

Let Women Fight

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On December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced, without exception, that all fields in military combat will be available to eligible females (Pellerin). This integration will begin as of January 2, 2016, enabling women soldiers, current and entering, the opportunity to be employed in 220,000 positions or approximately 10% of jobs previously reserved only for males (Tilghman). With women making up more than 50% of the population, Secretary Carter emphasizes the significance of integrating women into every field in the military. He states, “[t]o succeed in our mission in National Defense, we cannot afford to cut ourselves off from half the country’s talents and skills” (Schwartz and Lubold). Without lowering the standards set in military history and tradition, women will be eligible to participate, providing them with an opportunity previously only granted to men. These opportunities will allow women to progress in their careers, enabling them to obtain the highest levels of leadership provided by combat arms (Tilghman).

The integration of women in combat arms will allow the military to advance and reach its full potential. Furthermore, it will allow the military to expand and diversify the scope of skill sets in these positions. Greg Jacob, Policy director at the Service Women’s Action Network, concludes that giving access to these branches “ensures [the military has] the best person in leadership positions regardless of their sex” (qtd. in Goudreau). He continues, “If the best sniper is a woman, it should be her in the role” (Goudreau). Women who meet the standards and requirements should not be denied the ability to defend our great nation alongside many brave men. Through integration, women are able to provide many attributes and skill sets that can improve military tactics and strategies.

The military has adapted to an evolving society with increasing technological advancements. However, the military has had trouble integrating women in combat arms, though so-

cial views about women have drastically changed. Moore's law, named after Intel co-founder Gordon Moore, holds that the "[c]omplexity of integrated circuits has approximately doubled every year since their introduction" (Moore 1). Yet, even with such advancements, the military, in that it consists mostly of males, has remained stagnant in its views on women in combat. Though women have come a long way in their fight for equality, a number of negative stereotypes persist about the abilities of women to perform on the same level. One hindering stereotype is that women are unable to perform on the same level as men in the physical and psychological aspects during deployment in combat arms. Even with increased acceptance of women in traditionally male roles, introducing women to military traditions in combat arms is difficult for some to grasp. Professor at Wayne State University Law School, Kingsley Browne, remarks that women in combat arms "poses substantial threats to military effectiveness" and thus "will almost inevitably lead to a weaker military" (Kingsley 1-2). Jenna Goudreau suggests that Kingsley argues that women lack the physical capabilities to perform like men and because of this, integration of women will diminish military standards.

Although never considered equal, women have had prior and direct engagements in combat roles. According to David and Mady Segal, in their *Publication of the Population Reference Bureau* titled "America's Military Population," "[w]omen have served in the U.S. military throughout its history, but never on an equal basis with men" (D. Segal and M. Segal 26). Eager women were forced to pose as men in order to participate in this male dominating field, particularly during the Revolutionary war (26). D. Segal and M. Segal expand, stating that although holding vital roles, women were not officially accepted in the military until the 20th century. Women were only participants in times of war and dire need, then dismissed at the end of war and expected to return to their household roles. In later years, the military began expanding its female personnel in this field primarily because of the need for able bodies. By the end of World War II, women made up roughly 2% (265,000 women total) of the military population (27).

During this time, women were placed in various male dominated positions such as parachute rigger, aircraft mechanic, weapons instructor, as well as women service air force pilots (WSAPs). Even though these positions are more gradually being filled by women at increasing rates, women still failed to receive acknowledgement for their vast and crucial participation in times of war (D. Segal and M. Segal 27). Scholars David and Mady Segal continue, “[t]hese women, although not granted full military status and benefits until decades after the war, performed the vital and dangerous jobs of ferrying military aircraft to overseas theaters of operations” (27). Again, in a later time period, women were still being used only in times of shortages. In 1973, with the initial intentions of establishing a male dominated volunteer force, the military struggled to reach sufficient numbers of male volunteers. Instead, they received an overwhelming desire from women to fill these roles. Because of this, “the military was forced to rely increasingly on women to meet its personnel needs in the face of shortages of qualified male volunteers” (27). By 1980, women made up 8.4% of the military population and by 2002 this percentage reached 15%, temporarily eliminating gender-based restrictions (27). Even so, the integration of women was difficult to grasp. Although the Army permitted women the opportunity to serve in 91% of all military jobs, this only opened 70% of actual positions, limiting women and restricting jobs that provided the highest levels of command and leadership (28).

