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In January of 2016 the Secretary of Defense rescinded all gender-based combat restrictions. How the Marine Corps proceeds with this policy will either foster dissent and damage cohesion or capitalize on the expanded capabilities of all eligible service members. Current Marine Corps culture, however, does not promote a climate conducive to gender integration. This paper analyzes existing Marine Corps organizational culture, identifies obstacles to gender integration, and provides recommended changes. Conducting organizational culture change is not easy, but it is mandatory to ensure that the United States Marine Corps remains an effective fighting force.

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Organizational Culture and the United States Marine Corps:
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Executive Summary

Title: Organizational Culture and the United States Marine Corps: Removing Obstacles to Gender Integration through Culture Change

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Thesis: Current Marine Corps culture does not promote a climate conducive to gender integration. In order to successfully integrate females into combat arms military occupational specialties, Marine leaders must support egalitarian policies, value diversity, recognize the importance of all subgroups within the organization and leverage existing values of obedience, respect for authority, adherence to standard operating procedures, teamwork, and professionalism.

Discussion: In January 2016, the Secretary of Defense announced that all ground combat positions would be open to female service members. No longer a topic for debate, the Marine Corps must proceed with this directive. How the organization proceeds will either foster dissent and damage cohesion or capitalize on the expanded capabilities of all eligible service members to create the most effective fighting force. This paper analyzes the organizational culture of the Marine Corps through three levels of organizational culture: behaviors and artifacts, values, and assumptions and beliefs. Through this analysis, elements such as the repetition of negative historical patterns, noncommittal leadership, undervalued subgroups, and institutional gender bias are identified as obstacles to successful gender integration. The importance of supportive leadership is recognized throughout as a vital component necessary to implement the required cultural paradigm shift.

Conclusion: Required changes to organizational culture include implementing egalitarian policies that are openly supported by USMC leadership, fully realizing the benefits of diversity, and recognizing the importance of all subgroups within the organization. In contrast to the need for change, several elements within the existing culture can be leveraged to foster an organization more conducive to gender integration. These elements include the adherence to SOPs, obedience, respect for authority, and emphasis on teamwork and professionalism. Conducting organizational culture change is not easy, but it is mandatory to ensure that the United States Marine Corps remains an effective fighting force.

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Unless otherwise stated, whenever the masculine gender is used,
both men and women are not included.

Introduction

The Marine Corps has a strong organizational culture and fervent identity that is continuously challenged and forced to adapt to an ever-evolving, fluid, and dynamic society. Policies within the organization are updated to reflect changes that result from such adaptation. The latest mandated policy change is the integration of women into combat arms military occupational specialties (MOSs). Since the establishment of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in 1943, women's roles and responsibilities have slowly expanded to be more similar to their male counterparts, but this latest change is unprecedented, controversial, and groundbreaking.

It is the first time in United States' history that women are authorized to engage in ground combat without any restrictions. Current Marine Corps culture, however, does not promote a climate conducive to gender integration, and in order to successfully integrate females into previously closed combat arms MOSs, Marine leaders must support egalitarian policies, value diversity, recognize the importance of all subgroups within the organization, and leverage the existing values of obedience, respect for authority, adherence to standard operating procedures, teamwork, and professionalism.

The importance of leadership in this endeavor cannot be overstated. Understanding what culture is and how to change culture is an important aspect of leading military organizations.[1] Furthermore, organizational culture has a direct impact on unit readiness, cohesion, and morale. A leader's success is often dependent upon his or her understanding of organizational culture,[2] and when attempting to transform organizations, failure can result if a leader is unable to analyze existing culture sufficiently.[3] Marine Corps leaders at all levels of the organization will play a vital role in conducting the culture change necessary to successfully integrate females into combat arms MOSs.

This paper examines organizational culture within the Marine Corps and identifies the requirement for the USMC to update its policies, value diversity, recognize the importance of all subgroups within the organization, and emphasize existing values of teamwork, professionalism, respect for authority, and adherence to standard operating procedures. Doing so will remove the current obstacles to gender integration and ensure the future success of the United States Marine Corps.

Background

Throughout history, women's roles in the armed forces continuously evolved and expanded in terms of assignment, function, and responsibility. The most recent change came in January 2013, when then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta rescinded the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR). Enacted on October 1, 1994, DGCDAR was a progressive step forward that opened up forty-seven thousand previously closed occupations to women service members;[4] the only combat prohibition that remained was the assignment of women to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground.[5] By rescinding DGCDAR, all positions in the United States military are now open to all service members, regardless of gender. This unprecedented and historic policy decision did not come without controversy or conflict.

