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AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE 21ST
CENTURY ROYAL DANISH ARMED FORCES – CAN THE
US EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUTURE DANISH
ARMED FORCES?

by

Henrik R. Kanstrup, Major, Royal Danish Air Force

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Advisor: Lieutenant Colonel Marshall G. Cobb

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

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Preface

It is my intent to put the gender diversity issue on the agenda. “To fight and win wars” is the main objective of any military. This objective has been and still is being accomplished by a male dominated “warrior” organization, of which I personally, as a fighter pilot in the Danish Air Force, have been a part. Radical changes in societies and changing global security issues have made warfighting a much more gender-neutral undertaking. I personally believe men and women share the capabilities and resources that are required to “fight and win wars” with regard to the 21st century. It is my belief that a democratic society can only be maintained if equal opportunity exists between all groups in society – especially gender. It is a fundamental right for any citizen to be treated with justice, to be met with openness and without prejudices, and to ensure nobody will be exposed to discrimination in connection with any application for any job or position. I believe any military has a major responsibility to contribute to the realization of this issue.

I furthermore believe that the more diverse a group of workers or leaders are with regard to education, experience, age, and gender – the better chance they have to attain qualitative results and to make innovative decisions. In my opinion, a diverse workforce, with different resources, experiences, etc., leads to higher quality and more efficient problem solving. I believe any armed force needs the knowledge and experiences of both men and women. I am not excluding the minority and ethnic issue, but I believe that addressing the gender issue in an open-minded perspective may lead to an open and honest discussion on other diversity issues.

I believe an open organization where equal opportunity exists is an asset. It will create the most efficient working environment, attract the best working force, and increase motivation and productivity. This will, in the end, create a working force that is better suited to work across national, organizational, and cultural borders – i.e. the world of 21st Century armed forces.

It is my hope that by examining the diversity issue in the Danish armed forces and applying experiences from the US armed forces, I will be able to identify relevant issues and potential solutions for my country's armed forces' efforts to diversify their organization. It is not my intent to change policies; rather I seek to give this still very important issue a “fresh look”.

I would like to acknowledge Maj Gen Simonsen, Chief of Tactical Air Command in the Danish Air Force for taking valuable time to provide this research paper with an open and very honest interview. Furthermore I would like to thank my research advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Cobb for his outstanding guidance and assistance throughout the research process. I would like to acknowledge the entire Air University Library for its outstanding selection and helpful guidance. Finally I would like to express my appreciation to my classmates for taking time to discuss this important issue and provide very useful feedback during our many discussions.

Abstract

The gender diversity and integration issue has been a long and difficult process. The Danish military is struggling with a very low female representation. Gender integration in the Danish military has followed a general trend found in many other Western militaries. Issues like women in combat roles, physical standards, and sexual harassment have been discussed and to a certain extent addressed in the Danish military organization. The Danish military has often paralleled the evolution of other major militaries, such as that of the US. Gender integration in the Danish military has not been able to match the level found in society – where Denmark ranks in the top echelon of nations with regard to balancing gender opportunities and representation throughout the workforce.

Gender integration in the US military has also been a long and difficult process. The last decade has focused on the integration of women into combat roles. Political issues as well as political constraints have dominated this process. The obvious issues of physical standards and the integration of women into combat roles are still undergoing examination. Sexual harassment has also been a central issue in the debate within the services, as well as in a very public forum. It may have been the most important personnel issue during the last decade and may have been a constraint to an open and honest debate on the exploitation of women in combat roles, as well as the overall gender integration process.

By reviewing many different sources, both military as well as public, I have tried to gather as much background knowledge as possible regarding both the US and Danish military gender

integration process. My focus has been to identify obvious problem areas, as well as seeking new ideas for exploring possible future policies. By using a relative, qualitative analysis I have tried to create a foundation for possible future ideas/strategies for the Danish military.

My findings show a very similar trend in the general gender integration processes followed by both the Danish and US military. The difference clearly lies within the nature of the different societies. The sexual harassment policy in the US, as well as the issue of “political correctness,” differs from policies and views in the Danish military. Both militaries have evolved and acknowledged the need for a renewed focus on diversity. Diversity is no longer a “bad” word, rather it is seen as an asset to future military organizations.

The radically changing world, with changing security issues, forces militaries to focus on getting the “best people for the job”. Together with changing societal demographics, this puts gender integration into a new perspective. It is time to approach this issue with an open and honest debate to create the best-suited military for future operations. This means we need to evolve out of a typically male dominated organization into a more effective and diverse workforce to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

Chapter 1

The Gender Issue in the Danish armed forces

Never give up on what you really want to do. The person with big dreams is more powerful than one with all the facts.

—Life's Little Instruction Book

Defining and discussing the gender problem

Traditionally a male workforce has dominated the labor market in Denmark, as in most Western countries. Since the early 1960s,¹ women have become a larger part of the workforce beyond traditionally female jobs. Today, together with Sweden, we have the highest levels of female representation at work in Denmark when compared to the rest of the world.

Even in the armed forces, which traditionally are considered the most male dominated working environment, we see more and more women. The representation in the Danish armed forces with regard to military positions, when discussing gender, is relatively low compared to the civilian side of the military – only 5% women are in uniform as of year 2000 figures, while 40% of the civilian jobs in the military are occupied by women.² According to senior military leaders, the military figure is low due to the relatively few women that are attracted to jobs in the military and a lack of retention among women in the military.³

The history of females in the Danish armed forces dates back to 1962 where jobs in the military were opened to females on a voluntary basis in the Army, Navy, and the Air Force.⁴

These women found themselves in jobs as privates and sergeants in higher staffs in the Army or in administrative positions within the Navy and Air Force. Females were not allowed to serve in military positions that could be involved in combat situations. In 1974 the military first began to offer officer commissions to women.⁵

In an equal opportunity act passed by the Danish parliament in 1978,⁶ the armed forces maintained their existing gender restrictions. This was done to secure a solid foundation, before working towards an increase in the levels of female integration within the forces. It is important to understand that the limited numbers of women in service at that time gave the military very little experience with females in the military when compared to the United States (US). Less experience takes more time.