For performance in physical aptitude, many women have the ability to perform to the standards and requirements of many combat arm positions. In 2015, before all branches officially opened to women, the Army produced a gender-integrated assessment that involved the two-month long Ranger School in Fort Benning, Georgia. At Ranger School, an average of 45% of the class will graduate. The Army’s primary goal in this assessment is to provide the best and most qualified soldiers for the defense of our nation. This assessment included 381 male soldiers and 19 female soldiers: of these, 94 men and 2 females successfully completed all three phases, graduating Ranger school and earning their Ranger tab. On August 25th,

during the graduation of the first two females to complete Ranger School, Army Secretary John McHugh, stated: “[w]e must ensure that this training opportunity is available to all soldiers who are qualified and capable, and we continue to look for ways to select, train, and retain the best soldiers to meet our nation’s needs” (Tan, “Army”). To ensure the consistency of Army Ranger standards, Secretary John McHugh stated that standards were maintained throughout the assessment and that “[t]his course has proven that every soldier, regardless of gender, can achieve his or her full potential” (Tan, “Two Women”). This assessment played a significant role in the military’s decision of opening combat roles to women because it served as real evidence of women’s ability to perform to standards in elite groups designed for combat arms. Additionally, this assessment marked a crucial point in our history as women continue to fight for equality in the military.

Though some women can perform to combat standards and regulations, it is apparent that the physical characteristics of men and women differ in various ways. Dr. Neel Burton states, “[m]en are physically stronger than women, who have, on average, less total muscle mass, both in absolute terms and relative to total body mass” (Burton). Women do not contain the muscle mass and in many cases, the build of a man. However, this does not mean women are incapable of performing on the same level. There are many instances in which women have been acknowledged for their excellence in physical fitness. In fact, Kim Field and John Nagl’s study provides evidence on women and their gradual increase in their level of performance in physical fitness. According to Field and Nagl, in their proposal, “Combat Roles for Women: A Modest Proposal,” women have been closing the gap in physical fitness at exponential rates and “increasing their performance in physical tasks-beyond the level men could achieve” (Field and Nagl 83). In their study, Field and Nagl examined and compared physical fitness scores between males and females on the one-mile run. Field and Nagl found “[t]he men’s record [had] dropped 16.8 percent from 4:12.6 set in 1915 to 3:43.13 in 1999, while the women’s record [had] dropped 32.7 percent from 6:13.2 to 4:12.56 in 1996” (Field and

Nagl 83). This provides evidence of women's continual gains in physical fitness as they strive for equal consideration and a foot in the threshold of male dominated fields in combat arms.

The increase in women's performance is attributed to many components, one of which is due to Title IX, which provide women with the ability and the opportunity to participate in male dominated sports. Title IX of the Education requirements of 1972, has strict regulations against discrimination based on sex in athletes on the collegiate level (US Dept. of Education). Women now have the ability to practice and compete competitively and thus have significant room to excel in athletics and physical fitness. In previous circumstances, women did not have this ability and/or opportunity to practice to meet these standards for performance. Women who have the potential have broken the barriers of traditional sports exclusive to men, which is shown in athletic teams like contact football and hockey.

