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Eliminating Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule: Internal Preparations for Implementation

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Abstract

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by

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MS, Duquesne University, 2009

BA, Mercyhurst College, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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Abstract

Decades before the elimination of gender restrictions in the U.S. military, ground combat was an equal opportunity issue for women. Direct combat units, such as infantry and artillery, are now open to female enlistment. The purpose of this study was to examine the efforts, challenges and/or successes, of incorporating women into a U.S. Army combat brigade in a single state. The frame-critical approach was used to outline the competing arguments between supporters and opponents of women in combat. The research questions guiding the study included how gender integration is perceived with regards to strength and survivability of the unit, and how future conflict will govern decisions about sending women into combat. A qualitative case study was employed with semi structured interviews with commanders of the combat brigade, given their proximity to the issue and responsibility in the implementation process. The selected brigade was serving as the initial test bed of evaluation for the rest of the state's combat units. The data collected via the interviews were cross-checked with documentary data including declassified memorandums, technical reports, and execution orders. During the analysis phase, the data were organized and coded to identify themes related to the experiences of the command structure. Overall, the officers were supportive of the policy mandate and expressed viewpoints that validated both oppositional and advocacy arguments. The implications for social change include how the military is working to validate performance standards to positively influence policy on gender integration, and the combat brigade utilized in this study is an example for the rest of the United States as it is slated to have the most female recruits for combat positions than any other state beginning in 2017.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the Study

On January 24, 2013, U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued a memorandum that eliminated gender restrictions for direct ground combat (Barry, 2013). Before that decision, an exclusion policy, known as the Aspin Rule, had been in place since 1994 preventing women from serving in direct combat roles (McNulty, 2012). Secretary Panetta claimed that lifting gender-based barriers within the military would improve the fighting force as a whole (Sisk, 2013). General Dempsey reaffirmed that claim by stating that they were acting to strengthen the armed forces. However, the only justification given was the enhancement of equal opportunity (Maginnis, 2013). During a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in 1992, the 27th commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert Barrow, delivered a candid testimony in which he stated that any discussion about women in combat "should not be about women's rights, equal opportunity, or career enhancement. It is about, most assuredly…combat effectiveness, combat readiness, and winning the next conflict" (Maginnis, 2013, pp. 1–2). Nonetheless, more than 2 decades later, the decision to overturn the ban was hailed as a triumph for civilian feminists who viewed ground combat as a glass-ceiling issue for women's equal opportunity.

Disagreement still exists regarding the soundness and feasibility of the new policy. Schön and Rein (1994) wrote about intractable policy controversies which are seemingly resistant to resolution when appealing to logic, research, and evidence. Some literature suggested that military organizational culture and structure needs to be carefully studied and reconsidered altogether (Egnell, 2013; Farnell, 2009). According to Schön

and Rein, policy controversies result from opposing parties holding conflicting frames. Schön and Rein defined *frames* as the "underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation" (p. 23). The issue of women in combat is a useful example to explore in terms of policy frames. Each party's conflicting frame shapes their policy positions and thus determines what counts as facts and what arguments are considered relevant (Schön & Rein, 1994). Feminists framed the question about women in combat as an equal rights issue (Maginnis, 2013). Opponents contend that the logic of assigning women to combat is contradicted by scientific evidence, empirical data, the experiences of other nations, and common sense (King, 2013; Maginnis, 2013; Simons, 2000). In addition, no easy and immediate answers exist concerning the facilitation and implementation of the new policy (Barry, 2013).

Women have served the country honorably throughout history – from traditional roles, such as scouts, spies or nurses since the Revolutionary War, to combat support in Iraq and Afghanistan (Maginnis, 2013; McGirk, 2006; McNulty, 2012). Service opportunities for women in the United States were limited in the past, but combat support roles increased steadily with time, and that trend expanded internationally as well (Barry, 2013). Currently, the United States has no restrictions on women serving in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force. Women account for nearly 15% of the current service members in the U.S. military (Farnell, 2009; Mattocks et al., 2012). Approximately 80% of the U.S. military is composed of combat support. Combat support is every bit as critical to the overall mission as direct combat roles.

Indeed, women's contributions during the nation's wartime are to be commended and appreciated. Several foreign case studies such as Russia, Israel, Italy, and France,

had women actively fight in defense of their countries during wartime. On the one hand, those foreign case studies were incidents of national survival and wartime exigency; it did not become a postwar normality (Maginnis, 2013). Israel removed women from the front lines after her war for independence in 1948, and until the 1990s most combat positions remained closed to women (Epstein, et al., 2013). And for 2 centuries, in the United States, it was considered unthinkable to send women directly into violent front line combat (Maginnis, 2013; McGirk, 2006). A major cultural shift may have occurred for it to be considered socially acceptable today. Farnell (2009) indicated that a cultural shift already occurred during the mid-1970s out of necessity for more military volunteers. Societal norms changed in response to the need, and likewise, subsequent change to institutional culture occurred as more women volunteered to serve (Farnell, 2009).

In 1992, the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces was designated with the task of collecting and studying evidence regarding women in combat. The success of female combat support during the Persian Gulf War prompted the formation of the Commission to consider "legal, policy, and societal implications" on gender restrictions in combat (McNulty, 2012, p. 145). Women filled 25% of combat support positions during Operation Desert Storm. Professor Maria Lepowsky, who taught women's studies at the University of Wisconsin, testified at the hearing and asserted that placing women in combat would boost "female self-esteem" (Horowitz, 2013). Moreover, Professor Lepowsky believed the positive consequence of a feminized military would be increased concern about committing troops to combat in the first place (Horowitz, 2013). On the other hand, testimony from commanders and war veterans outlined foreseeable problems. McNulty (2012) mentioned that the Commission

was closely critiqued because committee members were accused of being bias before the study began (p. 146). Retrospectively, the commission "heard no evidence that putting women in combat would improve the Army's ability to accomplish its mission" (Maginnis, 2013, p. 23). In perspective to the recent campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, Professor Lepowsky's hopes were not confirmed based on the physical and psychiatric casualty rates for women (Maginnis, 2013; Maguen et al., 2012; Mattocks et al., 2012).

National opinion dramatically shifted between 1991 and the decision to lift the combat ban in 2013. A 1991 Gallup survey indicated that only 38% of Americans favored putting women in combat (Brown, 2013). From 2001 to 2010, news outlets conducted surveys that revealed a majority of the public supporting women serving in ground combat positions (McNulty, 2012). The prolonged counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan certainly played a role in that shift as service women became casualties in those conflicts (Barry, 2013; Maginnis, 2013). Both campaigns started out as conventional before morphing into asymmetrical warfare. It was not unusual for female service members to be exposed to indirect fire or unofficially serve in combat roles by subterfuge or sheer necessity (Falk, 2012; Maginnis, 2013). Egnell (2013) recommended that "needs-based analysis," such as the development of female engagement teams (FETs) in Iraq and Afghanistan, be used when drawing conclusions about women's place in modern warfare (p. 39). When troop availability was an issue, both King (2013) and Maginnis (2013) pointed out that combat exclusion was regularly evaded by commanders through the semantic method of *attaching* rather than *assigning* women to combat units. This practice was common when dealing with a lack of support personnel. FET training included combat skills, but that was not their primary function.

Archived data of the Army's "Lioness" program highlighted the missions performed by female soldiers accompanying all-male combat units in Iraq as early as 2003 (King, 2013; McNulty, 2012). The Lioness program was not viewed as violating the existing exclusion policy because the women were not permanently *assigned* to all-male units (McNulty, 2012). Their support roles included civil affairs, personnel searches, and planning operations (Maginnis, 2013; McNulty, 2012). Some situational factors resulted in the Lionesses engaging in firefights with the enemy. Based on the experiences of these women, McNulty (2012) noted that the reality of ground conditions no longer matched the original direct combat definition. Although the Lioness program only serves as one case study, it is an informative example in assessing female integration and professionalized cohesion (Holmstedt, 2007; King, 2013). In 2011, female service members were attached to Special Forces and Ranger outfits as part of cultural support teams in Afghanistan (McNulty, 2012, p. 163). Since 2013, at least 154 female service members were killed and close to a thousand were wounded (DeBruyne & Leland, 2015). After the Joint Chief's new policy announcement in 2013, published national polls showed favorability toward women in combat as high as 75% (Mataconis, 2013). Change in public opinion, however, does not always correspond to views of military personnel. The issue hits closest to those who have or are currently serving.

Responses to allowing women in combat have varied from service branch to service branch, unit to unit, and individual to individual (Egnell, 2013). Surveys have been conducted within the U.S. armed forces to assess organizational climate (Ulmer, 2001). McNulty (2012) reported results from surveys conducted between Air Force Academy (USAFA) and West Point cadets that revealed contrast between their views on

women serving in ground combat. McNulty also pointed to the differences between the service academies' cultures as a probable explanation for the divide. The USAFA cadets had a more supportive position. Those results may be equated to the fact that female U.S. Air Force members, not to mention Naval aviators, are accustomed to piloting combat jets or attack helicopters. However, air combat is not the same as sustained ground combat; they are two different environments.

Army surveys as far back as the 1990s indicate that male and female service members have qualms about women serving in direct combat units. Opposition was strong among female soldiers especially if they are forced into combat on an equal basis with men (Maginnis, 2013). The 1992 Presidential Commission conducted a survey among retired general and flag officers. Of the respondents, three-quarters opposed ground combat service for women, and 90% opposed women in the infantry (Johnson, 1992). Those numbers were highest among retired Marine Corps and Army officers. A 2001 survey conducted by the Army Research Institute (ARI) produced similar results. Responses among both male and female officers reached the 80th percentile in opposition to assigning women to combat (Donnelly, 2007; Maginnis, 2013). Ironically, the line of questioning regarding army soldiers' views on women in combat was dropped from the annual surveys after 2001 (Maginnis, 2013).

Secretary Panetta directed the service branches to report to U.S. Congress by May of 2013 regarding any retained regulations toward women's assignment to combat units. The burden of proof falls on the armed forces to justify any continued exclusions. Military commanders have to adjust accordingly to every new policy. Egnell (2013) claimed that "an effective military organization is one that succeeds in performing the

core tasks that the political leadership requests" (p. 36). With regard to the implementation process, Cooper (2012) explained:

> It was assumed that administrators receive policy decisions adopted by politicians and then apply their best functional rationality to putting them into practice. Administrators were expected to use their professional judgment about the most efficient means for achieving the purposes defined by the legislative process (p. 69).

Political leadership is not the same as military leadership. How is the professional judgment of military leadership factored into policy issues that impact military readiness and effectiveness? For instance, the United Kingdom's sex discrimination and equality law permits gender exclusion if military judgment determines that "women would undermine and degrade combat effectiveness" (Barry, 2013, p. 23). Examples of military leadership challenging civilian leadership include the 1949 public condemnation known as the 'Revolt of the Admirals' directed at the Department of Defense (McFarland, 1980). Similarly, a 'Revolt of the Generals' was directed at Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for not heeding the generals' prewar warnings leading into the Iraq War (Hanson, 2010). In 2010, General Stanley McChrystal was relieved of operational command when he publicly disagreed with the Commander-in-Chief's troop level proposal for Afghanistan. This was an example where General McChrystal was held accountable for breaching the civilian-military divide (Allen, 2010).

The nature of civilian-military relations needs to be understood when connecting military effectiveness with political intent (Egnell, 2013). In retrospect, during testimony in 1992, General Barrow commented that sometimes civilian control of the military is

abusive and coercive (Maginnis, 2013). Some policies may not enhance operational readiness, but political judgments of civilian administrators can override military concerns. Therefore, the active military has changed policy not because it is the right thing to do, but rather to acquiesce to political pressure (Maginnis, 2013). The issue of women in combat is not much different. The Army Chief of Staff and the Marine Commandant are now faced with difficult decisions on how to appropriately facilitate opening ground combat to women (Barry, 2013).

Problem Statement

Introducing women into a traditionally all-male environment makes successful adaptation more challenging if no women were previously placed in the organization (Barry, 2013). Accordingly, General Dempsey remarked that "standards and critical mass" would have to coincide to create the conditions for "upward mobility" of female combat soldiers (Press Briefing by Secretary Panetta & General Dempsey from the Pentagon, 2013). Barry (2013) added that evidence from foreign armies suggests that it is exceedingly unlikely that female volunteers would reach critical mass to make them a "self-sustaining cohort" (p. 28). An immediate problem is that women in the U.S. armed forces have traditionally been held to lower physical training standards than the men (Maginnis, 2013). Secondly, "physiological differences", which coincide with training standards, "remain an enduring problem" (King, 2013, p. 21). Direct combat missions require a higher level of aggression, muscular strength, and aerobic capacity that place women at a distinct disadvantage when performing certain tasks (Epstein et al., 2013; Falk, 2012; Maginnis, 2013). Third, the pervasiveness of sexual misconduct is an evident problem plaguing the military (King, 2013; Stiehm, 2010). By its own admission, the

Department of Defense is still dealing with an epidemic of sexual assault in the armed forces. Consequently, military sexual trauma (MST) is already a leading cause of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among female service members (Maguen et al., 2012; Olsen, 2011). Lastly, suicide rates have been an issue with the military during the past decade, and female veterans are closing the gap when it comes to their suicide rates nearly reaching that of male veterans (Zarembo, 2015). These problems need to be managed when opening direct combat positions to women.

Notwithstanding counterinsurgency operations, which placed women in a de facto state of combat, training for conventional warfare remains a strategic priority for the military. Experientially, combat veterans (namely infantry) can offer testimony to the intense physical and mental rigor they undergo to achieve their positions. The progressive-feminist argument simply declares that women are virtually equal to men in all matters and should be treated as equals (Farnell, 2009). Conceptually speaking, men and women are equals, but they are not identical. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2012), proportional equality is a "form of treatment of others or distribution is *proportional* or *relatively equal* {emphasis added} when it treats all relevant persons in relation to their due" (para. 10). Common sense tells us that there are obvious differences between the genders. Human biology, not culture, determines that men and women have different physiological make-ups and are thus unequal in relevant aspects. Some feminist scholars, who advocated for integration, have conceded the point that physical disparity between the genders does complicate matters (Farnell, 2009; King; 2013; Stiehm, 2010). Even the majority of the Lionesses' duties resembled more police action than direct combat (Maginnis, 2013). Writing in the *Washington Post*,

former Navy Officer Elizabeth Reintjes De Angelo said that many military women do not desire to serve in front line combat, and that they prefer to serve in essential support roles where some of their skills are better than men (De Angelo, 2012). Nevertheless, organizational (combat) culture has been at the core of the policy controversy.

Farnell (2009) advocated for education reform to undo traditional military cultural thinking. Based on Farnell, the very *frames* defined by Schön and Rein (1994) are the focal point for resolution. Nevertheless, attitudes change more slowly than laws. Hence, the additional cultural reality of everyday attitudes of male soldiers can possibly undermine the process (King, 2013). Simons (2000) pointed out that unit cohesion and morale are no more subject to external or legal demands than combat itself. Maginnis (2013), a former army lieutenant colonel, predicted much more drastic consequences:

> Putting women in combat will seriously weaken our fighting force, discourage males who are already abandoning the all-volunteer force, encourage sexual improprieties that erode unit cohesion, inflict physical and psychological injury on young women fooled into serving in combat, and ensure that eighteen-year-old females will be subject to the draft just like men (p. x).

If enough women actively strive for and succeed in acquiring combat positions, then the Army Chief of Staff and Marine Commandant, as purported by Barry (2013), will have to assess the "largely unquantifiable risk" that low-level leadership in combat will become more difficult, and military effectiveness will diminish as a result (p. 28). Egnell (2013) took issue with how military effectiveness is measured and pointed to two problems. First, treating military effectiveness as success on the battlefield separates the

political aspect of war. Second, the overemphasis on physical factors distracts attention away from the intangible assets that influence effective use of resources (Egnell, 2013, p. 36). In addition, Seipel (2010) mentioned that women's increasing involvement in policy-making has influenced how states allocate resources. Dietz (2011) argued that exclusion erodes effectiveness and deprives the military of leadership capabilities of qualified females. Epstein et al. (2013) concluded that "there is no direct evidence that women have a negative impact on combat effectiveness" (p. 2673). Haring (2013) implored that it is not about *all* women be equal to *all* men in physical capacity, but rather simply letting women who can meet the physical standards serve as infantry. Nonetheless, as briefly acknowledged by Maginnis (2013), female soldiers are at substantial risk in association with this form of equal opportunity.

Overall, proponents who pushed for women in combat may not actually understand the realities of fighting capabilities or the threat it poses for women and the men they work with (Epstein et al., 2013; Maginnis, 2013; Maguen et al., 2012). Deadlines are now looming for top military commanders to either have a clear path for eliminating all gender restrictions or provide good reason for requesting a waiver from the policy (Tilghman, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this organizational case study was to examine the potential challenges and/or successes in implementing the new inclusion policy. A chief reason organizational culture is popularly studied is to determine if correlation exists between organizational culture and organizational performance (Berrio, 2003). A brigade element of traditionally all-male combat units provided the context for the study by examining

internal preparations and their perceptions on integrating women into the combat culture. Despite media speculation, Barry (2013) claimed that Panetta and Dempsey's decision is more conditional than what has been reported. The Pentagon may still exclude women from certain combat roles, the possibility of which is greater with U.S. Army and Marine infantry units (Barry, 2013). The Marine Corp and the U.S. Army have taken different approaches to opening combat roles to women (Lin, 2014). Combat engineer positions in the army and ground intelligence positions in the marines have thus far been opened to women (Tilghman, 2015). Tilghman (2015) noted "in total, about 91,000 previously male-only jobs have been opened to women over the past few years. Across the active and reserve forces, about 240,000 jobs remain closed, mainly in infantry and armor units" (para. 8). Although research related to marine experiences is referenced periodically, the main focus is on providing a snapshot of the Army experience. Although I sought to shed some light on any continued combat exclusion, the intent is to produce a better understanding of the organizational climate in the midst of significant organizational change and contribute to an emerging body of research on the subject at hand. King (2013) speculated that the culture is unlikely to alter regardless of the formal lifting of gender restrictions. Modes of operation, strategy, and goals are all influenced by cultural elements of an organization (Schein, 1985).

Remembering that *frames* represent perceptions and beliefs, another goal of studying organizational culture is to discover and "interpret aspects of organizational life so that we can better understand perceptions, beliefs, and actions of organizational members" (Martin et al., 1997, p. 3). Organizational culture assists colleagues in working through basic internal problems so that survivability and adaptability are

developed toward the external environment or external threats. Framing women as equally capable combatants in our armed forces does not mean that enemy combatants will recognize fair treatment or change their tactics (Maginnis, 2013). It would be beneficial for a long-term analysis to track the progression of the transition the Army is undergoing to determine if the organizational change efforts result in improved organizational performance and effectiveness.

Research Questions

RQ1 - How is the integration of women into combat roles perceived with regards to the strength and survivability of the unit?

RQ2 – How do male and female officers perceive the effect that America's future military conflicts will have on women assigned to ground combat operations?

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative case study. As previously mentioned, select combat units from a brigade element represent the units of analysis to provide a microcosm of a broader structure. I collected qualitative data was primarily through in-depth semi-structured interviews with commanding officers of field artillery and infantry units. Because combat units are at the forefront of the new policy, I want to report what internal preparations are being conducted, including how physical standards are going to factor into the implementation. In addition, female officers serving in combat support units were interviewed to gain their perspective and attempt to find evidence if women are actively seeking direct combat positions. The qualitative inquiry of officers should provide more insight on the changes that have to occur within the combat units to

successfully facilitate the policy and to determine if conflicting frames exist between commands.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is the *frame-critical approach* which is an approach to policy making developed by Schön and Rein (1994). These authors distinguished between policy disagreements and policy controversies. Policy disagreement refers to debates over issues that are able to be resolved when contending parties examine the facts of the situation and agree which facts are relevant. In contrast, policy controversies "are immune to resolution by appeal to facts" (Schön & Rein, 1994, p. 4). The distinctions are conceptually clear; however, it may not be clear which type of dispute is in question. Policy controversies emerge when opposing parties hold conflicting *frames*. Schön and Rein (1994) defined the concept of *frames* as "structures of belief, perception, and appreciation" on which policy positions rest (p. 23).

