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"Minimum essential adjustments": gender, physicality, and equality at the United States Military Academy, 1976-1980

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University of Iowa

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“MINIMUM ESSENTIAL ADJUSTMENTS”: GENDER, PHYSICALITY, AND
EQUALITY AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, 1976-1980

by
Amanda Kay Curtis

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Health and Sport Studies
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2013

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Catriona Parratt

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the ways in which understandings of gender, physicality and equality influenced policy and thus constructed the identities and experiences of female cadets during the 1976 integration of women into the United States Military Academy at West Point. Policy decisions and the way in which they were put into practice set the precedent for all subsequent female cadets and so it is important to explore their origins and early impact. West Point is an ideal setting in which to explore two historically masculinist institutions, sport and the military, during a time when the women's movement was cresting and the military was redefining itself in a new post-Vietnam voluntary military. An exploration of the changing gender dynamics as this elite male military institution became co-ed at a particular historical moment shows that physicality was more integral to the process of integrating women than actual military training was.

This study is based on archival research conducted at the Special Collections and Archives of USMA and the personal accounts of female cadets who attended West Point from 1976-1980 to produce a qualitative picture of the integration of women into West Point. Focusing on military training, physical education, athletics, and covert training I found that women generally performed equally to men in military training yet struggled in certain aspects of physical training which seemed to validate those who doubted women's ability to be successful cadets. Women were also excluded from important physical activities because of "physiological differences," something that further served to separate them and construct them as "different" and "lesser." Based on the Academy's policy and practice with regard to physical training, along with a number of related matters, I conclude that while women were given equality in most respects, those in which they were not served to make them a second-class tier of cadet and soldier, judged not on combat and military skill and potential but rather on physical capabilities and

attributes. As a consequence, even though West Point integrated women it did so in a way that served to protect the symbolic role of combat associated with masculinity.

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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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To Mom

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Gender.....	2
	Physicality.....	10
	Liberal Equality	17
	West Point Scholarship.....	30
	Sources.....	35
	Research Questions and Chapter Organization	41

CHAPTER

II.	A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO WEST POINT	44
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CHAPTER

III.	MILITARY TRAINING	51
	General philosophy of planning and integration	51
	Military Training	57
	Project 60.....	59
	Cadet Basic Training	61
	Cadet Field Training.....	69
	Recondo	76
	3 rd Summer Training for the Class of 1980	82
	Conclusion	85

CHAPTER

IV.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND EQUIVALENT TRAINING.....	88
	Initial Planning.....	88
	Medical Justification.....	92
	Research Justifications.....	95
	Combatives Justification.....	97
	Societal Justifications	100
	Telling It Like It Is.....	102
	Physical Aptitude Examination	105
	Women Cadets' Views	107
	Changes Made After the First Year.....	113
	Equal Training vs. Equivalent Training.....	116
	Conclusion	130

CHAPTER

V.	ATHLETICS.....	134
	Changes to Intercollegiate Program.....	135
	Planning and Evaluating the Athletics Program.....	138

Title IX.....	145
Women’s Basketball.....	149
Cheerleading/Rabble Rousers.....	156
Women’s Attitudes Towards Corps Sports	162
Intramurals.....	166
Conclusion.....	173
CHAPTER	
VI. COVERT TRAINING.....	178
Leadership in Summer Training	178
Menstruation	191
Physical Appearance.....	197
Weight Control	202
Support Systems (or Lack Thereof).....	206
Sexual Harassment.....	209
Women’s Sexuality.....	217
Femininity	220
Conclusion.....	228
CHAPTER	
VII. CONCLUSION.....	232
APPENDIX A. TERMINOLOGY AND ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDE.....	246
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	248

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways in which issues of equality and decisions about gender and physicality constructed the identity of the female cadet during the integration of women into the United States Military Academy at West Point.¹ The years from 1975 when admitting women was first debated through the 1980 graduation of the first class to include women, was a period of transformation for the Academy which would have a lasting impact on the perception of male and female cadets as Army officers. The decisions and changes made during this time period created and perpetuated the perception of women as a second-class tier of cadet and soldier based not on combat and military skill and potential but rather on physical capabilities and attributes.

My interest is in the integral role that physicality and sport play in West Point's gender integration. The connection between gender (including gender roles, femininity and sexuality) and physicality (including physical training, athletics, physiology and physical capabilities) becomes clear when investigating the process of integration and the decisions made about what women would and would not be given equal access to. Both institutions of the military and sport are historically masculinist and male dominated and "gendering" is a central process that occurs in them and West Point provides a site where these two institutions masculinist institutions overlap. The historical moment in which gender integration took place was also the time when second wave feminism was peaking, and society in general had to come to terms with the issues of gender and

¹ The ideas expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not purport to represent the official positions of the United States Military Academy, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the United States government.

sexuality that were part of the movement. In addition the now voluntary military was redefining itself post-Vietnam.

Gender

Higonnet, et al. argue that war must be understood as a gendering activity that ritually marks the gender of all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants. It follows that the military itself and its academies can also be understood as gendered spaces where the “differences” between men and women are socially constructed to justify gender-role assignments and where any woman who challenges her assigned role is considered not normal and certainly not feminine. The institution of sport has also historically been a gendering activity where as Birrell and Theberge argue the “construction and promotion of an ideology of natural gender differences and female inferiority” occurs and that sport “served as a site for the reproduction of gender relations that privilege men over women.”² By investigating West Point and gender integration I examine the ways in which these processes took place in both sport and the military. This conceptualization allows me to theorize about gender relations within the military and discover how those gender relations are evidenced by, played out in, and reproduced through physicality and sport at the Academy.

Women have had a connection to the military throughout history but scholars generally explore this relationship only during times of war. These works create a historical narrative of how women and gender have figured into militarism both prior to and following the gender integration of various parts of the military. Before the twentieth century women in the United States were primarily associated with the military only in a tangential capacity such as a wife, mother, or camp follower. However rarely, there is

² Birrell and Theberge “Ideological Control of Women in Sport,” 341.

anecdotal evidence of women fighting in battle either in place of their husbands or by dressing as men.

Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century women's relationship with the military slowly evolved from an ancillary role to an essential one. Historical overviews like Cynthia Enloe's *Does Khaki Become You* and Linda Grant DePauw's *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* explore this history while works like Joshua Goldstein's *War and Gender*, Lois Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin's *The Women and War Reader*, and Nicole Dombrowski's *Women and War in the Twentieth Century* focus more broadly on women and war. Most of the scholarship focuses on times of war since it is during such times that the connection between women, gender and the military seems to be most important.

In *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* Margaret Higonnet, et al. critique the general structure of these works, arguing that when historians discuss women on the home front they tend either to conflate all women under combined statistics and label them as a social problem, or to characterize the women who filled men's prewar roles as interesting but temporary anomalies. Higonnet reports that the two world wars are generally characterized as watershed moments for women; the focus centered on women's experiences and the impact of the war on their lives. *Behind the Lines* also challenges the assertion that the two world wars were entirely male affairs by detailing the various roles women played in the military, the medical corps, resistance movements and industry. These historians conclude that there were major differences in the status of women and men even if the activity in which they engaged was the same. While wartime may have "impelled women out of the domestic sphere," they write, "they nonetheless tended to remain in subordinate relationships to men, who continued to dominate the labor market and monopolize political power."³

³ Higonnet, et. al. *Behind the Lines*, 3.

Higonnet, et al call for a new historical perspective on studying women in wartime, one which emphasizes gender relations and gender systems. They propose a theoretical stance which asserts that “social differences between women and men are produced by systems of gender that construct and differentiate male and female activities and identities in accord with but not actually determined by biological sex.”⁴ They argue that this method avoids characterizing women’s experiences as unique and isolated. The authors predict that by examining femininity as a part of a system that also defines masculinity, women’s history will move from the margins and into the center of historical study. According to Joan Scott it is especially important to rewrite history in this way and not create a separate women’s history because this tends to reproduce the idea that women belong in a separate category. Scott cautions that a separate women’s history legitimizes the existing “lines of sexual differences and the inequality associated with them.”⁵

Higonnet’s theoretical stance is similar to the concept of gender order employed by Michael Messner and Don Sabo to examine gender and sport.⁶ They purport that the use of the concept of gender order is a useful theoretical framework to “examine the meaning of sport and its shifting relation to the wider array of systems of domination that comprise the modern political economy”⁷ because it is a more inclusive conceptualization of the sport/gender relationship that takes the historical dynamic of structural constraint and human agency as its center.⁸ They contend that gender is better

⁴ Higonnet, et. al. *Behind the Lines*, 3-4.

⁵ Scott, “Rewriting History” in *Behind the Lines*, 22.

⁶ See Messner & Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*.

⁷ Messner & Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, 11.

⁸ Messner & Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, 9.

conceptualized as a process rather than a “thing” people “have.” Both of these theories take Connell’s belief that gender is “a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity” as a foundation.⁹

The articles in *Behind the Lines* apply their suggested theory to the study of war arguing that it must be understood as a gendering activity that marks the gender of all members of a society whether they fight or not. During total war, the discourse of militarism, with its stress on “masculine” qualities, permeates the entire society, touching both women and men.¹⁰ This discourse relies upon preexisting definitions of gender at the same time that it restructures gender relations, both during and after the war. Within this system, female weakness and dependency is almost always presented as “natural,” as is men’s role to protect and defend women. These ideas appear valid as long as both roles of “protected” and “defender” remain stable but that stability was disrupted during the two world wars. Historian Kimberley Jensen argues that even if only for the duration of the First World War, the country saw women as defending the homefront and challenging the traditional identification of men as the protector.¹¹

Certainly women entering West Point would disrupt these tropes as well. The deconstruction and reconstruction of gender during the two world wars provides a valuable framework for discussing women’s relationship with the military and war. Joan Scott furthers this project by adding that questions about the representation of gender difference can link women’s history with political history, thus allowing historians to

⁹ Connell, *Gender and Power*, 98-99.

¹⁰ Higonnet, et.al. *Behind the Lines*, 4.