In the article, "Playing with the Boys: Manon Rheaume, Women's Hockey and the Struggle for Legitimacy," author Dr. Nancy Theberge states that Manon Rheaume, a groundbreaking female hockey player, in 1991, earned a spot as number three for the Trois Rivieres Draveurs, in Quebec. This distinguished her as the first female to play in a Major Junior League. Rheaume's success, however, does not end there; Dr. Theberge continues, "in September of that year [1992] Rheaume was invited to the tryout camp of the Tampa Bay Lightning of the National Hockey League (NHL)" (Theberge 37). Rheaume later became the first female to play in a professional men's hockey league during a regular season. Additionally, Rheaume played in the East Coast Hockey League with the Knoxville and Nashville teams before she returned to the Canadian national team in 1994 to play at the World Championships in New York (38). Women are breaking into traditionally male dominated arenas and showing that they are capable of "Playing with the Boys." This shows not only that women have the capabilities to perform in aggressive fields, which involve high volumes of contact and aggression, but also that women desire recognition based on the same standards as men. Though comparison of contact sports and

combat arms are not comparatively measureable, the ability to perform in contact sports serves as a stepping stone for women and their potential for performance.

Additionally, women may not display the muscle mass or “fit the looks” of men who have previously served in combat arm professions; however, women have different attributes that enable them to perform to high standards. In the article “Battle of the Sexes,” Dr. Neel acknowledges attributes women possess that provide an advantage compared to men. He explains, “women have lower blood pressure” which decreases their chances for cardiovascular diseases (Burton). This directly correlates to physical fitness in the field of combat arms.

Women and men differ in biology and genetics. However, seizing women of the opportunity to compete for these elite teams destroys the foundation of equality encompassed in the American ideal. Women should be able to speak, or in this case, perform for themselves. Women have fought many years to receive recognition to achieve equality. In the prior example of Ranger School, approximately 49% of soldiers successfully graduate, leaving 51% failing or dropping out. Until 2015-2016, this school was only open to men, thus signifying the only individuals to fail (or succeed) were men (Tan). Many men have been unsuccessful in their completion of Ranger school. This elite leadership course is made to teach “students how to overcome fatigue, hunger and stress to lead soldiers in small-unit combat operations” (Tan, “Army”). These exclusive schools are created to test and push soldiers to their limits and are, therefore, made to be challenging and difficult. Not every woman will succeed, just like not every man will succeed. Denying women the ability to compete is not only discriminatory, but withholds proficient and talented individuals who can benefit the United States.

Major Kim Field, and retired Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl suggest that, “the functional imperatives of military service cannot be used to justify the exclusion of women who can meet the physical demands of service in combat arms from those positions” (Field and Nagl 81). Allowing women the ability to compete in these elite positions in combat arms provides the

military with the most qualified individuals who are willing and able to defend our nation. Women have the capabilities to perform without dropping prior standards, showing validity to the decision of opening all combat fields to women.

Besides the physical attributes that differentiate men and women, the psychology of men and women are another argument against integration of women in combat arms. According to Dr. Gerard DeGroot, professor at the University of St. Andrew's School of History, women have been branded as "a caring role and cannot therefore summon the aggressive impulses necessary for effective soldiering" (DeGroot 23). Until the full integration of women in 2016, women have never been given the opportunity to perform outside of the "nurturing and caring" role and into the aggressive roles depicted in combat arms on an equal level. Similarly, women have never been given the opportunity to demonstrate physical aggression. Therefore, they should be granted the ability to perform on an equal footing without fluctuating standards engrained in our military traditions and history. In doing so, the benefits will outweigh the costs by a significant degree and "increase the effectiveness of the Army—in peace operations, to a lesser extent in conventional war, and in the Army's dealings with its civilian matters" (Field and Nagl 80).

In addition, Amy Adler, Paul D. Bliese, Carl Andrew Castro and Ann Huffman have proven that women are not that much different than men in the psychological aspect and thus can perform in high levels of stress. A study by scholars Adler, Bliese, Castro and Huffman found that "depression rates for men generally increased as the length of deployment increased, whereas the depression scores for women rose slightly initially and then remained relatively stable" (Adler et al. 128). This reveals that although men and women differ in psychological and mental aspects, there is no supreme way to manage and handle stress. Men handle and cope with distress differently from women, but this does not necessarily signify a superior method of handling distress, it simply indicates a difference. The study took 3,339 non-combat armed soldiers in all ranks (enlisted and officer) who were deployed from 1997 to 1998 to the Bosnia area.