The services had until January 2016 to either, fully integrate female service members into previously closed MOSs or request and be granted an exception to policy. The three year grace period afforded each service the time to research and test the implications of the policy change, and to devise a plan to set the conditions for successful gender integration.[6]

The media immediately picked up on tensions between senior leaders within the USMC and Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Ray Mabus. A battle ensued in the media pitting the

USMC, which would presumably request an exception to policy, against the SECNAV, who publicly praised and supported the integration of women into combat arms MOSs. Sensationalized headlines, such as "Top Marine Blasts SECNAV on Infantry Women: He Does Not Want to See America Win in Combat"[7] and "Why Marines, Unlike Army and Navy, Are So Against Women in Combat"[8] promised to keep the topic of female Marines in combat arms MOSs contentious and controversial. The battle played out in the national spotlight as top Marine officials were the only service members who publicly dissented and openly opposed the policy change.

As the media predicted, the USMC requested an exception to policy. In his statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert Neller, stated that he made the request based on the USMC's "best military advice."[9] However, in January of 2016, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced that the Department of Defense's rescindment of DGCDAR would proceed with no authorized exceptions. The Marine Corps lost its very public and bitter battle. The organization now faces the task of gender integration and how it proceeds will directly affect readiness, cohesion, and morale.[10]

Organizational Culture: The Necessity for Change

As part of its analysis into gender integration, the USMC sponsored the RAND Corporation to review foreign militaries' efforts at integrating females into direct combat units. Foreign militaries began combat arms gender integration in the 1980s and there are currently fifty-five countries that authorize female service members to serve in infantry units.[11] The researchers reviewed twenty-one of those countries that most closely resembled the United States and focused on unit effectiveness, unit readiness, training, recruiting, retention, and cohesion. The intent of this research was to establish insight into the challenges and uncertainties faced by

the USMC and derive lessons learned that can be applied to integrating female Marines into combat arms MOSs.[12]

Although research into foreign militaries' experiences and subsequent comparison to the USMC is limited, the report established several key lessons learned that the USMC can utilize in its efforts to integrate females into combat arms MOSs. Two of the primary lessons learned have direct ties to leadership and culture. The research determined that leadership commitment and accountability are directly tied to the success of female integration. The report stated that "without this commitment from key stakeholders and without visible involvement by senior leaders, progress on integration is difficult or impossible to achieve."[13] A second lesson learned identified the need for a "true culture change within the military in order to support the integration of women into new occupations."[14] Understanding and applying these lessons are crucial to the success of USMC integration efforts.

The challenges associated with integration, however, are not new to the Marine Corps. The USMC has a long history of incorporating marginalized groups, including women and ethnic minorities, into the organization. Each time a marginalized group is incorporated, the same dysfunctional pattern presents itself:

> The out group is first deemed not fit to serve or not capable. They will be judged fit to serve only in a menial capacity which justifies limiting their benefits and opportunities to advance. They are segregated and not really accepted. As they prove themselves and the need for their services continues or increases, they gain expanded roles and might gain access to more opportunity and benefits. They have to maintain a low profile and not challenge dominant groups or values. If they do, they will be judged disloyal to the cause at the least, or at the most, charged with damaging efficiency or harming the cause. If not limited or contained by official policies, they are most likely to be still limited by the dominant group's refusal to accept them—by unofficial prejudices, discrimination, or harassment.[15]

Rescinding DGCDAR removes the last legal barrier on a whole class of people and provides the USMC with its final opportunity to break the above pattern. Current Marine Corps culture, however, does not produce a climate that is conducive to gender integration. In order to break the pattern of history, the Marine Corps must undergo a paradigm shift within its organizational culture.

Organizational Culture: Theoretical Framework

For the purposes of this discussion, organizational culture is defined as the "assumptions, ideas, and beliefs, expressed or reflected in organizational practices that give meaning to the activity of the organization."[16] Culture is created, maintained, and changed by people; leaders within an organization play a particularly vital role in each of those functions. New members of the organization are introduced and absorbed into the culture through a socialization process, reinforced through interaction with peers, co-workers, and supervisors.[17] An organization's culture not only gives meaning to the organization's activity, but it essentially determines "how we do things around here."[18]

Edgar Schein, a professor at MIT whose work heavily influences the study of organizational culture, states that culture is found within three levels of any organization: behaviors and artifacts, values, and assumptions and beliefs. Behaviors and artifacts comprise the most visible level of culture; they are the "outward manifestation" of behavior patterns that demonstrate what a group is doing.[19] Within the Department of Defense, examples of artifacts consist of uniforms and equipment, while military rites and rituals demonstrate desired behaviors.