Opening direct combat roles to women has initially been framed as an equal opportunity issue. Frames have normative implications which imply a certain type of solution. Normative standards have to be distinguished from actuality. Schön and Rein explained that "often, a disagreement about the 'facts' turns out to mask an underlying controversy," and straightforward questions "may be difficult or impossible to answer by recourse to empirical investigation alone" (p. 4). Empirical questions pertain to what happened and why. Empirical assumptions may explain why direct combat has been open to women, but normative judgment focuses on the soundness of the policy. It is the cultural frames or the culturally-shared belief systems of combat units that have been subject to scrutiny by proponents of women in combat (Egnell, 2013; Farnell, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that the rescindment of the Aspin Rule requires significant organizational change for direct combat units. A review of relevant literature outlined the policy controversy, but now the policy is official. The Army Chief of Staff, General Raymond Odierno, acknowledged that the army's greatest challenge is providing steadfast support in worldwide operations while simultaneously drawing down the size of the armed forces under a stringent fiscal environment (Troxell, 2014). Each year, the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College publishes a key strategic issues list (KSIL) to make researchers aware of topics that are of special interest to the Army. Part I of the 2014/15 KSIL is dedicated to army priorities for strategic analysis (APSA). Assessing the growing role of women in the military is just one of the several topics of inquiry. Furthermore, based on the APSA, the Army wants to know how it should adapt its training and activities to serve as a catalyst for change in support of Force 2025 and Beyond. Force 2025 and Beyond is an emerging framework designed to align the army's strategic priorities with the demands of the future geopolitical environment (Townsend & Chaney, 2014). The three primary efforts of Force 2025 consist of force employment, force design, and science and technology and human performance optimization. Aptly named, the goal is to produce a leaner, smarter, more lethal and flexible force by 2025 and create the conditions for long-term fundamental change. Accordingly, the knowledge obtained from the study is to produce a better understanding of the internal preparations of an army organization, taking account if women can achieve and maintain the physical standards for combat and how future military operations will govern decisions about sending women into combat.

Assigning women to combat represents social change of enormous magnitude. Examining how and why this monumental change occurred has led to the need for further research into the relationship between gender and the military and the changing nature of war (Percy, 2013). Veteran combat commanders who have fought and/or know the realities of war can offer better perspective on what is best for an effectively functioning unit. The potential for unintended and unforeseen consequences is not uncommon in public policy issues. As such, the welfare of new female recruits needs serious consideration. Female empowerment may be a positive accomplishment to come from the experience. Testimony from members of FETs, while acknowledging challenges associated with mixed-gender units, recalls comradeship with male counterparts as a positive experience (Holmstedt, 2007; King, 2013; Williams & Schaub, 2006).

If the goal of the new inclusion policy is to create a gender-neutral military, then it is important to know if this study can identify factors that will facilitate successful gender integration including physiological and psychological mediation. Women serving in combat support jobs in warzones already share many risks with their male colleagues. Opening direct combat to women may subject them to greater additional risks. Not all combat aftermath is equally experienced between men and women returning from deployments (Maguen et al., 2012). It is not yet clear what role sexual assault and other traumatic experiences are having in the increase in female veteran suicide rates (Zarembo, 2015). Nevertheless, for the army to serve as a catalyst for positive social change, it needs to have a plan on how to reduce those numbers as the organization undergoes this transition.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Civilian control of the military and the sensitive nature of the issue can influence obedience. For purposes of the study, I assumed that the commanding officers respond honestly about assigning women into combat units including any potential positive or negative effects on operational readiness and the safety and morale of their subordinates. Confidentiality is provided to all the participants, including their rank and units of command. In no way is the institution to suffer any repercussion for participating. The study was confined to interviewing commanders (brigade, battalion, battery and company) of a local combat brigade and some combat support (for purposes of attaining female participation). In addition, I limited the study to 13 participants to be further explained in the methodology section. The combat units are purposely sampled because the inclusion policy directly applies to them. The confined locations limit the generalization of the results among the broader armed forces. Furthermore, the absence of enlisted personnel perspective (measuring attitudes) prevents a deeper account of the organizational climate as the organization undergoes significant change.

Summary

The nature of modern combat has led to new policy regarding women's roles in ground combat. I examined the perspectives of commanding officers composing an army combat brigade as they undergo preparation for the integration of women into infantry and field artillery. In addition, the positive or negative impact on culture and structure of combat organizations is yet to be fully determined. In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature that outlines the progression of the policy controversy and the conflicting frames associated with both advocates and opponents of women in combat.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The inclusion of women into ground combat roles has been one of the most highly contested and debated policies of the U.S. armed forces (Farnell, 2009). The rescindment of the exclusion policy represents a new transition for ground combat units, and more research needs to be conducted regarding the implementation efforts. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the internal preparations of a local combat brigade undergoing the implementation process. Perspectives from command leadership should help shed light on any challenges or successes they are experiencing with opening combat roles to women. The 2013 decision to remove gender restrictions on combat is still considered controversial (King, 2013). A review of relevant literature constructs the frame, as defined by Schön and Rein (1994), for the underlying controversy over assigning women to direct ground combat.

Maginnis (2013) provided the most comprehensive account of how the United States reached this milestone, the cultural myths surrounding the debate, the risks associated with putting women and combat, and what should be done. Maginnis put forth that feminists succeeded in framing the argument in the ideological terms of equality. Egnell (2013) addressed two assumptions related to the controversy - that women are not fit for war due to physical incapability or mental fitness, and that women will change the organizational (combat) culture of the military to reflect civilian rather than military character (p. 33). Correspondingly, Egnell considered those assumptions to be flawed. Simons (2000) contended that common sense was being lost in the argument with regard to the purposes and functions of the military – deterrence and winning wars – and the

foreseeable consequences of mixing men and women together – (i.e., sexual impropriety). Simons (2000) explained:

> Rather than regarding these predictable outcomes as unalterable realities, however, those who advocate lifting the ban point to a long American tradition of being able to amend behaviors, beliefs, and ideals. Culture, so far as they are concerned, *can* be changed. . . (pp. 451–452).

Indeed, Farnell (2009), an integration advocate, suggested that more energy and research be directed toward changing military culture. Owing to minimal statistical data produced about combat culture and why culture was not fully addressed in the debate, Farnell insisted that policy change alone would not suffice and that a cultural war needed to be won to guarantee women's ascent into the highest ranks. Egnell (2013) perceived the inclusion of women in combat units as an "opportunity to revise the culture and structure of the armed forces" (p. 34). Several years before the landmark announcement, Simons (2001) anticipated that equal opportunity to serve, reconsideration of unit cohesion, and foreign military case studies would be motivating arguments used in favor of lifting the combat exclusion rule in the United States.

The first section of this literature review discusses the frame-critical approach to policy making as the conceptual framework and how it pertains to the issue of women in combat. The second section describes the 'equal opportunity' arguments. The third section depicts the issue of unit cohesion. The fourth section discusses the physiology and psychology related to direct ground combat. The fifth section provides reference to women's service in foreign militaries. The EBSCO host research databases accessed for use in the literature review included Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, Political

Science Complete, Military & Government Collection, and PsycArticles. In addition, bibliographical sources contained in published books and journal articles related to the research topic were consulted. I also used the search engine Google Scholar. The key words or phrases searched included: *women in combat*; *women at war*; *war and gender*; *military sexual trauma*; and *military organizational culture*.

The Frame-Critical Approach

Schön and Rein (1994) introduced the frame-critical approach as a conceptual framework to explore policy controversies. Frames represent assumptions and perceptions that subsequently shape policy positions. Schön and Rein explained that the struggles between contending parties over the framing of a policy situation are "symbolic contests over the social meaning of an issue domain" (p. 29). Consequently, the social meaning entails what the issue is and what is to be done. More specifically, Schön and Rein referred to culturally shared belief systems as "metacultural frames" (p. 33). As noted in Chapter 1, the military combat culture has been a part of the controversy over assigning women to combat.

Although frames and interests are independent concepts, interests are shaped by frames, and frames may be used to promote interests (Schön & Rein, 1994). One party may hold evidence considered damaging to the opposing party's argument, but the opposing party may dismiss the evidence as "irrelevant or innocuous," or modify the argument so as to incorporate the new evidence (Schön & Rein, 1994, p. 30). Different views of reality fit the metacultural frame constructed for a given situation. Hence, the problem formulation and preferred solutions are grounded in different problem-setting stories rooted in different frames (Schön & Rein, 1994). Quantitative data between the

genders, between civilian and military personnel, and qualitative interviews about women's experiences in war provide perspective that has shaped public consciousness about the issue of women in combat. Schön and Rein (1994) also pointed out that "versions of particular metacultural frames clearly tend to be associated with traditional political-economic perspectives" (p. 34). Frames serve rhetorical function for purposes of persuasion and justification in policy debate. The following sections delineate the adversarial positions between opponents and proponents of the women in combat policy dispute.

Equal Opportunity to Serve

Fair treatment for all individuals is a worthy goal, and no American should be discriminated against. Seipel (2010) reviewed a growing body of literature about women's increasing participation in government and public policy. The number of American women serving in political office has grown steadily over several years (Seipel, 2010). The fairness or equality perspective decrees that women be granted the same opportunities as men when it comes to fulfilling their citizenship duties, including military service (Simons, 2001). In other words, for women to be equal societal partners, they must bear equal responsibility for national defense. "This notion of equality is based on the flawed assumption that we all have the ability to do the same things" (Maginnis, 2013, p. 49). Even after the abolition of the draft, the male-only Selective Service Registration was challenged as a violation of equal protection by male plaintiffs in the 1981 court case *Rostker v. Goldberg*. The Supreme Court upheld the Selective Service exemption of female conscripts because the law's purpose was to maintain a pool of

potential combat troops should the draft ever be reinstated (Rostker v Goldberg, 453 U.S. 57, 1981).

The *Rostker* decision reflected military policy of that time, which still excluded women from combat. Military policies have since changed during that decision, and as long as the current combat inclusion law stands, the Supreme Court will eventually have revisit the issue and require female registration for the draft (Maginnis, 2013). If bearing equal responsibility is a valid argument, then proponents would have to advocate for national conscription (Simons, 2001). Norway, for example, has roughly 8,000 conscripted soldiers, but those conscripts may only fulfill homeland security duties (Syse, 2013). The U.S. military is an all-volunteer force. Every American is not required to serve, and every volunteer does not have to be accepted. Furthermore, the military has strict medical standards that disqualify many people, but those exclusions are intended to protect operational readiness and to save taxpayers unnecessary medical costs (Maginnis, 2013).

In November 2012, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the Pentagon over combat exclusion of women, and only two months later the ban was officially lifted. Prior to the decision, Dietz (2011), a Judge Advocate officer, wrote a review dedicated to the legality of the exclusion policy. According to Dietz (2011), regardless of the social or political reasons for exclusion, the policy had to comply with the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The framework for Dietz's law review consisted of a 1996 Supreme Court case that ruled against the Virginia Military Institute's (VMI) exclusion of women and data collected since 2001 regarding women's experience in combat zones. Performance data of women serving honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan purportedly

undermined any justifications for exclusion (Dietz, 2011). In addition, Dietz mentioned the 2010 repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)'. That repeal was significant in terms of organizational change, and likewise should offer new perspective regarding gender integration. Subsequently, Dietz declared that the exclusion policy violated the Constitution's equal protection clause.

Haring (2013), a U.S. Army Reserve Colonel, cited studies from the Catalyst Knowledge Center and Naissance Capital revealing the positive connection between organizational success and the gender diversity of those organizations. Accordingly, companies with the most women board of directors performed better in financial management and quality of decision-making. In this instance, however, the author was drawing a false dichotomy between the corporate sector and the military. Or as Simons (2001) noted, "combat is not a workplace" (p. 92). Nonetheless, Haring was explaining how the military would be strengthened by allowing women to serve at all levels. Haring cited Woolley & Malone (2011) about increasing "collective intelligence" and more evenly shared "communication distribution patterns" in association with a greater percentage of women in a group (p. 28).

In recent years, Seipel (2010) suggested that the increasing number of women in political, managerial, and decision-making positions has made a significant difference and offered recommendations to "fully involve women in top decision-making roles" (p. 350). Contemporary battlefield environments will certainly involve changing dynamics and uncertainty. It is the improved scope and quality of decision-making that Haring viewed as a major benefit, which is why women needed to be afforded the opportunity to compete for the highest officer positions – to allow for better executive level decisions (p.

32). Farnell (2009) agreed that the exclusion rule was the main barrier to women attaining the top promotions. As a nonprofit think-tank, the RAND Corporation conducts many studies at the request of the DOD. However, RAND researchers found no statistically significant link between occupational restrictions and differences in female officers' rates of retention and promotion (Asch, Miller, & Malchiodi, 2012). Based on that study, Maginnis (2013) claimed that the promotion argument is dishonest. Furthermore, while women compose about 15% of the total active force, they account for nearly 18% of all junior officers, 13% of officers from major to colonel, and almost 6% of general and flag officers. In addition, women were less likely to join the military and more likely to depart early (Asch, Miller, & Malchiodi, 2012). The Canadian experience offers perspective in this regard. When gender restrictions were removed in the Canadian Forces (CF), the percentage of women in combat roles rose from 0.3% to 3.8% over a 12 year period (Barry, 2013). That percentage has remained about the same since. However, the attrition rate for women in the CF combat units is 11% higher than the men. The primary reason seemed to be that women prioritized family life over the military (UK Defence Science & Technology Laboratory, 2009; Barry, 2013).

Even if or after total female integration is achieved, King (2013) predicted that female participation in the U.S. military is unlikely to surpass the 15 percent marker. This suggests that the Department of Defense (DOD) should conduct further research before declaring combat exclusion as an obstacle to female retention (Maginnis, 2013). Studies conducted by the RAND Corporation have been used on both sides of the debate. For example, a 1997 RAND study concluded that the gender integration had a relatively small effect on readiness, morale, and cohesion within units where certain specialties

were previously closed to women (Farnell, 2009; McNulty, 2012). While intangible elements like morale and cohesion are part of the frame conflict, so too is the physical debate.

The army physical fitness test (APFT) has served as a practical gauge for determining the general physical well-being of recruits entering service as well as present active personnel. The U.S. Army maintains a 'separate but equal' APFT for females which is less demanding in relative terms than the male requirements (Maginnis, 2013). Dietz (2011) challenged opponents' employment of APFT data as justification for denying women entry in combat units. For instance, data from a 2011 West Point class revealed that 52% of third-year female cadets passed the physical requirements demanded of a 17 year old male (Dietz, 2011). Age is factored into minimum qualification on the APFT. A 40-year-old male is not held to the same standard as a 17-year-old male. Age-normed standards thus allow for fluctuating physical performance based on age, not occupational requirements (Haring, 2013). In 2006, the Army raised the maximum recruitment age from 35 to 42. Dietz pointed out that if a 42 year old male is presumed physically capable for infantry, then the minimum physical standard to which he is held on the APFT should be no different for the female soldier. Similarly, "evidence that women held to one standard failed to meet an unknown higher standard is unpersuasive justification for exclusion" (Dietz, 2011, p. 137). Nevertheless, the APFT still represents an example of gender-normed standards. A female is rewarded the same physical fitness score as a male of the same age who runs two miles two minutes faster (Maginnis, 2013).

In 1976, when women first enrolled in the service academies like West Point, it was expected that they would perform equally to the men (Schloesser, 2010). However, due to physiological differences, the standards proved too difficult for female cadets. Consequently, the standards changed to reflect gender differences and to promote diversity goals. The embarrassment the U.S. Navy suffered as a result of the Tailhook Scandal led some political leaders to demand that the navy accept more women into naval combat aviation (Maginnis, 2013). At first, the navy lowered its standards to accommodate the demand, and a report from the Center for Military Readiness concluded that the first woman, Lieutenant Kara Hultgreen, qualified as an F-14 pilot because of compromised flight training owing to her gender (Belz, 1995). Tragically, Lt. Hultgreen was killed in 1994 when losing control of her jet while attempting to land on an aircraft carrier (Maginnis, 2013). The navy corrected course by raising its standards, but it came at a terrible cost. With ground combat units, the "diversity metrics" summarized in the 2011 Report of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission are driving the policy change without regard to military readiness (Maginnis, 2013; Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2011; Thompson, 2013).

In 2012, the Marine Corps recruited female volunteers for the infantry officer course at Quantico as part of a broader effort to assess their performance (Dao, 2013). The grueling 13-week course would hopefully serve as an indicator of women's suitability to combat (Egnell, 2013). Of two eligible women recruited, one dropped out the first day; the other left two weeks later due to medical reasons (Wong, 2012). The same scenario in March 2013 produced the same outcome (Maginnis, 2013). In early 2014, the Marine Corps had to suspend its female fitness plan when nearly half of the

female recruits failed to pass (Associated Press, 2014). On the one hand, the physical fitness tests don't necessarily correspond to actuality of tasks or combat requirements. In addition, Farnell (2009) suggested that disqualification not be reduced to physical strength alone. Nonetheless, physical fitness tests still serve as useful indicators of general health, and the failures experienced in the Marine Corps indicate that more female volunteers will be difficult to find unless the standards change (Maginnis, 2013). A significant question remains: how will physical standards factor into the implementation of the new inclusion policy? King (2013) asserted:

> Even women who are strong enough to serve in combat present a problem because the armed forces, focused on war-winning (not employment equality), are unable to apply gender-blind standards to women; they cannot treat them equally and tend to be too lenient (p. 14).

Haring (2013) briefly pointed to Denmark as a foreign case study to examine where women serve in combat units. Denmark began testing gender integration during the 1980s. However, after a majority of the female test population resigned due to physical difficulties, Denmark altered its physical standards in order to admit women into combat roles (Dietz, 2011). The U.S. military has already tried gender-blind standards when attempting to match capabilities with job assignments, but that approach was abandoned because too many candidates were eliminated (Force System Directorate, 1985; Maginnis, 2013; United States General Accounting Office, 1996). Although concern exists that standards would be lowered to accommodate women, the commander of the marine infantry officer school said that would never happen and that the standards are already gender-neutral (Dao, 2013; Egnell, 2013). The army plans on opening

assignments first to qualified women while developing standards for the closed military occupational specialties [MOSs] (Lin, 2014). The marine plan, on the other hand, "is to come up with standards first and then decide whether to open closed MOSs" (Lin, 2014, para. 19). It is not yet known if the variation in the plans will be a source of contention between the two branches (Lin, 2014).

Combat is a level of intenseness unlike any other occupation (Simons, 2001). Equal opportunity to serve must include opportunity to fail. Whether women can achieve and maintain the physical standards for combat has to be determined. Women can legally demand equivalent opportunities, but they would have to know from the onset that they could be rejected from certain military specialties (Simons, 2001). The Pentagon has already utilized gender-norming for years to reward equivalent effort rather than equal results, which has produced the current physical fitness double standards (Maginnis, 2013). More importantly, the battlefield is an unforgiving environment where performance results are a life and death matter.

Barry (2013) mentioned that the Pentagon could still recommend that women be excluded from certain occupational (combat) specialties. Those positions would most likely apply to elite infantry outfits. At a 2014 Washington briefing, Colonel Haring criticized the U.S. Army Ranger School for remaining closed to women (Lin, 2014). According to Haring, "continuing to exclude women from accessing this elite leadership school makes it appear that the army is not confident in women's leadership or combat service potential" (Lin, 2014, para. 16). By the Fall of 2014, 31 women were chosen to be observers and advisors at the ranger school as a first step in preparation for integrated classes (Tan, 2015). When examining the Israeli forces, Epstein et al. (2013) contended

that while integrating females into combat units is possible, some combat occupations (elite infantry equivalents to U.S. Special Forces and Navy SEALs) would remain restricted due to the extreme physical requirements and high probability of direct enemy engagement.

The burden of proof still falls on the U.S. service branch commanders to provide reasonable explanation for exclusion rather than senior echelons explaining why the standards have to be changed (Barry, 2013; Maginnis, 2013). Any exceptions have to undergo thorough analysis based on all factual data related to the competencies and capabilities for the position and are subject to approval by the defense secretary (Barry, 2013). Simons (2001) surmised that the placing women in direct combat has less to do with rights and responsibilities and more to do with rewards. Career advancement is a reasonable goal, but "if the aim was truly parity and opportunity, women could accomplish both equally in their own single-gender combat units" (Simons, 2001, p. 90). Lobbying for all-female units has not happened. Predictive evidence of women's ability to perform physically may be acquired by examining their performance in combat support units in Iraq and Afghanistan (Dietz, 2011; Haring, 2013). However, beyond the physicality aspect, there is also the cultural aspect.