In the 1980s, the Danish armed forces continued the integration of women by evaluating the effects women had on normal military operations and organizational norms. This assessment placed selected female personnel into specific job positions as a test of their suitability for greater gender integration. The goal was to examine how to fully integrate women in the entire military organization. These different studies showed that women could serve in most positions in the military. One report⁷ pointed out a few possible problem areas: There was a risk that women would be identified as scapegoats or would be blamed for situations that had nothing or little to do with them at all. The integration of women would automatically focus on the difference in sex and the problems this issue would create.⁸ Units with women on proving grounds (examination) often performed better than under “normal” conditions, because they were expected to be something very special.⁹ There was a tendency to expect women to perform on equal terms with men from the beginning and create the same results as their male counterparts – an expectation that seems unrealistic when one recognizes the obvious difference

in physical strength and being a part of a male dominated organization. Finally, the report showed a risk that women were often accommodated in these military jobs and surroundings, rather than being fully integrated or assimilated. The female minority had to adapt to the male majority. If they did not succeed, they risked exclusion.

During the early years of integration, military developments followed the same trends as the civilian labor market. Issues like relationships between males and females in a combat unit and their effects on group cohesion, morale, and efficiency became focal points for debate and created unique problems for Danish military commanders.¹⁰ Instances of sexual harassment had to be dealt with by individual military leaders. Sexual harassment policies had not been officially published in the Danish military, so informal practices and operational experiences guided military leaders. Sexual harassment, although a very important issue throughout Danish society, is not considered a significant societal problem.¹¹ Thus, there was not any governmental pressure to create major organizational policies operationally addressing sexual harassment issues, as in the USA. Other than these important issues, which seem to be common throughout militaries in the Western World, women did not create any severe problems for the Danish military leadership.

As of August 2000, 3393 civilian women work in the Danish military compared to 5117 civilian men.¹² In the active duty force, 1042 females work in the Danish military compared to 19570 males.¹³ This illustrates the 5% figure for female representation mentioned earlier. To further put things in perspective, only two women have the rank of lieutenant colonel, one in the Navy and one in the Air Force. These are unsatisfactory figures and provide the biggest challenge for promoting gender integration in the Danish military. The low representation by females in the Danish Air Force, as well as other important issues regarding gender integration

puzzles many Danish military leaders, not least the Chief of Tactical Air Command, Denmark, Maj Gen Leif Simonsen.

Interview with Chief of Tactical Air Command (TACDEN) in the Danish Air Force,

Maj Gen L. Simonsen¹⁴

At the beginning of our discussion, Maj Gen Simonsen immediately acknowledged the low presence of women in the Danish military. We then discussed the issue of sexual harassment. Gen Simonsen said that he would not tolerate any cases of sexual harassment. He emphasized that current policies on sexual harassment must be taught and understood by all personnel. It is vital that military leaders understand the fundamental issues when dealing with any harassment problem. We must continue to pursue these issues to protect against unfairness and illegal actions toward any minorities.

The low numbers of women in the Danish military continues to puzzle Gen Simonsen. He mentioned that apparently there seems to be some kind of barrier preventing women from seeking a military career or education. One must understand that Danish society provides an extraordinary environment for all kinds of initial educational foundations. In the 10th grade of the public school system, boys and girls are often invited to join a military service on an expeditionary tour of service. Interest is equally divided between male and females. Then for unknown reasons, interest in a military career disappears among many of the females during high school and college. This may be due to the rich variety of employment options the society is providing or it may be due to lack of opportunities appealing to women, with regard to the military.¹⁵ It is also a fact that if females join the military they are tied to the military for a specific time period, hence they cannot leave the military if they find the job too challenging or

simply cannot adapt to the military job. Upon enlisting in the military, all recruits have to sign an agreement that they will serve in international missions after the compulsory service is over, if needed. This may be an important issue that prevents more women from applying for military service.¹⁶ I believe the problems associated with this issue are that you lose your freedom to seek new opportunities because you are tied to the obligations to the Danish military. This feeling is not very comfortable for many among the younger generations, perhaps most significantly among younger Danish females.

Another reason for the declining interest among women in a military career could be the differences in generations. The younger generations seem to be attracted to “fast money,” like the information business. Furthermore, it is important to understand that military service in Denmark and most European countries suffer from a lack of general public support. The use of the military instrument of power is more evident in the US when compared to Denmark. Even though we have participated in many UN missions, Operation Allied Force was the first conflict that saw the use of Danish fighter aircraft. With the lack of any obvious enemies and a changing security environment, the European militaries are struggling with recruitment and retention of quality people.

The discussion then turned to the obvious physical differences between male and females. The Danish military has been focused on this particular issue for many years. The question regarding similar physical qualifications for male and female soldiers is challenging, but the discussion should not be lost to the fact that there are strong women that can overcome the same physical challenges as men. The fact is that there is a difference in physical strength between average men and women. Female muscular strength requires a better physical conditioning to fulfill the overall physical requirements/standards than their male counterparts.¹⁷ Furthermore,

women have to generally work harder to maintain their physical strength.¹⁸ The Danish military has noted in several reports¹⁹ that the physical requirements in education and employment are a challenge for some females, while for other women, the physical requirements/standards seem to be a barrier in their career. Especially after childbirth, many women have difficulties coping with the physical requirements in their previous jobs with regard to attaining their previous physical condition. The military still has a few very physical demanding positions, such as Infantry and Special Forces like Rangers and Seals. Historically speaking, women have had a great difficulty asserting and proving themselves in these intensely physical career fields. The outcome is that physical requirements/standards have changed to meet the need to attract more women to the military. Many discussions have focused on different standards between male and females. To differentiate requirements will obviously give the women a better chance to pass tests in the military – but is this a solid foundation? There are pros and cons among women in the Danish military when discussing the adjustment of the physical requirements. It seems to be very important that the focus be on the functions in the military, rather than on general concerns about female physical strength.

Gen. Simonsen concluded that it is very important that the military continues to integrate more women. It is very important that the military continue to evolve and reflect the larger society, which for now is not the case. We must continue to pursue traditional and untraditional ways to integrate women and other minorities to meet the challenges in the 21st Century.

