

A gender-neutral socialization at the Royal Military Academy?

Delphine RESTEIGNE
Chair of Sociology

*Third ERASMUS + Gender Seminar:
“How to strengthen gender perspective within the European basic officer education?”*

2 March 2021



Content

1. Several tools used at the Belgian Defence

Socialization as an enabler to encourage organizational changes and inclusion

2. What do we do at the Royal Military Academy?

Diversity plan and lines of actions

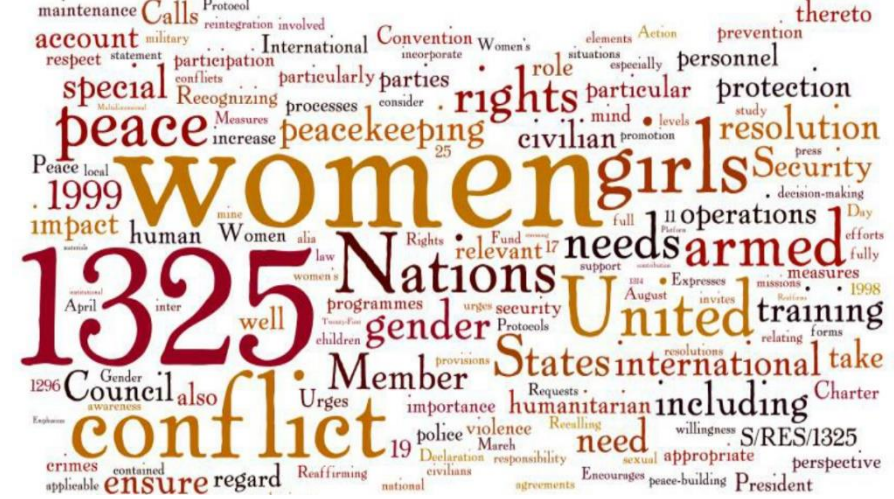
3. Conclusions

Several tools

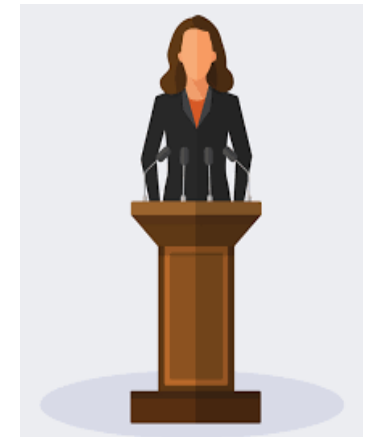
National legislation and action plans

Women and civil society participation in peace negotiations

Other commitments: training programmes, WPS conferences, etc.



➔ Emphasis placed on gender in professional military education and leadership roles



Belgian National Action Plan

Third NAP (2017-2021) : Objectives/ lines of actions/ Indicators/
Departments

6 main objectives:

- Promote the implementation of the international normative framework;
- Integrate a gender dimension into Belgian actions in conflict, peace and security;
- Fight against all forms of violence against women and girls, and more specifically sexual violence;
- Promote women's participation in processes concerning conflict, peace and security;
- Support the agenda WPS;
 - Assure that the WPS agenda and the NAP are followed and monitored.

Areas with little progress :

8.7% of women at the Belgian Defence (2019 >< 1978: first women)

5,9% of female military personnel in operations

According to a survey conducted in 2016 among women at the Belgian Defence, **27%** of female military personnel was never sent to military operations (although they would have liked to participate)

Areas with some positive changes: 😊

Current Minister of Defence

Royal Military Academy

MOD: Ms. De Donder (since October 2020)



People our priority (POP programme)

«We plan to recruit a lot, mostly young people and with a special attention to diversity ».

Promoting gender-neutral leaders in military academies

One of the main obstacles with regard to gender is the **organizational culture** of military organizations

Culture (more than policy) impacts our actions and the identity and image of the organization

→ **Professional socialization = one of the enablers to adapt the military culture to current social changes and challenges... and make it more gender-neutral**

We are all influenced by our cognitive biases

Picture a Leader. Is She a Woman?

Most people will draw a man. Researchers investigate the consequences.