The second level of culture in Schein's model is values. An organization's mission statement, policies, and charters reflect its values.[20] It is important to note that an organization's

espoused values may often be in conflict with the third and deepest level of culture: assumptions and beliefs.[21] Assumptions and beliefs are most closely tied to the human aspect of the organization, and the human part is often the most difficult obstacle to navigate when managing the change process. In her book on gender and organizational behavior, Elisabeth Wilson states "for any change to be effective, it is crucial to challenge and clarify people's beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes because the potent leverage for significant and sustainable change resides within the human system."[22] It is difficult for most organizations to identify and articulate their underlying assumptions and beliefs, but in order to understand and affect organizational change, leaders must be able to comprehend and correctly analyze all three levels of organizational culture.[23]

Organizations reside within a larger society, essentially a "host" culture comprised of the external environment.[24] Due to the external influences on organizations, any review of organizational culture must be done with an understanding of its host culture. Wilson refers to this phenomenon as "cultural traffic." She states that elements such as "gender, class, ethnic, and national origins" are particularly subjective to cultural traffic.[25] This means that members of an organization will influence organizational culture with the existing beliefs and assumptions imparted from their external environment.

Subgroups within an organization also account for varying influences on culture. An organization may contain a plethora of subgroups, and although they are associated with the ideologies of the dominant culture, their very existence creates the possibility of diverse viewpoints.[26] It is not uncommon for subgroups to create their own subculture, each with its own "network of meaning," its own values, assumptions, and beliefs.[27] Within the DOD, each

military service has its own subculture, and subcultures can be further broken down between MOS, officer and enlisted, geographic location, and specific units.

When managing organizational change, it is most important to note that one subgroup often "owns" the dominant culture.[28] In order to successfully implement change, leaders must identify the "cultural unit" that has the most impact on and directly affects the organizational culture. In order to successfully transform organizational culture, leaders must understand all three levels of an organization's culture, the external influences such as cultural traffic, and the internal influences such as subgroups and the dominant cultural unit. Cultural transformation is no small feat.

United States Marine Corps' Organizational Culture

It is critical to analyze existing USMC organizational culture in order to identify the obstacles to gender integration. The following section examines USMC culture through Schein's three levels of organizational culture and the USMC host culture, and identifies the dominant cultural unit and several key subgroups within the organization. Each of these elements plays a vital role in establishing the current culture and must be understood in order to achieve desired change.

The United States Marine Corps prides itself on its strong cultural identity that is forged in history, heritage, and tradition. New members of the organization are initiated into the culture through the socialization of initial training. The initial training is a rigorous rite of passage where each individual is transformed and "made" into a Marine.[29] Initial training sets expectations and standards for both officers and enlisted Marines alike, and by design, the training is gender segregated. Segregated training, however, instills biases. In its report on the USMC integration plan, the Center for Strategic and International Studies determined that morale and unit cohesion

may be negatively affected the longer it takes to integrate and expose male and female Marines to each other.[30] The report claims that as the USMC proceeds with gender integration, combat effectiveness will be negatively affected by the biases instilled through segregated training.[31]

The mantra "Once a Marine, Always a Marine," is recited repeatedly and elicits pride and loyalty to the organization. Culture is considered the "glue that holds people together, particularly when they have diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and talents."[32] The Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11, titled *Leading Marines*, supports that concept, and declares that "Being a Marine transcends our differences."[33]

A quick review of the demographics within the Marine Corps identifies where those differences exist. Based on a 2013 manpower report, the USMC is 79.14% white and 92.96% male.[34] The remaining minorities consist of 7.04% women, 10.33% black, and 10.53% other races such as Asian, Indian, and Pacific Islander.[i] [35] Considering the demographics, the hierarchical power structure within the USMC guarantees that the majority of the leadership consists predominantly of white men.

Another demographic distinction within the Marine Corps is the ratio of combat arms MOSs compared to combat support MOSs. Although less than 25% of Marines hold a ground combat arms MOS, the ground combat element is considered the most important and critical component of the organization. According to former Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, "Marines have placed the rifleman at the core of our institutional focus."[36] An aviator himself, this statement demonstrates the importance and favoritism placed on the warfighter. To the detriment of the organization's cohesion and morale, the organization's

[i] Hispanic Marines accounted for 14.6% of all Marines, but were not tallied as an individual ethnic group. Instead they were documented as Hispanic/white, Hispanic/black, Hispanic/Asian, etc.

culture undermines the legitimacy of non-combat arms MOSs and establishes the ground combat arms MOSs as the dominant cultural unit.

USMC & Schein's Three Levels of Organizational Culture

Reviewing the USMC through Schein's three levels of organizational culture depicts a culture steeped in military heritage and tradition, but also reveals organizational bias and highlights the differences between Marine Corps stated values and its assumptions and beliefs. These differences are predominantly what make current Marine Corps culture incompatible with successful gender integration into combat arms MOSs.

Behaviors within Marine Corps culture consist of ceremonial rites and rituals such as parades, formations, and promotion and retirement ceremonies. Each of these rituals demonstrate desired behaviors and characteristics such as discipline, adherence to standard operating procedures, hierarchical command, and respect for authority.