Gender diversity as a resource in the Danish military

The Danish military has acknowledged the necessity to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. In 1999, the headquarters of the Danish Armed Services announced a new personnel policy plan.²⁰ The overall policy was to recruit, educate, develop, and retain more personnel –

quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The military acknowledges that people are their most important resource. Personal development is a very central point at a time when demand on personal efficiency is very high. At the same time, the focus on family values, as well as quality of life, is very high. The military must acknowledge the need for flexible time and flexible leave policies to follow the trends in the Danish society. The Danish military has developed a family policy that puts family as the foundation for the future military.

In September 1999, the Danish military held a conference with the focus on the subject: “Different people – Different lives – Different resources.”²¹ Variety, with regard to sex, as an important organizational resource was one of three main subjects. Gen. Simonsen was Chief of Personnel, Danish Armed Services Headquarters, at the time. He focused on the overall low presence of females in the military. Even though the military is capable of dealing with all its present military tasks, Gen. Simonsen said it was a necessity that the personnel structure of the Danish military reflects the Danish population. He discussed the importance of solving national security issues and the use of the military instrument of power. He said it was vital that both the population, as well as the national leadership, support the use and the structure of the military – this can only be done if the personnel structure reflects society.

Different groups of the military have acknowledged the importance of integrating more women in the military. A Swedish military woman, Henrietta Goebel, addressed the issue of variety as a resource in relation to sex.²² She concluded that to support the challenges for the future Swedish military and to achieve an overall better and stronger military, it is important to expand the consciousness of our existing leadership. Many studies in Sweden showed a problem with regard to differences in attitudes toward integrating more women into the military. By openly discussing these issues in a variety of meetings, seminars, and conferences, while

collecting data of the cultural differences between men and women, the Swedish military focused their project on developing a consciousness of what are traditionally male and female roles within the services. The significance of their findings for the Danish military was to emphasize the need to learn more about the differences between men and women working in a military environment, identify the unique qualifications each sex brings to the organization, and understand how increasing the level of gender integration can enhance the effectiveness of any work organization – especially the Danish military.

Women in the military – Why?

The Danish conference in 1999 gave an answer to this question. Women in the military offer a broader recruiting basis: more educated people, more intelligent, and more interested people. A positive public attitude towards the military also supports more women in the military – an issue that must be accounted for because the public opinion plays a major role with regard to funding and support for the use of the military instrument of power. Integrating women helps develop new relations, new forms of contact, and a new way of expression. The qualities women offer give the military an additional competence, and at the same time creates a foundation for a total unified whole, which is supported by many military leaders, as well as me personally.²³ To develop an effective gender integration plan, it is important to examine some of the least obvious differences between male and female.²⁴

Generally, the research indicated that men typically support an individual culture. They are known to be team builders, although individual profiling is important for most men. In an organizational environment, men tend to acknowledge personal measurement/acknowledgement as important values.²⁵ Women on the other hand are more focused on a collective culture. They

are group builders and normally do not seek individual profiling. Rank is not as important for women as for men, according to Swedish researchers.

When discussing communication,²⁶ it is interesting to note that men focus on abstract words and they tend to theorize. Although they tend to repeat others' knowledge, they openly acknowledge agreement. Women communicate in figurative language and they are considered more "down-to-earth." Women are typically listeners and they are normally silent until there are new things to express. Agreement is acknowledged by silence. When discussing ways of negotiating it is interesting to note that men approach this issue with clear strategies and tactics. Men tend to engage in deliberate problem solving that emphasizes individual contributions. Women on the other hand have a tendency to use tactics as if solving a puzzle. It is important for women to tie all loose ends together and to involve all parts. Finally, it is important for woman to be part of a group culture.²⁷

All these features will help us better understand how to work together and together solve our military tasks and objectives in the most efficient way. The bottom line is that men and women are different both physically and psychologically. Men and women appear to exercise leadership in different ways. Men and women need different ways to explore their individual leadership/personal skills. All military leaders should learn the difference in male and female behavior and explore the obvious advantages between these qualities.

Notes

¹ Leadership and education, Basic book, p.329

² Danish military headquarters personnel center.

³ Interview with Gen Simonsen, Chief of Tactical Air Command.

⁴ Law # 174, May 17 1962, Bill on military personnel.

⁵ Leadership and education, *Basic Book*, p.329

⁶ Law #161, April 12 1978, Bill on equal opportunity.

⁷ "*Females in the Military*", FCL 1986. (FCL is the Danish military institute for leadership).

Notes

⁸ Ibid. According to this research: When a particular focus is on gender diversity and associated problems, problems may arise simply because they are expected.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Report on the possibility to approve women to attend the military on conscription-like terms. The Danish Department of Defense, December 29 1995.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Quarterly figures over military employees, Danish military headquarters (Personnel Center). Aug 2000.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ This interview was performed in Denmark during Christmas break from ACSC Dec 2000.

¹⁵ Gen Simonsen and own personal opinions.

¹⁶ This was briefly discussed with Gen Simonsen, but also discussed with Maj Soerensen, ACSC, who prior to ACSC worked in personnel, Danish Military Headquarters, interview 5 Mar 2001.

¹⁷ Research regarding gender integration into a Comm unit in the Danish Army, FCL Jan 2000.

¹⁸ Ibid. As a result of less muscle mass compared to men.

¹⁹ See note#8.

²⁰ www.Forsvarskommandoen.dk

²¹ Conference report, September 1999.

²² Henriette Goebel has been leading a gender diversity project called “the creative difference” for the Swedish military.

²³ Many prominent military leaders during leadership lectures at ACSC have addressed gender integration. The Swedish military leadership acknowledged this fact as well when Henrietta Gorbelt received her task by the Chief of the Swedish military.

²⁴ Ibid. Lecture performed by Henrietta Goebel, Swedish military.

²⁵ Ibid. (Arguments with regard to differences between men and women are analyzed from slides used by Henrietta Goebel)

²⁶ Ibid. Henrietta Goebel argues that more women give the military another dimension that the military have missed earlier. What women stand for gives another competence to the military. Military leader throughout the Swedish military supports this.

²⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 2

The Gender Issue in the US armed forces

Everything finishes well for one who can wait

—Leo Tolstoy

Defining and discussing the gender problem

Women served in the military in both World War I and World War II. But it has been only relatively recently, that women have participated in almost all aspects of military activity. Congress passed the Women's Armed Service Integration Act in 1948,¹ which established a permanent but separate women's corps in the military services.² The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was established in order to increase the number of women being recruited into the military.³ In 1961, President Kennedy established a Committee on the Status of Women,⁴ chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, to look into problems encountered by women employed within the Federal government. Public Law 90-130 removed the statutory ceiling on the number of military women (2%) and grade limitation (one line colonel per each service).⁵ In 1972, women made up only 2% of military personnel,⁶ and they participated in only two types of occupations: medical and dental occupations and administrative positions. The highest rank they could legally obtain was either a colonel or a Navy captain. Flight training opened to Army and Navy women in 1973 and the Air Force followed in 1976.⁷ 1976 was also the year when military service academies first admitted women. In 1980, the

Department of Defense (DOD) issued its first sexual harassment policy statement.⁸ In 1991 the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) issued a memorandum emphasizing that sexual harassment was unacceptable conduct.⁹ In 1989, service women participated in Operation Just Cause and, in 1990-1991, more than 40,000 US women participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ Similar to their male colleagues, women performed their military roles professionally and served their country with distinction. In 1993, the SecDef directed the military services to open combat aircraft and ships to women. Congress also repealed laws prohibiting women from assignment aboard combatant vessels.¹¹

Today, women make up 13% of the enlisted personnel and 14% of the officer corps. 80% of military positions are open to women today.¹² Their representation is still highest in medical and dental occupations and administrative areas, but almost all occupations are open to women – including all artillery units, most ship crews, and most pilot positions.

The gender battle

In the previous discussion, the factual issues of the implementation of women in the US military were briefly described. Certainly the military's core activity is combat. Its primary job is to fight and win wars. There is no doubt that previous soldiering was viewed primarily as a masculine role because combat has generally been defined as men's work. These masculine norms, values, and lifestyles have been predominant in the US military culture as well as other international military services. To survive in a radically changing dynamic world, culture must adapt to changing conditions. Two culture models, the traditional and the evolving, currently operate in the US military.¹³ The traditional model is characterized by social conservatism, a homogeneous, predominantly male force with masculine values and norms, and exclusionary laws and practices. The evolving model also uses combat and masculine traditions, but evolves

into inclusive laws and policies. Furthermore, the evolving model seeks a more heterogeneous and tolerant attitude. The struggle for women to be included in the military, as reviewed earlier, clearly indicates that the US military has been characterized by exclusion rather than inclusion. However, the evolving society and services have adopted more inclusionary practices, increasing the number and proportion of women in uniform. The problem though is that both models show a foundation of combat, masculine warrior type cultures.¹⁴

After the Gulf War, both US society and Congress questioned whether American women should perform combat roles. From this public debate evolved the 1991 Defense Authorization Act that, among other things, created a presidential commission to “assess the laws and policies restricting the assignment of female service members.”¹⁵ Karen Dunivin further supports this issue in her research¹⁶ where she argues that as a compromise between liberal senators, who wanted to repeal exclusionary laws restricting women from flying combat aircraft, and conservative senators, who wanted to continue excluding military women from all combat, the commission was formed to study the legal, military, and societal implications of amending the exclusionary laws. Over the next year, the commission conducted an exhaustive study of the complex and emotional issues associated with the existing duty assignments available to servicewomen, including combat roles. In its 1992 report to the President and Congress, the commission identified 17 relevant issues, made recommendations, and summarized its findings as drawn from testimony, reports, and site visits.¹⁷

Analysis of the commission demonstrates the fundamental battle between the traditional and evolving model.¹⁸ A detailed analysis of the report indicates that the members, for the most part, came to their commission duties with entrenched values and beliefs about the role of women in the military and combat. Often, their values and beliefs were rooted in a fundamental ideology

about the role of women in society, including work and family. Like society's polarization over this issue, there were two divided groups. Typically, traditionalists viewed women in limited societal and military roles, while evolutionists saw women in expanded nontraditional roles, including combat arms.

In turn, the commissioners' prisms shaped their analyses. For example, Dunivin argues that if traditionalists assumed that women generally were the weaker sex, their conception of military culture was one where servicewomen were rightfully relegated to support roles because their participation (especially in combat) degraded the military's mission readiness and war-fighting capability. In short, they favored a traditional model of military culture.¹⁹ Conversely evolutionists, who generally viewed women as an equal sex, constructed a conception of military culture in which they expected women to be full partners of defense. Anything short of total equal opportunity and responsibility, including combat, was considered discrimination.²⁰

Sexual harassment discussion

In 1988, the DOD conducted a survey of military personnel in all Services on the subject of sexual harassment. 64% of all women surveyed reported that they had personally experienced sexual harassment in the year prior to the survey.²¹ In July 1991, then SecDef Richard Cheney issued a memorandum outlining a seven-point action program designed to eradicate sexual harassment. The policy message, however, did not appear to get through to everyone. The Tailhook Association's 35th annual symposium, held September 5-7, 1991, resulted in many allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault and focused public and congressional attention on these problems.²² The Tailhook scandal, led the secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations to resign. Officers who had been at the convention suppressed information, however, and nobody was court-martialed afterwards.²³ It was clear that there was still a wide

gap between policy set in Washington and the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and small groups in the field. The witnesses who testified before the House Armed Services Committee on sexual harassment in the military in March 1994 called attention to the fact those problems persist. Testifying at those hearings, then Assistant SecDef Edwin Dorn explained, “ The military services have averaged more than 1500 sexual harassment complaints during the past years (1992-1994). Most of them, about 800 a year in 1992 and 1993, have been substantiated.”²⁴

A RAND research study from 1997,²⁵ showed that in units, which had been recently opened to women, sexual harassment and the threat of sexual harassment charges continue to be morale issues. There appeared to be considerable confusion about the definition of sexual harassment. Several leaders were horrified to discover that a large percentage of women were claiming sexual harassment, only to discover that these complaints were really about living conditions and the general working environment, rather than specific charges. The point is that many initial sexual harassment cases were not concerning sexuality, rather they were job related, pertaining to equal opportunity. Many personnel, especially junior personnel, did not understand what does – and does not – constitute harassment. Some sexual harassment prevention and awareness training programs instituted at units prior to their gender integration seemed to have a negative effect on the transition to an integrated unit. The training seemed to scare the men from interacting on any level with the women. Some men reported that they were told “don’t talk to them, don’t sit near them in the mess, don’t breathe near them.”²⁶ Not surprisingly, the women in those units reported that the men seemed “scared to death of us.”²⁷