Unit Cohesion

The basis of cohesion has produced some of the most heated debate among scholars (King, 2013). Kingsley Browne's work *Co-ed Combat: The New Evidence That Women Shouldn't Fight the Nation's Wars* has been referenced in regards to women undermining the cohesiveness of all-male groups (King, 2013, p. 13). Simons (2000) said that "cohesion should be the most serious obstacle to gender integration precisely

because no structure can guarantee it" (p. 452). The British Ministry of Defence (MoD) released results of its own study that concluded that while women can meet infantry requirements, the presence of women in combat units may be detrimental to unit cohesion (Barry, 2013; Dietz, 2011; U.K. MoD, 2010). Some commentary suggested that erosion of unit cohesion is chief among the misguided assumptions associated with integrating women into combat units (Egnell, 2013; Haring, 2013).

Historically, masculinity has been the dominant feature of military culture and a principal factor in cohesion and combat motivation (Tarrasch et al., 2011; King, 2013). Cockburn (2013) presented numerous examples of masculinity being embedded in various cultures concerning militarism and nationalism. Combat training shapes men (masculinity) for the expressed purpose of the disciplined violence of war (Cockburn, 2013). Maginnis (2013) explained that the masculine mindset is the glue that holds soldiers together and fuels the aggression needed against the enemy; the feminization of ground combat threatens to damage that warrior ethos. Simons (2001) noted that, although unintentional, women inevitably "alter the chemistry in all-male groups" (p. 96). Because human bonding is not quantifiable, Simons (2000) argued that it is largely ignored as the "glue" holding units together (p. 452). Tarrasch et al. (2011) explained that integrating women into combat roles may be perceived as a "dangerous blow" to the existing social order (p. 306).

Social scientists attempt to measure cohesion by means of observing group performance of various tasks or inquiring group members to assess their own sense of attachment to their units and the perceived strength and performance of those units (Johns, 1984; Harrell & Miller, 1997; Mangelsdorff, 1999; Rosen et al., 1999; Simons,

2001). The RAND Corporation produced a broad review on studies related to the topic of unit cohesion (RAND, 2010). In general, the review focused on two differentiations: social and task cohesion (Haring, 2013). Some sources have stressed the importance of social cohesion in relation to the close bonds of friendship forged among soldiers (Siebold, 2007; Siebold & Kelly, 1988; Wong, 2003). The advocacy argument maintains that "cohesion does not require that soldiers bond socially, only that they accomplish their tasks effectively" (Simons, 2001, p. 89). In other words, competence matters more than personable likeability. In combat, King (2013) discovered accounts from soldiers that understand their roles as such – that solidarity depends on goal accomplishment, not friendship (p. 15). Haring (2013) reported that women serving in aviation units, "with no degradation in unit performance", is evidence that unit cohesion is not dependent on demographic features such as gender (p. 30). However, air combat stills need to be differentiated from ground combat.

King explained that the growth of professionalism is of great consequence for military culture itself and particularly for cohesion at a group level. King explored the phenomenon of "professionalized cohesion" based on experiences of the Israeli Defense Forces [IDF] (p. 16). Essentially, "IDF soldiers relied on swift trust to generate cohesion" when their units were reassembled or merged based on mission requirements and troop availability (King, 2013, p. 16). Competence in task execution seemed as effective in developing cohesion when compared to social cohesion developed over long-term bonding (Ben-Ari, 2010; King, 2013). Epstein et al. (2013) confirmed that the IDF experience indicates that cohesion is preserved in gender-integrated combat units. King noted that professional cohesion may be crucial to the integration of women into the

infantry. King concluded that "gender barriers appear to be breaking down…and women are increasingly accepted by the infantry on the grounds of their performance" (p. 19). Haring expressed that more emphasis should be placed on task cohesion as it relates to group performance, and that some studies show correlation between high social cohesion and negative group behaviors. Haring (2013) cited an event like the Tailhook incident as an illustration of "excessive social cohesion that reinforced negative group behaviors" (p. 30). MacKenzie (2013) reinforced Haring's view by pointing to military nadirs over the past decade – including the travesty at Abu Ghraib, record suicide rates, and the sexual assault epidemic – all which highlight the negative aspects of group cohesion.

Along similar discussion to task and social cohesion, the shift to an all-volunteer force, as observed by many scholars, reformed civil-military relations (King, 2013). In referencing frames, as introduced by Schon and Rein (1994), it is important to remember that frames have normative implications. Egnell (2013) mentioned that the purpose of civil-military relations theory tends to be normative. Egnell regarded the field of civil-military relations theory as an insightful source in the integration debate. The foundation of the theory rests on the assumption that military organizations are shaped by two forces: a functional and a societal imperative. The functional imperative stems from security threats, and the societal imperative is rooted in ideologies and social and institutional forces (Egnell, 2013). Some theorists have emphasized the societal imperative over the functional – civilian control takes precedence over military effectiveness (Boene, 1990; Egnell, 2013). Referencing the cultural gap between civilians and the military, Hillen (2002) wrote:

> If the purpose of having military establishment in the first place is to promote cozy civil-military relations, then military culture should be forcibly brought into line with civilian culture. If however, the purpose of having a military is to provide for the common defense, then the military must nurture the unique culture developed for that purpose. (pp. 168–169).

Some scholars suggest striking balance between the imperatives, while others propose that the goal shouldn't be about reaching a middle-ground but rather to seek synergy between them (Dandeker, 2003; Egnell, 2013; Janowitz, 1960).

According to Egnell (2013), one's perspective concerning the functional or societal imperative leads to fear and rejection based on flawed assumptions. Egnell explained that gender integration in combat does not fit the traditional interpretation of the functional imperative; instead, it is seen as the "politically imposed societal imperative" (p. 39). Similarly, Winslow and Dunn (2002) noted that laws and rulings from civilian sources resulted in "externally imposed change" with the opening of combat positions to women in the CF (p. 654). Comparable to Dietz (2011), Winslow and Dunn examined the legal standard of incorporating men and women as equals in the CF, but the researchers also examined the social nature of integration as having more extensive implications than the legality issue. Social attitudes may not be in alignment with the laws or evolve more slowly than the laws.

King (2013) claimed that there is still substantial evidence that many soldiers are opposed to female presence in combat, and that "everyday attitudes of male soldiers are likely to be more important in undermining female integration" (p. 21). Matthews et al. (2009) sought to compare the attitudes of male and female West Point cadets, Reserved

Officer Training Corp (ROTC) candidates and non-military affiliated college students with respect to attitudes about women serving in nine different military positions. Matthews et al. mentioned that "historical biases and stereotypes" are reflected in the ongoing social attitudes toward expanding military roles for women (p. 242). The volunteer sample included 509 ROTC candidates (384 male, 125 female), 218 West Point cadets (184 male, 34 female), and 598 civilian college students (264 male, 334 female). The authors hypothesized that cadets would be less supportive than civilians, and that men would be less approving than women (Matthews et al., 2009, p. 244). Women by law were still banned from direct combat during this study, which made it a category of particular interest. The overall results indicated approval of women serving in diverse roles. However, the researchers' hypothesis was supported when applied to the category of women in direct combat; it held the lowest approval among the nine total. The authors recommended further research into perceptions, stereotypes and tensions regarding gender in the military and their direct and indirect implications. Matthews et al. (2009) concluded that social attitudes may ultimately impact the inclination of women to volunteer for any type of military service.

After combat inclusion became official, Young and Nauta (2013) produced a quantitative study expanding on the aforementioned research. Young and Nauta wanted to examine if "differences in attitudes toward women in the military held by military-affiliated and civilian individuals are attributable to differences in sexism" which in turn was the basis of their hypothesis (pp. 166–167). The researchers described differences between four types of sexism: old-fashioned sexism, modern sexism, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism. The authors purported that associations between the benevolent and

hostile concepts and attitudes about women in the military haven't been investigated. Hostile sexism was defined as expressed anger based on a woman's refusal of a man's advancements; benevolent sexism stems from prosocial beliefs that women should be protected (Young & Nauta, 2013). According to the authors, benevolent sexism, although viewed as compassionate, would produce a negative view about women in combat because such a role violates the perception of how women should be treated. The researchers anticipated that each level of sexism would make a distinctive contribution to prediction of attitudes. The research site consisted only of a medium-sized public university in the mid-West with a volunteer sample of 316 students. Of that population, only 62 students had some type of military affiliation – ROTC, active duty, or veteran. The results revealed that all forms of sexism produced negative connotations about women in the military and in combat, and each sexism category provided an independent contribution. However, when women serving in combat was the only criteria, benevolent sexism was a non-significant predictor of attitudes. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that sexism appeared to fully account for negative attitudes held by military-affiliated students and their views on women serving in combat.

Young and Nauta (2013) admitted that their results have to be "tempered" given that only a single institution was surveyed, and it shouldn't be assumed that the results can be generalized to all military personnel (p. 170). In terms of application, Young and Nauta suggested that opening combat roles to women may actually reverse negative perceptions. Documented intergroup contact (between men and women) has shown reduction in prejudice, and might likewise increase favorable attitudes in military males as female participation increases (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Young & Nauta, 2013).

King (2013) pointed out that a similar reform in attitudes is emerging among elite infantry groups like the British Royal Marines and Parachute Regiment (p. 19). General Dempsey observed that the introduction of women into West Point had made it a better place (Barry, 2013). Furthermore, Dempsey claimed that assigning women to combat units would mitigate sexual harassment and assault, a response which Maginnis (2013) called an "illogical assertion" (p. 31). Sexual tension remains one of the most corrosive issues to the unit cohesion controversy.

Dietz (2011) contended that mixed-gender units have successfully overcome issues of sexual tension and misconduct as a result of good leadership and discipline (p. 120). Maginnis refuted the idea that effective leadership defeats sexual indiscretion. For instance, the Associated Press reported that 30% of commanders were fired between 2005 and 2013 because of sexual-related offenses (Baldor, 2013). From pregnancy rates aboard navy vessels, to testimony from deployed aviation and army leaders and subordinates, the best chain-of-commands could not stop the sexual excursions (Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions, 2013; Maginnis, 2013). Soldiers assume high levels of trust, and such inappropriate sexual relationships "destroy service members' confidence in one another and in their leaders" (Maginnis, 2013, p. 71). Simons (2001) mentioned that the potential alone for sexual impropriety is enough to create a toxic environment because "conjecture breeds doubt, doubt suspicion, suspicion mistrust" (p. 99). Soldiers train together with the expectation that they will deploy together. Pregnancy, accidental or not, requires a woman be removed from duty which likewise affects military readiness. No alternate physical comparison renders men non-deployable (Simons, 2001). Lastly, minus improper consensual fraternization, the

military still has a problem dealing with sexual assault. MacKenzie (2013) commented that any discussion of gender equality in the armed forces must include a candid dialogue about the sexual violence epidemic. The Pentagon's annual reports have documented the rise of sexual harassment and assault (DOD SAPRO Reports, 2013/15). Farnell (2009) lamented that early Western history and (Greek) mythology portrayed women as a "source of temptation" (p. 17), but Simons (2001) referenced Freud who nearly a century ago noted that "Thanatos and Eros are hard to keep apart," but it is "easier when sources of temptation just aren't around" (p. 98). By 1998, controversy over women in the CF reached a head after media exposure of allegations of rape and sexual harassment (Winslow & Dunn, 2002). Much like other militaries, it raised questions about the armed forces culture and women's place in that culture (Winslow & Dunn, 2002). Maginnis (2013) interviewed Heather MacDonald, a researcher for the Manhattan Institute, and she warned that Eros "is an indomitable force," and when introduced in combat units "you will inevitably have an explosion of sex...and a spike in sexual assault" (p. 75). General Dempsey faulted an "established psychology" for creating that type of environment (Barry, 2013, p. 22). Based on a retired general officer interview, McNulty (2012) explained that creating a "culture of inclusion" is a solution to the pre-existing exclusion argument (p. 153). MacKenzie (2013) supported the "potential need for cultural evolution" within the armed forces (p. 129). However, Maginnis contended, "this cultural 'evolution' is not inevitable, and cultural norms cannot alter basic physiology" (p. 52).

Physiology and Psychology

There are physiological and anthropometric differences that place women at a distinct disadvantage when performing certain tasks – especially the physical rigor necessary in combat (Epstein et al., 2013; Tarrasch et al., 2011). Farnell acknowledged that biological differences impact a woman's ability to endure excessive and prolonged ground missions. Military-oriented studies have shown that on average women possess 30 to 40% less isometric and muscular strength than men in both the upper and lower body (Martin & Nelson, 1985; Sharp et al., 2002; Tarrasch et al., 2011; Epstein et al., 2013). As Epstein et al. (2013) noted, "muscular endurance is among the most important physical requirements for many military tasks" (p. 2,679). On the other hand, Farnell (2009) maintained that it takes more than strength and stamina, and that remaining healthy and fit in protracted environments requires proper training, commitment and competence. Tarrasch et al. (2011) said that, in general, "no studies have assessed female soldiers' psychological reactions to military life," the stress involved, or "their professional survivability" (p. 306).

Farnell faulted "artificially imposed cultural restrictions" for the consistent societal attitudes, and wrote that such views are rooted in historical misperceptions about women being "intellectually inferior", too emotional, and "overall less capable than men in most everything" (p. 17). Even "perceived lack of emotional resilience or aggressiveness" has been cited as concern by other militaries in relation to combat role requirements (Barry, 2013, p. 23). Farnell further claimed that there is "no compelling statistical or factual data to sustain these views" (p. 17). On the objection to the emotional aspect projected on women, medical studies have shown men and women's

brains to be wired differently. In fact, women have a multi-tasking brain, and the emotional portion of the brain is far more developed in females than males (Shepherd, 2013). For men, the aggressive portion is more developed, and they logically face situations differently (Batrinos, 2012). Hence, there are psychological differences between the genders, but those differences do not create inequality.

When studying the IDF, Tarrasch et al. (2011) sought to identify moderating factors that would facilitate the successful integration of women into combat units. Tarrasch et al. pointed out that women who choose combat service may have to cope with additional stressors beyond what is equally experienced among the men. For example, male soldiers maintained that women create problems to the normal routine by adding to their already-high existing workload (Fenner, 1998; Tarrasch et al., 2011; Titunik, 2000). Hence, fear of rejection or alienation serve as sources of social stress for female soldiers (Tarrasch et al., 2011). Grossman (2008), who provided a detailed account on the psychology and physiology of combat, mentioned that extreme stress, when unchecked, is destructive to the emotional and physical well-being of a person.

Tarrasch et al. studied a sample of 450 soldiers, including 235 women and 80 men from an IDF combat battalion, and a control variable of 135 women from a non-combat medical course. The researchers hypothesized that stress levels of women in combat roles will be higher as compared to that of men in combat and women in non-combat roles (p.306). Furthermore, stress levels will be mediated by psychological attributes of the soldiers, and "stress levels will be negatively correlated more strongly with physical health among female as compared to male soldiers" (Tarrasch et al., 2011, p. 306). Questionnaires were administered to assess trait characteristics two months prior to the

start of basic training, and assessing state characteristics before, during, and after completion of basic training. Trait characteristics were measured by hardiness – defined as the personality characteristic that "facilitates handling stress by avoiding undesired reactions to stressful situations" (Tarrasch et al., 2011, p. 307). State characteristics measured burnout and self-efficacy, which was defined as expectation or belief with regard to their ability to cope with stressful situations (Tarrasch et al., 2011). The researchers discovered that females experienced more stress during their basic training than the males regardless of their type of training. Females in the non-combat group showed increased stress during the midway point of their training, were more affected by burnout symptoms, but tended to have higher levels of self-efficacy by the end of their training (Tarrasch et al., 2011). The combat groups reported moderate levels of self-efficacy by the end of training which the researchers accredited to end of the beginning of a challenging career. Lastly, women serving in combat roles were more likely to seek medical attention than the other two groups (Tarrasch et al., 2011).

Although Tarrasch et al. found that females reacted in a more intense manner when integrating into combat units, the authors also found that the groups differed in behavior regarding their gender roles based on expectations they set for themselves. Tarrasch et al. offered two possible explanations: either women entering combat roles adapted their behavior to fit masculine norms, or these women chose combat based on an a priori inclination towards a more masculine sex role. Tarrasch et al. favored the former explanation because it has been previously reported that female soldiers are expected to adapt to the governing masculine culture, and such adaptation can interfere with their gender identity (Chandler, Bryant, & Bunyard, 1995). Cockburn (2013) concurred that

women “make painful compromises and adaptations” to fit into masculine ranks (p. 434). Their commitment to adopting the norms and meeting the demands may explain why women frequented the medical facilities more often; the increased physical exertion exacted its toll on their bodies (Tarrasch et al., 2011).

Epstein et al. (2013) confirmed that several studies about workload tolerance and injury frequency in the military showed that women exerted themselves considerably more and fatigued earlier than men when carrying out routine tasks (Cline et al., 1998; Friedl et al., 2008; Kelly et al., 2000; Libster et al., 1999). Also Epstein et al. (2013) discussed that “fatigue is a major underlying cause of injuries, and female soldiers are more prone to be injured than males when conducting similar military tasks” (p. 2,675). Over time, the extreme conditions of combat take their toll. Grossman (2008) reported that “the stress of combat debilitates far more warriors than are killed in direct hostile action” (p. 4). Stress adversely affects health. Some studies have focused on gender differences related to PTSD and coping behaviors.

The body of literature is growing regarding the pervasiveness of mental health disorders among veterans. A few previous studies reported elevated rates of mental health and anxiety disorders among females, while destructive coping behaviors were more prevalent in males (Riddle et al., 2007). Maguen et al. (2012) examined the mental-health care consequences of deployment and combat exposure among the newer generation of Iraqi and Afghan war veterans. The data were collected by means of pre- and post-deployment screenings from a large army medical facility as part of the army’s health reassessment program (Maguen et al., 2012). The studied sample included 7,251 military personnel (6,697 men and 554 women) based on the variables needed for

appropriate analysis. The researchers also sought to identify gender differences in MST. As hypothesized, the researchers found men to report greater exposure to combat than women, while women reported experiencing MST more often than men (Maguen et al., 2012). Traumatic experiences (exposure to death, witnessing killing, killing, and MST) were all significant predictors of PTSD. In addition, men screened higher in rates of substance abuse, but there were no significant gender differences with respect to PTSD symptoms (Maguen et al., 2012, p. 313). Symptoms of depression in adjusted and unadjusted analyses, however, were more likely to be associated with females. Overall, the researchers found minimal support to the differential effects of combat stressors on the mental health of male and female veterans, but PTSD was statistically significant in relation to injury and gender. The limitations to the study included the sample population and the single medical facility which meant the results could not be generalized to other locations, service branches, or veterans of other wars. Maguen et al. (2012) noted that "gender differences also may change over time and future research should examine these gender differences in mental health outcomes longitudinally" (p. 315).

Mattocks et al. (2012) produced a qualitative study to examine the deployment experiences of U.S. female service members including their experiences with combat exposure, gender discrimination, MST, separation anxiety, and the nature of their post-deployment coping strategies. The researchers explained that their study is "nestled in a larger research study, the women veterans cohort study [WVCS]" which was a two-phase longitudinal study examining healthcare utilization, healthcare costs, and health outcomes among male and female patients in care of the VA (Mattocks et al., 2012, p. 539). Of phase two female participants, 19 volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews

with a trained qualitative interviewer (Mattocks et al., 2012). The interview format would allow the participants to speak freely about their military experiences.

At the conclusion of the study, the researchers accessed the VA's administrative and clinical data to determine the mental health conditions of each woman based on review of mental health diagnoses (Mattocks et al., 2012). PTSD, depression, and anxiety disorders were the primary focus owing to their prevalence among veterans. Of the interviewees, 32% were clinically diagnosed with PTSD, 11% with major depression, and 11% had an anxiety disorder (Mattocks et al., 2012). The researchers identified two major themes among the women: stressful military experiences and post-deployment reintegration problems (Mattocks et al., 2012). Those two categories were further broken down into subgroups. Combat-related experiences, MST, and separation from family fell under stressful military experiences, while PTSD was related to reintegration problems such as disrupted relationships with family and friends.

Mattocks et al. (2012) also listed post-deployment coping strategies into three main coping behaviors: behavioral avoidance, cognitive avoidance and behavioral approach (p. 541). Behavioral avoidance included binge eating or purging, compulsive spending, over-exercising, and prescription drug abuse. In addition, those activities were preferred by some women to be done in isolation which is representative of cognitive avoidance. Lastly, the behavioral approach utilized by some women involved constructive activities such as routine exercise, individual counseling, or reaching out for help through female support groups. Overall, Mattocks et al. found that military-stressors experienced by some women have been consistent with prior studies including women's coping strategies. The policy implications of the study revealed a need for gender-

specific mental health treatment and substance abuse counseling for females that are victims of MST (Mattocks et al., 2012). Mattocks et al. hope that post-deployment intervention specific to female veterans will promote positive coping mechanisms leading to long term healthy recovery.