¹¹ See Higonnet, et al.’s *Behind the Lines*; Kimberly Jensen’s *Mobilizing Minerva*; Susan Hartmann’s *The Home Front and Beyond* for discussions on women’s limited role during the First World War.

maintain a perspective that makes women both visible as historical actors and as subjects of the narrative.¹²

It is important, however, to do more than simply acknowledge these women as historical actors in sport and women's history. Patricia Vertinsky calls for seeking a "new understanding of the historical relationship between sport and the social construction of gender by examining gender as a dynamic, relational process through which unequal power relations between women and men have been continually constructed and contested."¹³ This study seeks to examine gender as the kind of process that Vertinsky, Messner and Sabo, and Higonnet, et.al. discuss. This approach allows the Academy's decisions to be discussed in a new light since its arguments were supposedly based solely on physiological differences between men and women.

In *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* Leisa Meyer challenges the traditional narratives surrounding the Second World War by situating it in a discussion of gender systems. Meyer examines the Women's Army Corps (WAC) as a way to evaluate the debates about what were the proper roles for women and men during wartime. Beginning in 1942, over 150,000 women would serve in what initially was the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps before becoming an official part of the Department of the Army as the Women's Army Corps. Meyer argues that present-day debates on women's roles in the military have their roots in the World War II era, concluding that in both periods female victimization and agency are used as arguments against women's full integration into the military.

An important element which Meyer examines in the process by which women were accepted into the "masculine" institution of the Army was the construction of a new category, that of the "female soldier." Competing meanings of gender, race and sexuality

¹² Scott, "Rewriting History," 21-31.

¹³ Vertinsky, "Gender Relations, Women's History and Sport History," 23.

created and continually constructed the female soldier. This concept provides a good model for understanding the same process for the Academies by asking how the female cadet was constructed by these competing meanings.

Meyer argues that prior to World War II the categories of “woman” and “soldier” were seemingly mutually exclusive. Military service was a critical marker of masculinity, creating a male soldier and a female “other.” Women’s participation in the military was possible only if they became sexless, and thus the female soldier was an impossibility. Opponents of the WAC argued that if women remained unchanged in such a completely masculine environment then they could not possibly succeed as soldiers. Those women who were successful were thought to have been masculinized since the only way to succeed would be to lay aside their femininity and act like men. The difficulty of reconciling the categories of woman and soldier has meant that historians of both the military and women have often ignored the subject of women in the military. In the interstices between these various fields there is a significant gap that I hope my research on women at West Point will fill.

Meyer also explores the congressional debates and the rhetoric surrounding the creation of the WAC. On the surface, as is often the case, this rhetoric focused on the woman-soldier dichotomy. In actuality, the debate was truly about the deep and profound concerns generated by the militarization of women for war. Especially troubling were the “potential defeminization of women and the emasculation of men, with all that might mean.”¹⁴ Various congressmen argued that it would be humiliating to have women defending the nation and doing the duty of men. Meyer argues this rhetoric demonstrated the ways in which female military service threatened both women’s status as “protected,” men’s as “protectors,” and the gender, racial and sexual systems based on this duality. Women leaving their families and their domestic responsibilities for the

¹⁴ Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 13.

military epitomized the contradictions between the traditional duties of women as wives and mothers and the new opportunities available through the mobilization for war.

Also vital to the understanding of gender is the role that sexuality as well as issues of masculinity and femininity play in it. One of Leisa Meyer's greatest contributions to the scholarship is her in-depth examination of sexuality and the role it played in the construction of femininity and masculinity beginning in the Second World War. Meyer argues that if women maintained their femininity, they were viewed as incompetent soldiers; and if they succeeded as soldiers, they must have lost or rejected their femininity and become mannish which was culturally equated with lesbianism. Conversely, those female soldiers who highlighted their femininity were labeled as promiscuous. Susan Hartmann agrees arguing that the public assumed that women's military contributions could only occur in the form of sexual favors.¹⁵ The public feared that female soldiers would interact sexually with male soldiers if integrated, and that if segregated, female soldiers would interact sexually with each other.

The public and the military also attempted to create a designated place for women that would not disrupt the traditional gender roles and definitions of femininity and masculinity. If soldiering was a masculine activity the fear was that women who took up military service in the Army would lose their femininity and adopt male characteristics, appearance and power. Meyer argues that this fear of masculinization was accompanied by a fear that women would also adopt a more aggressive masculine sexuality; if women behaved like men, they might also misbehave like men. Opponents of women in the Army also alleged that the WAC was comprised of homosexuals, the reasoning being that either the service attracted women who were 'sexually deviant' or that their service in the Army would make them that way. Supposedly, military service would masculinize

¹⁵ Helped by a slander campaign against the WAC and the distribution of birth control, the public believed the Army was luring in women as prostitutes.

women and cause them to engage in promiscuous heterosexual activity like men or turn into “men” who would seek women for sexual activity.

During World War II the public perception of military women as lesbians was related to the idea that women entering military service had the potential to be lesbians because a “real woman” would not want to be a soldier at all. This is similar to Birrell and Theberge’s argument that by “discrediting all women in sport as lesbians, men can rest assured that their territory is not being invaded by ‘real’ women.”¹⁶ By insinuating that “real” women would not want to be soldiers and thus labeling military women as lesbians or hypersexual the military sought to protect its male preserve. These characterizations might also be used to keep the number of women in the military at a minimum and limit the amount of female solidarity with which women would be comfortable. It will be important to investigate issues of sexuality as well since the lesbian stereotype is being used to keep women out of the military just as it is used to keep women out of sport and other physical activities.

Sport programs for women appeared first during World War II and then primarily as a means to enhance the heterosexual appeal of the women.¹⁷ Wakefield argues that the military used sport to show that the women were ‘wholesome’ and not lesbians.¹⁸ This was a tricky proposition since the prevailing rumor about women in the military during World War II was that they were all manlike lesbians. Service women who could play sports with skill fit the stereotype that assumed lesbians were ultra-athletic and the

¹⁶ Birrell and Theberge, “Ideological Control of Women in Sport,” 353.

¹⁷ The physical training program for women was initially created to increase their strength, especially in the upper body. Later, upon the request of WAC company commanders, the physical training program focused on a more entertaining sports and recreation program including volleyball, archery, basketball, bowling, tennis, table tennis, badminton, and softball. Football and baseball were forbidden for women. Women would compete within their units as well as against women serving in different units or different branches of the military.

¹⁸ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 104.

military wanted to avoid this. However, it also wanted to keep women fit and occupied so it continued to promote a sports program for them while risking further negative publicity. The military tried to bolster the wholesome image by restricting the activities and sports women were allowed to play, thus reinforcing gender stereotypes. Wakefield argues that the message sent was that no matter how athletic a woman was she could never be as strong as the weakest male in the military. This seems to be a constant tightrope that women in both the military and sport have to walk.

Susan Cahn's *Coming on Strong* is an important work in sport history that can be applied to the military and this study.¹⁹ Cahn explores how gender and sexuality have been culturally constructed throughout the twentieth century in the realm of sport and has many similarities to this study on women in the Academy. Cahn approaches women in sport as having crossed into a male realm, which is the same for women entering into the Academy. She illustrates how both critics and advocates articulated beliefs about femininity, the female body, and the meaning of womanhood. Many of the controversies over fundamental questions about the content and definition of American women and manhood that Cahn examines are the same for sport and the military. For example, the fear that women entering sport and engaging in a traditionally male activity would become manly, or that women would feminize sport, is the same fear with which women entering the military had to contend. Cahn also examines the contradictory relationship between athleticism and womanhood which is similar to Meyer's discussion of the contradictory relationship between soldiering and womanhood.

Physicality

As more women see the military as a viable career choice it is increasingly important to historicize the relationship between women and the military to examine why

¹⁹ Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

such hostility towards servicewomen still exists. Many of the arguments frequently used to keep women out of the military, the academies, and combat are based in deep-seated cultural beliefs about the capabilities of men and women. One of the most passionate and persistent arguments used against women in the military has been and continues to be based on female physicality. Physicality was a primary argument against admitting women into the academies and continues to be used to block women's involvement in combat. While women are now more or less an accepted part of the military, their involvement in combat is still contested. Until January 24, 2013 women were barred from serving in combat and special operations units like the Army's Special Forces and the Navy's SEALs. There were officially no American female combat soldiers but in Iraq and Afghanistan some women are "attached" but not "assigned" to direct ground combat units below brigade level yet they are still exposed to danger. Much of the scholarship regarding women in the military focuses on the debate over their role in combat.

Erin Solaro makes a case for women in combat in *Women in the Line of Fire*.²⁰ She argues that the U.S. Army can no longer fight without women and that women are fighting well and justifying their presence. The purpose of her research is to debunk the many long-standing beliefs generally used to justify excluding women from combat and concludes that all remaining restrictions on their full participation in the military should be dropped. Solaro concedes that there are physical differences between men and women yet points out that only some of those differences might have actual military significance. Women's generally smaller stature, lower weight and higher body fat levels might be relevant but other differences are practically meaningless and many of those differences are culturally imposed. She contends that the reason physicality is so contentious in the

²⁰ Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire: What You Should Know About Women in the Military*. Emeryville: Seal Publishing, 2006.

combat debate is that it is predicated upon the military's assumptions about weight and body-fat levels of physically active women.

Solaro also compares the integration of blacks into the Army to that of women. She contends that racist cultural beliefs held that blacks were unintelligent but could be taught in the military. Sexist cultural beliefs held that women were not as physically competent as men but the military believed that women could not be taught by refusing to consider that women's physical weakness might be culturally imposed rather than a natural 'fact'. Consequently, gender was a bigger obstacle to overcome than race since all men were considered physically competent regardless of race. Solaro concludes that the military, as well as society, perceives differences between the sexes to be more important and more immutable, especially with regard to aggression and strength than differences between the races.

Solaro often responds directly to Martin van Creveld, perhaps the most outspoken military historian against women's combat involvement as these scholars tend to represent the two extremes of the combat argument. In *Men, Women, & War* van Creveld makes it clear that he does not believe that women belong in the military at all. The "feminization" of the military, he insists, has caused damage both fiscally and to the power of the fighting force. He continues that he also does not need to prove that women are, on average, not as fit for war as men since "considering the tremendous demands of war and women's relative weakness and vulnerability is, or ought to be, self-evident."²¹ Instead, Van Creveld's purpose is to dispel what he calls the "great illusion" of women in the military. He argues that "the influx of women into the military, far from representing some world-historical step in women's unstoppable march towards liberation, is both symptom and cause of the decline of the military in question."²²

²¹ van Creveld, *Men, Women, & War*, 10.