Examples of artifacts, the second element within the most visible level of culture, are Marine Corps uniforms and revered heroes. The uniform is closely linked to history and tied to organizational identity. When the Marine Corps first allowed females to join the organization, they were not afforded the benefits of full membership. The Marine Corps Women's Reserve was established in 1943, and women served as support staff to the regular Marine Corps, were officially referred to as "Women Marines," and wore a distinctly separate uniform to indicate their secondary status.[37] In 1975, "there was a mood to erase all appearances of a separate organization for women in the Marine Corps and an effort was made to refer to the women simply as Marines."[38] Despite this advancement, female Marines continued to wear a separate uniform.

While watching midshipmen in uniform at a Naval Academy football game in 2009, Mabus had an epiphany and realized the disparity of requiring separate uniforms for male and female service members.[39] The secretary posed the following question: "If we ask another group to wear a different uniform, can you imagine the trouble we'd get in?"[40] Mabus believed the separate uniforms, whether conscious or unconscious, created a bias and stood as a symbolic barrier between male and female service members. By its very nature, a uniform should denote consistency and uniformity amongst all members of the organization. Mabus directed the Navy and Marine Corps to begin testing a single uniform that all service members would wear, regardless of gender.

The Marine Corps' first efforts to create a gender-neutral uniform began with the white dress cover. Initial attempts to incorporate the historic "Dan Daly" cap were widely unpopular because of its resemblance to the modern female cover.[41] After a series of tests, surveys, and opinion polls, the Marine Corps determined that the current male cover would be the future gender-neutral cover. The requirement for a single uniform promotes equality and uniformity for all service members, but the resistance towards anything resembling a female uniform demonstrates organizational bias in that female service members will likely assimilate to a men's uniform.

Revered heroes are another example of Marine Corps cultural artifacts. Heroes personify desired behaviors and characteristics; they live on through legend and stories learned in initial training and passed from one generation of Marines to the next. Marines learn what is important through popular heroes and stories associated with them. The names Dan Daly, Smedley Butler, and Chesty Puller are synonymous with brave, selfless, and heroic warfighters that all Marines are taught to honor and emulate. The absence of popular female heroes is indicative of current

Marine Corps culture. Wilson argues that retelling tales of current military heroes is a means to glorify male dominance,[42] and in doing so, it highlights the bias in how the organization defines "hero." What the organization focuses on, is just as important as what it chooses to ignore.

The Marine Corps' primary values of honor, courage, and commitment are clearly defined and can be recited by all Marines. Additional values are defined by the Marine Corps' naval character, expeditionary mindset, professionalism, and commitment to selfless service.[43] All Marines learn the fourteen leadership traits and eleven leadership principles before earning the title *Marine*. Many individuals join the Marine Corps to be part of something larger than themselves, to be members of a winning team. Amos asserts, "We win battles as units, not as individuals."[44] As such, teamwork, uniformity, and mission accomplishment are highly sought after organizational values.

The stated values elicit a united culture that "transcends differences;" however, the Marine Corps culture has historically been one of exclusion for different classes of society. Influenced by the external host culture, federal regulations required occupational closure based on gender, race, and sexual orientation. The Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 authorized women to serve in the armed forces, but limited their membership to two percent of the total force and specifically prohibited women from serving in combat aircraft and aboard all combat ships.[45] There was no specific prohibition from ground combat; at the time, that was omitted as an assumed restriction. Since 1948, the restrictions placed on female service members have slowly eroded. Significant advancements include gender integration of Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs in 1972 and the service academies in 1976, and the elimination of the restriction of females in combat aircraft in 1991 and aboard combat ships in 1993.[46] As women's rights expanded, similar restrictions on racial minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

transgender individuals were also removed. Rescinding DGCDAR is a historic decision that removes the final restriction on a whole class of people. It is the ultimate policy decision that truly transcends differences.

The third and deepest level of culture, assumptions and beliefs, are the most evasive and difficult to identify, but critical to understand if an organization is to undergo successful change. "Every Marine [is] a rifleman" is a popular mantra and belief that all modern Marines espouse. During initial training, the socialization into USMC culture, all prospective Marines learn basic infantry skills. This is reflective of the Marine Corps' institutional focus on the rifleman and attempts to unify all Marines through common skills and abilities. The prevalence of this mantra distinguishes Marines from the other services within the DOD. However, while this is a stated belief, it fails to transfer into the underlying assumptions of the organization's members.

In the summer of 2012, the USMC conducted an online survey for all active and reserve component Marines titled "Women in Combat Units." The intent of the survey was to "collect information from Marines on their opinions about gender-based ground combat restriction policies."[47] The survey questions focused on Marines' thoughts towards current combat exclusion policies and opinions regarding potential benefits and concerns if DGCDAR restrictions were to be lifted.[48] The survey results showed male and female respondents had vastly opposing opinions.

