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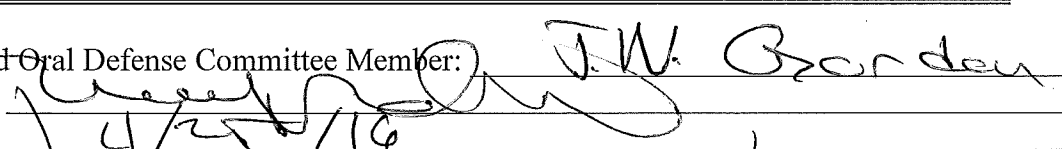
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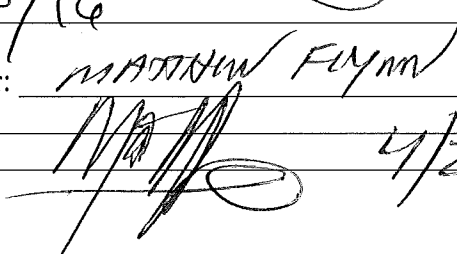
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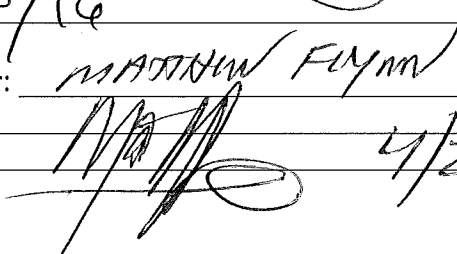
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Preface

My motivation to research the US military female integration into ground combat military occupational specialties was inspired by my fascination with justifications expressed by those who oppose it. I wanted to explore the rationalization used to justify discrimination based on a service member's gender rather than their qualifications. I found it ironic that a female service member in the United States military could theoretically lose her life trying to ensure equal rights while being restricted by the same institution she is operating within.

My outlook on the matter when I began researching this topic was that female service members do not want to be men, nor seek to blend all gender norms. Integration advocates seek equality in the opportunities afforded to both male and female service members. The ability to meet essential occupational performance standards should be the determining factor on whether or not an individual is qualified to serve in any capacity. A female that meets the standards should be afforded the opportunity to serve in a ground combat military occupational specialty.

After conducting my research, I have a greater appreciation for why some advocate for maintaining the status quo; however, my opinion has not changed. Gender alone should not be the eliminating factor. A successful integration will require everyone to keep an open mind and foster an environment that welcomes females. I predict the integration process will face resistance for the first few years but, once the males get used to female comrades, the integration will be seamless.

In no particular order, I would like to thank my family for their sacrifices that enabled me to complete my Masters of Military Studies requirements. I also want to thank my fellow AY15-16 Marine Command and Staff College students. Our conversations in the halls, library, gym, and over cold adult beverages kept me motivated. I would like to acknowledge my Master of Military Studies mentor, Dr. John Gordon and my instructors, LtCol Mark Liston and Dr. Paul Gelpi, for keeping me on schedule and encouraging me throughout the academic year. Last but not least, I want to thank the Library of the Marine Corps and Leadership Communication Skills Center (LCSC) staffs for their support, assistance, and patience.

Executive Summary

Title: US Military - Equal Employment Opportunity? Ground Combat Integration Examined

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Thesis: This paper will prove the US military should proceed with the abolishment of gender-based ground combat career field exclusions, the last major integration barrier.

Discussion: Female involvement in the US military has progressed but is not equitable. Although women are allowed to serve in the military, gender-based restrictions prevented them from filling ground combat military occupational specialties. Objective occupational standards should be the qualifying factor to determine a service member's eligibility, not their gender. All organizational changes are challenging but become seamless overtime. The initial costs associated with the integration will be burdensome on the service branches but equality is priceless.

Conclusion: There are substantiated advantages and disadvantages involved with integrating female service members into ground combat career fields. Despite recommendations to maintain the status quo, the Department of Defense is committed to integrating female service members into previously restricted career fields.

INTRODUCTION

As of January 2015 there were 201,400 active-duty women in the United States military.¹ They comprised approximately 15.3% of the active-duty force. Equal professional opportunity for all uniformed personnel has been a controversial issue that resurfaced in January of 2013 when then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta lifted restrictions imposed by the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR) limiting positions servicewomen were allowed to fill. Linear battlefield assumptions which, may not apply in recent and future conflicts, influenced restrictions on females employment in ground combat career fields. The Department of Defense (DoD) is actively addressing opportunity disparities by mandating female integration in all career fields with limited exemptions.

This research paper will examine how female involvement in the US military has progressed and whether or not the military enables maximum female service member contribution via equal opportunities. Their support to the military began with laundress, cook, and nurse support to servicemen prior to having the option to serve on active-duty, and then advanced to approved enlistments in restricted non-combat career fields. Today opportunities for females are more equitable. Women attend service academies, command fighter squadrons, and join the elite Army Ranger corps upon completion of training. Benefits of abolishing the ground combat limitations include equality among the sexes, capitalizing on diversity, and a larger population from which to recruit. The drawbacks associated with lifting the restrictions include: anatomical physical limitations that increase the odds of injury, decreased unit cohesion and effectiveness, and finally, the return on investment concerning the disparity between integration funding, training and manning requirements versus the benefits of the integration.