On a personal level, I observed similar trends and behaviors as an instructor pilot at Sheppard AFB, Texas, in 1992. At the same time, I observed the introduction of Air Force Quality policies. These policies also seemed to affect gender integration issues by focusing on

overall quality statements rather than addressing how to solve obvious problems concerning the implementation of sexual harassment policies. Existing perceptions made many men reluctant to push women, especially during physical activities, because of the fear that the women would retaliate with an unfounded charge of sexual harassment. Men were reluctant to counsel women privately, as they would men, because of the innuendo that would accompany them if they were alone together and because of the lack of any witness who could speak on their behalf. This would obviously lead to sexual harassment accusations as argued by the previously discussed RAND study. I personally support this conclusion and further argue that these early sexual harassment policies were misperceived and did not support the overall gender integration process.

Another issue cited in the RAND study is the “Zero tolerance” policy. There appear to be two interpretations of the policy. In the first interpretation, zero tolerance means that the command will not tolerate violations of policy and will take swift and serious action when violations occur. Most people who thought that zero tolerance was a good policy held this interpretation. They thought that publicly chastising violators deterred overt violations. Others thought the policy was wrong and complained that it was not right to give unfair treatment to first offenders to set an example for others. A second interpretation of the policy is that zero tolerance means, “This doesn’t happen under this command at all.” Everyone with this interpretation thought zero tolerance was a bad idea. They felt that zero tolerance meant the command would not dare to recognize or punish violators because that would be a public admission that the command had failed to prevent violations and that, in so doing, they would risk scandalous coverage and would hamper their high-level careers.²⁸

Effects of gender integration on readiness, cohesion, and morale

The 1997 RAND study revealed other important issues of gender integration. Gender integration was found to have had a relatively small effect on readiness, cohesion, and morale in the units studied. Other influences, such as leadership and training, were perceived to be far more influential. Commanders and personnel in the units studied in the research indicated that gender integration has not had a major effect on their units' readiness. Both men and women asserted in RAND's survey that women perform about as well as men, although there was widespread support for setting gender-neutral physical requirements for positions requiring strength.²⁹

The most-often mentioned effect on readiness was the non-availability of personnel due to pregnancy. When a unit has many women or is understaffed, the limitations imposed by pregnancy are both more visible and have a disproportionately greater effect because losses due to leave following birth must be compensated for and replacements are rarely available.³⁰ The overall readiness issue becomes very complex when the people element is introduced. What makes a unit of military people work effectively together for a common purpose? Is it physical ability, mental and psychological adeptness, or good leadership?

The 1997 RAND study indicated that any divisions caused by gender were minimal or invisible in units with high cohesion. Gender did not appear as an issue in units with high cohesion. Gender appeared as an issue only in units with conflicting groups. When it did negatively affect cohesion, it was generally because gender is one way that people break into categories when conflict surfaces or because dating occurred within a unit. Gender was also mentioned in the RAND study as having a positive effect, raising the level of professional standards, because woman leaders were well-regarded by their peers and subordinates and were often considered better at resolving some of the leadership gender inconsistencies observed by

both men and women.³¹ Throughout the survey, gender was almost never mentioned in issues cited affecting morale. Leadership was regarded as the overwhelming influence. Sexual harassment influenced morale to some extent and, in other discussions mentioned in the RAND survey, issues of double standards significantly impacted morale.³² The perception of a double standard was held most widely by men and tended to revolve around such things as different physical standards and a perceived unwillingness of male supervisors to demand as much of women as they do of men. Finally, dating and sexual relationships, even those not forbidden by the regulations, were viewed as potentially causing problems for morale within a unit.

Gender integration also has some positively perceived effects upon morale. Some men told the RAND survey group that gender integration resulted in units developing a more positive, professional work atmosphere.³³ In addition, both men and women indicated in different RAND questionnaires that men could discuss their frustrations and other personal issues with female colleagues more than with men, and that this opportunity prevented them from seeking more destructive outlets, such as excessive drinking and fighting.³⁴

Other findings related to gender

According to the 1997 RAND study, the majority of men and women surveyed favored integration in basic training.³⁵ However, 25% of women and 39% of men preferred segregated training, especially in units perceived to be very focused on small cohesive teams, like Navy seals and Marine units. Few (14-18%) felt that women should be assigned in groups to newly opened units, but the remainder differed in whether women should be assigned evenly across all units or whether the assignment process should be gender blind.³⁶ Over half of the men surveyed by RAND in the enlisted ranks favored some relaxation of the ground combat exclusion policy. While only one-third of male officers agreed, Army and Marine Corps men of all grades were

more likely to prefer the current policy. These facts are all present in the RAND survey and on a personal level, this is what I also concluded after discussing gender integration at ACSC with my student peers from all US services.

A change in the current ground combat exclusion policy is supported by over 80% of the women surveyed by RAND. Those who support change differ on allowing women to serve voluntarily in ground combat positions or requiring them to do so, as men are. Many of the men and women were concerned that the public spotlight on gender integration in the military was making the adjustment more difficult and diverting attention from the progress that has occurred.³⁷

The services recognized the negative publicity of major sexual harassment cases, such as Tailhook and Aberdeen, and the potential impact they could have on their recruiting programs.³⁸ As a result, they are initiating new measures or continuing previous initiatives to restore public trust. For example, Major General Al Lenhardt (1997), the commander of Army recruiting, sent a letter to the parents of recruits awaiting entry to active duty to ease their concerns about sexual harassment.³⁹ The Air Force also provides each applicant with an Applicant Rights card. This card tells the applicant what to do if they believe they are a victim of discrimination or sexual harassment.⁴⁰

Special Concerns

In the Fiscal Year 1995 DOD Appropriations Act, Congress acknowledged service efforts to integrate women into the military. Congress then directed military psychologists to submit a report on development of gender-neutral physical enlistment standards.⁴¹ The report to Congress indicated that the Air Force was the only service using physical strength standards and that those standards were gender neutral. Interestingly, the report indicated it was easier to set physical

standards in the Air Force, because the Air Force has relatively few physically demanding jobs as compared with other services. The physical standards discussion is perceived to be one of the major difficulties in the overall gender integration case. This fact is supported in the previous mentioned RAND survey as well as other sources reviewed in this paper. In addition, there appeared to be no consistent, recurring problems across the services that were traceable to the absence of physical strength criteria as to warrant the costs of developing job-specific physical ability screening tests and standards. In February 1996, Congress asked the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate whether physical standards were relevant to the actual performance of work in physically demanding jobs, and whether physically demanding jobs could be reengineered to reduce physical requirements without harming unit performance.⁴² The GAO did not find any widespread physical strength and job performance problems, but nevertheless urged military psychologists to systemically collect data from all services on job performance difficulties related to physical strength.