Of these, 63.3% were men while 36.7% were women (Adler et al. 126). This study reveals the differences between men and women during deployments. The study also found that men became physically exhausted from consistent stress throughout deployment, negatively affecting psychological health. On the other hand, the study did not find any direct correlation or relationship between psychological health and constant stress in deployed women (Adler et al. 132). In regards to women, factors like sexual discrimination throughout deployment were considered, as well as prior or previous deployment history, which has increasingly more effect on men (Adler et al. 30). This indicates that women, in a general sense, have the emotional capacity to successfully deploy. The same study also found that in regards to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), stress levels increased in women with length of deployment but was not as systematic or consistent as it was found in men (Adler et al. 29). This signifies another difference in men and women, but no one coping mechanism has been found to be more effective than any other.

Women have historically played in vital roles in combat. However, according to Dr. DeGroot in his article "A Few Good Women," "women have fought effectively. But because women are not supposed to fight, the instances when they have done so have been carefully camouflaged" (DeGroot 27). He continues by citing events which occurred during World War II when women from the British mixed-sex and anti-aircraft batteries participated in combat actively, but were forced to believe they had no direct involvement in combat even with contact with direct enemy fire in the front lines. Women, at the time, were "prevented from loading or firing the weapons (they merely aimed them) in order to maintain the illusion that they were not actually killing" (DeGroot 27). For many years, women have displayed significant participation at the front lines without receiving recognition. Instead, they have been indoctrinated to believe their roles had no direct correlation to combat arms.

Many other countries are living proof of women's' ability to successfully perform. In Denmark, for example, "Danish research showed that women performed just as well as men in

land combat roles" (Cawkill, et al. 21). Furthermore, a document from The Defense Science and Technical Laboratory of the Ministry of Defense states that, "as far as the Danish Personnel Policy Section of the Danish Defense Personnel Organization are aware, there have been no reported difficulties with employing women in combat roles" (Cawkill, et al. 21). In Israel, women have played significant roles in combat arms. As of September 2009, a study found that 68% of women in The Israel Defense force (IDF) were in light infantry, though not defined as "close combat roles" (Cawkill et al. 24). To continue, the study also reported data conducted from 2002 to 2005. This included IDF commanders' recognition towards women in combat roles. It was found that "female combatants often exhibit superior skills in areas such as discipline and motivation, maintaining alertness, shooting abilities, managing tasks in an organized manner, and displaying knowledge and professionalism in the use of weapons" (24). In another example, the Canadian Force (CF) mentions that the "introduction of women, despite some resistance, has been reported to have provided the opportunity for women to contribute to the evolution of culture across the organization and to operational effectiveness" (18). Through successful female integration of other countries military forces, women have proven themselves to have the mental capacity and physical abilities to perform in direct combat.

Combat readiness related to morale and cohesion is another aspect to consider in the integration of women in the front lines. The National Defense Research Institute conducted an assessment of female integration and the direct effect it had on units. The study consisted of male and female enlisted individuals and officer personnel in all branches of the military in a concise three-month long term. During this time frame, researchers analyzed the progression of women in positions which were previously restricted. The study delved into three main components: 1. The interpretation of female integration in each branch, 2. Progress assessment and the degree of implementation, and 3. The outcome and results of integrating women in terms of combat readiness, moral and cohesion (Harrell and Miller 5). In conclusion, the study found that the integration of women did

not have a major effect on unit readiness, morale and cohesion. They did however, discover “a consensus that leadership, training, and workload are the primary influences on how well their units function” (Harrell and Miller). Furthermore, the study found that in regards to basic training, 25% of women and 39% of men preferred segregated training, leaving the majority with a preference for integrated training (Harell and Miller xix).