²² Ibid.

While van Creveld contends women should not be in the military, Jeff M. Tuten uses physicality to argue against women in combat specifically. In “The Argument Against Female Combatants,” he argues that the end of the draft and the growth of the women’s rights movement changed the roles and level of participation of women in the military. His argument is framed around military effectiveness and the desire to win wars, rather than around issues of social justice. He contends that women are physically (upper-body weakness, relative lack of stamina, endurance, speed, and coordination), psychologically (relative lack of aggressiveness, lack of the urge to kill, and lack of evidence that women could withstand the fear and stress of actual battlefield combat); and socially inadequate for combat (the damage that the presence of women in combat could do to male bonding, the urge for men in combat to create a kind of masculine warrior ethic). Tuten bases his argument on the assumption that the infantry wins wars and emphasizes the physical nature of combat and importance of close-combat fighting. He also assumes that historically women’s presence in combat has been negligible and when having occurred, wholly ineffective. Tuten concludes that the inclusion of women in combat roles in the military “could spell disaster for our national security.”

Countering Tuten is Mady Segal in “The Argument For Female Combatants” who responds and adds a number of other points to the debate.²³ She addresses the physiological argument by arguing that all women are not weaker than all men, that males have emotional cycles comparable to the menstrual cycle, that not all women get pregnant or have child-care problems, and that much of modern warfare is technological and not based on infantry hand-to-hand combat.

An additional counterargument to the physicality issue is that if the trend toward increased participation of young girls in sports continues, women will become more

²³ Segal, “The Argument For Female Combatants” in *Female Soldiers-Combatants or Noncombatants?: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 267-290.

physically fit and able to handle the physical demands of combat. This is especially true if girls and women continue to move into sports previously defined as for men only, such as boxing, wrestling, and weight lifting. Segal continues that sex differences in physical performances have already been reduced among trained athletes, pointing out that female Olympians have improved at a faster rate than men in the same sports. She contends that this demonstrates that performance differences are affected by sex role socialization and physical training and not just innate differences. Segal contends that as changes occur in which activities are socially defined as appropriate for girls and women the physical performance gap between men and women will narrow further.

Scholars also occasionally use sport as an example of physicality with which to support one side of the debate over women in the military and in combat specifically. For example, in “Women in Combat” Stephan Maninger uses sport to argue that women are biologically disadvantaged in terms of strength and endurance, injuries and deployability and that combat is beyond the capabilities of women.²⁴ He continues that allowing women into all areas of the military would result in force degradation and a general lowering of standards to the point where “modern militaries largely stand to forfeit their sustained deployability and war fighting capabilities.”²⁵

To support this argument, Maninger uses gender-segregated sports teams. He argues that it is “the relative lack of physical strength as well as the injury-prone constitution of the female body” that keeps women and men from playing sports together.²⁶ He continues by pointing out there are some sports like football, rugby or

²⁴ Maninger, “Women in Combat,” 11. Maninger considers women undeployable because of their ability to have children and women would require special health and hygiene during combat operations. He also argues that men can be soldiers longer before reaching their peak.

²⁵ Maninger, “Women in Combat,” 13.

²⁶ Ibid.

basketball that women avoid almost entirely at the professional level and that combat is more competitive, risky and non-compromising than those sports. He uses this example to criticize those who argue that women are physically up to the task in combat or that they do not need to be.

Maringer also uses sport to dispute the idea of creating different standards for men and women, arguing that if the Olympics have men's events and women's events then the military should also be able to have different standards for age, sex and qualifiers for particular jobs like combat. He refutes this idea by arguing that such an approach is "unhistorical" as it does not adequately consider the realities associated with combat and that future military opponents are "less likely to make allowance for the physical disadvantage of women vis a vis men in the way the International Olympic Committee does" and view combat as a full-contact team event.

Scholars have written very little on the connection between the modern military and sport,²⁷ although Wanda Wakefield is one of the few to have investigated this in *Playing to Win*. Wakefield explains how and why sports became a critical part of training and entertainment for the American military, describing the development of military sport from the Spanish-American War through to the end of World War II. She uses the military's sports program as a means of exploring issues such as power, masculinity, and race as they were expressed and reinforced through athletic competitions. She also shows how military sport was used to further national interests, arguing that sports metaphors were used to masculinize the military and maintain morale while at the same time helping to maintain patriotism and gender identity. The military also used sport to reduce racial and sexual tension. Wakefield concludes that the size and

²⁷ Baseball and World War II is the only topic that several scholars have investigated with most focusing primarily on the impact of the war on Major League Baseball and its players but fail to make the larger connection between baseball and the American military.

scope of the military's efforts to draw all soldiers and sailors into sports shows the extent to which competitive athletics have become an important part of fighting wars.

Historically, women's involvement in sport has been limited by fears that such involvement would threaten their health, femininity and reproductive capabilities. Patricia Vertinsky addresses these concerns in *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, an examination of how nineteenth-century beliefs based on biological differences between men and women and the unchangeable nature of women's fed into ideas about their perceived physical inferiority. Her work on fears over women's reproductive capabilities and the belief that women needed to be protected as potential mothers is very much like late twentieth-century notions about women in the military. In both cases, scientific knowledge, medical beliefs and social perceptions interacted to affect views concerning what kinds and amounts of physical activity were most appropriate for girls and women. West Point conducted similar scientific studies and used these as the basis for many of their policies governing the integration of women.

These arguments kept women out of sport or limited their role at the end of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century. The field of sport history has explored these fears and arguments but while such objections lessened over time with regard to women in sport, they are still used today to discourage women from entering the military and that is a topic which scholars have yet to explore.

As Ann Hall explains, "female bodies have always been central to feminism but sporting bodies have not...nor have feminists always seen the relevance of physicality."²⁸ Yet physicality plays a role in the construction of unequal relationships between dominant and subordinate groups and their persistence over time. This project will speak to that role as much of it is concerned with a soldier's athleticism and physicality. I investigate how and why physicality was so important after integration.

²⁸ Hall, *Feminism and Sporting Bodies*, 49.

Once, merely attending the academy was enough to make a cadet a great leader; after integration the rhetoric changed to emphasize having superior physicality as the mark of a great leader. Thus during the integration process physicality became one of the most significant factors in the construction of gender.

Even though the relationship between women, sport, and the military has not been heavily studied, I believe it is vital to investigate the role of athletics in the process of integrating West Point. The study of athletics allowed me to ask why certain sports like women's basketball and cheerleading were adopted first and how they were used to promote certain images of the female cadet at West Point. Were women generally accepted more readily in athletics than in other areas of Academy life like the military program? Why? Was there a difference in Academy media coverage of women's athletics versus their military achievements?

This study demonstrates that ideas about physicality and sport played an important role in the discussion about women in the military, in the cultural construction of the female soldier and that physicality was passionately contested in every instance of women's integration into various parts of the military. It can help us to understand the cultural role that physicality and physical tests have played as well as address the question of why different physical performance standards for men and women have been and continue to be so controversial.

Liberal Equality

Cyclical patterns are common in history and as women were afforded more equality during times of war there was a desire on the part of the nation to return to the "normal" political and domestic arrangements that predated the wars. Jensen argues that during World War I women used their activities as physicians, nurses and women-at-arms to strengthen their civic identity through service to the state and built on this strengthened civic identity to mount further claims to full female citizenship and equality

during the war.²⁹ Yet women would lose much of this identity after the war when, as Betty Friedan writes, “within fifteen years of the end of World War II the realities and the perceptions of woman’s place had reverted to a norm closer to that of the Victorian period than to that of the early twentieth century.”³⁰

Women had been fighting for equal rights and access to education for over one hundred years before they were admitted into the military academies. Education has long been viewed as a primary way to advance one’s power and status and as such the topic of coeducation has always been one which made all-male institutions uncomfortable. Women entering into previously all-male institutions of higher education encountered many of the same issues as women entering into the previously all-male academies. They were rarely welcomed and often encountered significant problems once they were on campus. In her study *In the Company of Educated Women* Barbara Solomon argues that women were merely tolerated on coeducational campuses where they found barriers to their full participation and development and had to engage in complicated maneuvering once admitted. This held true for the first women to enter West Point as well. Male cadets tolerated them because they had to but they put up significant barriers and were often hostile to women’s full participation in cadet life and development.

Through her examination of women in higher education from the colonial period to the mid-twentieth century Solomon traces the various moves women made into higher education and notes the social forces that often precipitated or accompanied these moves. In *Women at Cornell*, Charlotte Conable looks at the social forces of the mid-nineteenth century that created the impetus for women to enter into Cornell University, describing the situation surrounding the initial decision to admit women as one of “social reform and

²⁹ Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva*, 165.

³⁰ Tobias, *Faces of Feminism*, 60.

militant feminism”.³¹ This is similar to the climate at the time that the decision to allow women into the academies was taken and in both instances there were intense debates: about the purpose of female education in the nineteenth century and about educating and training women for a role in the military in the twentieth.

Solomon stressed that women’s “education evoked opposition” and thus there was heavy resistance to giving them access to higher education.³² She argues that throughout the different historical periods, resistance often came from the students’ own families but also significantly from society since educated women challenged expectations for female roles. This foreshadowed much of the same resistance that women entering into the military and the academies had to face, primarily from the close knit society of the military and society at large, both of which balked at women taking the “male” role of soldier.

A primary focus of the women’s liberation movement and second wave feminism was to correct these “role equity” issues through legislative means. The belief was that all people, at least as far as government was concerned, ought to be treated the same.³³ Within the context of second wave feminism role equity issues did not involve any change in women’s nature or social roles but in their equal access and equal opportunity. As Shelia Tobias explains, “role equity issues, then, as feminists pursued them and as a majority of Americans perceive them, ask for and expect equal treatment for women without challenging the notion that men and women are different.”³⁴ Examining West Point’s gender integration during this time period through this liberal feminist lens shows the strengths as well as the limitations of second wave feminism.

³¹ Conable, Charlotte. *Women at Cornell*. See also Dorothy Gies McGuigan’s *A Dangerous Experiment: 100 Years of Women at the University of Michigan*.

³² Solomon, Barbara, *In the Company of Educated Women*, xviii.