The documented experiences of female service members in Iraq and Afghanistan underscore the counterinsurgency operations, but training for conventional warfare is still a strategic priority for the armed forces. Epstein et al. (2013) produced a comprehensive overview of the fundamental gender differences which are pertinent to physically demanding occupations. For purposes of the study, Epstein et al. examined a light-infantry battalion within the IDF. The researchers' goal was to offer a firm "physiological basis that may facilitate the development of physiological and physical employment standards" (Epstein et al., 2013, p. 2,673). The researchers covered physiological differences in body composition, cardiovascular system, and the musculoskeletal system.

In absolute terms, Epstein et al. (2013) reported that females had lower cardiopulmonary capacity, lower anaerobic power, lower muscular endurance, and lower bone density when compared to males. Anthropometric data indicate that lower bone density creates greater risk for stress fractures (Epstein et al., 2013; Moran et al., 2008; Tommasini et al., 2005). Stress fractures are among the most common overuse injuries. Roy (2011) reported that musculoskeletal injuries experienced by an infantry brigade deployed to Afghanistan were primarily caused by overuse. All combat soldiers are at risk, though cumulative data show the occurrence of stress fractures as higher in female soldiers than males (Bijur et al., 1997; Gam et al., 2005, Jones et al., 1993; Wentz et al.,

2011). During training and deployments, soldiers will face environmental stressors as well that impact health and performance. Gender-related differences account for disparities in heat and cold tolerance. Women thermoregulate less effectively than men thus exposing women to greater risk of heat-related injuries (Epstein et al., 2013).

When applied to the external stressors of military service, every physiological deficiency makes women more susceptible to overuse injuries and fatigue which create difficulties in operational readiness (Epstein et al., 2013). Grossman (2008) claimed that physiological factors are inadequate indicators of combat performance because so much depends upon individual characteristics. Indeed, Epstein et al. (2013) noted that their study applied to the female gender as a whole and not individual case study. The preoccupation with measuring individual capabilities, however, is something that Simons (2000) foresaw as a problem. The individuals eventually have to function as a unit, and it is the unit which is "marshaled into battle", therefore unit performance should be measured and analyzed (Simons, 2000, p. 452).

Epstein et al. suggested that physiological observations be taken into account when planning combat fitness and training protocol. Common sense measures included balanced diet to counteract iron and calcium deficiencies, differentially dividing carry loads between soldiers, and reducing incidence of overuse injuries through proper education of commanders and subordinates (Epstein et al., 2013). The researchers noted that changes in training protocol in the IDF – such as gradual progression in physical training and recovery periods from weight-bearing exercises – decreased the rate of stress fractures from 30% to 10% (Epstein et al., 2013, p. 2,683). Tarrasch et al. (2011), also, recommended "tailor-made training" in regards to helping women cope with the

psychological stressors specific to combat roles (p. 309). Furthermore, mission-oriented operational doctrine purportedly helps make female integration achievable. Epstein et al. explained:

> Lower fitness…did not prevent accomplishment of the specific missions assigned, which were carried out successfully by both female and male soldiers. Thus, although females have an initial disadvantage physiologically…the IDF experience is that a thoughtful doctrine, which takes account of the soldiers' physical abilities, enables successful integration of females in combat professions (p. 2,684).

Epstein et al. (2013) concluded that knowledge gaps still exist about preventive measures for overuse injuries and enhancing performance by implementing proper training protocols. Still, the researchers remarked that other militaries have drawn similar conclusions regarding the feasibility and success of female integration in combat units (Epstein et al., 2013).

Foreign Militaries

Valuable lessons can be drawn about gender integration from countries that have already opened combat positions to women (MacKenzie, 2013). Simons (2001) mentioned that experience from foreign allies affords us an "unprecedented advantage" when shedding light on "how effective integrated combat units can be" (p. 99). Israel is probably the most prominent example cited in which women consist of 34% of the IDF (Haring, 2013). The physiological study produced by Epstein et al. was focused solely on the IDF. Military service is a mandatory for Israeli women, and Israel is the only country with such a requirement (Epstein et al., 2013). Israeli women actively fought in

their nation's war of independence in 1948; the same year the IDF would be established. However, female Israeli soldiers were removed from frontline duty after that war when it was discovered that Arab enemies fought more fiercely to destroy units comprising women (Epstein et al., 2013; Maginnis, 2013). Contributing to that decision was the possibility of Israeli women becoming prisoners of war and subjected to further abuse by the enemy (Maginnis, 2013).

Dr. David Guttmann, a professor of psychology and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University medical school, spoke at a 2009 symposium on "Islamic Terror and Sexual Mutilation" (Glazov, 2009). Accordingly, Dr. Guttmann noted that Israeli female POW's were routinely tortured and mutilated in the most obscene ways (Glazov, 2009). Nonetheless, Israel would later reverse its decision. By the mid-1990s, gender equality advocates demanded that combat positions be open to women. In 1999, a gender-integrated light infantry company was formed and soon expanded into a battalion in which women compose 68% of combatants (Epstein et al., 2013).

In 2000, Israel's Military Service Law was amended to permit women the right to serve in any position in the IDF (Izraeli, 2009, para. 21). A 2003 IDF study recommended that women continue to be excluded from infantry, artillery, and armor units because of physical weakness (Dietz, 2011). A 2007 study commissioned by the head of the IDF personnel study seemed to contradict the previous study and recommended that women be permitted to serve in all units (Dietz, 2011). However, the IDF's elite direct combat roles remain closed to women (Epstein, et al., 2013; Maginnis, 2013). Senior veteran combat commanders expressed concern about Israel going too far in pushing for women in direct ground combat (Maginnis, 2013). The Associated Press

interviewed retired Major General Yaakov Amidror who said that women will never be a match physically in frontline units (Sergel, n.d.). Retired Major General Yiftach Ron-Tal, who led the process of gender integration, now expresses strong doubts about any further integration of women into combat units (Maginnis, 2013). Ronen (2011) reported General Ron-Tal's statement:

> It turns out that the amount of stress fractures suffered by soldiers is dozens of percentage points higher among women than among men. As a result, the female soldiers are not required to carry as much weight. I think that women's service in combat roles in the IDF should not be widened…mostly because of operational considerations. The army must not allow this thing to interfere with its operational ability….Women's service in roles not suited to them might harm state security (para. 4).

The General's comments and concerns corresponded to Epstein et al.'s (2013) conclusion that selecting females based on military-oriented physical tasks is still in question.

When the British army first lifted gender restrictions, it discovered a substantial rise in musculoskeletal injuries in female soldiers (Gemmell, 2002; Tarrasch et al., 2011). Epstein et al. stated that "musculoskeletal injuries are a major concern in the military since they directly affect soldiers' combat readiness" (p. 2690). After extensive analysis, the U.K. found that only 0.5% of the country's female population had satisfactory levels of fitness to meet infantry requirements (Barry, 2013). The British MoD determined that lower physical fitness would not constitute justification for exclusion, but the potential adverse affect on unit cohesion was more serious (Dietz, 2011). The potential risk of undermining combat effectiveness with mixed-gender teams in close combat operations

was grounds for retaining the exclusion policy. In addition, very few female soldiers expressed any desire to serve in direct combat roles (Barry, 2013).

Since the early 1980s, women were permitted to serve in all combat specialties in the Norwegian military (Haring, 2013; Maginnis, 2013). A former Norwegian Colonel commented that few women are attracted to the infantry positions, but those that are have to meet the physical standards (Mulrine, 2013). Overall, the Norwegian military only has a professional force of about 11,000 and roughly 8,000 conscripted soldiers (Maginnis, 2013). Furthermore, Norway has the additional protection of falling under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Norway has reported that operational effectiveness has increased with women and there is no evidence of adverse impact on unit cohesion (Cawkill et al. 2009; Haring, 2013). Canada reported similar findings to that of Norway on operational performance and cohesion (Haring, 2013).

Canada first began evaluating women for infantry training in 1987. By 1989, the tests led to the opening of all combat positions to women in the CF, and Dietz (2011) reported that Canadian women were serving in ground combat roles in Afghanistan. In 2011, Canada deployed 310 women in designated infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineers, and pilots to Afghanistan (Bell, 2011). No objective data was provided to the press, and the CF refused to provide statistics on how often women were used in combat in Afghanistan (Maginnis, 2013). A former Canadian commander did affirm that the protective nature of some male soldiers resulted in them carrying women's workloads or attempting to protect them on the battlefield (Maginnis, 2013). Moreover, the risk of sexual assault was ever present. Captain Nichola Goddard, the first Canadian woman killed in action, wrote in correspondence to her husband that six rapes occurred in her

camp in one week (Fortney, 2010). The association of the perpetrators was not mentioned, but the result was the need for nighttime escorts. It is a similar problem that U.S. female service members face in the war zone and the need for male escorts after dark (Maginnis, 2013). Overall, Canada is having difficulty recruiting enough women for combat jobs (Barry, 2013; MacDonald, 2013).

Lastly, Australia, one of America's closest Pacific allies, has begun its trial experiment in opening combat to women. Australia's policy almost mirrors that of the United States in terms of the planning phase which began in January 2013, and the full implementation set for 2016. The decision to remove gender-restrictions was driven by a series of sex scandals (Maginnis, 2013; Mulrine, 2013). Women compose 14% of active Australian forces (Mulrine, 2013). The Australian plan entails a "try before you buy" approach in hopes to encourage female participation (Pearlman, 2012, p. 28). As of recent reports, "no serving army or air force women have sought combat positions", and only three responses were generated from its navy (Maginnis, 2013, p. 87). Women currently serving can apply for combat provided they meet all requirements.

Overall, foreign case studies provide additional confirmation that women have competently fulfilled combat support roles, and the United States can learn from others' mistakes or successes (Maginnis, 2013).

Summary

Egnell (2013) mentioned that emphasis on "lean and mean" organizations, which is also a goal of the Force 2025 and Beyond initiative, "indicates the potential contribution lies in how and with what conviction armed forces conduct operations" (p. 40). More importantly, Egnell views the transformative potential of women in combat,

namely changing combat culture, as a far-reaching positive consequence of the new policy. Collective intelligence, creative thinking, and information gathering and analysis were all cited as positive contributions that women can offer to combat branches (Egnell, 2013; Haring, 2013; King, 2013). Dietz (2011) concluded that the removal of gender restrictions will restore the merit-based nature of the military. Nonetheless, perceptions and realities about women in combat have to be analyzed on both sides of the debate.

Creating a feminine minority within a traditional masculine environment can lead to anger and the belief that the profession has lowered its standards (Tarrasch et al., 2011). Training in gender-integrated groups can narrow gaps in fitness, but significant differences between the genders will remain even after basic training (Epstein et al., 2013). Physiological arousal still interacts with performance, and direct combat missions will demand a level of aggression, physical strength and stamina beyond the capability of almost all women (Epstein et al., 2013; Falk, 2012). King (2013) pointed out that "on purely physiological grounds, the exclusion of women from the infantry is still seen by many as appropriate, even necessary" (p. 21). Maginnis (2013) recorded retired Rear Admiral, and physician, Hugh Scott's explanation about gender inabilities:

> …is due to the naturally occurring, unalterable anatomical and physiological differences in physical strength and endurance that exist between males and females, which is hormonal in nature, and cannot be ignored without jeopardizing the lives and safety of all members of a unit, and degrading its ability to carry out a successful mission (p. 75).

Maginnis insisted that "no amount of training or education can change these physiological traits" (p. 24). Furthermore, in similarity to the British MoD conclusions,

General Dempsey fears, though not explicitly stated, the risk of sexual tension being introduced in mixed-gender combat teams (Barry, 2013). On the one hand, sexuality can be exploited, and concern exists that the behavior of male soldiers and commanders will change (Barry, 2013; Simons, 2001). According to Buckley (1997),"no edict will ever eliminate sexual activity when men and women are thrust together at close quarters" (p. 69). Moreover, MST still overshadows the armed forces even before the newest form of gender integration was announced.

The findings presented in this chapter reveal the need for further research into the relationship between gender and the military and the changing nature of war. In addition, what can be gathered from the literature review is an illustration of what Schön and Rein (1994) described in the problem of reframing:

> For all these reasons, there is no possibility of *falsifying* a frame; no data can be produced that would conclusively disconfirm it in the eyes of all qualified, objective observers….There is no way of perceiving and making sense of social reality except through a frame….Those who construct the social reality of a situation through one frame can always ignore or reinterpret the "facts" that holders of a second frame present as decisive counterevidence to the first (p. 30).

Existing research does not offer any easy answers to the policy controversy but certainly bring to light the competing frames over assigning women to combat. Assessing the growing role of women in the military is still a strategic priority. Sometimes the same frames used in rhetoric serve a function in action (Schön & Rein, 1994). For the U.S. military, women in combat has become policy in practice, and frames influence

institutional mechanisms, procedures, and patterns of behavior "that determine what policies actually mean in action" (Schön & Rein, 1994, p. 32). With the military under criticism for lack of progress in implementing gender integration, it is important to examine what, if any, challenges commanders have faced and what protocols better facilitate the process. In Chapter 3, I define the methodology to address the research questions associated with this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the organizational climate of a local combat brigade and to explore the following: (a) any challenges associated with the implementation of the recent combat inclusion policy, (b) the perspective of commanders regarding the policy mandate. The purpose was also to determine if their perceptions reflect any change in cultural thinking. Field artillery and infantry units represent direct combat units at the forefront of the policy change. An army combat brigade was selected for purposes of providing a snapshot of a broader organizational change. Lin (2014) pointed out that the military has recently faced criticism for its lack of progress in implementing the new policy. Capturing the point of view of army infantry and artillery commanders tasked with facilitating the change should provide insight into why progress has been deficient and what internal preparations are being conducted. Furthermore, physical standards have been a primary concern related to women in combat (MacKenzie, 2013). As such, I sought to examine how physical standards will be factored into implementation, and what can be done to minimize risk to new female recruits.

The review of relevant literature included testimony and recommendations by active and retired officers that revealed conflicting frames within military personnel over the elimination of gender restrictions in combat. Some literature confirmed Maginnis' (2013) warnings about the disproportionate physical and psychological harm experienced by women in military service (Epstein et al., 2013; Maguen et al., 2012; Mattocks et al., 2012). Some quantitative data was provided related to the attitudes of civilians and

military-affiliated persons regarding women's presence in the military and in combat. Epstein et al. (2013), King (2013), and Tarrasch et al. (2011) attempted to outline conditions to ensure successful integration of women into combat units. Haring (2013) and MacKenzie (2013) suggested that the debate should be rendered obsolete by the fact that there are no established set of occupational standards for combat. Epstein et al. concluded that the body of literature pertaining to physiological differences and their impact "on military competence should be reviewed with caution" (p. 2,685). Methodological differences in the way studies are conducted can distort the conclusions "and can even be contradictory" (Epstein et al., 2013, p. 2,685). In addition, as previously mentioned, Farnell (2009) wrote that winning the policy fight would not simply result with change to military culture. According to Farnell, in order for women in the military to be viewed as equal to men, perceptions have to change.

In this chapter, I discuss the qualitative methodology and the research questions used in this study. I also outline the participant recruitment process, the data collection phase, the data analysis procedures, and issues of trustworthiness. I then discuss the role of the researcher in the section on trustworthiness.

Research Design

The research questions guiding the study were as followed:

RQ1: How is the integration of women into combat roles perceived with regards to the strength and survivability of the unit?

RQ2: How do male and female officers perceive the effect that America's future military conflicts will have on women assigned to ground combat operations?

Creswell (2009) mentioned, under characteristics of qualitative procedures, that a "study may be organized around identifying the social, political, or historical context of the problem under study" (p. 176). The literature review provided some social, political, and historical context to the issue of women in combat. The best sources of empirical research have been reliable qualitative interviews or quantitative survey techniques that provide useful information of the experiences of American women in combat (King, 2013).

With military combat culture being at the center of the policy controversy, it could be suggested that an organizational ethnography be employed to study an entire military culture-sharing group. However, ethnography typically involves a larger unit of analysis, extensive observations of the group, and the focus would be on determining how the culture works (Creswell, 2013). To get an in-depth study involves a smaller group of participants. Grounded theory would require the process of integration to have been completed in order to obtain participant perspective. Moreover, the goal of this study is not to develop a theory. Phenomenology would limit the study to a single concept or idea, and narrative research would limit the data gathering to the life experiences of one or two individuals. For purposes of this study, exploring the issue of women in combat can be better served in the context of case study research.

Instrumental Case Study

Case study research involves exploring "in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Accordingly, I examined the event or process of women being integrated into direct combat assignments. More specifically, I conducted an instrumental case study because I selected a single

organization (a combat brigade of an army division) to illustrate the issue. Instrumental case study research provided a detailed picture of the combat brigade as it undergoes significant organizational change. Although informative, only a small number of individual case studies have been produced that highlight successful instances of gender integration (King, 2013). Multiple perspectives are needed to provide a holistic account (Creswell, 2009). A single case study is likely to be made up of many smaller cases such as the stories of specific individuals and organizational units (Patton, 2002). The commanders of field artillery and infantry units, comprising the brigade element, are the selected representatives for the "real-life" case in progress. The interview questions used in this study are designed to elicit the perspectives about gender integration from the standpoint of army commanders tasked with implementing the combat inclusion policy. A list of open-ended questions to be asked during the interview process is provided in the appendix section.

Participant Selection

When selecting participants in qualitative research, purposeful sampling means that researchers deliberately choose participants who have firsthand knowledge or experience of the central phenomenon or issue being explored (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This study used nine participants based on a purposeful sampling strategy. Each interviewee was contacted via email, by phone or in person and informed about the study. Subsequently, his or her participation was requested. Written permission was obtained by willing participants and stored in accordance with research guidelines. The participants were recruited from a combat brigade element. Interviews were conducted at a time convenient for each participant. Currently, where I reside, there was only one

combat brigade actively experimenting with opening combat roles to women. In turn, it was meant to serve as a template for how the other statewide combat units follow suit. The brigade cannot be specially identified without compromising the confidentiality of the site and the participants. The participants included one brigade commander, three battalion commanders, and two battery commanders. In order to gain female officer perspective, other units were reached such as divisional support command and aviation units. The aim was to interview 3 to 4 female officers. The majority of participants were male officers because of their proximity and involvement in directing implementation efforts.

Ethical Considerations

Rudestam and Newton (2007) pointed out the two main ethical concerns of social science research are needing fully informed consent of participants and the need for them to emerge unharmed from the process (p. 276). No experimental research is being conducted that would turn the participants into test subjects thereby increasing any risk of harm. Written consent was obtained from all willing participants. Furthermore, the names and positions (ranks) of participants are kept confidential and not disclosed for any reason. All transcribed information from interviews was stored on the researcher's private computer. The research sites and participants are not identified or published in the dissertation. A member check strategy was employed to make sure the participants' viewpoints were accurately recorded. After the interviews have been conducted and the data transcribed, the participants were offered copies of the transcripts to make sure they were not misquoted or misrepresented. Member check validation is critical to make sure my understanding of what is happening corresponds with participants in that setting. A

copy of the research proposal was submitted to the Staff Office of the Judge Advocate along with a request letter to The Adjutant General (TAG). Each state has an Adjutant General who is the senior chief administrative officer and is in effect the commander of all the state's military forces. To be granted access to the target population required permission from TAG since all the participants are subordinate to TAG. Permission from TAG, though, was conditional upon vetting and approval from the university IRB.

Data Collection Procedures

Rudestam and Newton (2007) explained that "qualitative methods tend to focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who have lived them" (p. 35). Qualitative interviews were the primary data collection technique. Commanding officers of infantry and artillery units were purposefully selected given their role and responsibility in the policy implementation. Female officers were also interviewed to validate or offer competing perspectives. The purpose of the study was explained to participants prior to data collection along with giving the approximate length of time for the interview (30 to 45 minutes) and receiving informed consent. Semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted face-to-face at a setting of the participant's choosing, or via telephone. Their responses were taped on a digital voice recorder. Open-ended interviews invite more detailed answers to the issue at hand. The commanders' perspectives are helpful for providing insight and information into how they are accomplishing the task or what challenges they are facing.