This paper will prove the US military should proceed with the abolishment of gender-based ground combat career field exclusions.

BACKGROUND ON FEMALE ROLES IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY

Women have participated in US military affairs as far back as the 1600s. Initially females performed non-combat support tasks in order to increase the pool of males available to fight. Unauthorized to enlist, women in the French and Indian War and the War of American Independence served as battlefield nurses, water bearers, cooks, and laundresses during the American Revolution. In the mid-1800s, female nurses worked under the War Department in the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) and the Red Cross providing aid to wounded soldiers during the American Civil War and as civilian contracted nurses under the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War.² The U.S. Navy Nurse Corps, established in 1908, followed the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, established in 1901. Females could enlist in the Army and Navy a decade later. In addition to roles previously filled, service women became bilingual telephone operators and office clerks in support of World War I stateside and overseas.

From 1941-1945, during World War II, female immersion advanced significantly. There were more than 400,000 servicewomen serving in the military stateside and overseas. The Coast Guard established the *Semper Paratus* – Always Ready (SPAR) Women’s Reserve to serve as stateside storekeepers, clerks, photographers, pharmacist’s mates, and cooks.³ Also, in 1942, the Army reorganized and “...established the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), which converted to the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) in 1943.”⁴ The Navy recruited over 80,000 women to serve in their Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) Navy Women’s Reserve. The WAVES filled communications, intelligence, supply, medicine, and

administration billets. Established in 1943, the Marine Corps' Women's Reserve allowed women to serve as stateside clerks, cooks, mechanics, and drivers. The World War II era was also noteworthy for creating female military aviation opportunities. The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) organized and flew as civil service pilots. Smith reports, "WASPs fly stateside missions as ferries, test pilots and anti-aircraft artillery trainers."⁵ Unfortunately, as the war ended and the country began to demobilize the military, decreased service end strength requirements, and discharged many of the servicewomen.

Progressively, "The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 granted women permanent status in the Regular and Reserve forces of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps as well as in the newly created Air Force."⁶ In 1967, the repeal of a stipulation placing a two percent cap on the number of enlisted women serving and 10 percent of officers occurred.⁷ The Air Force opened their Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program to women in 1969, followed by the Army and Navy in 1975 six years later. By 1976, females could apply to service academies. In 200 years, the military progressed from employing civilian female cooks and laundresses to commissioning active duty leaders in more technical career fields.

The 1990s was also a pivotal era concerning combat-related policy for servicewomen. Opportunities for women to contribute in combat expanded in tandem with Gulf War preparation and tactical execution. Congress repealed laws banning women from flying in combat in 1991 and repealed the law banning women from duty on combat ships in 1993.⁸ As a result, the Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, and Army opened combat pilot positions to female aviators.

The Pentagon replaced its previous policy restricting female service members from assignment to units with high probability of engaging in ground combat with the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR). The DGCDAR stated:

Women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground...Direct ground combat is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect.⁹

The DGCDAR based policy on the assumption that future conflicts would be linear with a distinction between forward and rear battlefield areas. Per the Women in Service Review

Implementation Fact Sheet, the four additional discretionary restrictions include:

1. Berthing and Privacy: Military Departments could restrict positions where the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy agreements were prohibitive.
2. Co-Location: Military Departments could restrict units and positions that were doctrinally required to physically co-locate and remain with direct ground combat units that were otherwise closed to women.
3. Long Range Reconnaissance and Special Operations Forces: Military Departments could restrict certain positions involving long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions.
4. Physically Demanding Tasks: Military Departments could restrict positions, which included physically demanding tasks that would exclude the vast majority of women.¹⁰

Essentially, the rule restricted service branches from assigning female service members to infantry, armor, artillery, combat engineering, air-defense artillery, special forces and support units that co-locate with these units.¹¹

GROUND COMBAT INTEGRATION FACTS TO CONSIDER

There are pros and cons associated with every Department of Defense policy revision. The appeal for equal professional opportunities for all uniformed personnel is one of the cornerstone arguments made by those advocating to abolish career field restrictions.¹² Other advantages to eliminating ground combat career field restrictions imposed on female service members include an increase in diverse input in decision-making as well as an increase in the personnel available to fill billets in those career fields. The prime argument of sceptics against

lifting the restrictions center around female physical strength and endurance inferiorities and the proven increase in injuries related to the physical demands of combat and combat training, decreased unit cohesion and efficiency, and the metaphorical juice not being worth the squeeze.