The military psychological society is currently analyzing the survey results from about 50,000 job incumbents and their supervisors.⁴³ In addition to responding to Congress and the GAO, the military psychological society intends to use this information to formulate policies for physical strength enlistment standards and job-skill training programs.⁴⁴

Overview of other key issues

In the first semester of my year at Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, I have gathered information on the gender integration issue in the U.S. Air Force. In conducting this research project, I discussed this particular issue with members of the staff and my classmates and peers.

It seems to be an issue that interests most military personnel, but at the same time it seems to be an issue that is not openly discussed due to many political constraints or their diverse perceptions of current policy guidelines. The different viewpoints put forth in these discussions typically follow the traditional and exclusionary model discussed earlier, as well as the more inclusive and evolutionary model. Based on these discussions, I believe that the traditional exclusionary model is also found in my own generation, as well as younger ones. I acknowledge that the subject of “women in combat” is an emotional one and not often subjected to empirical evidence. In my opinion the different viewpoints can be divided up into two groups: Pro and Cons.⁴⁵ The Con group argues that combat is a man’s job (the occupational specialization argument). The combat environment is unsuitable for women and they should be protected from it (the environment/danger argument). The presence of women in a unit would destroy that unit’s effectiveness and thus its ability to accomplish its combat mission (the combat effectiveness argument). Women are physically weaker than men and thus are unable to perform combat jobs (the physical strength argument). The presence of more women in the military, and specifically in combat roles, will lead other nations to perceive United States forces as weak (the national security interests/figurehead force argument).⁴⁶

To support the US argument for continuing efforts to increase their levels of gender integration, I believe it is interesting to consider the Pro side of gender integration discussions. Here we find such positions as the historical argument - women have efficiently and effectively served in combat roles. Furthermore, there is the sex discrimination argument: the blanket restriction of women as a class from a category of jobs is unjustly discriminatory since some women are just as capable and interested in performing combat jobs as men are. Another argument supporting equal opportunity is that women should have the right of equal access to all

types of jobs, combat roles included. Citizenship rights imply equality of sacrifice, as well as equality of opportunity. The right to serve and protect one's country is as important to women as to men, and more women in the military is not an issue of equality, but rather of quality. Furthermore changes in demographics call for an increase in gender integration because of population profiles, the number of young men eligible for military service in the 1980s and 1990s declined, thus the military had to rely increasingly upon women.⁴⁷

The bottom line is that my subjective findings do not clearly relate the pros and cons to services or specific branches of the military. The above-mentioned issues represent assumptions about women and their roles in military organizations.⁴⁸ There seems to be an overall general acceptance of women in the military, but the lack of an open and sound discussion seems to be a result of "political correctness" constraints, as seen pertaining to other important personnel issues in the U.S military, like homosexuality and ethnicity.⁴⁹ In my opinion, the many and very important issues of gender integration have been overshadowed and hampered by the public focus on specific issues like sexual harassment cases.

Summary of US strategies/policies in the common areas/issues of interest

As we have seen, the role of women in the US armed forces has been an evolutionary one. This is a fact although the military as well as society seem to have been largely divided into two major groups: the conservative and more exclusionary group and the evolving group. Both sides share combat and masculine traditions, but the evolving model has followed the general trends in society, thus increasing the number and proportion of women in uniform. Historically, women were judged not to be an appropriate part of military (they served a military function, but did so as civilians, not as military members). They have been viewed as emergency or "part time" help

in the military, as serving in peripheral rather than in core roles in the armed forces, and as a resource of last resort.⁵⁰

However, at the present time, these organizational assumptions have evolved toward policies emphasizing that women are a legitimate part of military organizations and an important and continuing resource in their own right. Organizational assumptions about women's military roles will continue to evolve, as women become more and more a part of the 21st century military.

The attention given to the issue of integration of women in the US military during the last decade has been largely focused on public political pressure, sexual harassment cases, and "political correctness" constraints, rather than an open and honest process of systematically examining other important issues in the gender integration case. Based on my observations and opinions of senior speakers at the ACSC, issues like male/female qualities, equal opportunities, physical standards for combat roles, and getting the best people for the job, seem to be overshadowed by the overall political process and the issue of political correctness. An indication of changes in a more positive direction is a decrease in the overall number of reported sexual harassment cases.⁵¹ If this is an indication of a better understanding of current policies and improved equal opportunities, I believe this is a very positive indicator of improved gender integration.

