3% of the applicants are male (taken from 1994-1996 breakdown), with on average 86.3% of the successful candidates being male. If the figures in relation to the recruit and cadet competitions tell an interesting story, then the opinions of the women interviewed for this study make for interesting reading also.

As the emergent design of the interview schedule developed, the question of the number of women serving in the PDF and the question of fairness in their recruitment at all levels arose.

All of the female officers interviewed who had been involved in the conduct of interviews for Cadetships confirmed the existence of such a quota system. The figures in table (iv) provided by DFHQ would appear to be consistent with the claims of the majority of women interviewed, that a quota system for the allotment of female cadetships is in operation. To quote just one such officer:

Yes there is a quota system in operation. Even to the extent of this year's competition. I think we're still stuck in the old school, we're still in a minority – they just don't want us in there.
(Interview No. 9, 16/4/99)

On the question of numbers of women in the PDF, of the sixty women interviewed, 53 women indicated that they would like to see more women recruited. Their attitude to the recruitment of women could be summed up by interviewee number 44 who stated, "It's building up. The percentage of women is increasing. The more coming in, the better".
(11/9/99)

Of those women interviewed, four stated that for them, the breakdown by sex of the PDF was simply not an issue. Interviewees Number 3, 17, 22 and 23 (all officers) indicated that this subject was not an issue for them:

I think that candidates for the PDF should be assessed on their capabilities. The best soldier, regardless of sex.

(Interview Number 3, 13/4/99)

Interviewee No. 17 stated:

There's too much emphasis on gender breakdown. I feel, just take the best candidates. The sex of proposed candidates is not an issue.
(29/7/99)

Interviewees 22 and 23 respectively indicated that for them, the numbers of women in the job did not exercise them. "It never really bothered me. I haven't really thought about it",
(Interview 22, 9/8/99). "I'm not saying we've reached our quota, but it's certainly not an issue". (Interview No. 23, 10/8/99)

Three of the interviewees indicated quite strongly that they felt there were enough, if not too many, women in the PDF.

Women probably perform better at interviews. But you couldn't have an all female recruit intake. There should be more men than women in the army. Men are physically stronger. There are jobs that require that – and we need the men for that. The majority should be men, definitely.
(Interview No. 19, 27/7/99)

Interviewee No. 39 had this to say: “There are enough women. If there were any more, there'd be too many problems”. (Interview No. 39, 10/9/99)

One of the women went so far as to say that military service was unsuited to women and motherhood. “I wouldn't be in favour of more women. You'd have no army if you brought in all women. If they have families, they won't go overseas”. (Interview No. 11, 19/4/99)

The vast majority of the women interviewed however, 53 out of 60, indicated that they would like to see more women in the PDF. Many expressed the opinion that they were working as a minority group, and that this was unhealthy. “Seriously outnumbered”. (Interview No. 15, 20/4/99)

“There aren't enough (women) for a healthy working environment”. (Interview Number 27, 24/8/99). “Until there is an equilibrium, then we'll still be exhibits”. (Interview No 38, 8/9/99). The majority of female personnel I spoke to felt they were very much a minority group within the organisation, and that this fact was disempowering. “We're too small to make any difference. We have no voice. You'd need between 17% to 30% to have an impact”. (Interview No. 33, 31/8/99)

One interviewee, (number 8) referred explicitly to critical mass:

No. There aren't enough of us. I think the research shows you need at least 10% for critical mass to have an impact on the organisation.
(15/4/99)

In the control sample, of the 17 women interviewed in Lebanon, 16 felt there were not enough women in the PDF. I feel this was consistent with the sample obtained through networking.

In terms then of fairness, in terms of whether or not women in the PDF felt that the PDF was indeed an equal opportunity employer, the following points arose:

Of the 60 interviewed, 48 felt the system was unfair towards women. Of these 48, 30 expressed explicitly their belief that a quota system was in operation for female recruitment at all levels.

Twelve out of the 60, or 20% of the overall sample, felt that the systems in place for the recruitment of women were fair, and that the PDF was an equal opportunity employer. Of the 17 interviewed in the control sample, 4 of the women indicated that they felt that the recruiting system was fair.

As stated, 50% of the women interviewed felt that a quota system was in operation for the recruitment of women. Many women, particularly NCO's and officers who had been involved in interview boards claimed to have had first hand experience of this quota system.

The system had all the appearance of being fair, but there are agendas at Brigade level to impose quotas on women coming in. On the Cadet Interview Boards I've been involved in, I've had a quota explicitly stated. One board didn't mention a quota, but funnily enough, the exact same number of females came in that year. The Cadets this year could tell you how many females are coming in this year.
(Interview No. 24, 11/8/99)

This view is echoed repeatedly throughout the sample for both officers and other ranks.