Advantages to Female Integration

Americans pride themselves on personifying democracy and its liberties. Advocates in favor of lifting antiquated gender-based barriers seek to rectify the contradiction posed by the US military. The irony is that service members suppressed by inequalities within the organization actively risk their lives promoting democracy and equal rights. Surely, the desired end-state is an organization that allows its members to serve based on their abilities and qualifications unrestricted solely based on their gender. According to Ben Barry in *Women in Combat*,

Dempsey (then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey) also observed that allowing women to enter the U.S. Army Military Academy at West Point had made it a better place. The U.S. Army had a problem of sexual harassment of women and removing remaining restrictions would help reduce this: ‘when you have one part of the population that is designated as warriors and another part that’s designated as something else, I think that disparity begins to establish a psychology that in some cases led to that environment. I have to believe, the more we can treat people equally, the more likely they are to treat each other equally.’¹³

The “...application of the ground combat exclusion policy results in women being denied the opportunity to serve in the infantry, artillery, tanks, and assault amphibious vehicle MOSs.”¹⁴ Opening the restricted ground combat career fields to service women maximizes all feasible professional opportunities. Allowing females to fill such roles and participate in tactical ground combat operations removes the glass ceiling. According to Ben Barry, “...a majority of senior leadership positions in the US military were held by former infantry and armor officers, excluding women from these roles created an unnecessary glass ceiling for female officers.”¹⁵

Restricting females from serving in ground combat specialties hurts their career opportunities. Congress mandated the creation of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Section 596, to evaluate and assess policies and practices that shape diversity among military leaders. The MLDC found that “Despite undeniable successes, however, the Armed Forces have not yet succeeded in developing a continuing stream of leaders who are as diverse as the Nation they serve. Racial/ethnic minorities and women still lag behind non-Hispanic white men in terms of representative percentage of military leadership positions held.”¹⁶

In addition to equality amongst service members, lifting the gender-based restrictions would increase diversity within the ground combat units. As stated in the *Journal for Applied Statistics*, “Diverse individuals bring more information and broader perspectives to group decision-making and can increase innovation and creative thinking because of differing backgrounds.”¹⁷ Incorporating females in ground combat units would provide a greater variety of solutions to problems. The MLDC reported, “Including a broad range of men and women from different backgrounds can increase the likelihood that the US military “knows the enemy” and is better able to work with international partners by adding to the cultural and linguistic knowledge base from which US forces may draw.”¹⁸

A third benefit of abolishing the ground combat restriction policies is the increased available pool of candidates. According to the *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century Military* report released by the Military Leadership Diversity Commission in 2011, “...statistics released by the Pentagon show that 75% of young people ages 17-24 are currently not eligible to enlist” due to current entry requirements.¹⁹ The 2010 DoD Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report identified a major concern regarding the lack of

eligible youth available for recruitment in the future. It warned that the ability to attract qualified young men and women into the armed forces would be challenging due to medical, criminal, ethical, or physical reasons rendering them ineligible.²⁰ Recruiters are falling short of their goals DoD-wide. Opening ground combat billets to qualified female service members will minimize shortfalls in manning allowing for a military more capable of performing its mission with minimal manning shortfalls. In the past, theories concerning African American service member segregation were abolished, as were policies denying homosexuals from serving on the basis that they would degrade military readiness. Theoretically, the same could be said for female integration into ground combat career fields being discriminated against based on gender. Instead of having a negative impact on military readiness, eliminating the restrictions on servicewomen would widen the pool of talent that the armed forces could draw on.²¹

Counter Arguments to Advantages

One could argue all three aforementioned advantages. There is a double standard concerning female equality in the military. Gender-based co-location restriction policies may be justified considering the current US military male-only draft policy. Although, “In 1979, when considering the reinstatement of Selective Service registration, the Senate Armed Services Committee cited legal and policy restrictions on women in combat as one of the reasons for differential treatment of men and women by Selective Service.”²² With restrictions lifted, will there be a Selective Service policy revision? Contentions with the benefits of diversity stem from studies with findings that suggest the opposite. According to *The Relationship between Unit Diversity and Perceptions of Organizational Performance in the Military* published in the *Journal of Applied Statistics*, “Diverse group members may have greater difficulty finding

commonalities for building cohesion and group identity. Misunderstandings and miscommunications are more frequent...²³ Lastly, countering the theoretical increase in available recruits, some present the argument that "...women tend to meet these eligibility requirements at lower rates than...men."²⁴ This implies that because there is a small population of females qualified to meet general armed forces entry requirements, there would be an even smaller pool capable of meeting ground combat requirements.

Disadvantages to Female Integration

Just as advocates petition for policy change, there is also a population that favors maintaining the status quo. The assumption that females are not as mentally or physically capable of performing ground combat tasks as males is one of their cornerstone arguments. Bergman wrote "Females have only 30-50% of the upper body strength and 70% of the lower body strength of a male of comparable size, and because of hormonal differences, strength training produces less increase in muscle bulk in women than in men...In practice, therefore, for a given level of physical exertion, women have to exert more effort than men of comparable size."²⁵ Ground combat is physically demanding on a consistent basis. There is little margin for error therefore the personnel performing the tasks need to be capable at all times. According to the Center for Military Readiness (CMR),

In close combat environments physical capabilities are as important as ever. Equipment and survival gear carried by today's combat soldiers, including electronic weapons and communication, satellite communication devices, batteries and water weigh 50 to 100 pounds...This weight is proportionately more difficult to carry by female soldiers who are on average shorter and smaller than men with 45 to 50 percent less upper body strength and 25 to 30 percent less aerobic capacity, which is essential for endurance.²⁶