Case data consist of all the information accumulated about each case: interview data, observations, and documentary data (Patton, 2002). Documentary data can include any public documents, newspaper clippings, or official reports that outline the research

issue. Supporting data obtained from documents provided background and helped explain the attitudes of the organizational members under scrutiny. Recording impressions in a personal journal also occurred during the data collection phase. Other qualitative sources of information preferred included unit strength reports, memorandums issued by senior leadership, recruiting and retention reports, revised training manuals, budgetary information, and/or secondary data from previously conducted surveys. Patton (2002) mentioned that "quantitative data can be a part of a qualitative case study" (p. 449). If possible and with the participants' approval, gathering field notes by observing physical fitness exercises and/or joint-training sessions would be another potential data source. Informal and conversational interviews with the leadership during such training sessions would aid in the data collection procedure. Ultimately, any unclassified information the army provides, about the implementation efforts, is useful. Unclassified information can include manuals, regulations, directives, personnel rosters, technical orders or any information about the designation, strength, mission, or combat posture of a unit.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is principally inductive in nature –arguing from the data to a general theme or conclusion (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The search for themes is characteristic of all qualitative data analysis. In general, the data analysis in the research consists of three strategies: organizing the data, coding the data, and then representing the data. Coding is the primary feature of qualitative analysis. The digital recorded interviews were transcribed for purposes of coding and grouping the codes into themes.

The most convenient approach was to utilize NVivo computer software program to properly store the text documents for analysis.

Public documents or official reports that deal with the research issue are also potential data sources to be imported into the computer software program. The data analysis plan involved a contextualizing strategy to look for patterns across the interconnecting narratives from the officers' interviews - looking for possible points of tension and conflict within the transcribed text. In contextualizing, the emphasis is on context in the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The importance is given to forming a description from the data and contextualizing the description with the framework from the literature (Creswell, 2013). In essence, the army officers to be interviewed were treated as key informants. Patton (2002) explained:

> Key informants are people who are particularly knowledgeable about the inquiry setting and articulate about their knowledge - people whose insights can prove particularly useful in helping an observer understand what is happening and why (p. 323).

With the weight of responsibility falling on the shoulders of these officers, they are in the best position to give expert input into the potential challenges or how effective the implementation efforts are or will purportedly be. Patton (2002), however, warned that data from informants represent perceptions, not truths, and their perspectives are necessarily limited and biased.

Perceptions are pertinent to defining the concept of frames, but multiple data sources are needed to strengthen the confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn. The purpose is to see if the officers' viewpoints reflect broader perspectives or if conflicting

frames exist between commands. Frames are taken for granted in the realm of policy making (Schön & Rein, 1994). Schön and Rein (1994) claimed that "we are usually unaware of their (frames) role in organizing our actions, thoughts, and perceptions," though they exert influence on "what we see and how we interpret what we see" (p. 34).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Schön and Rein stated that "in order to reflect on the conflicting frames that underlie policy controversies, we must become aware of our frames" (p. 34). As a combat veteran, I already have familiarity with military culture and served in a combat unit similar to the participating organization under study. On the one hand, that is helpful for promoting confidence and having rapport with the population, but at the same time my professional judgment could be construed as being influenced by my familiarity. Any credible research strategy requires the researcher to adopt an objective stance with regard to the issue under study.

Ensuring credibility is an important factor in establishing trustworthiness. Triangulation is very useful in adding credibility to the generated conclusions (Patton, 2002). Different kinds of data may yield different results "because different types of inquiry are sensitive to different real world nuances" (Patton, 2002, p. 556). Combinations of interviews, observation, and document analysis provide opportunity for cross-data consistency checks (Patton, 2002). For example, qualitative sources can be triangulated by comparing observations with interviews (ex. joint training sessions involving coed personnel), checking interviews against policy or program documents to corroborate what the participants report, or comparing perspectives of people with different points of view (ex. female vs male officer perspective). Patton (2002) explained

that "understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative and important" (p. 556). Themes established based on converging sources or perspectives from participants can add to the validity of the study (Creswell, 2009). In addition, data was verified through the member check process to confirm that the patterns drawn from the qualitative data accurately reflect the interviewees' perceptions. Overall, triangulating methods and data sources holds the most promise for strengthening the trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

This chapter explained the use of an organizational case study to capture the viewpoints of local army commanders undergoing the changing conditions in the research setting of traditionally all-male combat units. Female officer perspective was also sought to provide additional insight. The participants were purposefully selected, and the interview questions presented in the appendix will best help in understanding the issue. The data was collected via in-depth interviews, observations and qualitative documents. NVivo software provided the means for coding the data and establishing themes based on observations and perspectives from the participants. After analyzing the findings, I presented the overview of the results in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to examine the internal preparations of a local Army combat brigade with regards to opening direct combat roles to women, including any potential challenges and/or successes they are experiencing. The case study was designed to capture the perspective of commanding officers, as key informants, in direct combat arms units (infantry and field artillery) and provide information on the progress of the implementation efforts. The research questions that formed the foundational background for the interview questions included the following:

RQ1: How is the integration of women into combat roles perceived with regards to the strength and survivability of the unit?

RQ2: How do officers perceive the effect that America's future military conflicts will have on women assigned to ground combat operations?

In this chapter, I present the findings of interviews conducted with commanders who bear responsibility and provide oversight in the implementation efforts of the female inclusion policy. I examined the perceptions and experiences of these officers undertaking the process of integrating women in their respective combat arms unit.

Data Collection

The data collection process started through peer-to-peer (snowball technique) recruiting. The method of data collection involved semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (see Appendix A) designed to elicit detailed responses about women in combat and the changing nature of war. A few female officers were also sought out from support positions to gain their perspective as well, and fortunately I had the privilege of

interviewing the first successfully integrated female fire direction (field artillery) officer in the state. Owing to confidentiality, neither the specific combat brigade nor the state within which it is located is identified. Overall, there were a total of nine participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

	Gender	Command level	Command description
P1	M	Battery	Field artillery
P2	F	Battalion	Public affairs
P3	M	Battalion	Infantry
P4	F	Brigade HQ	Logistics
P5	M	Battalion	Field artillery
P6	F	Battery	Field artillery
P7	M	Battalion	Infantry
P8	M	Brigade	Infantry/ Field artillery
P9	M	Battery	Field artillery

The assigned number to each participant was merely determined by the order in which each became available for interview. The date and time of each interview coincided with a time convenient for each participant. A female intelligence officer who initially agreed to participate later withdrew herself from consideration, and another officer expressed interest in participating through an intermediary but did not respond to repeated invitation requests. Owing to proximity issues, not all the interviews were conducted face-to-face as denoted in Chapter 3. Furthermore, other potential qualitative sources, such as recruiting and retention reports, budgetary information, and organizational command climate survey results were not permitted to be released by the officers for purposes of this study. Last, I did not collect direct observational data, though one participant did provide audiovisual material of artillery gun crew live fire exercises from a recent training period. Consent forms were sent to each participant and were subsequently

signed by the participants. I conducted three interviews face-to-face, and the remaining via telephone. The location of each face-to-face interview was chosen by the corresponding participant. I was in a private home office setting for purposes of the phone interviews. On average, the interviews lasted between 40 to 65 minutes. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and immediately transcribed upon each completion. In addition, I reviewed unclassified documents such as memorandums, technical reports and implementation plans that coincided with data gathered from the interviews.

Because of the evolving nature of the issue of women in combat, recent revelations are added that had not yet occurred during the time frame of the previous chapters. For example, the Army Ranger School graduated its first two female candidates in August 2015, but they were still unable to join the elite 75th Ranger Regiment which requires additional schooling (Associated Press, 2015). During that same month, the chief of naval operations, Admiral Jon Greenert, announced that the U.S. Navy SEAL training program would be open to women (Larter & Myers, 2015). Furthermore, when the decision was still pending to open all combat roles to women, Defense Secretary Ash Carter issued a memorandum in October 2015 asking civilian and military leaders not to publicly discuss the women in service review (WISR) until he reached a final decision (Wong, 2015).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Marine experience would be referenced periodically. Any recommendations to keep certain combat specialties closed would have to be based on "a rigorous analysis of the knowledge, the skills and abilities needed for the position" (HQDA Execution Order 097-16 to the U.S. Army Implementation Plan,

2016, p. 2). An extensive study was conducted by the Marine Corp on mixed-gender units in simulated combat situations. For five months, the mixed-gender units' performance was tracked against all-male units (Philpott, 2016). During one of my interviews, an officer mentioned the results of the marine review that revealed that mixed-gender units performed slower, had more injuries, and were less accurate when firing weapons. The lone exception was field problem-solving. Based on the data from that study, former Marine Commandant, General Joseph Dunford recommended that infantry positions remain closed to women (Wong, 2015). General Dunford was still commandant at the time of the study, but he was slated, shortly afterward, to replace General Dempsey as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, Secretary Carter reached a different conclusion based on the marine data, and by December 2015 the Defense Secretary ordered the military to open all combat positions to women without exception by the beginning of January 2016 (Kamarck, 2015; WISR Implementation Plan United States Marine Corp, 2015). As one commander remarked during our interview:

> P7: …you can definitely see some resistance from the Marines (regarding integrating females in combat), they're the ones that are the most vocal, and most recently the Commandant of the Marine Corp doesn't agree with it.
>
> P7: I think, with the policy side of it, if we go back a few years, whether we're talking about former Secretaries of the Army, current Secretary of the Army, had asked that echelons down to brigade combat teams to evaluate what inclusion would look like and try to assess it. And it seems, very quickly, it was turned

around on its head where they said ‘no, you’re going to do that’. I don’t think that there was that transition period to accept it and to build it out.

The combat brigade selected for this case study was initially designated as the test bed for evaluation in the state and basically act as a template when rolling out implementation in the other combat brigades. However, based on Secretary Carter’s announcement, the brigade commander said, “I think they are now opening it up across the board given the memo from Division that it should be open to all units” (personal communications, August 23, 2016). The U.S. Army had fielded its first female infantry officer in April, 2016 (Browne, 2016). At the time my interviews, the participating infantry commanders mentioned that they have not yet had females enlisting to fill 11 bravo (infantry) positions. The brigade has the infantry slots available and expects the opportunity to get females integrated from enlistments, and the assumption is that they will see an increase in strength in those infantry units once they are integrated. Unless females are simply not interested in those infantry positions, the timeline cannot yet be known.

With the latest developments in the policy mandate, the respondents shared their reactions to the external policy environment including perspectives regarding the Marines’ experience, the Ranger School, the U.S. Army implementation plan, the state of civil-military relations, and the registration of women for the draft. The only evaluation, internally, for the brigade thus far is in its successful integration of the first female artillery officer. As long as the training succeeds for some recent recruits, the brigade expects the eventual addition of another qualified female fire direction lieutenant, two enlisted female artillerymen, and a supply specialist in its combat units.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study consisted of organizing the data (transcribing interviews into text data) and then reducing the data into themes through a coding process and subsequently representing the findings. The analysis of the data was conducted following a traditional approach as outlined by Wolcott (1994): Highlight certain information in the description → Identify patterned regularities → Contextualize with the framework from literature → Display findings. The Defense Secretary specified seven concerns that must be addressed by each service branches' implementation plans (HQDA Execution Order 097-16 to the U.S. Army Implementation Plan, 2016, p. 3; WISR Implementation Plan USMC, 2015, p. 2):

1. Transparent Standards – assigned tasks based on ability, not gender.
2. Population Size – equal opportunity may not equate to equal participation.
3. Physical Demands and Physiological Differences – mitigate injury rates.
4. Conduct and Culture – integration of women may require a cultural shift in previously all-male career fields.
5. Talent Management – adherence to a merit-based system must continue to be paramount.
6. Operating Abroad – some areas of the world do not share the same principles.
7. Assessment and Adjustment - integration will involve commitment to the monitoring, assessment, and in-stride adjustment that enables sustainable success.

The officers interviewed for this study all addressed these concerns in some shape or form with their responses. Some of the themes that were developed from the responses

resembled these concerns. For instance, Table 2 condenses officers' comments and how it fits into the Secretary's concerns:

Table 2

Sample Comments and Relation to Concern

Participants	"Made comments relating to"	Specified concern
P1, P2, P3	Gender-neutral standards	Transparent Standards
P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P9	Equality	Population Size
All	Physical demands	Physical Demands
P1, P3, P5, P6, P8	Organizational Culture	Conduct and Culture
P1, P2, P5, P9	Job capabilities	Talent Management
All	Past/Present battlefields	Operating Abroad
P3, P4, P7, P8	Logistics	Assessment & Adjustment

Coding is a central step in the analysis process which involves "reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments" (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). During the transcription of interviews phase, I began precoding by italicizing and/or underlining certain salient points made by the officers that appeared to provide additional insight or reflected perspectives and data discussed in the literature review.

Table 3

Sections From the Literature Review That Emerged in Participant Responses

Literature Review Section	Participants
Equal Opportunity to Serve	9 out of 9
Unit Cohesion	5 out of 9
Physiology and Psychology	6 out of 9
Foreign Militaries	4 out of 9

For example, responses that involved references to foreign militaries included:

> P1: Israel has successfully integrated women, so it can be done.

P3: At least in my unit, the one thing I can say, they fairly recently did some exercises with the Canadian Army, and the Canadian Army was fully integrated. And what they saw was that the female soldiers that were part of the Canadian Army that were integrated into the infantry, were high-performing female soldiers.

P7: I worked with some foreign militaries that have females integrated in front line units, and they seem to do just fine. Where I have my concerns, it is a transition that won't be without its issues….I think the best thing to do is look at the other militaries across the world, how they've done it and where they've seen successes and challenges.

P8: …the Soviets and the Israelis integrated female snipers. I think we're potentially missing out on half the population. And as the United States population gets less and less qualified physically for service, you have to open up the flow in of those coming in to fulfill those slots, male or female.

The literature section on unit cohesion had further examined the categories of organizational culture and subculture of all-male units, the issue of sexism and sexual impropriety, and civil-military relations theory. The digital recorder, both for face-to-face and telephone interviews, was able to help in capturing trace expressions of laughter or determine if there was hesitation in the participant's voice. This would be noted in parenthesis next to the transcribed text. On the one hand, the limitation to phone interviews is the absence of body language which is an obvious indicator of a person's attitudes or emotions. During the face-to-face interviews, the body language most

present was hand gestures to emphasize certain words. In addition to precoding, other techniques for identifying themes throughout the interview data included word repetitions and key-words-in-context. Checking the interviews against policy or program documents helped corroborate what the participants discussed, as well as comparing perspectives of people with different points of view in order to ensure credibility.

The transcribed interview data was verified through the member check process to confirm that the patterns drawn from the qualitative data accurately reflect the interviewees' perceptions. Themes established based on converging sources or perspectives from participants would add validity to the study (Creswell, 2009). After reviewing the interview data and related documentary information, such as declassified department memorandums, implementation plan execution orders, and technical reports, four primary themes emerged. The first theme related to job performance. The second theme related to uncompromised standards. The third theme related to civil-military relations. And the fourth theme related to the generational gap or generational differences.

Presentation of Results

The frame-critical approach was the conceptual framework used for this study. The frame-critical approach is an approach to policy making, and frames, which represent beliefs and perceptions, can impact a person's policy position and/or decision-making process. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) mentioned that "perception is at the core of all conflict analysis" (p. 9). Indeed, the opening remarks of one of the infantry commanders, regarding his perspective on the policy mandate, stated, "I'm in favor of it. I do see challenges with it. In particular*, perception is one of those challenges…"* (P3, personal

communications, July 29, 2016). The perceptions of the interviewed officers help in understanding their attitudes going forward with the implementation phase of gender integration in direct combat units. The first research question dealt with how gender integration in combat arms is perceived by commanders with regards to the strength and survivability of the unit. The aforementioned infantry commander said:

> One of the main reasons I'm in favor of it is because we always talk strength, and …if we get qualified females that are able to move into those roles, it will actually helps us increase the amount of people we can bring into formation….So at least from my perspective, in my unit, I don't see a large backlash. I *expected a backlash* against it but I haven't seen that…and for the most part *the leadership is looking for opportunities to lead the way to integrate* in order to *take advantage of the opportunities for strength* and also to just get the better…you figure the females that want to join the infantry are going to be the females who are the strongest and you want to get those ones when they first come in (P3).

Another infantry commander commented:

> …we have females that work in the forward support company, and nobody seems to care; it's not a big deal...the concerns that people thought would originally be there, I don't think it exists, and if you've ever seen those surveys we have, the unit/command climate surveys, it's less than a deal than I originally anticipated it would be. I definitely thought there would be some sexism, and it really doesn't seem to be there. Now when we look at…do we take direct combat role down another echelon, do we put females in the line units, participating literally in that direct combat role, then I think that's where you start to see some concerns (P7).

The marines referenced a review by the United Kingdom that determined that integration of women in ground combat units would negatively impact combat effectiveness because survivability is one of the factors in which there is no known mitigation strategy; a conclusion that was reinforced by the marines own peer reviewed research that highlighted the physical disparities between males and females (Memorandum for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 2015, p. 6). The marine perspective thus far seems to be one of disinterest regarding opening combat roles to women, and General Dunford appeared at odds with the other service branches and the Secretary of the Navy (Baldor, 2015). As Phillips (2015) wrote, "the disagreement between the Marine Corps and the Pentagon is a rare public display of tension in a culture that generally values silent professionals" (para. 15). Moreover, up to August 2016, no females had successfully completed the marine officer infantry course (Browne, 2016). A couple of the participating army officers commented that:

> P1: The Marine Corps has their infantry officer course, and some people have complained that it's biased against women. But it's a very difficult course, physically and intellectually, and it's biased against weak and stupid people regardless of who you are. And I don't see it as a bad thing or an insult to say that women on average are weaker than men. There are women that stand out as exceptions but not the rule….The marines have done it the right by opening their infantry officer school to women, but they haven't changed the standards one bit. Same with the Ranger School.

> P7: Even if you look at the few women who graduated Ranger School, ones that are in infantry officer basic courses, whether army or marines, you're

> seeing…there's a standard there; I think they're pushing so hard to make something fit that naturally has not evolved. I think it's absolutely fair to open it up; I have males that don't meet some of the standards.

As previously mentioned, job performance was the first theme developed out of the interview data, and there was a general consensus of support among the participants:

> P1: I support the mandate; that's my official answer as an officer, but it's also my personal answer. I really do support it. My biggest concern as a leader of troops, as far as the individual soldier goes, is whether or not that soldier can do the job….The bottom line is simple performance. If someone can do the job, that's the most important criteria.
>
> P2: As far as opening up combat MOS's to all, male and female, I have to go on record and say if they can do the job, they should be allow to do it.
>
> P3: Overall, I'm in favor of it. My perspective as a commander is that right now I already have females in the infantry battalion. They're not in the infantry slots, but they are in the infantry battalion already. And even when I was company commander in Iraq, I had females actually out with us when we were conducting patrols. So in my experience there are challenges, and I will talk about the challenges, but in my experience it is not a role that I think is limited to only males…. And if you look at other armed forces, they have integrated females into those roles, and they have been successful.
>
> P4: I'm not against it; I personally don't want to go that direction….I'm all for females getting the opportunity to all these different positions. It's not something

that interested me; I never wanted to be, maybe a combat engineer, but not infantry or field artillery….I like that doors are opening, it just has a lot of changes that have to be ironed out, I think.

P5: I have females in my headquarters battery and my support company, but they're all in non-combat MOSs at this point. They're service support and support personnel, medics, cooks, mechanics, those types of MOS duties at this point. And I've been dealing with that for about the last ten years or so, and really no issue there in bringing them into the force and having basically a coed force….As far as implementing them into the force, integrating them in, I didn't really see an issue with it other than you now had to have separate barracks for females and males where before you didn't have to worry about it. But that was probably the biggest change I noticed as far as integrating them into a combat arms unit…otherwise, a soldier is a soldier is what it came down to.

P6: I'm obviously happy that the ban is finally lifted. I was previously enlisted, and I actually support a field artillery unit, so timing wise…they lifted the ban and it kind of felt like it was perfect. I was about to commission; they had just given us the 'okay', and it just felt like everything was aligning. So, I'm happy that it happened because I love my job now, I love my unit, I love what I get to do. I don't think I could fit any better into a branch like I do this one.

P7: My thing is that as long as the women are able to perform the role of the infantryman, then to me it (the gender issue) is irrelevant, the whole thing goes back to, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, it doesn't matter; we're all

green, and as long as everybody can perform whatever that green standard is, then we're fine.

P8: I think it probably goes along with what we've seen under the last ten years with the changes regarding the military. Starting with the Don't Ask, Don't Tell transition over to more recent things about transgender. So under the administration, not too surprising going toward this, but I think it's something that's doable but it's going to take a transition period in a number of ways to make sure it's carried out successfully.