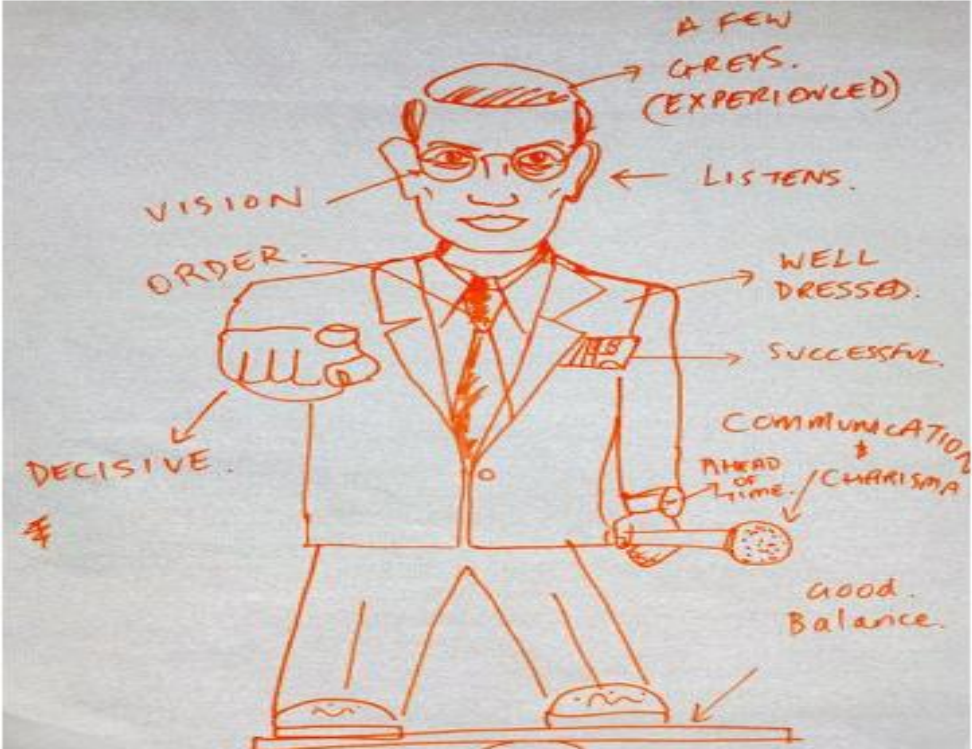
By Heather Murphy

March 16, 2018



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This series of images emerged from a simple prompt: “Draw an effective leader.”



Both men and women almost **always draw men**

How might holding unconscious assumptions about gender affect people's abilities to recognize emerging leadership?

Getting noticed as a leader in the workplace is more difficult for women than for men

E.g. impact of the voice

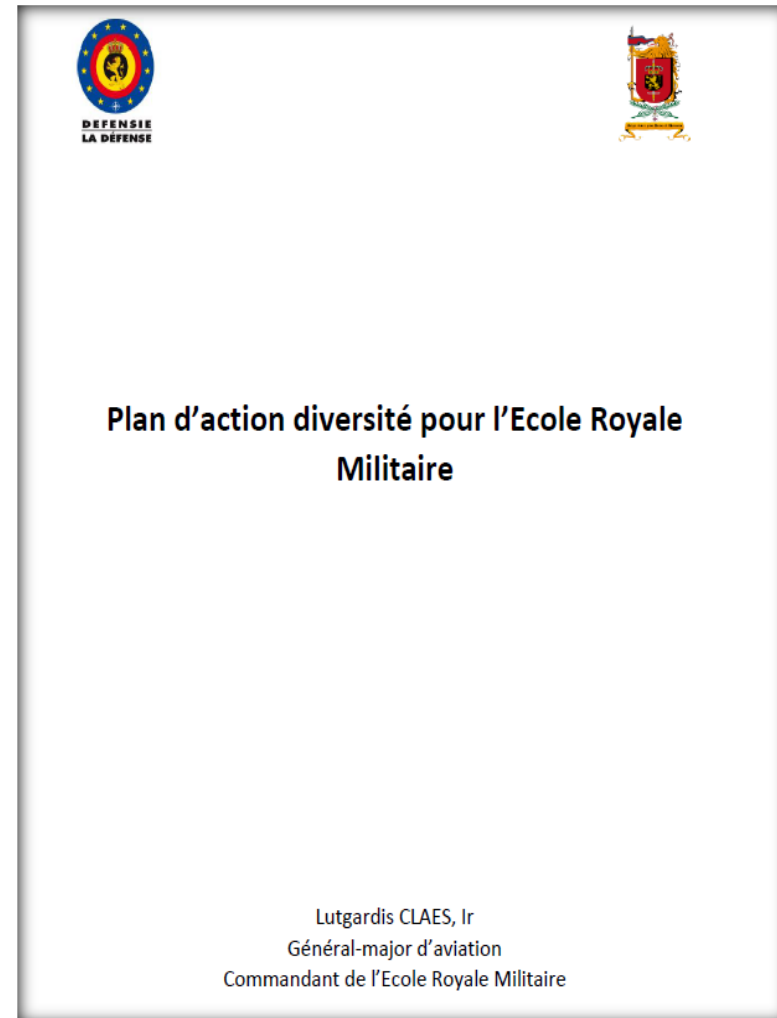
Even when a man and a woman were reading the same words off a script, only the man's leadership potential was recognized

More and more female cadets at the RMA

	% Women in SSMW	% Women in POL
2015	21	20
2016	24	8
2017	14	11
2018	17	13
2019	20	17
2020	27	20

What do we do at the RMA?

Since 2019: diversity action plan
with the support of the top
management and which
involves all layers of the organization
(including cadets)



Current phase: collect qualitative and quantitative data

Attrition report :based on 250 interviews conducted with cadets who left the RMA between 2013 and 2019

- Gendered issues? Difficulties related to military culture and sports

Diversity survey : conducted in autumn 2020 to gather data regarding all types of diversity

- Determine specific line of actions

Encourage cadets to study (gender) diversity through bachelor and master thesis (Chair of Sociology)

Other initiatives: Diversity theater (for Bachelor 2 students) with role plays for cadets and discussions



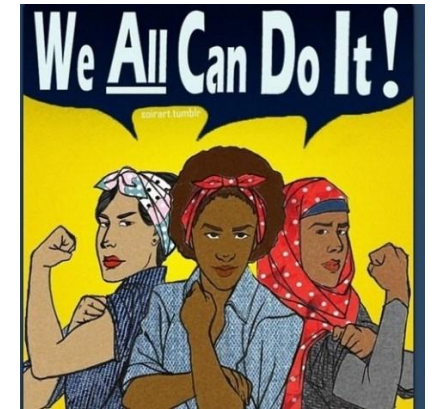
Conclusions

Some slight gender “fatigue” but organizational changes also begins during the socialization process

Encourage the development of a critical mass in the military academy and diversity in the minority group (more diverse women)

Support greater solidarity between women (network, ...)

Expose cadets to more women in leadership positions



Thank you.

Delphine Resteigne

Chair of Sociology

Royal Military Academy

Email: delphine.resteigne@mil.be