Women have various attributes that diversify them from male counterparts. This includes leadership style, which is one of the primary influences on unit morale and cohesion. Alice Eagly and Mary Johannesen-Schmidt from Northwestern University conducted a research on gender and the correlation of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Transformational leadership is expressed as a leadership style that utilizes trust and confidence to motivate and mentor followers. Furthermore, these leaders “innovate, even when the organization that they lead is generally successful... [b]y mentoring and empowering followers” (787). In contrast, transactional leaders focus on rewarding subordinates on accomplishing responsibilities or rectifying mistakes to meet goals and objectives. This form of operant conditioning, consisting of rewards and punishments, does not prioritize self-motivation. Lastly, laissez-faire, is “marked by a general failure to take responsibility for managing” (787). These leaders are less involved and rely on subordinates to make decisions (Cherry).

Researchers found that in regards to leadership style, women surpass men in transformational leadership, defined by the influence, motivation and personal connection female leaders had with subordinates and peers (Eagly and Schmidt 791). Additionally, Eagly and Schmidt’s study suggests that:

[F]emale managers, more than the male managers, (1) manifested attributes that motivated their followers to feel respect and pride because of their association with them, (2) showed optimism and excitement about future goals, and (3) attempted to develop and mentor followers and attend to their individual needs. Women also exceeded men on the transactional scale of contingent reward. (791)

Women were also found to have more communal characteristics compared to men, which enable them to communicate effectively with their subordinate in a sympathetic way (783). Eagly and Schmidt also elaborated on a study, which indicated women's favorability to leadership styles that aligned with a more democratic and participative view (789). Because of women's focus on transformational leadership and contingent reward, Eagly and Schmidt "suggest that the female managers in this norming sample were more effective than the male managers" (793). This diverse perspective on leadership can be interpreted in combat arm roles. Women have attributes that can help the military by providing a different perspectives regarding communication and leadership that can improve military objectives and missions. Snyder states that "women can equally contribute to the common good of defending American democracy, even if they do not do so in the same exact way as men in every situation. This refocusing provides a different way of framing several controversial issues" (Snyder 194).

Captain William Denn, an intelligence officer with previous deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, expresses the significance of women in our military. Through his deployment experience, he learned the necessity for women at the forefront due to our country's most recent conflicts (Denn). He emphasizes, "[w]e need [women's] creativity, insight and empathy, qualities often lacking in male-dominated units" (Denn). There are certain circumstances where women are essential in meeting objectives and accomplishing missions. One particular example lies in conducting key leader engagements (KLEs). These specific engagements establish relationships between "unit leadership and key power figures and influencers within a local civilian community" in order to gain critical military intelligence (The Defense Information School). Captain Denn admits that women would have helped significantly during his patrols in Iraq in 2007-2009. During deployment, Captain Denn faced adversities gathering information from Iraqi men who were ineffective in deliberation for fear of consequences from al-Qaeda. Because of this, Iraqi women had a higher chance of being coaxed for

critical information. He states, “[h]aving women in our platoon would have dramatically increased our ability to elicit critical intelligence. This could mean the difference between a mission’s success or failure, with lives in the balance” (Denn). These attributes and characteristics that women possess can enhance the military and make it more effective.

Women have suffered various adversities through stereotypes on their inability to perform on the same level as men. Because of stereotypes like these, women were denied access to occupations in combat arms. Until 2016, these barriers in our military were concrete. With women integrated in all branches and units within the military, our nation has the ability to expand the scope of skill sets, revealing an array of the most qualified and diverse personnel. Women have the ability to progress and reach their full potential, in turn contributing to the defense of our nation. Women are willing to make sacrifices for the greater good for the defense of this nation as many men have done before. Instead of questioning women’s abilities, women should be put to the test. Only then will we discover the potential women can bring to combat arms and the military as a whole and learn that it’s about time we let women fight.

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