³³ Tobias, *Faces of Feminism*, 93.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Feminists' views of the military often been divided, especially during the 1970's when much of the debate was about whether women should be part of the peacetime military at all. The Vietnam War also deepened the feminist understandings of the "mutually reinforcing relationship between militarism and racism/sexism" since the armed forces used racist and sexist slurs to motivate soldiers and rewarded them with the privilege of sexual access to Vietnamese women.³⁵ On one hand feminists supported women's right for equal career opportunities in the military and the benefits and privileges that it brought. However there had always generally been a long antiwar, antimilitary tradition among women activists. Meyer's study addresses these issues. She argues that feminist participation is often limited due to the assumption that the military is too irredeemably male and patriarchal or that it is not an appropriate venue for fighting for equal rights. For example, during World War II feminists did not argue in favor of women's right to participate fully in the military as women. Instead they "defended women's military service as a temporary aberration that would end with the war when women would be discharged and return to their respective homes and families."³⁶ Erin Solaro also paints all feminists broadly as having "allied themselves uncritically with whatever peace and protest movements that came along, usually emphasizing women's status as victims" and that most feminist publications were antimilitary.³⁷ While feminists were against women's participation in the military, antifeminists believed that women's contribution to the common defense should be limited to raising strong sons who would serve. Meyer continues that while it might be difficult to imagine a military that has an equal place for men and women, or a military that reflects both masculine and feminine values, it is still important to study the military and not to ignore an institution

³⁵ Baxandall & Gordon, *Dear Sisters*, 124.

³⁶ Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 57.

³⁷ Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire*, 134.

through which “stratified citizenry, based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, is constructed.”³⁸ She calls, further, for scholars to challenge the current limitations on women’s access to power by continuing to historicize and understand the discourse about service women and their status and role within the larger society.

In *Feminist Perspectives on Women Warriors*, Francine D’Amico examines how various types of feminists approach the issue of women warriors; in important respects these are similar to the ways in which they approach sport. She argues that antifeminists view the image of the female soldier as unnatural. They believe that women’s increased participation in the military will destroy the family, civil society, and military efficiency. D’Amico also assumes an inherent and natural gender difference when she argues that radical feminists see the warrior woman as representing women’s potential for power and “as lingering evidence of an ancient matriarchy or woman-centered and woman-governed society.”³⁹ Embracing the idea of female solidarity and advocating a separatist philosophy of empowerment they also see the military as necessary for “liberating and defending women from patriarchy.”⁴⁰ Instead of maintaining the current gender hierarchy as antifeminists would prefer, radical feminists would prefer to either reverse the gender hierarchy or disengage from it through separation.

According to D’Amico, liberal, or equal rights feminists, invoke the image of the warrior woman as evidence of women’s equality with men in the sense that women as well as men can be warriors. By assuming social roles usually ascribed to men, like that of the warrior, they argue that women may earn equality. In this view the military furthers equality which is defined as women being the same as men. Some liberal feminists also argue that women’s inclusion in the armed forces will gradually help to

³⁸ Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 183.

³⁹ D’Amico, “Feminist Perspectives on Women Warriors,” 120.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

transform it into a less patriarchal and more democratic institution as well as potentially providing economic and political benefits for women.

Critical feminists view the image of women warriors as promoting masculine values and this is counter to their goal of “redefining gender-based social values and hierarchical power structures.”⁴¹ According to critical feminists, in seeking to take on the woman warrior role, women may be manipulated into being militarized yet not empowered. The needs of the military institutions, not the needs of women, determine the latter’s role in the armed forces, and their participation is likely to reinforce rather than undermine its gendered structure. Because the military as an institution is supportive of the larger society, this means that women warriors ultimately help to reproduce its racist, sexist, and heterosexist patterns.

Contrary to the liberal feminist argument of equality, a critical feminist perspective “sees the expanded military participation of women as a symptom of the militarization of society, not as evidence of women’s achievement of equality.”⁴² In addition while some women may benefit from military service, women’s increasing presence does not change the fact that the military is fundamentally patriarchal in nature. According to D’Amico if anything, the increasing presence of women helps legitimize the institution by helping it to appear to be egalitarian and democratic.

D’Amico also explains that critical feminists argue that a woman’s sexuality, no matter her sexual orientation, becomes a means of controlling her within the military institution. Because of this a military career can hardly be considered as a way for women to become empowered. D’Amico concludes by pointing out that rather than trying to make women equal within the military institution, critical feminists would prefer to dismantle the structure of the military institution.

⁴¹ D’Amico, “Feminist Perspectives on Women Warriors,” 120.

⁴² D’Amico, “Feminist Perspectives on Women Warriors,” 122.

This work will utilize two of the themes that are central to feminist cultural studies: that sport is a realm for the production of an ideology of masculinity and of male power, and that ideas about physicality, sexuality, and the body are central to defining gender relations.⁴³ A critical approach allows for an investigation of power and the reproduction of, resistance to, and transformation of gender through physicality and sport at the military academy.⁴⁴ These themes will also allow for a more detailed analysis of the place of physicality in that process.

Victories in legislation and enforcement came quickly for second wave feminist activists during the late 1960s to the mid-1970s and brought some measure of liberal equality to women. Those specifically relating to the military began in 1972 when New York Senator Jacob Javits first brought the issue of women in the academies before the Armed Services Committee when the United States Naval Academy rejected his nominee Barbara J. Brimmer solely on the basis of her being a woman. William Hathaway cosponsored an amendment to open the academies to women, which the Senate passed, but the House Armed Services Committee struck the amendment from the larger bill claiming it was not germane and needed more study. That same year the Army began accepting women into ROTC on a test basis, opening up further opportunities for women.

A significant change occurred in June, 1973 with the end of the draft and the advent of the All-Volunteer Army. The Army thus began a major expansion in the numbers of women needed to help maintain its required strength. Also in 1973 Jerome R. Waldie and Don Edwards, both California Democratic House members, each filed a law suit on behalf of women who wanted to attend the naval and air force academies. These lawsuits claimed women were being deprived of equal rights in training, employment and career advancement in the military. Judge Oliver Gasch of the U.S.

⁴³ Birrell, "Feminist Theories for Sport," 67.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

District Court in Washington, D.C. upheld the military's position and rejected the law suits ruling that there was a legitimate government interest in denying women admission claiming "the preparation of young men to assume leadership roles in combat were necessary to the defense of the nation."⁴⁵

In June of 1974 all WAC officers were permanently detailed to other Army branches, except Infantry, Armor, and Field Artillery from which women were barred. They could now compete with men for the same assignments and schooling (except for schooling at the Academy), and be promoted equally with their male counterparts.⁴⁶ The unequal access to the academies was addressed for nine days between May and August, 1974 when testimony was heard before the Committee on Armed Services in the House of Representatives at the Congressional Hearings on House Resolution 9832 to "eliminate discrimination based on sex with respect to the appointment and admission of persons to the Service Academies and to insure that each admission to the service academies shall be made without regard to a candidates sex, race, color, or religious beliefs."⁴⁷

After the contentious debates in which representatives of West Point, along with all branches of the military argued against the admittance of women, the Stratton Amendment which called for women to be admitted to the service academies on the same basis as men passed the House of Representatives on May 20, 1975 with a vote of 303 to 96. The next day on May 21, 1975 West Point created a planning committee to begin preparing for the likelihood that women would be integrated. Shortly thereafter on June 6, 1975 the Hathaway Amendment, a slightly modified version of the Stratton Amendment, passed the Senate overwhelmingly by voice and on October. 7, 1975

⁴⁵ Law Suits, 1819. USMA.

⁴⁶ Meyer, *Creating G. I. Jane*, 316.

⁴⁷ Congressional Hearings on H.R. 9832. USMA.

President Gerald Ford signed the Defense Appropriate Authorization Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-106) admitting women into the nation's service academies. The following summer on July 7, 1976 one hundred and nineteen women became the first to enter the United States Military Academy as cadets.⁴⁸

With the closure of the WAC center and WAC school on December 31, 1976 basic and officer training for men and women was integrated for the general Army. The number of positions potentially open to females increased dramatically from 19,000 in 1972 to 160,800 in 1976.⁴⁹ Following in the fall of 1977 women began to train with men in the same basic training battalions in certain places⁵⁰ and in September of 1978 President Jimmy Carter signed a congressional act disestablishing the Women's Army Corps, effective October 20, 1978. WAC strength had grown from some 16,000 officers and enlisted women in 1972 to 56,841 by September 30, 1978.⁵¹

Second wave feminism helped secure a measure of liberal equality for women in the military during the 1970's. By law, military women receive equal pay for equal work since soldiers are paid by a (relatively) genderless calculation of time in service and rank.⁵² Yet even though women have a certain level of equality in the military they still faced the major barrier of being barred from combat and hence advanced positions that are selected based on combat command experience since ground combat is paramount in the Army.

⁴⁸ 81 women enter the USNA at Annapolis, Maryland, and 157 enter the USAFA at Colorado Springs, Colorado.

⁴⁹ Meyer, *Creating G. I. Jane*, 318.

⁵⁰ At Fort McClellan, Alabama; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Fort Dix, New Jersey; and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

⁵¹ Meyer, *Creating G. I. Jane*, 318.

⁵² Mitchell, "The Gender Lie," 52.

The Congressional Hearings over the issue of women in the academies is representative of the larger social debate of the time regarding women's capabilities and their rights to equal opportunities. Much of the debate centered on the 'natural' differences between men and women and how one sex was better suited to certain activities than the other. For example, much of this particular debate centered on women's unsuitableness for combat because they did not have the 'natural' physical strength that men did. Lt. Gen. William Knowlton, the Superintendent of West Point at the time of the hearings, explained that combat tends to start when everyone is fatigued and "that kind of physical strength that is required is something that is more naturally that of men than of women."⁵³ He also believed that women could not handle the physical environment of combat simply because there are "no ladies' latrines in a rice paddy." Gen. William Westmoreland added to the environment argument believing that "they're asking women to do impossible things. I don't believe women can carry a pack, live in a foxhole or go a week without taking a bath." Rep. Patricia Schroeder (R-CO), the only woman on the Armed Services Committee, called the combat argument a phony issue, insisting that the debate about the capabilities of women in combat was beside the point since "it's not like everyone from West Point immediately moves into a trench with a sleeping bag."