(B)efore the interview takes place, the army decides beforehand how many females they're going to take and they stick by that. Even though they might have 20 females who are suitable and more than qualified, you'll never get a platoon of recruits with twenty women. I've been in the army for two years and in that time there's always a maximum of seven women.
(Interview No. 14, 20/4/99)

(There are normally seven soldiers per section in an infantry platoon)

Thirty of the women referred specifically to an alleged quota system which they felt was in operation and which was unfair towards women. The other 18 women from the sample cited other reasons as to why the recruiting system was biased towards men. Interviewee No. 5 put forward a novel theory:

In the overall selection there is a preference for men. The male is more compliant and is happy to do the brain-dead work. I mean, who would stand in the road ten hours a day up in Al Yatun. And volunteer again and again?
(Interview No. 5, 14/4/99)

('Stand in the road' refers to check point duty in Lebanon)

Other women felt that at the interview and selection process, they were compared to men, and that they were disadvantaged in the comparison.

When I was interviewed I was asked; A fella can do x, y or z, can you? I felt I was being compared to men. I was told I'd be coming in to a man's environment. (Interview No. 36, 8/9/99)

20% of the sample however felt the entry system for the army was fair. The emphasis in many of their answers is interesting; "Yes the system is fair. The women have to go through everything the men do. There's no favouritism". (Interview No. 42, 11/9/99). "Yes the system is fair. You have the same tests and interviews for men and women". (Interview No. 34, 6/9/99)

The overall attitude of the women I spoke to could be summed up in the following quotes;

They see the army as being for men.
(Interview No. 9, 16/4/99)

They say there's equal opportunities, but there isn't.
(Interview No. 13, 19/4/99)

They don't really want women in the army. If they had a choice between men and women, they'd take men first.
(Interview No. 21, 28/7/99)

The system is obviously not fair if only such a small percentage of women are in.
(Interview No. 6, 14/4/99)

80% of the service female personnel I interviewed believed that the induction system to the PDF is biased against women.

The results of both recruit and cadet competitions show there is a consistent core group of women who are interested in, and capable of military service. The women of the 1994 intake have performed as well as their peers to date. In some aspects they have outperformed their male peers. According to the figures given to me by Enlisted Personnel Section, the only recruits who were failed in their training, or who were found "not likely to become efficient" were male, (Source, E.P.S., Army Headquarters). The 5'3" females of the 1994 intake performed satisfactorily. The only personnel in 1999 who elected not to continue in service were female. (Source: Extension of Service Board, December 1998, Confidential)

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an introduction to the workplace setting of the PDF, which is the focus of chapters five to eight of the thesis. Section one highlights the emphasis throughout subsequent chapters on the collective status of female personnel within the organisation in terms of numbers recruited ('critical mass'), empowerment through training ('education'), deployment ('experience') and promotion or access to 'strategic power'. Chapters five to eight profile the status and roles assigned female personnel throughout the organisation. The data presented in chapter five is examined in order to establish any evidence of a "women's effect" as described by Howes and Stephenson (1993:51) or "commitment" as described by Reskin and Padavic (1994:87) in terms of the numbers of women recruited to the organisation.

The second section of the chapter provides a brief account of the advent of the recruitment of women to the organisation. The section outlines the proposed establishment of a 'Women's Service Corps'. This section highlights the recommendations of the 'Committee on the establishment of a Women's Service Corps' which advocated lower pay for female personnel and the automatic termination of service for female personnel on becoming pregnant. The section concludes with the decision of the military authorities to abandon the concept of a 'Women's Service Corps' in favour of integrated service for women. This decision was reached in light of the provisions of the equality legislation enacted at that time.

Section three of the chapter contains a semiotic analysis of the uniform chosen for female personnel entering into service with the Defence Forces. The semiotic analysis links the highly gendered accoutrements of the female issue uniform and the original vision of separate service for women where they would be confined to clerical, driving, observer and welfare duties. The female pattern uniform, it is argued, was designed with a specific pattern of employment for female personnel in mind. Practical considerations meant that the female pattern uniform was more suited to secondary or support roles within the organisation. The symbolic importance of dress, especially in status related matters is emphasised by Argyle, (1978:331-332). In being denied participation in ceremonial duties on the basis of the uniform chosen for them by the military authorities, women found themselves denied the "strong feelings of dependence and togetherness" (Argyle 1978:193) provided for in such rituals or their full and public integration into the organisation. In essence, the uniform chosen for female personnel reflected the roles and status envisaged for them both practically and symbolically.

