

Focus on What is Best for Combat Effectiveness

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Abstract

The combat exclusion policy created in 1994 to protect women must continue to be enforced. Demanding equal opportunity in war situations is preposterous when women are hindered by physical issues, psychological concerns, and moral aspects. Military effectiveness in combat would be touched by a wide range of women's issues from strength to pregnancy. In addition, both genders would face challenges with the combat body-to-body contact training, which could lead to sexual harassment or assault situations. Overall, equality at the expense of mankind's valuable child-bearers is not in the best interest of American society and should not be compromised for women to participate in combat.

Focus on What is Best For Combat Effectiveness

“Life is about give-and-take, but some issues cannot be compromised!” states S. Toronto. One issue that the United States of American has held fast to is not only a policy, but, also, an American distinctiveness in regard to women and their placement in combat. A compromise which would allow women in combat zones would lead to new hurdles for the military and America’s culture. Nevertheless, debates are again raging that men and women should stand shoulder to shoulder in battle to ensure equality of the genders. Overall, this is preposterous to think the American culture could ever reach the point that equality of genders is necessary for war situations to be fair. War is not about fairness, it is ugly and destroys. Still, thankfully at this point the majority of Americans are not in favor of sending women to fight in a war! Therefore, the military should not change the Department of Defense regulations set forth in 1994, that bans women from being in combat zones and should reinforce the policy strictly. The rationale for no women in combat are based on the physical aspects, the psychological issues and most importantly the moral reasons.

To begin with, the obvious is in the physical structure differences of men and women. This factor cannot be changed and thus has resulted in the military having to create different expectations and training methods to meet the gender differences. Evidence of this can be found in the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces reports. According to Cort Kirkwood (2003), a previous member of this force, the findings were that women when challenged in combat situations are only as strong as the weakest military man. Indeed, even after intense training the servicewomen who had gained strength were still performing at a lower physical output level than their counterparts. Supporting proof was obtained using the Army Physical Fitness Test, which released results that classified women in the top fifth of the group scored equal to men in the bottom fifth of testing (Mitchell, 1998).

Overall, the rigors of combat do not allow for weaknesses and if those on the battlefield are less than top-notch there is a reduction in military effectiveness. To date even the feminists who are aware of the differences have not pursued lawsuits or publicly requested change to rectify such differences in training requirements (Fenner & deYoung, 2001).

Furthermore, the bone structure of a woman does not lend itself to the combat challenges soldiers must endure and injuries occur. For example, the gear each soldier must carry weighs 100 lbs at its lightest (Mitchell, 1998). Consequently, a woman's body is not designed with upper body strength that men possess and this grueling weight leads to an increase in women's health problems and injuries. According to Erin Solaro (2006) research data shows that women experience higher incidents of illness and seek medical attention more frequently than fellow men soldiers. In addition, the occurrence of stress fractures has been recorded as 1.5 to 5 times above men in related courses.

Of course one reason for women having more stress fractures than men could be tied to cultural influences of the way American genders regard personal body mass. Meaning a person that has high muscle mass is able to protect trauma to the bones more effectively. If the army training focused on bulking up in muscle mass, increased acceptable weight levels and pushed the muscular body as necessary for military effectiveness than American society would need to make a cultural change in how the body's of men and women are compared. The reality is a servicewoman is a woman when she's off duty and would have to be emotionally strong to accept that currently the American norm is not muscular women. Therefore, the question arises does the cultural belief really need to be pressured into changing since military effectiveness is currently superior without involvement of women in combat. Indeed, American culture does not need to adjust and the military officials need to cease twisting the rules to fit their decisions without authorization.

Within this same realm of physical differences is the issue of servicewomen's child-bearing capability. The human race is by far the most intelligent form of life on planet Earth and thus the survival instinct of this species is automatically top-priority; just as in even the lowest functioning species (Miller & Levine, 2002). Survival depends upon reproduction and the American society knows this. Therefore, man instinctively is driven to shelter the child-bearer from harm. Whereas, combat situations need non-gender thinking to ensure the safety of all soldiers on the battlefield. However, man is man and when conditions are at the most trying and hellish, differences in genders do rise to the surface. There is no need to put the military effectiveness in combat zones to the test when there is already a policy in place keeping women out of such situations of war. Currently, the military is not short of male soldiers, so equal opportunity to be killed really isn't in the best interest of American society.

Additional circumstances that are gender orientated and necessitates addressing, also, falls within the servicewomen's realm; menstruation and pregnancy. Servicewomen are provided the option to receive hormone shots or pills to stop them from menstruating, but cannot be forced to select this alternative. If a woman does select temporary menstruation stoppage poor sanitary conditions have resulted in many women experiencing yeast and urinary infections, which would most likely be intensified in combat situations (Mitchell, 1998). Even if women do not want to discuss the affects these areas can have on a women's military performance the truth is when the body is fighting an infection or menstruating, peak physical performance is not occurring. This would not be acceptable and could risk operations. It is, also, important to note that combat zones have few if any bathroom facilities and these poor conditions increase health risks when days may pass without proper hygienic care (Fenner & deYoung, 2001). Women need not be exposed to such poor combat conditions if the policy to ban women from combat zones and

battlefields were enforced to the ultimate level. On the issue of pregnancy; combat and pregnancy are not compatible and never will be.