Officials also cautioned the male leader to be "aware of his own sexual responses and biological urges" in dealing with the female soldier since it was "common knowledge that female soldiers will use their femininity and emotions to gain special treatment from a male superior or contemporary."⁵⁴ Prior to gender integration a male cadet described another 'natural' behavior based on his belief that "the welfare of the average woman in

⁵³ Testimony from General William Knowlton, Congressional Hearings on H.R. 9832, 204.

⁵⁴ Buttolph, Dan, Memo, Report on Symposium on Management of Army Women, Sept. 2, 1975. USMA.

the Corps of Cadets will depend upon her physical looks. Good looking girls are naturally going to be treated better than a less pretty girl—basic male behavior.”⁵⁵

Another theme of the debates focused on women who wanted to join the academies or who might be successful there as not ‘normal’ women. General Lewis Hershey strongly believed women in the military were “nothing but defective men” and the Armed Forces “couldn’t be run by defective men.” When discussing how the average man would have difficulty in successfully completing the 4-year program at the academies, Lt. Gen. Clark acknowledged that there probably were a few women who were above average and could be successful, however they would not be “the typical normal, healthy American young women” whom they were looking for. A male cadet agreed claiming “women do not belong at West Point. Any woman who would even think of coming to West Point is not mentally straight. I will do my best to rid West Point of any women I encounter.”⁵⁶ This was the mentality women faced when they entered the Academy.

While feminists generally were not focused on the military at this time they still took most of the blame for women in the military. Conservative activist and organizer of Stop the ERA, Phyllis Schlafly blamed feminists for demanding the armed services accord “the same dignity to lesbians and prostitutes as to wives, to illegitimate births as to legitimate, and to abortions as to live births, and that we support immoral and antifamily practices with public funds.” She accused the armed services of deferring to feminist demands to give “preferential treatment to servicewomen who engage in immoral practices and bring their babies back to post” concluding that “the purpose of the armed services is to defend the United States of America—it is not to create a tax-funded haven

⁵⁵ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women,” 1976. USMA.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

for sexually active young men and women, nor is it to serve as a giant social welfare institution.” She believed that “the very idea of ordering women into combat jobs would send a message to the world that we have reduced the strength of our troops to the physical strength of the average female. It would be a sign to the world that we do not have enough men willing to defend America.”⁵⁷

Officials also made a distinction between the “normal” women and the “liberation” woman who demanded equality in all aspects. Major Dan Buttolph advised the administration that, based on interactions with enlisted women, the “normal female soldiers wanted to remain feminine and to receive the deference our culture renders women.”⁵⁸ He continued that the “normal female soldier is competitive but not in the same sense as the woman liberationist but rather is done with a sense of motivation which might actually spur the male soldiers into better performance.” One male cadet felt that admitting women would destroy the esprit de corps and that women were “going to intrude on one of the oldest, and, most definitely, strongest fraternities in the history of the United States” simply “to appease a bunch of fad-happy females, but in doing so it will destroy the tradition of USMA.”⁵⁹

The discussion of gender roles also indicated a larger debate occurring outside of the military regarding women entering into traditionally male arenas. Adm. Jeremiah Denton said we need women in “their more conventional God-bless-‘em-roles” and that we would “sacrifice the honor that goes with those roles as well as sacrificing our own honor” were women to be put in combat. Similarly, Jacqueline Cochran, a female WAF pilot, opposed women entering the academies on the grounds that a person receiving an

⁵⁷ Testimony from Phyllis Schlafly, Congressional Hearings on H.R. 9832, 237.

⁵⁸ Buttolph, Dan, Memo, Report on Symposium on Management of Army Women, Sept. 2, 1975. USMA.

⁵⁹ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women,” 1976. USMA.

academy education should serve for 20 to 30 years (even though the commitment is only 5 years) to justify the government's money. And since she believed "a woman's primary function in life is to get married, maintain a home, and raise a family" serving 20 to 30 years would not be reasonable for a woman. Cochran also argued that as "future mothers of this country" women have no business being in combat and if they want to, "they should be restrained" because "you don't let crazy people run around the streets. You put them in a home."⁶⁰ One male cadet commented that "a woman's role is to cater to every desire and whim of the inherently superior male. She should aspire to no higher a position than to be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen."⁶¹ According to Harold Voth, having a woman lead a man was "as absurd and destructive as when a family is headed by a domineering, aggressive woman with a weak, passive male standing several paces behind her."⁶²

Similarly to women moving into male preserves during this time the fear of losing something quintessentially male accompanied the thought of women entering in the academies. Several officials argued that women would irrevocably change the academy and inevitably erode this vital Spartan atmosphere. However, Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-MN) countered that "a point of equity is that if we are going to open up the armed services for women's opportunities, I think we will then have to open up the inner sanctum, which is the military academies, as well as the broom closets."⁶³

⁶⁰ Testimony from Jacqueline Cochran, Congressional Hearings on H.R. 9832.

⁶¹ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, "Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women," 1976. USMA.

⁶² Testimony from Harold Voth, Congressional Hearings on H.R. 9832.

⁶³ Testimony from Rep. Bill Frenzel, Congressional Hearings on H.R. 9832, 60.

West Point Scholarship

Except for Karen Dixon Vuic's *Officer, Nurse, Woman* which examines the Army Nurse Corps during the Vietnam War⁶⁴, the literature on women in the military skips from World War II to the end of the twentieth century and the Gulf War and then into the Iraq War. It is this significant gap in the literature that I envision my project beginning to fill. The literature on women in the military during the Vietnam War is sorely lacking and practically non-existent following the end of the Vietnam War until the Persian Gulf War. This is the time period that I will be focusing on with my study of the integration of women into West Point.

It is also important to begin to fill in the gap in the literature on the Vietnam Era and the Academies. The majority of books written about the Academy are not academic in nature. Most works concerning West Point or its graduates focus primarily on cadet training or on certain graduates from the Academy. The West Point bicentennial inspired several books but these are primarily popular pieces explaining the basics about Academy life.⁶⁵ Several former male graduates have also written about the "West Point way of leadership."⁶⁶

The only academic work focusing specifically on the integration of women at West Point is Lance Janda's *Stronger than Custom: West Point and the Admission of Women*.⁶⁷ Janda's purpose is to study the process of integration and the Army's efforts to

⁶⁴ Vuic argues that women could provide support service for the military, contribute to the war effort on the home front and serve as feminine symbols of what soldiers sought to protect and to which they longed to return. Vuic concludes that adding women to the Vietnam war zone complicated the historical meanings of women's sexuality in wartime and demanded new understandings of the roles that women would play.

⁶⁵ See von Hassell and Dillon's *West Point: The Bicentennial Book*, Robert Stewart's *The Corps of Cadets: A Year at West Point* ; John Grant, James Lynch and Ronald Bailey. *West Point: The First 200 Years*.

⁶⁶ See for example Larry R. Donnithorne's *The West Point Way of Leadership*.

⁶⁷ Janda, *Stronger than Custom: West Point and the Admission of Women*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002.

integrate women. He uses the integration of women at the Academy to examine in microcosm the “entire spectrum of issues raised by furthering opportunities for women in the military.” He argues that this is possible since issues in the military “dramatize in such heightened fashion the schisms that rend society as a whole” and can explain almost as much about society as a whole as they do the military in particular. This is an ambitious book that is broadly about the social change which resulted from the admission of women into the Academy. It explains the conflict which emerged between the nation’s civilian and military leadership over the role of women in the armed forces during the integration of the Academy.

Janda asks if equity has been confused with equality and if equality of opportunity is now confused with equality of achievement; whether biology, physiology, or anthropology should shape the “relentless push of American culture for absolute equality at any cost”; and whether the military is an appropriate place for “social engineering” or if society should expect the military to do anything besides win our wars. He begins to answer these questions by analyzing what happened when women entered the “warrior culture” at West Point and challenged the “monopoly men have historically held over organized, state-sanctioned warfare.” He argues that seeing the male warrior culture under the stress and strain of expanding to include women is an important step in understanding the broader cultural connection between being soldiers and being male in American society.

In “The Crucible of Duty: West Point, Women, and Social Change” in *West Point: Two Centuries and Beyond* Janda analyzes the experiences of the first class of women to enter the Academy and suggests that West Point is an agent of social change helping to shape new social mores as well as leaders of characters.⁶⁸ He contends that the ability to “shatter cultural convention in the name of duty stands among the foremost

⁶⁸ Janda, “The Crucible of Duty,” 344.

contributions made by the armed forces and West Point to American life.”⁶⁹ He illustrates this by noting that the army desegregated in 1948 long before mainstream society did so and again in 1976 by “leading the way in institutionally advancing equity and even equality for American women.” He argues that in neither case did the military promote that social change, instead fighting against it, yet the government chose the military to set new social standards because it represents the most traditional and respected institutions in the United States. He continues that whatever social norms are common in the military become “an ideal for much of American society to emulate.”

Janda contends that changes at the Academy often represent watersheds in American history and that when members of any social group graduate from West Point it is seen as a victory for the group as a whole and as a landmark event that forever changes perceptions of that group in the minds of the American people. It is seen as proof that the particular social group is “fully included in the fabric of American life in principle if not yet in fact.” Janda gives West Point a lot of credit, arguing that “the admission and successful graduation of women cadets from the U.S. Military Academy make clear that West Point is among the strongest and most resilient institutions in America, and one of the most important in leading social revolutions that fundamentally alter our society in the long run.” He concludes however that no matter the significant gains women made in the Academy, American culture retained enough ambivalence about women at military academies to make the entrance of female cadets to the Virginia Military Institute and The Citadel national news twenty years after women were already at West Point.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Janda, “The Crucible of Duty,” 345.

⁷⁰ See Phillapa Strum’s *Women in the Barracks: The VMI Case and Equal Rights* and Michael Kimmel’s “Saving the Males.”