P9: …I have no issue with women serving in combat roles just as long as they conform to the same standards that's required off all soldiers in that position. We have males that can't meet that standard so they're moved to other MOSs or job skill sets, same should be for women…. If they're able to meet the physical standards, we should give them that right, and they have that right because it's a volunteer force…if they can't meet those standards and they still want to serve, they have to look at other roles that they can serve in to serve their country. Because no matter whether you're an artilleryman, a cook, a MP, anything, the overall mission is that we're serving and protecting our country.

The supportive position of these commanders regarding women in combat roles remained contingent upon the fact that standards, physical or otherwise, would not be compromised. The U.S. Army implementation plan states that, "The Army will maintain standards, improve readiness and capitalize on lessons learned through formal studies and previous integration experience" (HQDA Execution Order 097-16 to the U.S. Army

Implementation Plan, 2016, p. 4). As such, uncompromised standards were the second theme to develop. The following statements addressed this issue:

> P1: There are plenty of jobs in the military I can't do…and they have inflexible standards for a reason, because ultimately you have to be able to do the job.
>
> P2: It (the army) cannot change the standards to meet the gender….They must keep the physical requirements in place, and they need to be held to that standard. There's no cheating.
>
> P3: I've been an infantryman for awhile…if I could get rid of the males in my unit that can't meet the standards and replace them with a female that could meet the standards; I'd do that in a heartbeat. Because, what I see, the bigger danger is allowing people who don't meet the physical standards, male or female, into the infantry.
>
> P5: My only concern with it is that the standards remain the standards; that they don't lower the standards to accommodate the women. That's my only concern about it; otherwise I have no issue with it.
>
> P6: The last thing I would want is someone to try to throw it in my face that I only got my position because they lowered the standards. And I think any female in the branch would feel the same way….and speaking with my male counterparts, we all shared that same concern that they were going to lower the standards because of us, and I don't think any of us really want that. You'll find

> that the women, who really want to be in the branch, don't want it because of a compromise; they want it because they earned it.
>
> P9: Standards should be for the job and not based off gender….In regards to allowing women in combat arms, when it comes down to the actual executing mission, I'm all for it so long as they meet the requirements.

The above female officer (P6) addressed the concern regarding a possible lowering of standards within that quote. Similarly, other officers commented on this as well:

> P4: I fear that they will drop the standards…. If we want ten[women] to pass and if none pass, let's drop the standard a little bit, but then if we want ten to pass and then five of them pass at this standard, then 'ok' that's sufficient…. There's a reason why we have the standards, and I think there will be people who are willing to risk saying 'this isn't working out'.
>
> P7: …if you go back even before the first female Ranger graduates, when they had the first female Sapper school graduate, which is the combat engineers, the first graduate of that was actually one of my classmates, and I had a whole bunch of buddies who went through class with her, *and the standards were not upheld for her to graduate.* So that was very much trying to force something, to make it fit to show that we're progressing, and I don't agree with that. If it means we have to re-evaluate the standards, to make it more inclusive, that's fine so long as it never changes what the mission is and what the expectations are. I've worked with females…and there absolutely are differences, and it's not fair to not acknowledge them and the challenges that come along with them.

In January 2016, then-head of the Southern Command, Marine General John Kelly was dubious that more women would successfully enter the infantry if the current standards are upheld (Browne, 2016). The standards for the Marine Corps have thus far proven overwhelming for female applicants. Data obtained by the Associated Press reported, over a five-month period beginning in 2016, that 6 out of 7 female recruits and 40 out of about 1,500 male recruits failed to pass the new routine of pull-ups, ammunition-can lifts, a three mile run and combat maneuvers required for movement into training for combat arms (Baldor, 2016). An interview given by General Kelly, as he was heading into retirement, discussed the concerns he had. In addition to standards, his statements also reflect on the theme of civil-military relations:

> His "greatest fear," he says, is that the vast "equal opportunity" pressure for women in combat roles will lead the Pentagon to water down standards…
>
> The reasons are obvious: On average, the two sexes simply have different physical virtues. Men will dominate when it comes to upper-body strength, which is generally vital in combat roles. And [Defense Secretary Ash] Carter has vowed not to alter the high standards for those roles.
>
> But Kelly doubts that will last: "Whether it's 12 months from now, four years from now…the question will be asked whether we've [truly] let women into these other roles." Ideologues who don't see the results they want will ask, "Why aren't [women] staying in those roles? Why aren't they advancing as infantry people?" (New York Post Editorial Board, January 16, 2016)

The literature review discussed civil-military relations theory and the idea that the military is shaped by two forces: a functional and a societal imperative. The functional

imperative stems from security threats, and the societal imperative is rooted in ideologies and social and institutional forces (Egnell, 2013). Some theorists have emphasized the societal imperative over the functional – civilian control takes precedence over military effectiveness (Boene, 1990; Egnell, 2013). General Kelly, as shown above, commented indirectly on the societal imperative and how ideology may factor into the civilian decision-making process. The theme of civil military relations was also drawn from this case study's interview data, with officers commenting on civilian involvement:

> P1: What do I perceive as the most challenging aspect? There are a couple of things. *There's going to be a societal push from some corners of society that are going to want equal outcomes, and I don't see that ever happening*….Jobs that require lots of physical strength, artillerymen, even corpsman because they have to pick up soldiers and carry them across battlefields…anyone who has to lift heavy loads. The requirements of the job aren't necessarily bias against women, but they are bias against weaker people.
>
> P2: Commanders really can't (cave to public pressure)….Civilians can't be pushing for cheating. If they change the requirements, if they do that so more women can be pushed through, that's cheating. So if it comes down that they're pushing people through because they feel pressure from civilian politicians, that's wrong and officers should stand up to that and say 'no is no'. I mean, people's lives are at stake.
>
> P5: Yeah, I could see that coming down the road (societal push for equal outcomes). I don't know when, but I could see them wanting to push a certain

percentage of female recruits as branched artillery, branched infantry or branched armor or branched cavalry, whatever the case may be. I wouldn't rule that out, I would say it's a definite possibility.

P5: Back in February of this year (2016), I was at division headquarters…and the [redacted] commanding general…would bring different people in and do leadership professional development. And one of the gentlemen he brought in was Brigadier General [redacted]. General [redacted] was a 30 year career officer, Vietnam, he was Special Forces, and he was involved with starting the Delta Force….30 years career military and then he went into the private sector and worked there for 25 years. *And one of the things he said that struck me, and it had to do with civilian companies and civilian leadership, and basically what he said is there's general lack of leadership in civilian companies and they don't know how to handle troops*. So again, you have civilians pushing this stuff but yet they have no idea what's involved with commanding troops or being out there in the dirt, in the cold, in the rain and trying to get them to perform and keep them motivated. Take that for what it's worth, but I think you get into sustained combat situation where you out for a month or two or three or however long before you get hot chow or a warm shower, I don't know how that's going to go over.

P7: …there is a reason for civilian oversight. This is one of those things. I do believe in gender equality pushed in the right direction, that's fine, but they didn't

give the opportunity, or the Secretary didn't give the opportunity to the military to come up with a plan.

P8: I think what the DOD has to do is establish one of those baseline requirements and then have the information, the science and the support and everything else to back it up to say 'these are valid, these are realistic', and secondly they have to make sure they're making it challenging enough that some men will not pass as well. So there might be societal pressure on it in the name of equality….So I'm sure it's going to go back and forth for many years as we go through this integration policy, and I think they're doing reviews every year, or monthly. So really it's going to be a matter of are we establishing standards that are realistic, that are feasible, that apply across the board to all genders, so that there is nothing to discriminate in the standard, there's only discrimination in the accession based upon that individual soldier's performance….*It will take several years to do this, and we got to make sure all the support systems are in place so that you don't have an E1 (private) going into a unit alone with no other support. A cohort almost has to go in to that particular company or battalion to make sure that whichever females are first in do have that mental, psychological and mentoring support that they need to be successful in that particular branch.* If you look at what those two women did in Ranger School, it's a great indicator of the potential out there for females in the combat arms.

P9: Society has a way of, how am I going to word this; there's a group for everything. There's someone out there who wants to see equality for everything

> on every level, where everything is equal, everything is the same, everybody is offered the same opportunity, or saying for every one there's another just like it, whether it be race or gender or nationality, whatever it is. But unfortunately it's not possible, and I don't believe that society, however large the voice is…that it could ever happen. Even if you put more money toward trying to raise the number of women; if they're not out there, it can't be done. So I think we have to understand that although society may want something at that time, and this is kind of in the light right now, maybe five years from now, that won't be on the agenda or that won't be the main topic. Maybe next time we have a more involved conflict and you see a higher death toll of women who are in combat arms, maybe society's opinion changes, or the next time there's a major conflict, the draft is enacted, you have women being drafted and all of a sudden society's opinion changes or maybe it won't.

In 2015, the Associated Press, working with the RAND Corporation, released results of surveys that went out to 18,000 people who were in positions that were closed to women. The results revealed that Special Forces service members did not believe women could meet the physical and mental demands of special operation jobs and expressed concern that department leaders would cave to political pressure by lowering training standards (Baldor, 2015; Groening, 2015). Those concerns were not limited to just men but also women. One of the female officers I interviewed had some firsthand experience working with Special Forces:

> I spent almost 5 years in a Special Operations unit working with Special Op forces. It's a joint unit, so I had the pleasure of working with SEALS, Army

> Rangers, and Marine…and Air Force Special Forces. So those gentlemen that I worked with, I was able to see what they did, and I was able to see the work they were required to do. I worked very close with them, and I understood a lot of the aspects of the job. Because as a public affairs officer, I had to understand their missions. I was in on all the intelligence briefings.…so I understood the kinds of requirements that were placed upon them…. Things are pretty dicey when you're actually going out and you're day after day on the front lines. When I was in Iraq and go out to visit the troops, I would have to escort the media out there on the front lines, and I saw these men who were in these outposts day after day in the hot sun, and they were just drenched in their own sweat, and the salt stains of their clothes, and their skin was just purple from the sun. And they lived out there in these outposts with no luxuries, meaning there were no showers or anything out there, no privacy for a bathroom…. I can't see most women being able to do physically that type of demanding work for 16 months or even 12 months. I'm just talking from an Army perspective. Each service will treat this differently (P2).

Both the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy overrode any recommendations made by the Marine Corps, and thus any data produced by the army would likewise have no effect. I posed the hypothetical to the commanders within this case study, had this combat brigade remained the center of evaluation in the state, if they would have made any recommendations for certain military occupational specialties (MOSs) to remain closed, including if they thought it would minimize risk to potential female recruits:

P3: I haven't made that recommendation, and I don't particularly see it…that a female can't meet the physiological standard of being an infantryman. I think it's more difficult for a female to meet that standard, but I don't think it's impossible. And I have met females who actually outperform, physiologically, a lot of males who are in my unit.

P5: I wouldn't totally rule them (females) out on the gun crews, maybe certain positions, yes, but I would think they would be quite capable of doing other positions on the gun crews….I would give them their day in the sun as they say. Let them try it and see what happens. You may find out that it is too physically demanding because when you get into a four, five, six round mission, you're moving….If you watch a solid gun crew that has been working together, it's like poetry in motion. But again, I'd be willing to bet there are plenty of females out there quite capable of doing that job…there's only really one guy who's handling the round, bringing it from the ammo carrier up to the gun and sitting it on the tray during the fire mission. I would think they (females) could be integrated into a gun crew rather easily.

P6: Honestly no, I would think anybody would want the same thing that somebody else can have as long as they have earned it. I know that for the enlistment process they started adding in the OPAT, where they're having more physical demands where they're enlisting soldiers to make sure that they're actually able to complete these tasks. And it's smart that they're finally doing something like that because I've seen plenty of soldiers that can't even lift a 155

round, yet I went to training and I'm expected to load them in and take them out as well. I would hope that they don't keep anything closed just because I think it should be an even playing field especially since there have been females that have started to push the boundaries and show that we're just as capable as you, we just need the opportunity to show you.

P7: No, I'm not going to say off limits, but when we have the natural evolution of it, it was going that way anyways….going to back to engineers or field artillery, those are all things that if things were to go bad, or even my Intel or whatever, I can pull them back into a rear echelon and still have them fulfill their responsibility and do their job.

P8: I'm not sure what recommendations I would have made as far as the accession that would have made it easier. I'm not necessarily opposed to women in any of those occupational specialties. But how do you set the conditions for that? You don't necessarily have only one female in a tank crew, for example, which is four people in one vehicle, very close quarters. Or how do you do it for an infantry squad which is less than ten guys? So one that they have somebody they can talk to of the same gender, so they don't feel isolated. Two, to the extent for their own safety, and three do they meet the physical requirements. It is what it is right now; we'll go ahead and integrate them to make sure they have those support systems in place….It's all the other unknowns that society might be concerned about.

> P9: If we restrict women on the 155 rounds but allow 105 rounds because we noticed an increase in injuries that can burdened the government down the road thru medical care….We've integrated them but based on their capability, keep it separated, but then we're going back to partial integration; it still leaves that gap, you're not letting us fully exercise or fully be a part of everything that's out there, so it's hard to say….Everybody gets hurt, everybody has injuries, so we take care of soldiers who get injured all the time. Hopefully the OPAT and the high physical demands test through AIT (Advanced Individual Training) will help separate who can or who can't no matter what their gender is.

There a couple points to address from the above quotes. First, there is the field artillery commander (P5) who referenced the work of the gun crews as 'poetry in motion'. After viewing provided video material of a battery crew conducting training exercises, from my observation, it was a fast-paced and intense operation. This particular crew was operating a M777, towed howitzer system. It was impressive to watch, given all the tasks involved, as the crew fired off three rounds within one minute and 15 seconds. With the exception of handling the artillery round, most of the tasks were more mental and attention to detail – reading the displays, working the gears on the gun to elevate and traverse it, lowering and feeding the ammo tray, setting the charge, clearing and swabbing the bore, to name a few. Depending on the length of the firing mission, the ammo carrier's position may be rotated among other crew members. Secondly, two artillery officers (P6 & P9) referenced the OPAT (Occupational Physical Assessment Test). The OPAT is a new screening test added to the enlistment process for employment in seven combat arms-related specialties (USARIEM Technical Report T16-2, 2015).

Before the OPAT, the APFT was the only method by which the army was measuring physical readiness for duty. When asked about how the military can validate occupational performance standards, one commander replied:

> It's a good question, and it's very difficult. How can they do it? The question hasn't been answered for male soldiers yet, and all male infantry….how can you validate that a guy is prepared to deploy as an infantryman? Is it the PT test?.... I know that if they kicked everyone out that couldn't pass a PT test, we would lose a significant percentage of the formation right off the top. So I think the first real thing the Army has to do is be serious about what risk they're willing to take in order to implement a standard in the first place and understand what that risk is going to be….Until we get answers to those kinds of questions for males, I don't think there's any way we can figure out how we're going to do that in a different way because of integrating females. The premise to that question is that there's already a standard in a way to do it for the males, and how do we change that or how do we mitigate that for adding females, and I don't think that premise is correct, at least looking at it from my logic…so you're just adding females into an already broken system (P3).

Based on other studies, the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine (USARIEM) determined that APFT performance did not necessarily correlate to how soldiers perform physically demanding assigned tasks. The literature review discussed arguments over the APFT, and the arguments cited by Dietz (2011) and Haring (2013) appeared evident in the USARIEM's position that the APFT was "legally indefensible" as a screening mechanism for entrance into specific MOSs (USARIEM

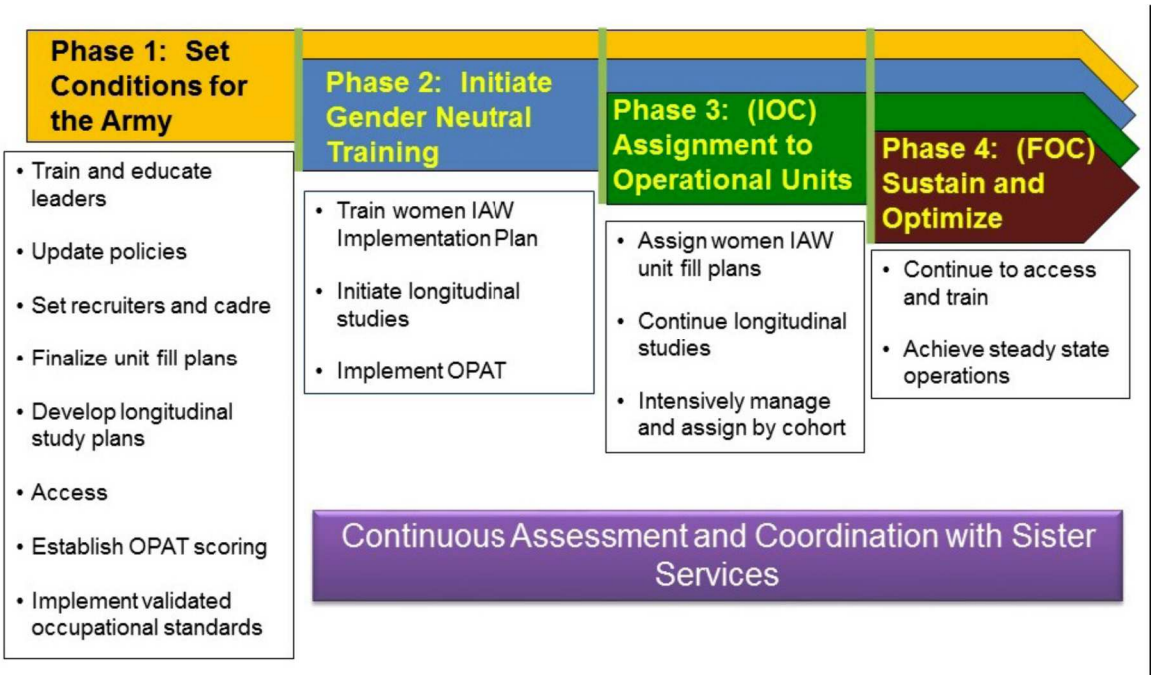
Technical Report T16-2, 2015, p. vii). The OPAT was indicated in the army's phased implementation plan. Based on my study's interview data, the army is involved in phase 3 because the assignment of female cadre has begun in this particular state. The brigade commander commented:

> ….we're able to open it up as far as for officers where we were doing interviews for females equivalent for what we're doing for males which is, if there is a slot open, we interviewed five or six people, and whoever was most qualified, we recommended that we assess them. And that happened, I know, in the field artillery, for example, I distinctly remember talking with the battalion commander saying 'she's the most qualified one out there' She's got the background, she's got the education, she's got kind of the plan so to speak mentally how she wants to do this transition into a combat arms. So I think that was the biggest thing which is don't change your method by which you're assessing officers, do the same method that you did just now you're opening it up to another cohort which is females being considered, not just males for those particular positions. I would probably recommend the same approach. It's really you're opening the pool of candidates is what you're doing, you're not lowering your standards as far as who's most qualified. And the battalion commander said at that point that she was the most qualified of all the officers I interviewed, so I want to take her and I was fine with it….Where we did it first was the battalion staff level, at the battalion headquarters so it's not pushing down to the company quite yet. And that's primarily where we still see them, at the staff level, working for the battalion commander and the battalion staff themselves not so much down to the

company levels in the battalion….We just don't have the numbers to push them down to the company level yet (P8).

Figure 1

Army Gender Integration Phases



(Source: HQDA Execution Order 097-16 to the U.S. Army Implementation Plan 2016)

The purpose of the OPAT was the development of physically demanding tasks that are relevant to the demands of the combat arms specialty. Soldiers' performance on the OPAT would likewise serve as a predictor to their suitability for a specific combat MOS.

Table 4

Most Physically Demanding Tasks of the Seven Combat Arms MOSs

	Infantry (& Indirect Fire), Combat Engineer, Fire Support, Cavalry Scout	**Artillery**	**Armor**
Load Carriage	Foot March		Foot March
Repeated Lift & Carry	Prepare a fighting position	Transfer ammo with an ammunition supply vehicle	Stow ammo on an Abrams (tank)
Heavy Drag	Casualty Drag	Casualty Drag	Casualty Drag
Heavy Lift	Casualty Evacuation	Transfer ammo with an ammunition supply vehicle	Casualty Evacuation
Controlled Heavy Transfer			Load main gun on an Abrams (tank)
Agility	Move under direct fire		Move under direct fire

(Source: USARIEM Technical Report T16-2, 2015, p. 29.)