Bergman wrote, “The majority of females undertaking training alongside men are both anatomically and physiologically disadvantaged, and this leads to an increased risk of injury.”²⁷ The physical and mental demands of ground combat tasks paired with anatomical differences in females increase the likelihood of injury. Women suffer debilitating bone stress fractures and other injuries at rates double those of men.²⁸ The female pelvis is wider than that of a male which creates an increased angle at which the femur meets the tibia. This wider angle increases the stress placed on the skeleton during strenuous exercise.²⁹

Equal Opportunities, Equal Risks? Overuse Injuries in Female Military Recruits published in *Journal of Public Health Medicine* assessed the rise in female personnel medically discharged from the British Army. The study found the rate of females discharged from service rose steadily since 1992, as females began to train alongside males.³⁰ The rate increased from approximately 3 per 1000 per year to over 35 per 1000 in 1996, with no significant increase in male injuries during that time frame.³¹ The majority of the discharges were for overuse musculoskeletal injuries such as stress fractures, shin splints, and anterior knee pain as a result of co-ed military training.³²

Prior to 1992, women in the British Army served in either the Women’s Royal Army Corps (WRAC) as clerks, signaler, drivers, cooks, or in the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) as nurses. In fact, “Both of these women’s services had their own training centers, where women were trained mainly by women, and the skills in which they were trained reflected their future role. In 1992, the British Army began to embrace the concepts of equal opportunities, and the WRAC was disbanded and careers in the QARANC became open to males.”³³ Regiments and corps were integrated allowing women to do most of the same jobs as

male soldiers. Segregated training dissolved to reflect the new equal opportunity integration of females.

The published statistics demonstrated that medical discharge figures for females had started to worsen around 1992, at the same time females had started to train alongside males...This study demonstrated that female personnel undergoing recruit training in the British Army have an increased incidence of medical discharge compared with males undertaking the same training and that this is most likely to be due to stress fracture or other syndromes predominantly affecting the lower limb. This increased incidence first became apparent after the introduction of mixed gender training following the disbandment of the women's corps in 1992.³⁴

Considering overuse injuries accounted for 70.2 percent of the medical discharges among the recruits in the study sample, perhaps a way to offer equal (training) opportunities to both sexes would be to provide identical but separate training provided the outcome of the training is no less favorable for either gender.³⁵

In addition to the perceived inadequacy of female strength and endurance to handle strenuous ground combat, the status quo prevents a decline in unit cohesion and effectiveness. The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) "...is a measure of the military EO climate – the perceptions of the fairness of military processes and the degree of discrimination and harassment in military environments."³⁶ Notably, "The sample analyzed in this study consists of aggregated data for 2457 military units generated from a database of responses to MEOCSs administered and maintained by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) between 1990 and 1997 with over 100,000 individual respondents from all the US military services."³⁷ Based on MEOCS results, researchers determined an increase in female representation in a unit had a negative impact on men's rating of group cohesion and effectiveness.³⁸ It also concluded that increasing subgroup (ethnic/racial minorities and females) representation increased role, group interaction, and group cohesion problems.³⁹

The U.S. Marine Corps formed the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force (GCEITF) in July 2014 to examine female service member competence in ground combat tasks as well as how integration would affect ground combat unit cohesion and mission effectiveness. The task force was comprised of approximately 100 female Marine volunteers, 300 male Marine volunteers, and 200 direct assigned Marines from active duty and the reserves. Modeled after a Battalion Landing Team, the ground combat element for a Marine Expeditionary Unit, the volunteers completed military occupational specialty (MOS) schools then joined the task force. The task force participants trained to perform ground combat-related tasks for the next four months at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The research study tasks were gender neutral and fundamental to all combat arms units. Tasks included movement under load, accuracy in a live-fire attack, combat vehicle maintenance, and employment of weapon systems and combat vehicles. After the four-month training, participants deployed to a simulated field environment at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twenty-nine Palms, CA for a three-month assessment. Finally, researchers conducted specialty assessments on the Marines at MOS training centers.⁴⁰

The Marine Corps released a four-page summary of the results that stated that all-male units out-performed integrated -that is, male and female- units in most tasks. The interpretation of the results validated beliefs that female immersion into ground combat units was a bad idea. Because all-male units accomplished most tasks faster and more accurately than the integrated units, the implication was that co-ed units were less effective. In fact, “A number of female Marines were dropped or sidelined during the experiment due to injury. Data released by the Marine Corps after the experiment wrapped up in July indicated that male Marines far outperformed the women in a variety of tasks. Women were slower, fired their weapons with

less accuracy, and were more susceptible to injury, the data showed.”⁴¹ These findings supported Marine Corps leadership’s request to maintain all-male ground combat unit integrity.