While primarily a work about VMI and The Citadel, Michael Kimmel's "Saving the Males: The Sociological Implications of the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel" introduces the idea of women as tokens at these military institutions. He suggests that as tokens in a gendered institution, women cadets were constantly "doing gender" and publically negotiating the meanings of femininity. Kimmel argues that women cadets were "constantly negotiating sameness and difference with each other, with male cadets, with faculty and staff, and with themselves."⁷¹ Kimmel continues that when the women stressed sameness, they were seen as different and when they stressed difference, they were treated the same. Based on interviews with female cadets, Kimmel concludes that the women created four gender strategies or ways of "doing gender": emphatic sameness, strategic overcompensation, informal networks of support, and strategic deployment of gendered display.⁷² Emphatic sameness required the female cadet to downplay her gender identity as a woman in favor of being seen as a cadet. Strategic overcompensation was the belief that women had to work twice as hard to remain equal to the men. Women developed informal networks of support since the first class of women had no women mentors or role models to turn to. Finally, the strategic deployment of gendered display refers to how women negotiated their contradictory experiences of femininity. Kimmel found that female cadets would often assert traditional femininity in social situations while they downplayed it in professional ones.

In *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster* Brian Mitchell exemplifies that ambivalence, or outright disdain, towards women in the Academy. He argues that in a very short time the military academies were converted from "bastions of male chauvinism to institutions officially dedicated to the feminist principles of equality and

⁷¹ Kimmel, "Saving the Males," 505.

⁷² Ibid.

androgyny.”⁷³ He contends that women have “thoroughly feminized” the academies and now live by a double standard to account for the fact that women cannot perform with the men. Mitchell argues that wherever necessary, the academies have made allowances for “the unsuppressed girlishness of female cadets.”⁷⁴ Mitchell concludes that due to the integration of women, physical courage and discipline is no longer important at the academies and has been replaced by intellectual discipline. My study directly contradicts this premise and will show that in actuality physicality became paramount once women joined the Academy.

Anastasia Prokos and Irene Padavic’s “There Oughtta Be a Law Against Bitches: Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training” is one of the few studies to have investigated women entering into the male-dominated world of the police academy and in turn, the police force.⁷⁵ The authors argue that there is a “hidden curriculum” at the academy that teaches both female and male recruits that women do not belong and that masculinity is an essential requirement for being a successful police officer. This article investigates the creation of masculinity in police academy training as a cultural process that sustains the gender status quo and is perhaps implicated in the low representation of women on police forces in the United States. The authors also note the central tension of female police officers trying to negotiate acceptance as both police officers and women, which is comparable to the tension female soldiers must negotiate. A primary difference between the police academy and the military academies is that all police officers will have to go through the police academy while that is not true for the military academies,

⁷³ Mitchell, *Women in the Military*, 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁵ See also D.L. Pike’s “Women in police academy training: some aspects of organizational response” and M.T. Charles’s “The performance and socialization of female recruits in the Michigan State Police Training Academy.” Several studies have been conducted examining the role of women in the police force and the frequent sexual harassment they face.

however, the process by which masculinity is created and reproduced to sustain the gender status quo is the same for both institutions.

Sources

There have been few female graduates who have written their stories and only one from the Class of 1980. The most recent work by a female graduate is *Porcelain on Steel: Women of West Point's Long Gray Line* by Donna McAleer, a 1987 graduate.⁷⁶ McAleer notes that while numerous books about West Point, its history, and its graduates exists, no single book focuses exclusively on the stories of the Academy's women graduates. This is the gap that McAleer fills with her collection of contemporary biographies of fourteen female graduates.

Only three published accounts of the first four years of gender integration written by female cadets exist and only one was written by a member of the first class of women. Carol Barkalow's *In the Men's House* is the only primary account of the first integrated class at West Point.⁷⁷ Barkalow is a member of the Class of 1980 and as such gives a first-hand account of the first four years of integration as experienced by one of the 62 women who graduated in the first integrated class. As a member of the women's basketball team, she also gives an insider's perspective on the role athletics played in the acceptance of female cadets. Barkalow also details the physical training as well as the physical and sexual harassment that these women faced.

In addition to Barkalow's book two others have written their accounts of those first integrated years at West Point. Gail O'Sullivan Dwyer's *Tough as Nails* and Donna Peterson's *Dress Gray: A Woman at West Point* also detail those early years as

⁷⁶ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel: Women of West Point's Long Gray Line*. Jacksonville: Fortis Publishing, 2010.

⁷⁷ Barkalow, *In the Men's House: An Inside Account of Life in the Army by One of West Point's First Female Graduates*. New York: Berkley Books, 1992.

experienced by members of the Class of 1981 and 1982 respectively.⁷⁸ While not members of the first graduating class, Dwyer and Peterson are able to illustrate how other women at West Point perceived that class. The first class of women were set apart not only from the men but also from the other women who followed them.

I use these three accounts to illustrate certain incidents and attitudes that occurred during those first four years of integration. These accounts are not necessarily meant to be representative of every woman's experience at West Point but rather to highlight some of the problems that happened which might not be a part of the official records and reports. I also use these two accounts to "read between the lines" of the authors' words to help determine cadet and administration attitudes toward women in various situations.

Nearly all of the primary sources I examined are located within the Archives and Special Collections held at the United States Military Academy Library at West Point (USMA Library). Comprising record group 404 of the National Archives of the United States, the materials held at the Archives in the USMA Library contain the historical administrative records of the United States Military Academy from its founding in 1802 through the present. The materials held in the Archives must have been generated by the Academy in the course of official business and must be of permanent historical value. The Special Collections contain private and commercial sources not necessarily generated by the Academy. The collection includes manuscripts from graduates and non-graduates as well as published sources such as books, maps, photographs and ephemera.

With regard to the integration of women into the Academy, the Archives hold collections from the Chief of Staff and the United States Corps of Cadets (USCC). This folder contains memos regarding women's uniforms including color photos of men and women cadet uniforms as well as sketches of designs for uniforms to be worn by women

⁷⁸ Dwyer, *Tough as Nails: One Woman's Journey Through West Point*. Ashland: Hellgate Press, 2009 and Peterson, *Dress Gray: A Woman at West Point*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1990.

cadets entering USMA in the Class of 1980. These materials also contain reports from the Special Committee to Study Changes in Cadet Uniforms from July 1975 to December 1976 as well as a report on the Service Academies' Conference on Women. Many of the papers relating to the initial planning for women detail the types of discussion held in preparation for their inclusion.

Also contained within the Chief of Staff collection are background materials compiled by the West Point historian from 1973 to 1978. Included in these are papers relating to the early legal battles over keeping women out. These materials also include the Army's official position on the admission of women to USMA (prior to their integration) as well as statements made before the House Armed Services Committee.

The USCC records contain numerous folders of interest. Materials on the Department of Physical Education (DPE) were especially useful in determining what changes were made to the physical education program and physical fitness requirements as a result of integration. These papers include reports, memos and physical performance data for the classes of 1980 and 1981 and other recommendations, memos and discussions relating to the programmatic impact of integrating women. A particularly interesting report entitled "Profile of United States Military Academy Women's Physical Education Program, 1979" shed further light on the DPE and the changes it made in accommodating women. This material includes the written responses of the Classes of 1980, 1981 & 1982 to the questionnaire upon which the report is based and as such help gave voice to the cadets who were most directly involved in and affected by integration.

Also included in the USCC records are folders containing materials related to planning and organization for women cadets from 1973-77. These materials include in part, fact sheets and information papers produced by the Academy along with memos and letters. Similar to the Chief of Staff materials on this subject, these offer information on the initial planning and decision-making and are thus important for gaining an

understanding of the process by which the Academy modified its programs in anticipation of the arrival of female cadets.

There are fewer records from the women's athletics program. Information regarding women's athletic teams are contained in one folder with a second folder on Title IX. The latter contains the final report and briefing given to the Board of Visitors and the Superintendent.

Among the USCC papers there are three other reports of particular interest. A "Report on Analysis of PAR Admission Standards" conducted by the Office of the Director of Institutional Research in 1978 was helpful in gaining an understanding of the admission tests and standards that the men and women entering in the Class of 1980 encountered. Another, summarizing the "Characteristics of the Class of 1980," gives background information on those cadets entering the Academy in 1976. A final (1977) report, "Women Cadets at the United States Military Academy," offers similar information specific to women.

One source from the Archives which is especially important to my project is an expansive study on the integration of women which the Academy itself conducted, entitled Project Athena. This is a four year, multi-part "Report of the Admission of Women to the US Military Academy" authored by Major Jerome Adams from the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. The overall purpose of Project Athena was to study coeducation at West Point by analyzing its impact on cadets and on the institution. Project Athena I (2 Sept. 1977) includes information on the pre-admission phase, cadet basic training, and the initial academic year. This report provides a "comprehensive, systematic summary of the significant actions taken from the period June 1975 to June 1977 to integrate women into the U.S. Military Academy." Data on the characteristics of cadets in the Class of 1980, attrition rates, performance of cadets in academic, physical and military training, attitudes and adjustment problems of men and women to USMA are provided.

Project Athena II (1 June 1978) includes background on the rationale for expanding the role of women in the military, the methods and conceptual design employed in the study, and its results. The latter include comparisons between the Classes of 1980 and 1981 on selected measures. Project Athena II investigates the second year of coeducation, looking at these two classes and “provides a comprehensive, systematic update on an analysis of coeducation from the period June 1977 to April 1978.” Included in the report are analyses of: “characteristics of entering classes; academic, physical, and military training performance; resignation rates over time; the assignment of women to the staff and faculty; and approaches toward educational awareness on the issue.”

Project Athena III (1 June 1979) provides a “comprehensive summary of the significant actions taken from the period May 1978 to May 1979 to integrate women into the Corps of Cadets at West Point.” Adams reports on admissions, cadet basic training, the academic year, cadet field training (the second summer training), cadet advanced training (the third summer training), and ongoing programs, unresolved issues, and future problems.

Project Athena IV (1 June 1980) reports on coeducation during the 1979-1980 year. The report summarizes the analysis on the military, physical, intellectual, moral, and social development of the cadets. Post-graduation issues are also included. These reports all conclude that women were effectively integrated into the Corps of Cadets and all graduates are being prepared to lead in an Army which requires the integrated services of men and women.

Project Athena is a comprehensive study that includes nearly every aspect of integration that could possibly have been measured. It is, therefore, an invaluable source for addressing virtually any aspect of gender integration at West Point. The report also offers a wealth of statistical data against which more qualitative sources can be read.