Section four of the chapter elaborated on this consideration of the practical and symbolic impact of the female pattern uniform with the inclusion here of data obtained at interview. A number of key points arise from the interview data. The vast majority of those women interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the female pattern uniform. Specifically, 46 of the 60 women interviewed expressed the view that the female pattern hat ought to be withdrawn. Many of those interviewed expressed a preference for a beret as worn by their male colleagues. Of the 19 officers interviewed, 14 expressed a preference for a peaked cap like those worn by their male peers citing status-related reasons for this change. Fifty-three of the women expressed dissatisfaction with the skirt as issued, with 58 advocating the right of female personnel to exercise a choice between wearing a skirt or trousers. Fifty-four of the 60 women interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the slip-on shoes as issued by the military, pointing out the difficulties caused when attempting to march in this style of footwear. Fifty-seven of the 60 reported not being able to obtain combat boots in their size. The data gathered here suggests that female personnel face many problems generated by a uniform, which was chosen for them by others. Many practical difficulties remain for female personnel in attempting to match the clothing chosen for them with the setting in which they work. It is significant to note that of the 60 women interviewed, only one has ever been asked for an opinion on any aspect of the female pattern uniform or the scale of issues of clothing and equipment to female personnel.

Section five of the chapter provides an outline of the methods in which personnel are recruited to the Defence Forces. Tables (i) and (ii) provided by the military authorities show the rank structure as it applies to other ranks, junior and senior non commissioned officers and junior and senior officers. Section six of the chapter deals specifically with the recruitment of other ranks (female) to the PDF from 1982 to date. A combination of sources and methods are utilised here in order to assemble the data presented. These include those figures for recruitment provided by the military authorities in table (iii) and information obtained during participant observation. The trebling in the numbers of women in the Defence Forces in recent years is explained as being the result of a sudden growth in numbers recruited to the Defence Forces since 1994 against a backdrop of a twelve-year embargo on recruitment. Despite this unprecedented growth in the numbers of women in the Defence Forces, the data still gives cause for concern in relation to the numbers of women being recruited to the PDF. The section contains evidence of quotas for the recruitment of female personnel, restrictive entry criteria in the form of arbitrary changes in the height requirement for female applicants and the citing of infrastructural reasons to justify quotas. The figures provided by the military authorities in table (iii) indicate the existence of an all-male intake of recruits in 1995. The table in its total figures suggests that women comprise 15.3% of the

total numbers applying for recruitment with women comprising 12.4% of those being recruited to the organisation.

Section seven deals with the recruitment of female cadets to the PDF. As was the case with the recruitment of other ranks (female) a combination of sources and methods was used to assemble the data presented on female cadet competitions. Table (iv) supplied by the military authorities contained figures relating to the 1994-1998 cadet competitions. The figures for the 1994-1996 competitions show that on average, women comprise 22.7% of all applicants. The figures for the same period show that women comprise 13.7% of candidates accepted and awarded cadetships. The figures provided show that women comprised 13.7% of all candidates accepted over the period 1994-1998.

Incorporated into section seven is the data obtained at interview on the subject of the induction of women to the Defence Forces. Fifty-three of the sixty women interviewed indicated that there ought to be more women in the Defence Forces. Forty-eight of the sixty women interviewed stated that they felt the system of entry was biased against women. Of these 48, 30 women expressed explicitly their belief that a quota system was in operation for female recruitment at all levels.

The recruitment of women to the Defence Forces, despite the fact that the numbers of women in the PDF have trebled in recent years, gives cause for concern for a number of reasons. Despite the numbers of women having trebled within the organisation, the numbers of women are very low (approximately 3% at time of writing) by comparison with other military (an average of 15% for all active NATO forces) and the remainder of the public service (48%). Fifty per cent of those women interviewed stated explicitly that they believed a quota system was in operation in the recruitment of women to the Defence Forces. Eighty per cent of those interviewed felt that the induction system to the PDF is biased against women. The inferences drawn from the data here are dealt with in some detail in chapter ten and ought to be of concern to the military authorities. It is significant to note that none of the women interviewed was ever consulted by the military authorities or asked for feedback on the manner in which they were recruited to the PDF.

CHAPTER FIVE.....	89
The integration and recruitment of women to the PDF	89
5.2 The concept of a Women’s Service Corps.....	91
5.3 The female pattern uniform as visual code	93
5.4 The recruitment of female personnel to the defence forces.	99
Table iii: Direct Entrant Categories: PDF.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.5 The enlistment of other ranks (Female).....	101
Year	108