Overwhelmingly, the male respondents did not support the integration of females into combat arms MOSs and further believed that gender integration would adversely affect unit readiness, cohesion, and morale.[49] Every Marine may be considered a rifleman, but clearly not every Marine is welcome to serve in that capacity. The majority of female respondents, on the other hand, supported gender integration and did not believe there would be a negative effect on

readiness, cohesion, or morale.[50] The survey results are only reflective of those who participated (twenty-three percent of the total force), but are an indication that the underlying assumptions of the organization's members may not be aligned with its stated values.

The *Marine Corps Gazette's* 2013 essay contest winner is another indication of underlying beliefs and assumptions within the organization. Established in 1916, the *Gazette* is considered the professional journal of the U.S. Marines. Unlike other tabloid news sources, the *Gazette* is a renowned journal that is endorsed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps and considered "required reading" for all Marine Corps officers. In 2013, the *Gazette* selected the winner for its annual essay contest. Written by a female intelligence officer, the essay was titled "Why Women Don't Belong in the U.S. Infantry." The author argued that gender integration would disrupt the infantry's identity, jeopardize readiness, increase the number of sexual assaults, and not allow men to "fart, burp, and tell raunchy jokes" in a politically correct environment.[51] The popularity of this article and its status as the 2013 contest winner is a clear indication of underlying beliefs within the organization.

USMC Culture: Host Environment and Subgroups

Any review of USMC culture would not be complete without also understanding the external environment from which its members originate. To this point, it is important to recognize that the institutional gender bias within the Marine Corps is not an anomaly, as many members join the organization with pre-existing biases. Since the ancient Greeks, western culture has been based on a male-superior gender ideology.[52] This ideology presupposes that men are superior because of their greater physical size and strength and prescribes males the role of provider and defender for less capable, dependent women.[53] According to Geert Hofstede, an

expert on national cultures,[ii] the United States is a predominantly masculine society.[54] American culture displays a preference for achievement, strength, courage, assertiveness, and rational and dominant action; traits stereotypically associated with masculinity. In a masculine society, stereotypically feminine traits, such as modesty, passivity, vulnerability, and being emotional, are considered liabilities.

The preference for stereotypically masculine traits drives gender stereotypes and creates career barriers based on gender related assumptions.[55] For example, contemplate the previous combat exclusion policies and consider whether they were based on physical ability or solely based on accepted gender norms and cultural stereotypes.[56] The erosion of previous policies indicates the latter. As an expert on gender and organizational behavior, Wilson states that "awareness of gender differences and appropriate roles and behavior are examples of societal assumptions that are imported into organizations."[57] The societal assumptions imported into the military in 1948 restricted the first female service members to feminized occupations and imposed gender-specific restrictions on their service that still linger in today's modern military.

Recognizing the existence and impact of subgroups within the Marine Corps is also important to understanding its organizational culture. There are numerous subgroups within the Marine Corps all based on differing identities, roles, and functions. While each of these subgroups is distinct and influences culture with its varying viewpoint, the favoritism placed on the ground combat arms subgroup is detrimental to the morale and cohesion of the organization.

The remaining seventy-five percent of the Marine Corps, those within the combat support subgroup, are not afforded the same value or recognition as the combat arms subgroup. The acronym "POG" (person other than grunt) is used frequently with negative connotations and

[ii] A social psychologist, Geert Hofstede, is considered an expert in national and organizational cultures. He is most popularly known for his cultural dimensions theory in which he states that national culture can be classified along six dimensions and each dimension affects behavior within that society.

refers to any Marine without a ground combat arms MOS. This term, and others such as "indoor Marine," are meant to belittle and demean members of the combat support subgroup. Although friendly rivalries between the two opposing subgroups could potentially boost morale and increase teamwork, the current culture capitalizes on the differences and creates hostility. The inferior status of combat support Marines makes them a marginalized subgroup whose contributions to the team are overlooked and undervalued.

As a minority within the lesser subgroup, female Marines are doubly impacted. The combat exclusion policies within the organization create an institutional bias that subjugates female Marines even further. Regina F. Titunik, a professor at the University of Hawaii who specializes in women and war, describes this phenomenon further: "Because they are still excluded from combat roles – and the prestige associated with them – women will inevitably continue to be seen as inferiors and suffer the indignities associated with this subordinate status."[58] The culture of the Marine Corps, created and maintained through its policies of exclusion, established a marginalized subgroup based on gender.

Cultural Paradigm Shift

Culture can be used to identify 'gaps' between a current state of affairs and desired behaviors, values, beliefs, and assumptions.[59] The current culture of the USMC does not promote a climate that is conducive to the successful integration of women into combat arms MOSs. Although there is a gap between the current state of affairs and the desired end state, not all aspects of the culture must change. Indeed, many central tenets of Marine Corps culture can actually be used to support the needed change, and only a few critical elements within the current culture must be changed in order to support the integration of women into combat arms MOSs.