The Special Collections department at West Point also contains material pertinent to my research. Special Collections is home to *The Pointer*, the cadet magazine, which is written by the cadets and includes works of fiction, pictures, news pieces, etc. Examining the ways in which cadets depicted and discussed women in *The Pointer* was very helpful in establishing the environment the first female cadets entered (e.g., the magazine shows women, primarily shown as homecoming queens and pinups and as early as 1959 there was a 'joke' picture of a woman in a cadet uniform). *The Pointer* also had an annual issue called the "Femmes"; all submissions in this were from women who were in some kind of relationship with a male cadet or faculty member.

The Pointer View is the post newspaper, written by staff members who are not necessarily journalists but are also not cadets and the *Howitzer* is the Academy's yearbook. I looked at both for coverage of the integration process and the amount and type of coverage women received after integration. Both sources were especially helpful with regard to athletics.

The USMA Catalogs helped to determine the differences in academic or physical requirements for male and female cadets as they detail the academic, military, and physical programs and also include information on extracurricular and supporting activities. In addition, the Catalogs outline the admissions process as well as the physical aptitude examination.

Special Collections also contains several special reports that again helped examine the process of integration. Robert Priest (1977) wrote several studies on coeducation at West Point including one on the nature of cadets' comments on the integration of women. I used this report in particular to give voice to the cadets themselves. Allan Vitters (1977) also wrote a report entitled "Women at West Point: A Case Study in Organizational and Interpersonal Change" along with one on a summer leadership study in 1979.

Other special reports include summaries of studies conducted before and during the process of integration. “USMA Project Summer Time” is one such, produced by the Department of Physical Education in 1976. The Study compares the USMA men and women on selected physical performance measures. “Project 60” is a comparison of two types of physical training programs on the performance of 16-18 year-old women and was used to determine what changes the integration of women might necessitate. “Project Body Composition” was a three-part study on the prediction of selected body composition measures of USMA academy men and women. “A Comparison of Faculty and Cadet Attitudes Toward Women” developed by the Office of the Director of Institutional Research analyzed what attitudes and biases different types of faculty members held towards female cadets. This Office also produced the report “Women at West Point: Their Performance and Adjustment.”

Research Questions and Chapter Organization

The study of West Point during the first years of gender integration is especially significant since it combines two of the most male dominated institutions in our history at a particular historical time in which gender issues are at the forefront due to the women’s movement and the military is in flux post-Vietnam and the abolition of the draft. This study will begin to fill the gap in scholarship during this time period and is an ideal topic for bringing together the multiple themes of military, sport and gender in this particular moment.

The foundation for my research questions is a statement in Public Law 94-106 which Congress signed on October 7, 1975. This included the following directive:

“the academic and other relevant standards required for appointment, admission, and training, graduation, and commissioning of female individuals shall be the same as those required for male individuals, except for those minimum essential

adjustments in such standards required because of physiological differences between male and female individuals.”⁷⁹

This means that the administration had to base changes to the program on perceived gender differences and justify them as such. Focusing on this directive allows me to investigate the role of physicality specifically. The question then is what were those changes and what can be made of those decisions? What can those decisions tell us about beliefs about women’s physicality held during that time? What was being protected or preserved as male and why? How was gender constructed by the academy and by the cadets themselves as indicated by their actions?

In focusing primarily on issues of equality and decisions made, I investigate the changes made to the programs at West Point as a result of the integration of women and examine the connection between gender and physicality that existed previously and was created at West Point by the institutions and cadets. I first examine what changes were

⁷⁹ The entire section relating to the academies is as follows:

Sec. 803 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in the administration of chapter 403 of title 10, United States Code (relating to the United States Military Academy) chapter 603 of such title (relating to the United States Naval Academy) and chapter 903 of such title (relating to the United States Air Force Academy), the secretary of the military department concerned shall take such action as may be necessary and appropriate to insure that (1) female individuals shall be eligible for appointment and admission to the service academy concerned, beginning with appointments to such academy for the class beginning in calendar year 1976 and (2) the academic and other relevant standards required for appointment, admission, and training, graduation, and commissioning of female individuals shall be the same as those required for male individuals, except for those minimum essential adjustments in such standards required because of physiological differences between male and female individuals.

(b) Title 10, United States Code, is amended as follows: (1) Sections 4342, 6954, and 9342 are amended by striking out the word “sons” wherever it appears therein and inserting in place thereof in each instance the word “children.” (2) Section 6956(d) is amended by striking out the word “men” wherever it appears therein and inserting in place thereof in each instance the word “members.”

(c) It is the sense of Congress that, subject to the provisions of subsection (a), the Secretaries of the military departments shall, under the direction of the Secretary of Defense, continue to exercise the authority granted them in chapters 403, 603 and 903 of title 10, United States Code, but such authority must be exercised within a program providing for the orderly and expeditious admission of women to the academies, consistent with the needs of the services, with the implementation of such program upon enactment of this Act.

made specifically to aspects relating to physicality in the three areas of military training, physical education, and athletics. I then investigate how these changes were interpreted and appropriated by the administration and cadets. Finally, I consider the covert ways in which female cadets were set apart from their fellow male cadets and the overall effect these issues had on the view of and experiences for female cadets during the first four years of integration.

Most, if not all, of the reports produced by the Academy are quantitative in nature. I used these reports in conjunction with other evidence to produce a more culturally critical qualitative picture of the integration of women into West Point. Combining the statistical data produced by these studies with other primary sources gave a more complete picture of integration including the cadet voice than just numbers have previously allowed for. I used this evidence to develop chapters on military training, physical education and equivalent training, athletics, and covert training. By examining gender, physicality and equality at the Academy from 1976-1980 I argue that while women were given equality in most areas, those where they were not served to create and perpetuate women as a second-class tier of cadet and soldier based not on combat and military skill and potential but rather on physical capabilities and attributes.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO WEST POINT

Following the Revolutionary War, in 1802 President Thomas Jefferson established the United States Military Academy at West Point as an institution devoted to the arts and sciences of warfare.¹ The Academy's highest organizational level is the brigade which comprises the entire Corps of Cadets. This is divided into four regiments, with three battalions in each regiment and three companies in each battalion.² The company is the level at which cadets officially identify themselves in the Corps of Cadets chain of command. There are thirty-six companies in the brigade with approximately 110 cadets per company. Each company is made up of four platoons with 25 cadets per platoon. Each platoon comprises three squads which each squad ranging from five to ten cadets. Finally, there are two teams in each squad, with two or three cadets per team.³ The 4,400 cadets are drawn primarily from congressional appointments with a quarter being drawn from the Department of the Army. Freshmen are designated as Plebes, or fourth-class cadets; sophomores are Yearlings, or third-class cadets; juniors are Cows, or second-class cadets; and seniors are Firsties, or first-class cadets.

Colonel Sylvanus Thayer, who served as Superintendent from 1817-1833, is credited with being "the father of the Military Academy" and it was he who built its academic foundation which is still called the "Thayer system." The Thayer system is based on extensive interaction between instructors and cadets and incorporates preparation, engagement, recitation, evaluation and feedback.⁴ Thayer upgraded

¹ <http://www.usma.edu/history.asp>

² Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 47.

³ Ibid.

⁴ How it is described in a 2003 R-Day Welcome powerpoint created by USMA.

academic standards, made civil engineering the foundation of the curriculum, instilled military discipline, and emphasized honorable conduct.⁵ Members of the 1970's Academic Board described the Thayer System as "conserving and inculcating attitudes which are absolutely essential for military men. The combination of prescribed mathematical and applied science courses and the formalized classroom procedures develop a respect for order, for duly constituted authority, and for rigorous attention to detail."⁶ The curriculum eventually evolved beyond a strict focus on civil engineering to include other types of engineering and following the Second World War was again revised to reflect the significant developments in science and technology and "the increasing need to understand other cultures." The Academy's academic departments are: behavioral sciences and leadership, chemistry, civil and mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and computer science, English, foreign languages, geography and environmental engineering, history, law, mathematical sciences, physics, social sciences, and systems engineering.⁷

In addition to academic development, West Point also focuses on military and physical instruction and development. The goal of the military program is to have a graduate "demonstrate proficiency in individual war fighting and small-unit leadership skills, and selected professional knowledge and become a commissioned leader of character committed to Duty, Honor, Country." The graduate will also internalize and exemplify the "warrior ethos and demonstrate self-discipline and mature judgment necessary to think and communicate clearly, decide wisely, and act decisively."⁸

⁵ <http://www.usma.edu/history.asp>

⁶ Ellis and Moore, *School for Soldiers*, 44.

⁷ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 35.

⁸ How it is described in a 2003 R-Day Welcome powerpoint created by USMA

Beginning with Cadet Basic Training in the first summer, each cadet's academic semesters and summer months involve a comprehensive program of military classroom and field training. Military training encompasses the four summer field training programs that cadets must successfully complete. Field training at Army units during the summer period is planned so cadets will apply and practice leadership at the unit level, a consideration for others, personal accountability for decisions and consequences, confidence, and interpersonal skills.⁹ In general, courses in military science and leadership cover small unit tactics and leadership.

The mission of the physical training program is "to inspire, motivate, and develop cadets, through a progressive and sequential program, to be leaders of character who are physically and mentally prepared for a career in the Army and a lifetime of fitness and well-being."¹⁰ Physical education is meant to prepare them for the rigors of service life and to be combat ready and to this end the Department of Physical Education directs classroom training supported by intercollegiate athletics, club sports, and intramurals.¹¹ Following World War I, Superintendent Douglas MacArthur made major changes in the physical fitness and intramural athletic programs in response to what he saw as the intense physical demands of modern warfare,¹² and creed of "every cadet an athlete" became an important focus. MacArthur increased the number of intercollegiate sports played at West Point from 5 to 15 and quickly turned the Army-Navy football game into a national event. He also composed and ordered engraved into the stone above the entrance to the gymnasium: "Upon the fields of friendly strife; Are sown the seeds; That, upon other fields, on other days; Will bear the fruits of victory."

⁹ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 77.

¹⁰ How it is described in a 2003 R-Day Welcome powerpoint created by USMA

¹¹ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 43.