Both the army and marines have confirmed that women have sustained higher rates of injury in ground combat training exercises (HQDA Execution Order 097-16 to the U.S. Army Implementation Plan, 2016, p. 3). Musculoskeletal injury – overuse of muscles and joints – is the leading cause of restricted or limited duty, medical care, and disability in the military (Fuerst, 2016). Risk of injury is still directly linked to the physiological differences between males and females. That conclusion is based on the analysis that "a woman who is performing to the same physical performance standards as a man will be working closer to her maximum capacity when carrying the same absolute combat load, and will fatigue sooner than her male counterpart" (Memorandum for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 2015, p. 6). The OPAT may prove to be the physiological mediation the Army utilizes to validate occupational performance standards in order to positively influence policy on gender integration:

P1: The Army's exploring, in fact they're going to start new recruits, but there's a test that involves a shuttle run, a medicine ball throw, a dead lift, a standing long jump. And it's the physical analogy to the ASVAB where you take the ASVAB and create different categories. And for each MOS, for each job, you have to meet certain standards in certain categories. And they're doing the same thing with this physical test. The Army has started, or will start, the OPAT which has four events, it's gender neutral and MOS specific. So, if you're going to be a medic and part of your job is picking up a stretcher, and I don't know the specifics yet because it's still very much in the planning stage, but you'll have to be able to dead lift so much if you want to be a medic. Your shuttle run will probably be more for your infantry-type folks where you have to get a certain score on the shuttle run, as well as dead lifting. If you're going to be a mortar man or artillery man where you routinely lift some artillery rounds that are 100 lbs, you just have to be physically able to do that. The Marines did a test where they knocked out some men and some women based on a gender neutral standard. And I think that's the way to do it, to have a gender neutral standard because, as I said before, ultimately it's the results that matter. War is a pass/fail test, it's not graded on a curve; you win or you lose. So we need people who can do the job.

P9: Having an occupational standard really says, male or female, if you can perform this job then you can meet these standards, and that's what should drive the force. A physical fitness test can be skewed; you might have somebody who can run two miles in ten minutes but that doesn't mean for my needs they can lift a 96lb round because they only weigh 110 lbs soaking wet. So when you have

> those MOS specific standards, it really selects the people who can perform it, male or female. The OPAT is a great way, then, to initially screen what they're physical ability is…as you're enlisting, based on your OPAT and your ASVAB score, so now we're looking at not only their mental capability but also their physical capability, in saying this is what you can select from in your MOS. And once you get to your MOS, you have your high physical demands training that's now going to be incorporated into the Advanced Individual Training (AIT), and going through that, if you can't meet those standards, you're not going to graduate from that AIT, you're not going to be in that MOS.

Nevertheless, on the theme of civil-military relations, congressional oversight can change everything. Kamarck (2015) explained that "congress has the authority to review the proposed changes, provide oversight for implementation, and amend the definition of gender-neutral occupational performance standards as needed" (p. 15). At least one commander pointed out that FETs, which was discussed in the literature review, were a result of military initiative, not civilian enforcement:

> P7: If you look at the SF (Special Forces) units, I think there's a great opportunity for women to integrate into those, I think they're called FETs…there is an awesome opportunity for that cultural piece; Afghanistan being a perfect example. Females integrated with SF units in order to speak more directly with foreign females because they weren't allowed to speak to males. So culturally, there's a great opportunity for that. That was an example of a natural evolution, there was a need, and the Army figured out a way to solve it as opposed to a direct 'you will do this'.

P7: I think that even with the direct combat roles, even if it had not been forced, I think it would have evolved into it because whether it's incidents like that (direct engagement) or the FETs, we just saw the need for it. Again, just natural evolution as opposed to a policy dictate.

An additional intent of this study was to determine if conflicting beliefs or perceptions exist in or between a select army command structure. For example, before the Secretary's December 2015 announcement, there was a specific list of MOSs that were being opened to females at the time, and one of the male officer's commented that he felt deprived of a qualified female during the beginning phases of implementation:

One of the MOSs was a 13 Romeo (radar operator), and I was talking to a female soldier who was unhappy with what she was doing, she's a doctor of physical therapy by trade, so she's certainly intellectually capable. She has been an E5 (Sergeant), and she's been moved around as a cook, a fueler, and doing a lot of jobs that she's certainly physically and mentally capable of doing, but she was looking for something a little more challenging than fueling trucks. I said "hey, I need someone in my radar section, and they just opened these up, would you be interested?" She said "yes" and I said "great," and I talked to my commander and said "they said these jobs are open and I have a female that wants to do this job, I need that soldier, she's willing to do it, what do I have to do to make that happen?" And that was when I was told that of [redacted] three brigades, [redacted] didn't just immediately open those doors to everybody. They picked one brigade and said, "We'll do it here, we'll experiment, we'll see how it works and will figure out how we're going to do this and then will move it out to the

> entire division." So I was denied that soldier who has now moved on to other things. So I lost a capable soldier because there was some inertia and caution on the part of senior leaders. 13R is an obscure MOS and there aren't that many of them. It's hard to find individuals who meet the ASVAB scores to get this…and who have the interest in doing it. And I had a soldier who met the standards and was willing to do it, and I was blocked because the folks at the very top weren't enthusiastically embracing the policy (P1).

While the lowering of standards has been a major concern, one of the battery commanders lamented that standards, over a course of time, have already been degraded:

> The concern of the actual degrading of standards, if I look at the overall picture of the army, I feel like we've degraded the standards for everyone at this point, from how we execute, or basic training, and the level of fitness that's required from the soldiers leaving basic training to the point that they're coming back to the units and they can't even complete a physical fitness test. So in that regards, I feel the whole Army has slipped (P9).

The majority of the officers agreed that the most recent combat environments, with women's exposure to asymmetrical warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan, contributed to the acceleration of women in combat arms. However, one female officer offered a differing perspective:

> If anything, I would think that our current combat situation would have deterred you from bringing females into it just because of who we are fighting and how they feel about women. Generally, they don't respect women and/or they cover them up completely. So, I think if you wanted to say something like that (what

> accelerated opening combat to women) it would almost be the opposite direction because we stand out very much in their society. And… they don't value women like our society value's women (P4).

Lastly, while the participants in this study had supportive positions about women in direct combat roles, that apparently is not the case among all those in leadership positions in or around the state's combat units. One male commander remarked, "I've talked with senior officers about this and senior NCOs (Non-commissioned officers), and I've heard some opinions that are very opposed to it. I've heard less that are just really open-minded about it (P7, personal communications, August 21, 2016). This quote is actually a lead into the fourth theme about generational differences among some current commanders and their subordinates.

Organizational culture, as discussed in Chapter 1, was a source of controversy when the lifting of gender restrictions was being introduced. A specific question asked of the commanders, in my study, was how the identity of direct combat units has been affected by the advancement of gender equality. The generational gap factored into their responses:

> P3: There are other things that were just always long standing tradition when I first joined the infantry that have gone away. Is that necessarily related to the gender aspect?....*I think we have lost some of the identity already as infantry, but that was in motion before these positions were opened up to females or were even integrated, it had already started.* And I think a lot of it had to do with the deployments and the Iraq War and what our young officers and soldiers who really only lived or have been in the army during the Iraq war; all they know is

that rotation and that deployment. And the ability to maintain some of those long standing traditions is gone. And they just don't know them to just maintain them and understand them. So I do think that some of the identity is being lost, and I think that has already started moving in that direction, and *maybe that change in identity is really what is going to allow integration to happen in a way that isn't going to completely destroy units or the identity of the units because I think they've already been lost*.

P5: Yeah…for old school guys like myself, it's definitely a culture shock….I've seen quite a lot in 25 years. I would say for younger soldiers, though, for newer soldiers, that's probably all they've ever known is the coed unit. But for some of the older guys, I think the older guys have problems dealing with it because back in the day it was you and all the other Joes. And just like when guys go to hunting camp or whatever, a weekend away with the buddies, kind of like what it was when you went to training. It was all guys and guys act like they do when it's all guys….and the guys with the combat patches are fading off into the sunset. So, I think the total force in itself is a lot younger at least what I've seen…compared to what it was. So a lot of those guys that were strictly in units that were male are probably getting to be dinosaurs like me. Yeah, the culture's changing as far as the military…but a lot of those guys from the old days when it was basically segregated male and female wise aren't around anymore. There not as prevalent….*As far as it being a culture shock to the younger kids, I think the younger kids would probably be more adaptable to it because that's the way the military has been moving since they came in*. They probably were integrated with

females during basic training, and depending on what AIT they went to, same thing there. So they may have been integrated with females from the onset of their military career to present day.

P6: So far, no issues have come about for me personally, but I think the fear of being put under a microscope is part of it (other females being hesitant to join combat arms), and that's why I think it's really important to keep pushing for a level playing field….I think it's very important to keep pushing for that so that you feel like you're integrating into a unit, and I know it's not that seamless, but I have noticed a lot of my younger soldiers, *like a lot of my younger male soldiers don't think twice about it, it doesn't seem strange to them probably because they're growing up with this kind of culture*. I know a lot of my older NCO's are having a little bit more of a difficult time, I guess, trying to get accustomed to the integration because they came into a different kind of army, and things have definitely been changing, and the world around them has also been changing.

P7: There is to an extent (a generational gap), but it goes back to some of the males I see are getting softer, and you have these females now who are trying to assert themselves and being more…the one female I mentioned, that's a lesbian in my unit, she's a badass, she's a hardcore badass. She leads PT for the rest of her squad, and holy shit, she crushes them. And I think it is generally accepted by, *I mean it has evolved to where that millennial group doesn't see it as much as an issue.* And I think the real benefit of all this is…you get a different perspective. So if we get into the psychology of things and the inherent differences between

> males and females, you have a lot of females who typically think a different way and their approach to problem-solving can be pretty unique. As we look at groupthink, that's one of the things we try to prevent when we're trying to solve complex problems. Bringing in a different perspective or a way of approaching a problem is tremendous. So I think that's a big benefit.
>
> P8: …the Millennials don't necessarily potentially care about what gender you are as much as are you qualified, and do you meet the standards? So there is going to be that generational conflict between, I think, older and younger and some hesitation amongst older ones.

Some of the previous statements mentioned culture, and the integration of women into these combat units represents significant cultural change. The following statements expand on that issue:

> P1: The other, non societal challenge, I see, is the units that have been historically all-male or male dominated have a culture that is not, in my experience, completely in line with some of the more politically-correct aspects of society. And they will have to change, and it's a necessary change…it's an obstacle to overcome.
>
> P6: I went into my unit not planning to change anything unless it absolutely had to. I had to observe; any good leader doesn't just go in and start making changes; they don't know what's going on, they don't know the situation. One of the first things I did was counsel my FDC (fire direction center) chief. He and I sat down; we talked about the strengths and weaknesses of the FDC, and we talked about

our own leadership development. And I think he has a little more respect for me for doing that before just jumping in and trying to make change. I'm not there to change the world. I was there because I want to be a field artillery officer. I'm not doing it to say 'women can do this and women can make a difference,' I just wanted to be treated like every other soldier that commissioned artillery and went to a line unit. So I think when you go into it with this attitude that 'as a woman I can do anything you can do,' it's kind of a turn off to a lot of your soldiers because they sit there and think you're doing it for the wrong reasons. And I think that's something I tried to make obvious, that I was there for the right reason. I was there because I like being a part of the branch, and I was there because I think blowing things up is awesome (**quiet chuckle after comment*)

P7: Yeah absolutely, that goes into the command climate and command philosophy. So I have an interesting position where I have openly homosexual females in my unit, in fact two of them are married together. When I first took command, I spoke at length with them to try to assess 'what is the command climate?', 'do you guys feel like you're made fun of or whatever?' and surprisingly they were like 'not at all'. 'Maybe at sometimes people ignore us because they don't want to address it'. What shocked me, we had that command climate survey shortly after I took command to really just figure out where I was at and believe or not, my sexual harassment issues do not exist with the females in the unit, they exist with other males. And it absolutely blew my mind with the general statements; it doesn't seem like it's a big deal. Maybe with some of the older ones who've been around for a long time, maybe it's harder for them to

transition, but the bulk of our force is made up of that millennial generation; they don't seem to care. So there's no reason to care, right? Gender equality, sexual-identity equality, as a commander or as a combat infantryman to my left or my right, I just need somebody who can perform the task.

P8: You don't want to change the culture of a unit simply to open up opportunities, but at the same time, how do you maintain the culture while accepting potential changes? Nowadays, I don't get too far down into the weeds with like platoon level or company level or the battalion commanders or company commanders that see that on a more day to day basis. I'm not hearing what's being discussed in the orderly room among a bunch of E4s (specialists and corporals)….I think you can keep a large part of that broader cultural sense of who we are as a unit as far back as the 1700s. The other part is that subculture that's in there…which is that male culture. And how do we make that not so much a male culture but an infantry culture, or an armor culture? And there is a culture in the infantry, armor and artillery as far as what they do, what their roles are on the battlefield, what unique specialties and qualities do they have. It's that other culture, how do maintain that esprit de corp without breaking it, thinking that you're making concessions just simply to do something that society thinks is correct? And ultimately what's best for the nation, the defense of nation? Is it integration? ….And is American society willing to see young women die more routinely than they have at this point? ….That's a societal question, that's why we have civilian leaders (**laughing after comment*).

I did ask the participants their perspective regarding a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 which now requires females to register for the Selective Service when they turn eighteen years of age. That question ties into the second research question regarding future conflicts. As pointed out in the problem statement in Chapter 1, Maginnis (2013) viewed the registration of women for the draft, albeit the next logical step after full gender integration, as a negative consequence of the policy. Much to my surprise, all the participants agreed with the legislative push to require women to register for the draft. The consensus among them was that if there is to be an equal opportunity environment, it must be equal all around. "Equality is a two-edged sword" (P1, personnel communications, July 6, 2016). Now, it's a shared risk that everybody has.

Granted the draft hasn't been utilized, and subsequently relinquished, since the Vietnam War, it could technically be reinstated depending on the scale of a major international conflict. This does not mean women would be automatically sent to front line combat. Eligibility requirements would still factor into what positions they would be deemed qualified to perform. There might be a small percentage that could perform combat roles, while others could be drafted into other critical MOSs – intelligence, administrative, supply, medics, etc. The military has been experiencing personnel drawdown since the 1990s (Eaglen, 2016). It stands to reason the smaller the military force becomes, the greater likelihood the draft could be reinstated.

The U.S. Army is set to be reduced by another 12 brigades in 2017. According to Army Vice Chief of Staff General Daniel Allyn, the army force strength will be 460,000 at the end of 2017, and estimated to be down to 420,000 by 2019 (Senate Armed Services

Committee testimony, March 15, 2016). The Force 2025 and Beyond initiative, as described in Chapter 1, was proposed with a goal of creating a leaner force and adjusting Army strategic priorities with the demands of the geopolitical environment. Eaglen (2016) explained a potential problem with this shift in force planning:

> Today's modified war plans are geared toward one short-duration, high intensity event with a country like Iran and a scenario like, say, closing the Strait of Hormuz. The second war remains a traditional conflict on the Korean peninsula, but shorter and with a heavier reliance of on our South Korean allies. Gone is any plan that foresees conflict taking longer than one year in duration or any contingency with a whiff of stability operations, long-term counterinsurgency or counter-insurrection, or nation building of the type seen in Iraq and Afghanistan (pp. 25–26).

It is not known with certainty if the nature of a future military conflict will govern the decision to send women into the front lines, but nonetheless, women in combat roles is unlikely to be a policy that is reversed:

> P6: Honestly, I would love to say it (the nature of the conflict) doesn't matter…but it all depends on the success of the mission….if you send in a whole platoon of women, and you know those men are not going to talk to them, are you really being successful in your mission? Are you setting yourself up and your soldiers for success? It comes down to what needs to be done for the mission. As the creed says, I will always place the mission first. So if that is what it requires, then maybe you have to sit it out. Do you want to sit it out? No. Does it feel like it's fair? Probably not. But at the same time, if that is what the army needs you to

do, you take the back seat and you do what you have to do to make sure they accomplish their mission. Would I love to be right out front with my guys to make sure they're getting shit done? Absolutely, don't get me wrong, the last thing I want to be doing is sitting behind a desk, exactly why I joined artillery, but at the same time you need to know when to take a step back, evaluate the situation and say what is going to be the most combat effective way we can accomplish this.

P7: I taught, prior to my current role, history and foreign policy, and I always look back at WWII, which I uphold as the golden standard, where you had these units which were force marched 25 miles a day, carrying everything with them, so we're talking rucks anywhere between 60 to 100 lbs depending on their roles and just having to move. Well, our logistics ability has greatly evolved beyond what it was in the 1940s, *but regardless we always have to plan as if we don't have those things,* and I can't leave my units behind piecemeal because somebody's not able to meet that standard.

P7: …we've had some discussions on this. It goes back to that movement, the WWII standard, being able to move 25 miles. You look at being on a front line and how can you integrate and all of a sudden possibly have to retract that based on that (standard). So, this now goes back to the transitional period where we haven't really figured and worked it out. I think the best picture we can say it will happen, we have some females in the unit and we're expecting them to do that,

but when push comes to shove, are there policy decisions that come down from higher that change that; I don't know.

P7: It's interesting that you (the researcher) picked the [redacted] as a case study, because going back to WWII standard about foot marching, the [redacted] uses [redacted], they have plenty of vehicles for transporting equipment and they're afforded a little more extra protection. *There is the uniqueness to that.*

P8: …going back to the societal piece…which is are people in favor of or opposed to it (placing women in combat). So you're going to have groups of people who say women are just as capable and if they meet the standards they should be able to fight in the contemporary environment. And then you're going to have the others who say 'no' we're endangering…those women could then be used, if captured, potentially as propaganda and/or we're putting them in greater danger because the bad guys aren't necessarily friendly toward soldiers, and putting women in those positions subjects them to harsher atrocities. So, the future of armed conflict, what does it look like? It's going to be both conventional and unconventional warfare. So you're going to have the traditional combat units that are fighting more traditional near peer enemies with standardized conventional forces of armor, infantry and all that. And then you're going to have the unconventional fight as well. Is that the best place for a woman to be? I guess if they're qualified and capable of doing it, have the training that everybody else does, it shouldn't necessarily prevent them from going into combat arms units.

> P9: I feel this moment it (the conflict governing the decision) can't because once we decide to integrate, we can't pick our battle and say 'ok, this is the type of battle we're going to fight, so now pull women out that trained to be field artilleryman, or infantryman, armor , cavalry scouts, and say 'hey, we gotta pull them out because we're doing a more force on force or a linear fight.' It won't be able to change; as we move forward with this, this is how we're going to have to operate, this is going to be how we fight any battle no matter what type it is, whether it be the type we're seeing in Iraq and Afghanistan or if it's more of a conventional type fight. Because once we build the team and they're performing, and a unit gets validated and is ready to deploy, you can't just say 'hey, let's pull them out now', because now you created a hole where it needs to be filled with a new soldier who wasn't a part of that team. So, yeah, I definitely don't think they can change that going forward.

The costs of recruiting and training females is often higher than their male counterparts due in large part to women's susceptibility to injury and the subsequent medical care (Maginnis, 2013). Amara et al. (2014) produced a study to set the groundwork for estimating future combat-related injuries, with a primary focus on traumatic brain injury (TBI). The researchers predicted that deployment-related injuries would likely increase because of the lifting of gender restrictions in ground combat (Amara et al., 2014). Men were found to have higher rates of TBI, but women incurred higher medical costs overall (Amara et al., 2014). When asked how the commanders in this study reconcile the costs of female recruitment while dealing with budget constraints, most of them did not know, had not considered it, or didn't see the issue factoring into

the decision-making of the military senior leaders. Budget cuts and constraints, in general, have forced commanders in all branches of the armed forces to accept risks they previously had not considered as they attempt to implement defense strategies (Eaglen, 2016). In a Department of the Navy memorandum, the marines approach to policy implementation stated:

> As with any policy change in the Marine Corps, leadership will be the most critical component to successful gender integration into ground combat arms occupational specialties and units. Fully invested and unwavering demonstrations of support by commanders and leaders must set the example for Marines at all levels (Memorandum for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 2015, p. 7).

One of the army battery commanders from this study made a statement that resembled the marine approach:

> I think the biggest thing I've had to do is keeping the male soldiers aware that this is coming and it's not something we can change. The train is already in motion, the wheels aren't going to stop, so what we do is have an open mind and keep moving forward. If we don't keep up with the change, we'll be left behind and all that will do is make a less productive team that can actually do the mission. So we need to embrace the change; know that it is coming whether soldiers like or not and then just move forward from there. *So that's the biggest thing, engaging soldiers from the leadership…down through the junior enlisted and section sergeants*, because once you get down to it, they're going to be having direct contact with females in the field as either subordinates or as their leader (P9).