The following are additional Women in Service Review studies conducted:

1. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness: RAND report regarding Establishing Gender-Neutral Standards for Closed Occupations.
2. United States Army: Gender Integration Study conducted by Training and Doctrine Command.
3. United States Army: Medical Command (MEDCOM) United States Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine task assessment.
4. United States Army: Medical Command Injury & Attrition Rates Working Group.
5. United States Army: U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Risk Assessment & Suitability Analysis.
6. United States Army: One-time Pilot program at U.S. Army Ranger School.
7. United States Marine Corps: Marine Corps Operations Analysis Division – Line of Effort 1 Thematic Research, Expanded Unit Assignments Study.
8. United States Marine Corps: Marine Corps Training and Education Command Line of Effort 2 Research Assessment and Findings Final Report.
9. United States Marine Corps: Marine Corps Operational Testing and Evaluation Activity Line of Effort 3 - Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force Experimental Assessment Report Final Report.
10. United States Marine Corps: University of Pittsburgh Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force Research Final Report.
11. United States Marine Corps: Center for Naval Analyses - An Analysis of Female Representation and Marines’ Performance in Aviation and Logistics Occupations.
12. United States Marine Corps: RAND Implications of Integrating Women into the Marine Corps Infantry Report.
13. United States Marine Corps: Michigan State University Gender Diversity in Male-Dominated Teams – The Impact of Compositional Configurations Over Time.
14. United States Marine Corps: Marine Corps Operations Analysis Division – The Experience of Female Combat Engineers and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician Study Results
15. United States Marine Corps: U.S. Naval Behavioral Health Needs Assessment Survey Report.
16. United States Marine Corps: Marine Corps Operations Analysis Division Smart Adaptations for the Gender-Integrated Marine Corps Final Report.
17. United States Marine Corps: Center for Naval Analyses – A Quick-Look Analysis of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force Baseline Climate Survey.
18. United States Marine Corps: Center for Strategic and International Studies Red Team analysis of Marine Corps research and analysis on gender integration.
19. United States Marine Corps: Center for Naval Analyses - Assessing How Delayed Entry Program Physical Fitness is Related to In-Service Attrition, Injuries, and Physical Fitness.
20. United States Marine Corps: Center for Naval Analyses - Relationship between Initial Strength Test (IST) and Attrition, Injury, and Physical Performance.

21. United States Marine Corps: Center for Naval Analyses - An Analysis of Marine Corps Female Recruit Training Attrition.
22. United States Marine Corps: Center for Naval Analyses - Implementing Force Integration: Issues and Challenges.
23. United States Marine Corps: Naval Health Research Center - Analysis in Support of the Women in Service Restriction Review Study.
24. United States Marine Corps: Military Medicine - Changes in Combat Task Performance Under Increasing Loads in Active Duty Marines.
25. United States Marine Corps: Marine Corps Force Innovation Office – International Studies (United Kingdom, Israel, Canada, Australia).
26. United States Navy: Center for Naval Analyses Enlisted Women in Submarine Task Force study to provide analytic support on sustainability of female submariners and consider effect of integration of women in submarines on the rest of the Navy.
27. United States Navy: Naval Health Research Center evaluation and validation of gender neutral standards for the selection of Sea, Air, and Land and Special Warfare Combatant Craft candidates along with conducting a comprehensive analysis of the physical demands for Sea, Air, and Land and Special Warfare Combatant Craft operations.
28. United States Air Force: Air Education and Training Command study to develop and validate occupationally-specific, operationally-relevant, science-based criterion physical fitness tests and standards for Battlefield Airman specialties.
29. United States Air Force: Air Force Personnel Center study on recommended Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery standards for Battlefield Airman specialties.
30. United States Air Force: Air Force Personnel Center validation review and documentation for Combat Rescue Officer, Special Tactics Officer, Combat Control Team, and Special Operations Weather Team assessment programs.
31. United States Special Operations Command: Joint Special Operations University study on Special Operations Forces Mixed-Gender Elite Teams.
32. United States Special Operations Command: RAND report on Implications of Indigenous Cultures on Mixed-Gender Teams.
33. United States Special Operations Command: University of Kansas Project Diane study exploring potential barriers and benefits of integrating females into Army Special Forces positions closed to females.

Finally, the third disadvantage to integrating female service members into ground combat military occupational specialties is the lack of return on investment. Is the juice worth the squeeze? One-time costs are generally those costs incurred in preparation for or during the initial integration such as integration research and development, changes to equipment, facility modifications, MOS training, and resources to assist integrated service members.⁴² Projected recurring costs include costs associated with attrition and retention rates, training completion rates, costs associated with time spent performing additional physical conditioning, and time lost

recovering from injuries.⁴³ Costs (retention, training, facility maintenance etc.) are not recorded by gender; therefore, researchers relied on models to project the financial impacts integration would have. They were not able to determine integration costs. The implications suggest the opening of infantry to women will incur additional costs because the attrition rate of female service members will be higher than that of male infantrymen. The forecasts, based on foreign military infantry integration and previously integrated career fields in the US military, suggests the total number of women entering ground combat specialties will be modest and the increase in representation will be slow.⁴⁴ This slow process will allow facility modifications to fall within current facility update projections but with a higher price tag due to the revised requirements.