Required Changes

The Marine Corps needs to immediately update its policies to reflect the egalitarian values associated with gender integration. As discussed previously, the inegalitarian policies of separate uniforms and segregated training must be changed in order to remove biases that serve as barriers to gender integration. Furthermore, leaders at all levels of the organization must openly condone and support the updated policies. Updated policies will serve as formal guidelines to establish new values within the USMC's organizational culture. The new plans and policies must be consistent with gender-neutral standards; doing so will eliminate any remaining symbolic barriers to equality. Removing imposed restrictions is consistent with the values of an all-volunteer force[60] and military service in a democratic society.[61] Although this step is critical, it is even more vital that the updated policies openly be supported by USMC leadership.

Ultimately, the success of any change initiative is dependent on individuals adopting the change, and leadership plays a critical role in making that happen.[62] Findings from foreign militaries that incorporated females into combat arms indicate that success is only possible with the support of leadership.[63] Again, to repeat a finding from the USMC-sponsored RAND report on the integration of women into combat arms MOSs, "Without visible involvement by senior leaders, progress on integration is difficult or impossible to achieve."[64] Further findings and recommendations made by RAND indicate that USMC leadership should provide a clear and consistent message (both internal and external) in order to facilitate gender integration.[65] The messaging provided by USMC leadership will directly influence each individual Marine's response to organizational change and subsequently, gender integration.[66]

In the current debate regarding the integration of women into combat arms MOSs, Marine leaders have used unsupportive messaging that fuels the negative beliefs and assumptions within current Marine Corps culture regarding women in combat arms. In his statements to the

Senate Armed Services Committee, CMC General Neller stated that although the USMC requested an exception to policy, gender integration would proceed because "Marines follow orders."[67] This public statement, made by the most senior ranking officer in the USMC, can be perceived as a begrudging acknowledgement of the recent policy change. Initial training teaches all Marines the simple task of following orders, but the CMC's actions and public remarks must go beyond that to establish a positive tone and favorable direction for all Marines to emulate.

When referring to previous attempts at integration, Lorry Fenner[iii] explains that "The example of opposition they [leaders] set serves as a model for the rank-and-file. Junior members think that inclusion must have been forced on their leaders or that their prejudice, discrimination, and harassment will be condoned by senior leaders who feel the same, but are not in a position to resist civilian political forces."[68] Negative statements regarding gender integration are particularly influential because they seem to support existing beliefs and assumptions within current USMC culture. Historically, opponents of gender integration have reacted with foot-dragging, feigning ignorance, constant scrutiny, and gossip and rumors.[69] It is imperative that leaders take responsibility for the tone they set and the command climate in their units to ensure this type of resistance does not go unabated. In order to change existing culture and create a climate more conducive to gender integration, Marine Corps leaders must openly support, and not just acknowledge, the new policies.

Although senior leaders within the organization initially opposed gender integration, it is not duplicitous to focus on the benefits of leveraging the capabilities of all service members now that integration is federally mandated. In his comments to the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 2, 2016, Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley stated that the U.S. Army will

[iii] Dr. Lorry Fenner is a retired Colonel in the United States Air Force and currently works at National Defense University. She has spent her career as an outspoken proponent regarding the inclusion of women into combat arms.

continue to defend America and it will now do so "with the most capable and qualified men and women."[70] General Joseph Votel, the commander of the United States Special Operations Command, stated that he "stands behind Secretary Carter's decision" and in doing so he unambiguously offered his support.[71] Each of these leaders set a positive tone for all of their service members to emulate. It would not be hypocritical for Marine leaders to repeat this rhetoric, and the support would provide positive leadership and direction within the organization.

In addition to creating egalitarian policies that are supported by USMC leadership, the Marine Corps culture needs to adopt diversity as a core value. Diversity as a business model became popular in the 1960s when companies realized that a diverse workforce results in increased efficiency, productivity, and innovation.[iv] [72] Furthermore, diversity as a strategic plan opens the pool of potential candidates and ensures that top individuals are recruited and retained.[73] The benefits of diversity in the civilian workforce can be transferred and realized within the Marine Corps. If diversity is adopted as a core value and the organization's members truly experience its benefits, diversity will transfer into the organization's underlying beliefs and assumptions.

The most common argument against diversity is that the presence of women will negatively affect unit readiness, cohesion, and morale. Not only is this the most common argument, but it is also the longest standing argument and has been debated much the same way since the 1940s.[74] The same arguments were used in opposition to the integration of ethnic minorities and were proven false.[75] Although proof of these concepts can be subjective and less tangible than more objective measures, studies have shown that the presence of women does not have the expected adverse effects on unit readiness, cohesion, or morale.[76] In fact, under the right

[iv] Not unlike the military, the civilian workforce discovered the benefits of diversity after being forced to comply with federal regulations. Passed in 1964, Title XII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion.

circumstances, such as strong leadership and effective training, the presence of women actually strengthens these elements.[77] Such findings support the business model of diversity and demonstrate the value of diversity within an organization.