Summary

This qualitative case study captured the perspective of army commanders within a combat brigade as they are undergoing the process of gender integration in direct combat arms. Female officer perspective was also sought which in turn included the first successfully integrated female field artillery officer in the state. Patterns or key-words-in context from the participants established the themes about job performance, standards, civil-military relations, and generational differences. Comments supporting the policy mandate along with acknowledgement of challenges were contextualized within the framework of the literature review.

There are implementation concerns regarding the potential lowering of standards, and females are still at a significant disadvantage from the start, physiologically, when it comes to infantry-related tasks. The marine perspective was referenced to show agreement and/or conflict between the two branches since the army and marines are at the core of the policy mandate. The OPAT is probably the most effective way to go forward to identify soldiers who can perform combat-related requirements. The validation process involves adding physically-demanding tests which are subject to continued scrutiny by civilian and department leaders. Any changes can be perceived as a compromising of standards and likewise create the perception that women have not earned their position. Women in direct combat will be an issue that is constantly evolving. In Chapter 5, I discuss the interpretation of the results, recommendations on future study, and some additional comments made by the participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

I conducted this study to examine the implementation efforts of gender integration in direct combat units. I selected a particular army combat brigade for this case study because it was to serve as the initial test bed of evaluation for other combat brigades in the state. However, policy changes required all military branches to open previously closed combat MOSs without exception, and implementation plans were to be executed beginning in 2016. Because the burden of implementation falls squarely on the backs of combat commanders, they were likewise purposefully selected for the interview process to gain their perspectives regarding the policy mandate. Both male and female officers in commanding positions were interviewed to discuss any challenges and/or successes they are experiencing as they undergo this organizational change. Although certain implementation concerns still exist, the combat brigade in this case study has successfully integrated its first female field artillery officer, and the state is on track to have the most women incorporated in its combat arms units by this year (Summer 2017).

Interpretation of Findings

As mentioned in Chapter 1, assessing the growing role of women in the military is one of several priorities for the army according to the KSIL. Two major contributors have led to women's expanding roles in the military. First, the rescindment of the draft and subsequent move to an all-volunteer force, and second, the demands for equal opportunity in all occupational fields, including national defense (Kamarck, 2015). A majority of statements made by the commanders in these interviews along with documentary data confirmed a few arguments made by proponents of women in direct

combat roles. For instance, as briefly pointed out in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, Dietz (2011) and Haring (2013) criticized the APFT, on a legal and practical basis, as an appropriate standard of measurement for inclusion in combat arms. That viewpoint was reinforced in a USARI technical report that discussed the development of the OPAT. Secondly, the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan changed the perception about women's placement in combat.

In their work *The Fourth Turning*, Strauss and Howe (1997) put forth the premise that the future is not linear. Prior policy on excluding women from combat roles appeared to be based on the assumption that future battlefields would be linear (Barry, 2013). The interviewed commanders were in agreement that though women were not put in direct combat per se, during Iraq and Afghanistan, the enemy had brought combat to them. Conventional operations are still a foreseeable threat, but now it appears the assumption has been reversed to reflect the counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan and that future conflict will reflect those campaigns.

Combat performance has been a central theme in the overall debate, but anecdotal and statistical evidence provide a depiction of women performing admirably across the military spectrum (Pena-Collazo, 2013). Grossman (2008) argued that once the daunting task of routing terrorism from the world is completed, the next task to undertake is the process of rebuilding nations, making them safe for democracy, and to accomplish that task would require peace officers and peacekeepers. Cockburn (2013) mentioned that women are sometimes acclaimed as more "peaceable" than men and thus gender can be a resource for peace (p. 434). It is plausible that women integrated into combat roles will have the opportunity to serve in peacekeeping operations of post-war scenarios.

Moreover, Baker (2006) suggested that women's traditional role as peacekeepers in their homes could crossover into their ability to perform peacekeeping tasks as well, if not better than men. In this case study, the female fire direction officer commented:

> The whole point is to be proficient in what you do. You need to be able to do your job regardless of any condition, war time, peace time, that's the most important thing to the Army, and that's one of the most important things to the soldiers around you because they're going to be depending on you. The army will put you where they want you…. Everybody's integral in some way and a lot of the men over there (Iraq or Afghanistan) won't let a woman talk to them. Even if it's peacekeeping, men and women have a role and they're effective in that role for different reasons. If I can't talk to a male overseas, I might have a male counterpart do it, I might have a male translator do it. If I need to go in and talk to a bunch of wives, maybe my male counterpart can't do that. And I go in there with a translator and now it's on me to pull the right information. Both genders have their strengths and value in that scenario and it's difficult to say if they're effective or not just because it depends on the situation (P6).

The literature review section on unit cohesion also raised the issue of sexual impropriety in the armed forces. Two of the participants pointed out that the army represents a microcosm of society, and can likewise experience some of the same problems, like sexual assault. Some commanders commented:

> P2: In the military, at least, we have mandatory training every single year on various things to include sexual assault and rape prevention, and equal opportunity. The military does a very good job of attacking that sort of thing year

after year after year. So they do a very good job of reinforcing that type of training as compared to the general civilian population. *I don't think it (sexual assault) is going to increase any more than in the general population. The military is nothing more than a microcosm of society*….And we also have the opportunity to kick people out for doing these things when we find out. And we just need to get to a point where people do not shy away from reporting these things. If there not reported, you can't do anything about it. There has to be more awareness, and the military does a good job on the awareness issue and on the prosecution issue.

P3: Every time you put yourself in a position where males and females come into more contact on a daily basis, I think, from my perspective, that you have the increased likelihood of that happening (sexual harassment). So I think it would be naïve to say that there will be no potential for that to increase; however, I think that that a lot of that is driven by the *level of dignity and respect in the culture of the unit.* And I think that of all the units that the integration can occur without a major increase in sexual assault. An infantry unit or a unit in which has high esprit de corp within the unit or brothers and sisters to the left and right, is one in which you will see less of that than units that don't have that high esprit de corp. *So, I think it would be naïve to say it wouldn't happen, but I think actually integrating within the infantry, let's say…not less of an opportunity, but people would be less inclined to do that in those units, but I'm speculating*.

P6: To be honest with you, I don't know about speaking for the Army as a whole, I know personally that they've been pushing SHARP (sexual harassment and rape prevention) training more than ever now. A lot of people see it as power points that are more of a burden than education. They are taking steps to revise the program and make it more relatable and actually, you know, from the moment you get in to the moment you get out, at least nowadays, the awareness for sexual harassment prevention is at an all time high. I guess, even, from hearing from my own, the older NCO's in my unit say they emphasize it because they never conjured this extreme to do it. I'm sure it is in preparation for having females come into the arena, definitely. I would hope that by pushing these programs, like suicide prevention and sexual harassment training, that male and female soldiers feel like they have a safe place to go to discuss these issues.

The brigade commander, in this case study, noted the need for a cohort to be established to provide psychological mediation for female recruits. In his memorandum about eliminating gender restrictions, former Chief-of-Staff Dempsey stated that it was necessary, in the beginning, for a sufficient number of women to be assigned to command positions in order for gender integration to be successful in the long run. Dempsey called for "critical mass" to make the policy work (Press Briefing by Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey from the Pentagon, 2013). However, as pointed out in the problem statement in Chapter 1, Barry (2013) predicted that it would be unlikely that female volunteers for infantry would reach the level necessary for a self-sustaining cohort. So far, the combat brigade in this study has not had females enlisting to fill infantry positions. It has not been defined what percentage of combat soldiers must be female to

make integration work (Maginnis, 2013). As cited in Chapter 4, some of the participants could foresee civilian leadership pushing for a certain percentage of women to be in combat positions; it could simply come down to a question of when. That perspective tied into the theme about civil-military relations. In relation to the equal opportunity positions outlined in the literature review, two of the female commanders did not comport with the equality argument:

> P2: Coming from the perspective of a female officer, who has commanded and spent 22 years in the military, I have witnessed and seen that women have not been promoted equally…for various reasons, and that's unfortunate. I've seen it get a lot better during my tenure in the military; however, I don't believe just opening up all aspects of military operational duties to women is going to make the difference….*That in and of itself is not going to create equality for all women*. As you (the interviewer) pointed out, the civilians, they made this new implementation of open combat to everyone as a means, it appears, to provide equality for everyone. That's not going to do it. Is it going to cause problems? I'm sure it will. Implementation problems and concerns, unit issues and concerns. It's going to cause all sorts of behavioral issues we're going to have to deal with even more so now….
>
> P4: Equal opportunity in the military has nothing to do with race or gender; it has to do with your physical fitness or your physical ability. Firefighters have to go through a certain rigorous training, and there are not a lot of female firefighters either because that gear is heavy.

It was interesting that the commander (P4) brought up the civilian example of firefighters because the New York Fire Department (FDNY) has been dealing with a similar gender equity policy. Specifically, in 2015, the FDNY graduated a 33-year-old female recruit who failed to pass its physical assessment test six times (Edelman, 2015). The training program she failed involved a realistic scenario of climbing in full gear while carrying heavy equipment, rescuing victims in zero visibility, breaking down doors, and doing it all while breathing oxygen from a tank on a limited timer. However, civilian leaders noticed enough women were not completing the training and wanted exceptions to be made. This is a valid comparison over the concern of watering down standards in military training which is foreseen by opponents of women in combat because of civilian control of the military.

Civilian employment rights do not apply to the military. When recruits volunteer to serve, they forfeit many of the Constitutional rights they take an oath to defend (Baker, 2006). The functional imperative of military service requires that service members surrender these rights in order for the military to perform its assigned function of protecting the rest of society… (Field & Nagl, 2001). The functional imperative, as described in civil-military relations theory, is the nature of war and a "nation's geostrategic setting which by necessity compels the armed forces to develop a certain structure and professional culture to be effective" (Egnell, 2013, p. 38). An internalized organizational culture, which has been a major source of controversy over the policy mandate, may be the main obstacle to gender integration, but Strauss and Howe (1997) also applied generational theories to the cycles of history and noted that the moods and attitudes of a particular generation will affect its decisions.

Since the army is becoming more composed of the millennial generation, as pointed out by some of the participants, unit cohesion, as an aspect of organizational culture, may become less of an issue because of the attitudes of the larger millennial cohort. In relation to the frame-critical approach, the cultural frame can differ among generations. A soldier's attitude, not gender, affects morale and unit effectiveness (Baker, 2006). The question of diminishing morale was raised by opponents of women in combat; however, according to a survey conducted in 2014 by the *Military Times*, morale among military servicemembers already hit an all-time low, but the lifting of gender restrictions on direct combat roles was not directly cited as a reason for low morale (Tilghman, 2014). The survey results indicated that "troops report significantly lower overall job satisfaction, diminished respect for their superiors, and a declining interest in re-enlistment…the all-volunteer military is entering an era fraught with uncertainty and a growing sense that the force has been left adrift" (Tilghman, 2014, para 6–7).

Draconian budget cuts were also negatively impacting troop morale. In general, the U.S. ground forces suffered under sequestration, losing nearly 100,000 soldiers since its wartime expansion including thousands of experienced noncommissioned officers with institutional knowledge of counterinsurgency warfare (Eaglen, 2016). The army has improved its readiness since 2014, but only a third of its brigade combat teams are ready to fight in all types of warfare (Eaglen, 2016). Inadequate planning and lack of clarity of mission led Marine General James Mattis, in his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, to ask his civilian superiors to think about the consequences of their decisions. In particular, the questions he believed Congress should ask included: "In light of worldwide challenges to the international order we are nonetheless shrinking our

military. Are we adjusting our strategy and taking into account a reduced role for that shrunken military?" (Mattis, testimony before SAFC, 2015, p. 5). In Chapter 1, I posed the question about how professional military judgment is factored into civilian policy decisions and then highlighted examples were military leadership openly challenged civilian leadership. Consequently, General Mattis' questions or dissenting views cost him his occupation. I have reason to believe, though still an assumption, that the commanders in this study answered honestly regarding their perspective on the gender inclusion policy. Although confidentiality is provided to the participants of this study, it is not known for certain if occupational jeopardy influenced some of their responses to reflect the views of societal culture. Pena-Collazo (2013) claimed that "it is a culture that presupposes women's physical inferiority and lack of psychological and emotional coping mechanisms" (p. 58). Nonetheless, physical disparity is still a legitimate concern as discussed in the literature review.

Based on statistics obtained by the Center for Military Readiness, females suffer double the rate of injuries compared with male colleagues in army combat training (Scarborough, 2015). Epstein et al. (2013) had concluded that knowledge gaps still exist about preventive measures for musculoskeletal injuries and enhancing performance by implementing proper training protocols. That gap still exists, though the army envisions a screening program to understand and predict musculoskeletal injuries which are the most significant threat to military readiness (Fuerst, 2016). No matter how much the army works at leveling the playing field, the physiological differences that make men and women inherently unequal cannot be universally overcome. Women will continue to contribute indispensably to the army division of labor, and as long as they perform

competently, in spite of any relative physical inequality, in their respective occupational skill, they can be accepted as "sisters" and valued as professionally equivalent (King, 2015, p. 382).

Although the Army may have struck a balance in the validation process with the OPAT, some may still consider the standards to be unnecessarily high (Kamarck, 2015). Congress has the option, in its oversight duties, to monitor or postpone implementation and request further studies. Within the conceptual framework of the frame-critical approach, the opposition or the advocacy frames come from honest, intellectual differences or beliefs. Competing frames will continue between those who are opposed to the policy on philosophical grounds, namely in the tradition of valuing the defense of women, while advocates of the policy will continue to see it as an equality issue.

Limitations to the Study

Originally, the study had the objective of obtaining more participants, but only 9 participants were interviewed during the data collection time frame. The participation that was lacking was more line company (infantry) or battery (field artillery) commanders within the brigade element. Observational data was also limited. The specific confines of one Army combat brigade limit the generalization of any results among the broader armed forces. Furthermore, the combat brigade selected was done so under the expectation that it was serving as the test bed for the rest of the combat units in the state. However, as noted in Chapter 4, that decision was rendered obsolete by the Secretary of Defense's order that all combat positions be opened to women without exception. While the particular combat brigade in this study has not had any current success with female infantry enlistment, the does not necessarily apply to the other state combat brigades now

that positions are open across the board. In addition, the absence of enlisted personnel perspective prevents a deeper account of the organizational climate during this transition. Senior NCOs such as First Sergeants at the company level and Command Sergeant Majors at battalion levels or higher, carry out policies and standards on performance, training and conduct of enlisted personnel, and can give advice or offer recommendations to commanders in matters pertaining to enlisted personnel. As pointed out in Chapter 4, one of the battalion infantry commanders mentioned that he has spoken with other senior officers and senior NCOs that are opposed to the policy mandate. As such, the potential for more competing perspectives remains compared to the supportive positions of the participants in this study.

Recommendations & Implications

In Chapter 1, I noted that it would be beneficial for a long term analysis to track the progression of the transition the army is undergoing to determine if the organizational change efforts result in improved organizational performance and effectiveness. The battery commander (P9) pointed out that the combat brigade from this study will have three to four more women incorporated into it by March 2017, so they will actually be able to see how the transitions are proceeding because there is no truth for certain until the experiment is run in real time. A long term transitional study would help better track the progress, and in terms of positive social change, this state is serving as an example for the rest of the United States. As the commander explained:

> Especially with selecting a battery, it's almost like you have the beforehand and then see how it goes. And I'll be transitioning out a year from now, so then you have a new commander, a new perspective, but at that point there will already be

> women in that unit for six to eight months, so how does he take this transition with having women there. So, it's going to be five, ten years from now to see how it actually develops, where soldiers are in their career and how it worked out. (This is an issue that's constantly evolving). I'm happy to get my opinion out there, and give you that perspective from a line battery commander. *And the [redacted] will have the most women this time next year in a combat arms unit, so we're kind of leading the way here, and I'm very excited and interested to see how it goes. This time next year there will be a lot of positive comments* (P9).

The degree of ease and success during significant organizational change is directly proportional to the amount of choice that people believe they have in implementing the change (Burke, 2011). As quoted in Chapter 4, one of the infantry commanders (P7), although supportive, still thought that a proper transition period was denied to work out any potential issues. For instance, sexual harassment may remain an issue. Since 2011, there has been a trend of sexual harassment on the rise among male soldiers, making it not just a woman's issue (Pena-Collazo, 2013). Whether that rise correlates to the repeal of DADT in 2010 could be a potential future study.

As recently as June 2016, the Defense Secretary also removed any restrictions regarding transgenders serving in the military. Gender integration may not remain at the forefront for long because the transgender debate is now an area for future study. Interpersonal relationships can become a challenge and affect a team, and those interpersonal relationships may become more complex when mixing in females or transgenders, etc. The military has never been able to control for interpersonal dynamics (Simons, 2015). The brigade commander commented regarding the transgender policy:

> That is a whole new level of complexity. At what point do you determine…how to evaluate that particular soldier by, whether it's what you're born with until you do the transition, that's a more complex question. *But if you look at the military, it's been in the lead, over its history, as far as, not social change but whether it goes back to the integration of minorities...under Truman to this, it has always been somewhat, in some ways ahead of the curve of society in ensuring some type of equality* (P8).

Furthermore, in terms of social change, one of the female commanders also discussed how the military leads the way over society in general:

> I think the military has led the way in gender integration. Look at how we integrated black soldiers in the military. How blacks were integrated into the military paved the way for how women started to become integrated into the military. As a whole the military has really out shown the civilian community in terms of integration – gender and race. I've had my concerns about the military, and I've stood up for my view points over my military career. But as a whole I can say the military is a very fine institution, and I have served with a lot of very fine people. *And we, more than the civilian community, have gone out of our way to promote equality*….People who get promoted in the military are the people who can do the job for the most part. We have ways in the military that are verifiably tracked to make sure that discrimination doesn't happen….In the civilian community, it's not open source like that, people are not reviewing everybody's evaluation to make sure everything in there is true and factual. So we have a lot of back stops in the military to ensure that there is equal

> opportunity, not just for women, but for everybody. It's not perfect, but it's a hell of lot better than the civilian community (P2).

Finally, gender integration can serve as a positive source for female empowerment. Combat command experience is beneficial in the military promotional system. When asked about her ambitions, the first successfully integrated female field artillery officer stated:

> Funny that you say that, because my commander, I used to be an XO (executive officer) at HHB (headquarters battery), and they weren't going to move me into a line battery until I went through BOLC (Basic Officer Leader Course). *Once I finally got through the course, back in May (2016) I graduated, my new commander in the line battery when I took the fire direction officer slot asked me what my endgame goal was, and I told him I want Lieutenant Colonel [redacted] job actually*. So, ultimately I would like to be a battalion commander; that's my final goal (P6).

Personal experiences of commanders, as well as other individual soldiers, amount to anecdotal evidence which can easily be dismissed by social scientists, but the issue of women in combat is an issue that is going to require more and more data. Evidentiary accounts add up to data. Not all military personnel are opposed to women serving in direct combat positions, but some do oppose it. As women and men work together in army combat training environments, commanders and noncommissioned officers can assess the professionalism and make predictions on how they might perform when deployed (Simons, 2015). There may be no shortage of studies, quantitative or

qualitative, regarding all the particulars of interpersonal dynamics in the military. Until data saturation is reached, data collection is where this issue will remain fixed.

Conclusion

Whether organizational change is resisted or embraced, all change is a loss experience, predominantly a loss of familiar routines (Burke, 2011). The gender neutral physical requirements for each occupational specialty, as designed by the OPAT, is probably the most prudent and effective way to go forward on gender integration including the most recent policy on transgenders. At any given time, the direction of a policy is chosen by the generation in power. The more public awareness is raised concerning implementation challenges or successes, the more the conversation on women in combat may be reshaped and likewise influence policymakers. Given the politically-charged nature of the topic, some military leaders, ones with practical experience, may believe they can't push back publicly. In the end, the societal imperative, of civil-military relations, overrides the functional imperative. Ultimately, throughout the history of warfare, the political context has been more important than the military context, and the issue of women in combat, which is continually evolving, will eventually take its place in that history.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your perspective regarding the policy mandate? What do you perceive as the most challenging aspect?
2. Describe, if any, changes that are being made to the physical and mental standards to the content of training courses?
3. How have changes, or what changes, on the battlefield accelerated the process of opening combat roles to women?
4. How has the advancement of gender equality affected the identity of direct combat units as well as their practices?
5. How (in what ways) can the military validate occupational performance standards to positively influence policy on gender integration in direct combat?