Notes

¹ Binkin and Bach, *Women and the Military*, p.10

² Sherrow, *Women in the Military, An Encyclopedia*, p.133

³ Ibid. p. 92

⁴ Defense EEO Council Report May 1995, Vol II

⁵ Binkin and Bach, *Women in the Military*, p. 12

⁶ ibid. p. 14

⁷ ibid. p. 22

⁸ Defense EEO Council Report May 1995, Vol II

⁹ ibid. p. 19

¹⁰ Karen O. Dunivin, Military Culture Research, AWC 1999, p. 4

Notes

- ¹¹ Peach, *Women at War*, p.21
- ¹² RAND: *New Opportunities for Military Women*, p. 11
- ¹³ Karen O. Dunivin, “*Military Culture: Change and Continuity*, “ *Armed Forces and Society* 20, no. 4 (summer 1994): 531-47.
- ¹⁴ Dunivin, research, p. 4-5.
- ¹⁵ *Report to the President, November 15, 1992: The Presidential Commission on the assignment of women in the Armed Forces* (Washington, 1992)
- ¹⁶ See note #10.
- ¹⁷ Dunivin, research, p. 5
- ¹⁸ Analysis is more detailed in Lt Col Karen O. Dunivin, USAF, research AWC 1999.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. p. 2 (Table 1).
- ²⁰ Ibid. p. 6
- ²¹ Kaiser, *Women in the Military, Feb 19, 1997, SSP Seminar*
- ²² The Tailhook incident also demonstrated how people can confuse “sexual harassment” with “sexual assault” – outstanding described in Stephanie Gutmann’s book *The Kinder, Gentler Military*.
- ²³ Sherrow, *Women and the Military*, p. 254
- ²⁴ Defense Equal Opportunity Council: Report on Sexual Harassment, May 1995 Vol I, 5.
- ²⁵ RAND: *New Opportunities for Military Women*, Harrell and Miller, 1997.
- ²⁶ Ibid. p. 72.
- ²⁷ Ibid. p. 73.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p. 33-82.
- ²⁹ Ibid. p. 33-82.
- ³⁰ Ibid. p. 40
- ³¹ Ibid. p. 49.
- ³² Ibid. p. 80.
- ³³ Ibid. p. 82.
- ³⁴ Ibid. p. 100.
- ³⁵ Also supported by Rosemarie Skaine in her book, *Women at War*, 1999, p.153-166.
- ³⁶ RAND, p. 100.
- ³⁷ Ibid. p. 101.
- ³⁸ *Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, US Senate*, February 1997. Different questions to the Service Secretaries were given and the answers are reflected in this statement.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ *Military Psychologist newsletter, Jan 2001.*
- ⁴² The GAO report can be traced back to 1994 where Congress in the Authorization Report of 1994 saw the need to establish gender-neutral physical standards.
- ⁴³ *Military Psychologist newsletter.*
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Also supported in M.C.Devilbiss “*Woman and Military*,” Nov 1990, chapter 3.
- ⁴⁶ Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Arms and enlisted Woman*, p. 224-230.
- ⁴⁷ Devilbiss, table 7 in chapter 3.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.

Notes

⁴⁹ Gen Jones, U.S Marine Corps Service Chief, addressed this very important issue at a lecture at ACSC, February 28, 2001.

⁵⁰ Binkin and Bach, p. 12-14.

⁵¹ Air Force Times, 5 Mar 2001.

Chapter 3

Comparing and Contrasting the US and Danish armed forces

“He who is full of courage and sangfroid before an enemy battery sometimes trembles before a skirt.”

—Napoleon Bonaparte

The Danish and US societies are typical modern Western societies. We share many common perspectives in our political systems as well as military society. The integration of women in the military has many parallel aspects in both armed forces. As a superpower and as a leading nation in global security issues, the US military is often the focus of many organizational and technological discussions. The same can be said in the case of gender integration.

With regard to women in the military, the US military has evolved more radically than the Danish military. 15% of military personnel in the US military are women compared to the 5% in the Danish military. In the last decade, the Danish military followed the US pattern of evolving policies on women in combat roles. Women were allowed to apply to become fighter pilots, but the Danish Air Force has yet to see the first female fighter pilot. Another issue to put the integration process in perspective is the fact that only two women have the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Danish military – a huge difference compared to the US military,¹ although women were admitted to officer education in 1974 in Denmark. Why this difference? First of all there is the obvious issue of the mere size difference between the US and Danish military. Secondly, a career as a female officer has not attracted the same number of women in Denmark

as in the US. This issue was discussed in detail in Chapter One,² where issues like educational opportunities as well as military constraints on women in service were summarized. Furthermore, serving the country has different perspectives in the two countries. In my opinion, serving and protecting the US is regarded very positively throughout the majority of the US society. This is also true in Denmark, but without an obvious enemy after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the support and understanding of military ideologies have decreased throughout society in Denmark.

Both militaries also share some common problem areas; for example, divisions of inclusive/exclusive arguments are common. There is a similar political focus on the integration of women in the military in both countries, although the political pressure and constraints seem more radical and focused in the US than in Denmark. One major common problem area is the concern over physical standards. Gender-neutral standards or differential standards seem to be the two major issues in this debate. Both countries recognize the importance of developing a physical standards system that provides an equal opportunity foundation as well as supports the gender integration process. The problem though is that this particular issue has often been focused on differentiating the standards to secure more women in the military, rather than focusing on the requirements and standards for each individual job description.³

The process of gender integration over the last decade has one major difference between the two nations – the focus on sexual harassment issues. This issue has been very important in the US, to the extent of overshadowing other and perhaps more important issues of gender integration. Denmark probably is considered a more liberal country with regard to sexual harassment. The sexual harassment issue is important, but the lack of official policies in the Danish military compared to the US military may indicate a flaw in the Danish military. The

absence of overt policies in the Danish military may indicate to women that the services do not care about (or are willing to ignore) sexual discrimination and harassment. This could further contribute to the lack of interest in pursuing a military career. The argument of sexual harassment policies and other important equal opportunity policies has been more publicly focused in the US military than the Danish.

Retention problems and demographic changes have made the gender integration very important to our nations. Both Denmark and the US have acknowledged the need for a more focused discussion and organizational contribution to resolve the issue. The Danish military have tried to look into more nontraditional evolutionary approaches to the gender integration issue. The US military seems to be stuck in a more constrained political discussion.⁴ Open arguments on the subject are much more common in Denmark than the US. The bottom line is that both countries need a continued focused discussion of the overall diversity issue to be able to meet the requirement and challenges for the 21st century militaries in a radically changing world.

Notes

¹ This can be supported by the number of women at the latest lieutenant colonel promotion board in the US Air Force.

² See Chapter One, under the interview with Gen Simonsen.

³ The RAND survey report addresses this issue in detail. See chapter 2.

⁴ The decrease in sexual harassment cases (Air Force Times, 5 Mar 2001, may indicate a radical change towards a more open and focused discussion on issues pertaining the continuation and improved gender integration.

Chapter 4

Summary and Recommendations for the Future Royal Danish Air Force

Don't commiserate with a human being – it is better to help him.