The Marine Corps currently pays lip service to diversity, primarily in its recruiting efforts. Marine Corps Recruiting Command publishes an annual Diversity Campaign Plan aimed at recruiting females and ethnic minorities. Previous commandants attempted to prioritize diversity through diversity task forces and general officer diversity summits. While these efforts are commendable, diversity has failed to transcend to the underlying beliefs and assumptions of its members.[v] The benefits of diversity will only be realized if this value is adopted and recognized by individual Marines. The majority of change processes intended for organizations are only effective if the change occurs at the individual level.[78] Changing the beliefs of individual Marines will present a unique challenge to the organization of the Marine Corps and its leadership.

It will be difficult, but Marine Corps leaders can have a direct impact on the organization's members' beliefs regarding diversity. This is done through action. John Katzenbach, a well-respected advisor and counselor to CEOs in corporate America, proclaims that change begins with behaviors, not mind-sets. Leaders "cannot simply tell people to think differently, they have to show them. It is easier to behave your way into new thinking rather than think your way into new behaviors."[79] The theory of positive deviance supports this concept and is used as a tool to achieve organizational change in both the public and private sectors.[80] The Marine Corps must take action, implement gender integration, and establish the policies

[v] Results from the 2012 Women in Combat Units Survey conducted by the United States Marine Corps showed that the majority of male respondents did not support gender integration and believed it would have adverse effects on unit readiness, cohesion, and morale.

associated with gender neutral standards in order for its members to recognize and believe in the benefits of diversity.

Studies show that exposure to a minority, under the right circumstances, usually breaks down the negative stereotypes associated with that minority.[vi] [81] The Marine Corps can capitalize on existing female Marines and their performance in combat to demonstrate the value of diversity. For over two decades, female pilots have a proven history of successful performance in combat. More closely aligned to ground combat, female engagement teams in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated the benefits of diversity by increasing the "outreach, security, and infrastructure and economic development of the local population."[82] Because these success stories have limited exposure to the majority of Marines, their effects have had minimal impact on the overall beliefs and assumptions within the organization. Implementing the new policy changes under supportive leadership must be done to influence beliefs and assumption through desired behaviors. If done properly, the value of diversity will be realized by individual Marines and affect a cultural paradigm shift that is conducive to gender integration.

The third and final element of Marine Corps culture that must change is the sole emphasis and importance placed on the ground combat arms subgroup. Although the Marine Corps has identified the warfighter as the core of its institutional focus, it must also understand that the warfighter cannot be successful without the existence of the combat support MOSs. The Marine Corps team is what truly wins battles. A common mantra that demonstrates the operational values of the Marine Corps is "Don't Break up the MAGTF [Marine Air Ground Task Force]." This statement demonstrates the importance of all MOSs within the USMC, but

[vi] The Contact Hypothesis, developed by Gordon W. Allport, states that prejudice towards a minority can be reduced under the right conditions. Among other factors, the conditions stipulate that a superior authority must support the integration and that members of the new group must be of equal status to the original members. Existing beliefs and assumptions within the USMC regarding women are negative because the integration of female Marines was not conducted under these positive conditions.

that same recognition fails to transfer to the individual combat support subgroup. In order to be a more cohesive and effective unit, Marine Corps culture needs to recognize and respect the contributions of every Marine within all aspects of the MAGTF, not just the warfighter.

The National Museum of the Marine Corps (NMMC) is a success story that demonstrates the progressive shift in cultural values and the recognition of previously unincorporated subgroups. While developing its more recent exhibits, the NMMC recognized that its previous exhibits were heavily infantry focused. There were few exhibits that recognized the contributions of the combat support MOSs. As such, the NMMC is undergoing a concerted effort to include combat support MOSs such as mortuary affairs, logistics, and engineers in its upcoming exhibits.[83] Recognizing the contributions and achievements of subgroups is a critical step towards changing Marine Corps culture. More action must be taken to incorporate subgroups into revered elements of Marine Corps culture. Doing so will create a culture that recognizes the value of diversity and subsequently, more conducive to gender integration.

Existing Elements of Marine Corps Culture

In contrast to the aspects of USMC culture that need to change, there are several existing elements within current Marine Corps culture that can be leveraged to support gender integration into combat arms MOSs. Existing cultures can be a powerful source of energy, and leaders who understand how to utilize existing culture to achieve desired modifications will be the most effective in implementing changes to organizational culture.[84] Specifically, certain behaviors and values within current USMC culture can be reinforced and emphasized to make the organization more conducive to gender integration.

Behaviors that leaders can use to support gender integration include adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs), obedience, and respect for authority and hierarchical

command. Once the egalitarian policies are updated to reflect gender neutral standards, adherence to SOPs will reinforce desired behaviors. The requirement for obedience and respect for authority can result in a culture that is conducive to gender integration, but only if leaders openly support the new policies.