The reality is, “Some women will be able to meet the required occupational standards, but most will not. While integration of women into combat is possible for those qualified, the small number versus the additional logistical, regulatory and disciplinary costs associated with integration do not make it a worthwhile move⁴⁵ The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics directed Department of Defense Secretaries to take immediate steps to ensure combat equipment (including footwear) issued to servicewomen is properly designed and fitted to accommodate their requirements, and meets standards for wear and survivability.⁴⁶ Although the researchers did not report an estimated dollar amount associated with the integration, the research found one-time and recurring costs were expected without increased war-fighting capability. Thus, the proverbial juice may not be worth the (financial) squeeze.

Counter Arguments to Disadvantages

One could argue for the abolishment of the gender-based ground combat restrictions by counteroffering the three disadvantages discussed above. In response to assumptions that

women are not physically capable of successfully performing ground combat tasks as proficiently as males, advocates remind critics of the same assumption made about female aviators prior to their integration. According to McGrath in *Women in Combat*, “When it came to the issue of women serving in combat aviation, the prevailing argument was that women did not have the physical strength required to fly certain airframes.⁴⁷ Evidence proved that to be false. Standards were set and women who met those physical requirements are just as successful at operating aircraft as males. Technological advances in tactics, weaponry, and equipment have also lessened physical demand in comparison to when the restricting policies went into effect.

Secondly, critics identified flaws in the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, study performed by the Marine Corps that examined female ground combat competence and the efficiency of integrated infantry units. Sceptics questioned why there was not full disclosure of the results upon completion. Originally, the Marine Corps marked the study as pre-decisional and not releasable under the Freedom of Information Act. The Corps also only released a four-page summary, which excluded the study’s methodology, and detailed findings.⁴⁸ Additionally, the study’s design was flawed and biased. It is possible male Marines participating in the study on a co-ed team intentionally did perform as well during team tasks that led to degraded team efficiency. Another design defect was the lack of established occupation-relevant standards for Marine combat positions. The volunteer pool was also determined to be a poor selection.⁴⁹

Lastly, one would argue that equality is priceless. The dollar amount associated with altering policies, procedures, regulations, and facilities in order to integrate women into the military decades ago was contentious but overtime has become so seamless it’s difficult to imagine the US military without female service members. Later, the investment to integrate aviation proved worth the funding and policy updates. As with any major integration, there will

be growing pains but historically the US military has successfully implemented improvements during interwar periods. Considering the United States is not currently participating in a declared war, this is the perfect time to make organizational improvements.

PUBLIC OPINION

Then-Secretary of Defense, Leon Pannetta's February 2013 memo rescinding the ground combat exclusion was not made in a vacuum. Decision-makers reviewed integration successes and failures of foreign militaries, studies conducted on Marine Corps co-ed test units in North Carolina and California, and facilitated several discussions amongst U.S. DoD leadership. "Congressional indecision on the 'women in combat' issue seems to reflect similar responses at the national level. Middle-aged and senior citizens tend to accept the conventional stand that 'men go to war while women hold down the home front' while the younger generations are demanding, and getting, equal gender status in society."⁵⁰ However, "The overall consensus is that women should be able to fill all roles in the military as long as they are capable and qualified for the job."⁵¹ The following are recent positions concerning the integration:

There are female service members who have proven themselves to be physically, mentally, and morally capable of leading and executing combat-type operations; as a result, some of these Marines may feel qualified for the chance of taking on the role. In the end, my main concern is not whether women are capable of conducting combat operations, as we have already proven that we can hold our own in some very difficult combat situations; instead, my main concern is a question of longevity. Can women endure the physical and physiological rigors of sustained combat operations, and are we willing to accept the attrition and medical issues that go along with integration? –Captain Katie Petronio, USMC⁵²

Cpl. Angelique Preston participated in the nine-month Infantry Training Battalion experiment. In an interview for the *Marine Corps Times* she stated,

At first they (male Marines) were kind of...they didn't really know what to make of us, because they didn't really know how to work with females. Eventually though, once the Marines were just doing their jobs in the field, their gender stopped mattering. The reality is that not a lot of women are going to want to lat move into these jobs. It takes a certain kind of mindset.⁵³

Lt. Col. Kate Germano led the Corps's only all-female recruit training battalion. She told the *Marine Corps Times*,

Getting Marines on board with this change could take time, especially among higher-ranking Marines. I think the most difficult individuals to sway are the older generation. The younger Marines, most of them have seen women excel in team sports in high school and they've seen women be outspoken. They've had mothers, aunts, and sisters as leaders, so I think it's going to help them embrace this. It will take accountability at every level of leadership to get Marines on board with such a big change, though, from regimental commanders down to the most junior platoon commanders.⁵⁴

When asked for his personal opinion on female integration in the Navy submariner community, an E-5 Navigation Electronics Technician assigned to the USS *Pennsylvania* ballistic missile submarine had this to say:

I honestly thought I would serve a full 20-year career, assuming that I would only deploy with men. To this day, I have not had the opportunity to serve with women, though most commands on my waterfront have them. While I have some concerns about the complete integration of the submarine force, none of that deals with the ability of a woman to effectively perform as a submariner and excel. The largest challenge, in my opinion, will be serving in close quarter situations. Generally speaking, there are two major platforms, fast attacks and ballistic missile submarines. Fast attacks don't have adequate space to have separate quarters for enlisted men and women. On ballistic missile submarines (boomers), there are multiple bunk rooms. This would more easily facilitate the integration of female enlisted members. The boomer is currently configured to support the integration. The next challenge of the submarine crew integration will be the "re-sailorization" of the crew. While I proudly serve with my crew, and have a great deal of respect for my shipmates, the locker room/shop talk mentality remains among the enlisted men. This is compounded by jokes that are racist, sexist, and homophobic. Finally, submarineers seem to find it acceptable to touch other members in a joking manner that frequently bars on sexual harassment. I don't point out these things to discourage the integration, it's happening regardless. I'm pointing out the challenges. I think it's more than overdue. Hopefully, it will make a large number of immature, "machismo" minded submariners more well-rounded sailors in a military complex that has become more dynamic, global, and forward thinking.⁵⁵ –Anonymous

FOREIGN MILITARY INTEGRATION

Concerns regarding female integration into ground combat are universal. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its partners are proactively promoting the role of women in peace and security by calling for full and equal participation of women at all levels. In addition to NATO's commitment to removing barriers for women's participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace-building, NATO is also taking action within its own organization to promote gender equality.⁵⁶ In 1998, the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces (CWINF) became a permanent office in NATO. Then, "In May 2009, the CWINF's mandate was extended to support the integration of a gender perspective into NATO's military operations, specifically to support the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and 1820 as well as related resolutions. The committee was renamed NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP)"⁵⁷ The NCGP is composed of a delegates from NATO member countries and provide advice to NATO and member nations on gender-related issues such as furthering gender equality. Although, "...the Alliance has no influence on measures or policies taken at national levels, it is required that all personnel – whether from Allied or partner countries – deployed in NATO-led operations and missions and serving within NATO structures are appropriately trained and meet required standards of behavior."⁵⁸

The United States studied female integration executed by other nations in preparation for internal policy revisions. Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, and Norway have the fewest restrictions on what service women can do. Many of the countries allow women to serve in all posts except on submarines. Norway was the first country in NATO to allow women to serve in all combat capacities, including submarines. Norwegian women are also subject to the draft in the event of a national mobilization.⁵⁹ Israeli women "must take part

in compulsory military service, they are conscripted for only two years, versus three for men.”⁶⁰

According to Ben Barry in *Women in Combat*, although women make up 6% - 19% of the aforementioned western armies, only .08% - 3.8% serve in combat units due to demanding fitness standards, negative gender stereotyping by male soldiers, and very few women are attracted to the ground close combat role.⁶¹

The U.S. is fortunate to have integration predecessors from which to learn. Several foreign militaries have integrated females into combat roles. Through their experiences, the U.S. has insight into the challenges they faced, the effects integration had on combat units, and is able to adopt successful integration strategies. One common best-practice was a well-developed implementation plan that included recruiting, retention, and integration strategies as well as a comprehensive training program to prepare the females for combat occupations. Successful integrations also used a gradual integration process. The first phase allowed lateral transfers for volunteers to move from noncombat occupations into a combat MOS then gradually recruited new personnel into vacant positions. Lastly, effective foreign integration implementation plans used baseline qualifications to determine eligibility. Relevant physical tasks and key capabilities necessary for the position(s) ensured sustained operational effectiveness.⁶²

GROUND COMBAT ITEGRATION – WHAT NOW?

Despite antiquated gender-based policies on one hand and proven disadvantages of integrating females into ground combat units on the other hand, the US armed forces will proceed with integration implementation in 2016. The 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR) was rescinded by then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta. SecDef Panetta also directed the military branches to review their occupational standards and assignment policies in preparation for integration implementation. Previously, career fields

opened to female service members by exception. Now, all positions will open to women upon approval from Congress. Because the definitive battlefield frontline no longer exists in present day conflicts in addition to modernized weaponry and tactics, Congress re-evaluated the 1994 DGCDAR and is overseeing the implementation of female integration into previously restricted ground combat career fields.⁶³

Ground combat, as defined by the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, "...is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect."⁶⁴ The rule excluded women from infantry, armor, artillery, combat engineering, air-defense artillery, special forces and any support units that co-located with these units based on "...an assumption that future battlefields would be linear, with a distinction between forward areas and rear areas. But the prolonged counter-insurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan saw no clear distinction between front line and rear echelons, with personnel serving in bases or traveling in logistics convoys subject to a 360-degree threat from mortar and rocket attack, ambushes and roadside bombs."⁶⁵ Lines have blurred in this new age of warfare, impossible to determine combat from non-combat. In an interview with the New York Daily News, Captain Kellie McCoy said, "Our doctrine was suited for wars with front lines. In Iraq, the front line is everywhere. Once you leave the camp, you're on the front line."⁶⁶

Per the U.S. Congress, House Committee on Armed Services, Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee 1993 *Women in Combat: Hearing Before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee*, "Women have served legally in temporary combat positions."⁶⁷ Gulf