Another point why women should not be combat soldiers is because of the sexual situations that can arise between genders. To begin with romantic relationships would hinder the effectiveness of soldiers doing the tasks required in battle. Generally, romance breaks down the logical thinking; because soldiers are people and people act with emotions. When individuals are in a romantic relationship they tend to try to protect each other instead of doing what is best for the unit. According to Marie deYoung (2001), the military has spent considerable time and money on training that addresses soldier relationships and consequences. However, people are human and when emotions are involved logic many times takes a back seat to feelings even with all the training. Overall, it is normal for men and women to socialize sexually, thus the easiest way to keep this from happening is to keep combat zones a man's place only.

An additional reason to keep the ban policy in affect is to prevent having a female soldier in combat captured and exposed to enemy treatment she would receive as a prisoner of war. Those who support placement of women in dangerous combat tend to gloss over their lack of control for equality of treatment in these horrific situations. The soldier's gender to the enemy does affect how the soldier will be treated. The enemy will demoralize or torture female POWs too; one way would be through rape. An example of this was Army PFC. Jessica Lynch, who was brutalized when she became a POW in Iraqi and ultimately was raped (Kirkwood, 2003). In addition, a male soldier captured at the same time has to face the brutalization of the woman without comprising the integrity of the mission to save the woman from further harm. Men are taught by their mothers to protect the women species at any cost. This caring trait would have to be removed and replaced with hard core thinking; a compromise our society it not ready to make.

In addition a neon flashing point that supports prohibiting the mixing of genders in ground combat are the military issues of sexual harassment and assault that have gained momentum in the last several years. It would seem that the fear of this would slow down the Army official's relaxing and manipulating policy to include women in combat. Obviously, placing women in combat would mean women and men would have intense preparation for war situations together. Both genders would be trained as though on the battlefield, which would involve close up gender body-contact, nude chemical detoxification exercises, hand-to-hand and many other physical training exercises, which justifiably raises concerns that sexual harassment or assault charges would abound (Fenner & deYoung, 2001). For the most part men feel the power the women hold over their heads in regards to a women's interpretation of contact or word exchange. However, camaraderie must occur within a group for success. As deYoung (2001) has repeatedly expressed; if women truly want equal treatment then when soldiers are in combat training scenarios genders must blend into a fighting unit that differences of genders are not predominant. Almost an impossible task, because men and women are not alike.

Another issue and the most compelling one is the moral aspect. Vietnam War hero Ron Ray stated, "The question isn't whether women can do, it's whether they should do it" (Kirkwood, 2003, p.3). Yes, America is the great land of opportunity where men and women should be able to follow their dreams, but war is not a dream. In other words, women should be spared from having to bear arms and fight in combat. We are a country that cherishes life and rely on the female gender to bear new life; so since men cannot do this then being the protectors of women is an equal trade off of giving to our nation. American fathers do not dream of their little girls growing up to be combat soldiers and have trusted the government and Army officials to not place them in such positions. Lately, this trust has been tested by military officials swaying their interpretation of the ban on women in combat to be more and more women placed in the line of

fire. According to Elaine Donnelly (2007), the lack of approval by the Secretary of Defense and notification to Congress about rising involvement of women in combat situations is constantly increasing and the military needs a wake-up call to stop these violations. Once the line of trust is severely broken there will most definitely be repercussions and the army officials will discover how strong American society feels about keeping women away from combat.

War situations expose soldiers to such terrible events that emotionally soldiers are brutalized. This means the military must train men and women to regard such brutal events as common factors of war that they must accept. In turn people become hard and less feeling, which God did not intend for our women to be. The military training must attempt to destroy the natural mothering instincts of the woman and remove the man's protective nature for woman (Fenner & deYoung, 2001). The whole society will start to change to less compassion and more barbarism. Once mothers return from battle they will encounter new problems with motherhood (Mitchell, 1998). This will start the downward spiral of the United States culture and lead to a troubled decaying society.

On the other hand are the individuals who oppose the policy and want women to be allowed in combat. Such as Lorry M. Fenner (2001) whom vocally supports women in combat and continually argues that the military lacks effectiveness without the inclusion of women, reduces women's equality as citizens, and ultimately keeps women from reaching their highest advancement in a military career. In addition, supporters stress anytime genders are not treated equally society suffers (Mitchell, 1998). However, collected data and historical events stand as evidence that such opinions are unfounded.

In closing the intertwining of physical, psychological and moral aspects show why women do not belong in combat. If allowed the American society would experience a crack all the way to the center of its moral core if high numbers of females became entangled into war and their

injuries and casualties reached the same rate as the male gender. Basically, the American culture must rear up and demand the protection of its child-bearers. Therefore, the first defense is to stop the downward spiral by demanding the military adhere to and even strengthen the combat exclusion policy for women. Furthermore, both genders have different but equally important purposes when the country is faced with war; the male fights the battle and the female keeps the roots of the country running. Simply some issues cannot be compromised, so instead mankind must focus on what is best for this country; no women in combat!

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