Although these behaviors can be leveraged to create a culture more conducive to gender integration, it is just as important to note that the same behaviors can be equally damning without support from USMC leadership. If leaders continue to show reluctance and set a negative tone towards gender integration, respect for authority and hierarchical command will continue to foster a hostile environment. The influence of leadership cannot be overstated as desired behaviors will only be achieved with leadership support.

Existing values such as teamwork and professionalism can also be used to support gender integration. The importance of the team is a stated value within USMC culture, and teamwork can be used to develop cohesion amongst a diverse group. Task cohesion is "the extent to which group members are able to work together to accomplish shared goals," and it is directly related to group performance and success.[85] Effective leaders can foster teamwork through training and exercises that facilitate task cohesion, effectively creating a stronger organization through teamwork.

The existing value of professionalism can be used to create a competent and proficient organization that flourishes in a diverse environment. The organization's deference for professionalism resulted in the current policies regarding sexual assault, sexual harassment, fraternization, and equal opportunity. Although some members of the organization may perceive these policies as an administrative hassle, the policies exist within the organization and can be a valuable resource for leaders as the USMC proceeds with gender integration.

Opponents of gender integration argue that the close working conditions between men and women will result in an increased number of sexual assaults and sexual harassment incidents. Although there is not sufficient information to support this argument,[vii] leaders should rely on professionalism to uphold and enforce existing rules and policies, respond to accusations in a timely and proportionate manner, and take responsibility for the command climate. The USMC has an established formal office, the Sexual Assault and Prevention Response Office, which is trained to educate and inform Marines, and implement official prevention and response programs. Leaders must capitalize on this resource to provide education and awareness as a means to successfully manage potential challenges related to gender integration.

The established equal employment opportunity (EEO) structure within the USMC can also be used to capitalize on the existing value of professionalism. Headquarters Marine Corps has an official Equal Employment Opportunity Office that provides training and education, processes complaints, and provides alternative dispute resolution. Through this office, the Marine Corps ensures that members of the organization are not subject to illegal discrimination due to race, religion, gender, age, or reprisal to include hiring, firing, harassment, and promotions. Additionally, the merit based promotion system within the USMC is structured to eliminate unfair discrimination. Women have served in the USMC for almost a century, and formal policies exist to ensure that the organization remains professional. Leaders simply need to enforce and capitalize on the existing policies to ensure that the organization's stated values are realized.

Conclusion

[vii] In the summer of 2014, the Marine Corps Force Integration Office tasked the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) to evaluate whether or not the USMC should request on exception to policy regarding the rescindment of DGCDAR. After reviewing previous analysis and conducting discussions with USMC subject matter experts, CSIS determined that there was insufficient data to suggest that the number of sexual assaults and sexual harassment would increase as a result of the integration of females into the ground combat element.

Change is disruptive. Older organizations, such as the Marine Corps, are particularly vulnerable to the disruption caused by change because they are more established and have standardized routines.[86] Furthermore, change will only be successful if its members truly accept the changes. Although all stakeholders are affected by change, members within the organization are especially vulnerable because their "reasonable expectations based on historic culture may no longer be met in the new culture."[87] The Marine Corps' culture is steeped in tradition and fueled by the pride and loyalty its members display towards the organization. As an older and more established organization, it faces many challenges in trying to implement culture change and to adjust the "reasonable expectations" of its members. Marine Corps leaders should anticipate disruption, and not be deterred, as they implement the changes necessary for gender integration.

It is critical not to underestimate the importance of leadership in implementing and facilitating the required changes. Leaders have a direct effect on culture through what they pay attention to, measure, and control.[88] Leaders establish the command climate that is a direct reflection of organizational culture. As one of the eleven USMC leadership principles, leaders are taught to set the example. They must be cognizant of the impact they have on their subordinates and be thorough and deliberate in role modeling, teaching, and coaching.[89] Marines look to their leaders for accepted behaviors and values, and their "perceptions of the change climate within the organization is consistent with those of their leaders."[90] Furthermore, leadership reaction to critical incidents and organizational crises also impact the beliefs and assumptions of their subordinates.[91] Leadership within the United States Marine Corps is a critical component to organizational culture; successful change is not possible without it.

Required changes include implementing egalitarian policies that are openly supported by USMC leadership, fully realizing the benefits of diversity, and recognizing the importance of all

subgroups within the organization. In contrast to the need for change, several elements within the existing culture can be leveraged to foster an organization more conducive to gender integration. These elements include the adherence to SOP's, obedience, respect for authority and hierarchical command, and emphasizing teamwork and professionalism. Conducting organizational culture change is not easy, but it is mandatory to ensure that the United States Marine Corps remains an effective fighting force.

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