War reports contain documentation of women employed in positions which exposed them to direct combat.⁶⁸ The Marine Corps has reportedly assigned females to the Lioness Program and female engagement teams to circumvent the ground combat exclusion policies; however, this is not full integration.⁶⁹ The duties servicewomen are currently performing place them in harm's way whether officially assigned to combat positions or not. Female service members searched Iraqi and Afghan females for weapons, accompanied males on convoy missions, and performed door-to-door foot patrols. Consequently, "Between 9/11 and January 2013, 152 US servicewomen were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan."⁷⁰

Modernized equipment and weaponry equalizes opportunities for female service members to perform successfully in combat. Personal protective gear weighs less and is more ergonomic than it was in the past. These updates allow members maximum range of motion, which allows members to perform duties faster with fewer injuries. Advancements in technology decrease hand-to-hand combat battles with the enemy. Improvements in surveillance and tracking equipment allow friendly forces to monitor enemy targets around the clock, giving friendly forces more opportunities to determine time, place, and method of engagement. This capability grants the commander time to build teams to accomplish a variety of missions utilizing real-time situational awareness based on each team member's strengths and weaknesses.

Road to Integration

Arguably, female integration into ground combat units has been in the works since the first female enlisted in 1918. Opportunities available to females in the US military have always been limited but have progressed over the last century. The most recent step toward gender equality was the lifting of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule

which restricted service branches from assigning female service members to infantry, armor, artillery, combat engineering, air-defense artillery, special forces units. Department of Defense leadership analyzed data collected during studies, considered recommendations from service branch representatives, and decided to proceed with the abolishment of ground combat career field limitations solely based on gender. “Congress established requirements, definitions, and criteria for the development and application of ‘gender-neutral’ occupational standards, and has oversight of all DoD decisions in this matter.”⁷¹ Establishing ground combat occupational standards and applying best practices learned from foreign military integration will limit obstacles during the transition.

In preparation for the integration, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff held quarterly meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to monitor progress. The Secretary of Defense held semi-annual meetings. As instructed, “The Services produced detailed plans outlining how they intended to implement the Secretary’s directive. Each Service and USSOCOM articulated a formal process for reviewing doctrine, organization, training and education pipeline, or facility changes necessary. Their plans further included strategies for addressing any potential cohesion, morale, or leadership issues.”⁷² According to the Women in Service Review (WISR) Implementation plan, the Department of Defense will open approximately 213,600 positions within 52 military occupational specialties.⁷³ Upon approval from Congress, service members who meet position occupational standards will fill ground combat military occupational specialty billets regardless of gender.

CONCLUSION

At one point outdated gender-based restrictions established when the battlefield was linear, weaponry and equipment were heavier and required more manual applications, therefore disparities between gendered norms were acceptable in society and in the military. However, today society is able to look past one's race, religion, and sex in an effort to assess the individual's capabilities. The U.S. Department of Defense is in the process of updating its policies to reflect equality based on competence versus discrimination based on gender. As of 2016, military service branches will open all positions to female service members and will need to provide justification to Congress for approval to keep positions closed. Previously, the department opened positions by exception but has flipped the presumption so that all positions will be open to all service members unless there is a justifiable reason the position it should not be.

Women have contributed to the military from inception of the US military. Although initially they were not authorized to enlist, they performed support tasks for servicemen in order to increase the pool of males available to fight. Their immersion into the military began segregated with a laundry list of limitations but advanced significantly during World War II. Congress repealed laws banning women from flying in combat in 1991 followed by the repeal of laws banning women from duty on combat ships in 1993 -- huge steps toward full female integration. Despite progress in the aviation and maritime domains, the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR) imposed restrictions on ground combat inclusion. The rule restricted service branches from assigning female service members to infantry, armor, artillery, combat engineering, air-defense artillery, and special forces.

The 1994 DGCDAR included terminology and definitions that are not relevant to the (irregular) conflicts we face today. Arguably, definitive battlefield front lines no longer exist. Even if conditions of today's conflicts were those of previous eras, advocates for abolishing gender-based exclusions seek policies based on abilities versus discriminating demographics. Advantages include more equitable opportunities for female service members, more diverse decision-making, and a larger pool of available personnel to recruit into ground combat MOSs. The disadvantages to female integration into ground combat units include anatomical differences that predispose females to injury, decreased unit efficiency, and requirements associated with providing proper personal protective equipment and dwelling accommodations may not be cost effective.

There are downsides associated with the integration but advocates are optimistic that as women are included into the culture and gain familiarity with day-to-day ground combat operations, the unit cohesion and efficiency issue will degrade over time. At one point, females were segregated and could not to serve alongside male service members but once women integrated, uniforms, personal gear, and dwelling accommodations soon followed. Theoretically, allowing female service women to contribute to ground combat is the same but on a smaller scale, requiring less policy and procedural modifications. Women should be able to fill all roles in the military as long as they are capable and qualified for the job. Female integration into ground combat military occupational specialties does not mean lowering performance standards. Integration will require acknowledging differences between male and female service members but will require abolishing career field limitations solely based on gender by establishing ground combat occupational standards and applying best practices learned from foreign military integration in order to clear the last major hurdle of full female integration into the US military.

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