—Maxim Gorky

The Danish military has an overall portion of 5% of women in the military.¹ This number is not satisfactory for an evolving and effective military organization. Gender integration in the Danish military has been a slow but improving process. The evolution within Danish society with regard to gender integration is not following the same trends in the Danish military. One problem affecting gender integration is that the Danish military has not appealed to the female side of the Danish population. Reasons such as military obligations, a lack of official gender policies like harassment policies, or male dominance can be sources for the slow integration process.² The discussion on women in combat roles has followed similar trends as in many Western countries, with similar problem areas. Issues concerning women in combat roles have shared different views. The Danish military is, like many other militaries, very male dominated, thus creating a male “warrior” culture. This issue, together with other issues like physical standards and sexual harassment policies, have been openly examined and continuously discussed within the military services.³

Retention problems and the increased political focus on gender integration during the last decade have made the Danish military increasingly aware of the gender diversity issue. Rather

than simply focusing on getting more females in the military, the Danish military command has approached the gender diversity as a resource to the military rather than a deficit. The overall objective is to recruit, educate, retain, and support the kind of people who are required for today's military organization. Equal opportunity policies in Danish society must be reflected in the military because it is well known that greater diversity systematically creates better results with regard to the overall well being of any organization. The Danish military recognizes people as the most important resource. Future military services are not only controlled by technology but primarily people – quality people. This in fact implies that the military also needs to emphasize issues like family values and other issues pertaining to quality of life.

The bottom line is that rather than focusing on the gender integration process from a very typical military standpoint, the military has elected to approach this issue with nontraditional viewpoints, like open conferences with both people from the military and the public to promote an open and honest dialogue. This is done to explore the positive trends with regard to gender integration as seen in the Danish society. The focus in the debate is that we must acknowledge that we are different people and we have different lives, thus creating resources for the radically changing tasks for the future military organizations. The Danish military continues to focus on changing security policies. Women in combat roles with regards to the contribution to international peace operations and humanitarian operations give the gender integration debate a new perspective.

Possible future ideas/strategies for the Danish military

“Look upon your soldiers as beloved children and they will willingly die with you”

—Sun Tzu

The gender integration process is and still will be very important. Many barriers have been met and overcome. It is important to continue evaluating trends from surveys throughout the military. It is important not only to examine the impact of gender integration and the impact of diversity on military organization, but also to react to these issues. Policies and organizations require changes to face these challenges – words and good intentions are not enough. To succeed we need to openly acknowledge that there are obvious differences between men and women. If we succeed in recognizing the true worth and contributions women can make to military operations and gaining greater awareness on these issues throughout the entire military organization, we will be able to create a foundation for a fair and complete integration of women in the military. I believe it will demand a substantial contribution from both military leaders and the command structure. We need action to support a true integration, not just assimilation into an already flawed system.

A Canadian policy, which is incorporated into the Danish military leadership basic publication,⁴ points out that female performance is more affected by leadership style than men. Women are more inclined to attach to a person rather than to an organization. Women acknowledge their leaders' personal opinions and feedback more than their male counterparts. If a leader does not set high personal standards, he can expect a more negative reaction from females than males. A female worker/subordinate reacts more positively to an open, honest, and professional leader.⁵ These are qualities every military desires in its leaders. The Canadian guidance concludes that the attitude and behavior of a military leader are the most important factors requiring examination, when discussing gender integration, unit cohesion, and unit/combat efficiency. So we as military leaders must be the initiators of future policies. It is important that we continuously educate our leaders in areas pertaining to equal opportunities.

Better information would clear up any misperceptions and identify areas where policies might be developed to minimize differences that do occur. I believe that we should accept gender integration without prejudices; accept women in combat rules including accepting possible female casualties and accept the fact that women are a natural part of the Danish military.

From a personal point of view, I believe many issues need to be explored and openly discussed. I believe the Danish military needs to develop an official sexual harassment policy based on experiences in the Danish military from new and focused studies and researches. The US experience can be of great value in achieving this goal especially by comparing the Danish experiences with the 1997 US RAND study.⁶ The RAND study further addresses issues like readiness, cohesion, and morale that can be of substantial importance for the Danish military. Further we need to insure that any new policies avoid establishing double standards for men and women in the same positions and where possible, eliminate any double standards that exist.

We need to focus on diversity as an asset to the military organization rather than continue with traditional male dominated procedures and processes. The integration process must focus on “the best people for the job” – not just to support more women in the military for political reasons. We must look beyond the question of “women in the military” to the larger context of the organization itself. I believe the question “Should women be in the military at all?” is a part of a legacy that does not belong in the 21st century. But as seen from the US experience and also from my own experiences in the Danish military, this issue is still alive – and must be faced in an open debate. One must accept that different attitudes towards women in the military will exist as long as the military continues to be male dominated. The US experience has fortunately given me a strong belief that the traditional male attitude toward gender integration and the overall equal opportunity is radically changing.⁷ This is a fact of life and should be understood and

accepted to create an honest and more evolutionary attitude throughout the military. I personally believe this male “warrior” paradigm, more obvious in the US military than in the Danish military, is more superficial than a real problem. I believe the problem arises when people of the same sex dominate the organization.

Certainly the Danish military’s main objective is to “fight and win wars,” but the role of the military has changed from one of “combat” to a more widely inclusive one of “conflict management.” I believe the issues that need to be continually focused on, are not simply how (and whether) to incorporate women into combat, but how (and whether) to train all military personnel in peace operations as well as war-fighting roles. These are the real issues in a military that still needs to reflect society to a greater extent. This means we need to not only focus on the gender integration process, but also on how to improve family values overall.⁸ The bottom line, I believe, is that we must continue the positive trends in the Danish military and be ready to face all challenges with an open and honest attitude.

Notes

¹ See Chapter One for detailed figures and discussion

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ P.R.A. Personnel Research Associates for the Department of National Defense Mobile Command Headquarters: *Mixed Gender Service: Leader’s Considerations*, 1988.

⁵ Leadership and Education, *Basic Book*, p. 330.

⁶ Harrell and Miller, RAND: *New Opportunities for Military Women*, see further in chapter 2 of this research.

⁷ Based on the observations and opinions of several senior speakers at the ACSC.

⁸ See Chapter Three.

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