¹² <http://www.usma.edu/history.asp>

MacArthur also formalized the Honor System which is managed by the cadets. The honor code states, “A cadet will not lie, cheat or steal nor tolerate those who do.” Cadets cannot deviate from these standards at any time, whether they are in or out of uniform¹³ and those who break the code are separated or expelled permanently. Any cadet who breaks any of the Academy rules or receives more than their allotted amount of demerits can be sanctioned with an area tour which entails walking a post for a determined number of hours. Area tours are imposed for minor offenses, like failing to make a bed, and more serious ones, such as leaving a post without authorization or missing a formation. Area tours begin with a long inspection which is followed by marching back and forth in the Central Area, carrying rifles at right or left shoulder arms. All area tours are conducted on the weekend, thus taking away what little free time a cadet might have.¹⁴

Upperclass cadets have more free time and leave than Plebes. All are granted leave for Thanksgiving and Christmas, however only the upper three classes are allowed Spring Leave. Plebes are only allowed one weekend pass per semester, but all cadets can earn Performance Passes for outstanding performance in the academic, military, or physical disciplines. Firsties earn four passes, Cows earn three and Yearlings two per semester. “While upperclass cadets can leave the Post in civilian clothes, Plebes must always leave in the appropriate seasonal uniform.”

New cadets enter West Point at the end of June on R-Day, or Reception Day. They have numerous rules to follow and are only allowed 4 responses: “Yes, sir/ma’am;” “no, sir/ma’am;” “no excuse, sir/ma’am;” “sir/ma’am I do not understand.” This ritualized system is meant to “cultivate the habit of not offering excuses which divert

¹³ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 65.

¹⁴ Cadets can usually walk off up to five hours during a Saturday and Sunday.

responsibility for one's action."¹⁵ Among other rules, new cadets must also walk at a brisk pace whenever they are near the barracks, out of doors, or not in formation. They may not speak to classmates in barracks halls or stairways or while performing duties unless they first obtain permission from an upperclass cadet in the area.

New cadets officially become Plebes on Acceptance Day when they are "accepted" into the United States Corps of Cadets. Even then there are numerous rules to follow. They are not permitted to wear civilian clothing anywhere on Post and are not allowed to date upperclass cadets. In the barracks, Plebes are mail carriers, minute callers, runners, laundry deliverers, and orderlies, in addition to performing company duties that are prescribed by their own chains of command.¹⁶ Plebes are also required daily to master certain information no later than breakfast formation. This includes: the menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; the name, branch, and unit of assignment of the officer-in-charge; all relevant front-page and sports-page news; and, "The Days." In this long-standing tradition, every fourth-class cadet must recite:

Sir/Ma'am, the days. Today is (day of the week and date). There are (number) and a butt days until Ring Weekend for the Class of ____; there are (number) and a butt days until Army defeats (home football opponent for that week) at Michie Stadium in football; there are (number) and a butt days until Army beats the hell out of Navy in football; there are (number) and a butt days until Christmas leave for the United States Corps of Cadets; there are (number) and a butt days until 500th night; there are (number) and a butt days until 100th night; there are (number) and a butt days until Yearling winter weekend; there are (number) and a butt days until spring leave for the upper three classes; there are (number) and a butt days until graduation and graduation leave for the Class of ____, Sir/Ma'am.¹⁷

There are particular rules during mess. After entering, Plebes are required to stand at "attention" behind their chairs until they are ordered to "take seats." They

¹⁵ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 18.

¹⁶ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 22.

¹⁷ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 21.

remain at attention while seated which means sitting upright, their backs straight—not touching the back of their chair—with their feet on the floor. They may not talk except in the presence of an upperclass cadet, and after they have received permission to do so. The first new cadet duty post at mess is the gunner, who when all cadets have been served, announces, “Sir/Ma’am, there are ___ servings of ___ remaining on the table.” The gunner also announces when additional supplies are on the table and cuts the dessert according to the required number of pieces. The cold beverage corporal sits at the end of the table opposite the table commandant, announces the preferred beverage for the meal, serves it, and keeps the table supplied with it and announces, “Sir/Ma’am, the new cadets at this table have performed their duties and are now prepared to eat.” A hot beverage corporal is responsible for keeping the table supplied with soup as well as tea, coffee, or hot chocolate.¹⁸

All cadets begin their first morning class promptly at 7:15. These classes include academic lessons, military instruction, and physical education. Cadets attend four morning classes before they assemble again for noon formation followed by lunch. Formations include regular uniform inspections and weekly haircut inspections. The afternoons are comprised of more classes, athletic practice (intercollegiate, club, or intramural sports), cadet extracurricular activities, barracks duties, or work assignments with different Academy administrative departments. Following dinner until when taps is played at 11:30 pm cadets study in their barracks or the library.

Each cadet is evaluated as a leader within the cadet’s academic, military, and physical performance and is measured by their performance in the duty positions to which he or she has been assigned. This score affects the cadet’s placement in military branch selection and graduation.¹⁹ Upon graduation, cadets are awarded Bachelor of

¹⁸ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 22.

¹⁹ Branch selection includes: IN infantry, AR armor; FA field artillery; AD air defense artillery; EN engineers; AV aviation; SC signal corps; MP military police; MI military

Science degrees and commissions as second lieutenants in the U.S. Army. They serve on active duty for a minimum of five years.

intelligence; AG adjutant generals corps; FI finance corps; MS medical service corps; CM chemical corps; TC transportation; OD ordnance; and QM quartermaster. Until recently, Army regulations did not allow women to serve in the infantry or armor divisions, but they were admitted into some areas of field artillery. Women also fly helicopters in combat in the Army.

CHAPTER III

MILITARY TRAINING

When Congress demanded equal treatment for women at the Academies, except for minimum essential adjustments allowed for physiological differences, they wanted men and women to receive the same training under the same standards. West Point made deliberate decisions when it came to planning and executing the integration of women into the Academy and its programs to grant this equality or not. It is important then to see how the Academy followed that directive and where equality was given and where it was withheld and question the meaning behind those decisions.

Prior to women being granted access to West Point almost the entirety of West Point's and the Army's protest was based on women in combat. Few believed that women "had what it took" to be a successful combat leader mentally, physically or emotionally. Yet, West Point elected to give the female cadets the exact same military training, including combat training, as the men. The Academy did not necessarily realize or acknowledge the enormity of giving women equal access to military training in a time when women were fighting for equal access outside of the military. Yet the fact remains that West Point gave women equality in what was, and continues to be, the most controversial area of integrated military training.

General philosophy of planning and integration

West Point based their official philosophy for integration on the precise wording of the law which allowed for only "minimal essential adjustments." Academy officials committed to making as few changes as possible to the overall training and cadet life. Officials wanted all cadets to share a common training experience. The academic program remained unchanged (women would receive the same classroom instruction and same degree upon graduation) and only minimal adjustments were made in the physical

and military training. Academy officials felt that part of the unique bond between cadets came from undergoing a common, challenging educational and military training experience. They felt an obligation to avoid a two-track system in order to preserve the “combat-oriented, Spartan flavor of the curriculum.”¹ So initially West Point made very few adjustments and insisted on a one-track system. This much publicized decision to insist on a single physical track would later come back to haunt the academy.

The first, and most comprehensive, plan entitled OPLAN 75-1 set out justifications for any potential change for every aspect of admission, training, education or graduation of cadets. OPLAN 75-1 covered every possible department and phase of training.² The Superintendent approved only those changes necessitated by physiological differences between men and women. In addition to OPLAN 75-1 the Academy undertook numerous research studies to investigate various aspects of integration initially including Project Athena, Project 211 (to assess the attitudes of cadets and faculty toward female equality) and Project 60 and 60A which cadets participated in.³ In addition to the numerous studies, several preparations occurred for the purpose of “extensive attitudinal preparation” for the cadets.⁴

¹ Commandant of Cadets, “Policy Assumptions Regarding Women,” Jan. 20, 1976. United States Military Academy Library Special Collections and Archives (hereafter called USMA).

² For example the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics was tasked with determining: the extent to which women will participate in intercollegiate athletics; any necessary facility modifications to accommodate women cadets; athletic equipment requirements for women cadets, and coordinate any necessary facility modifications with the Facilities Engineering Director. The men who reviewed the OPLAN needed their wives input who nixed the laundromats, mirrors, and sanitary napkin dispensers for women.

³ Designed by the Department of Tactics, Project 60, also called Project Summertime, was a small-scale study designed to determine if women could perform selected military training activities associated with Cadet Basic Training, the first summer training a plebe would undertake.

⁴ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 26. USMA. The Superintendent, Commandant and Dean scheduled periodic briefings to update cadets on the status of the planning and conducted a series of lectures and group presentation on human relations, women in the Army and human sexuality. Officials distributed several information packets and press releases. A

Superintendent A. J. Goodpaster described the first year of integration as “one of the most significant years in the 185-year history of the Military Academy” due to the unprecedented challenges presented to the academy between the large-scale honor violation and women.⁵ His administration adopted certain organizational strategies to attempt to adjust the Academy environment to the admittance of women. Officials claimed commitment to a “no-nonsense” approach to any instances of direct hostility by males toward women and noted that there were very few instances of “childish and irresponsible behavior.”⁶ The Academy also expanded their educational effort on the question of male and female relationships. This included discussing the expanding role of women in the Army, leadership issues which will ‘inevitably’ arise in units with both male and female cadets, and the adjustment problems which “all minorities face in integrating professional environments.”⁷ West Point committed to creating an environment to help all cadets grow and reach their potential (which did not always happen) and its leaders hoped one strategy that might begin to change “subtle patterns of discrimination” would be programs of assertiveness training for women as well as men.

The administration set the tone for the integration of women into West Point for better or for worse. After its initial vigorous and vocal opposition to women, it had some damage control to do to try to get male cadets to accept them beginning by simply saying

small contingent of cadets visited Fort McClellan and Fort Jackson and were included in certain aspects of planning such as cadet regulations changes. Officials invited several external consultants with backgrounds in the physical and behavioral sciences to USMA and USMA hosted female candidates, ROTC members, U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School cadets on visits to the Academy all in an attempt to expose male cadets to females in the military. The Office of Military Leadership designed and conducted an 8-hour workshop for the male cadets who served as training cadre in Cadet Basic Training. Officials used numerous questionnaires throughout integration to poll both men and women cadets about various topics.

⁵ Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 30, 1977. USMA.

⁶ Vitters, “Report: Attitudinal Barriers Facing Women at West Point.” USMA.

⁷ Ibid.

that they only opposed women entering the academy because of the combat issue. However, this simplified explanation could not erase what was said and how vigorously women's admittance was fought. Superintendent Sidney Berry famously said he would consider resigning if he failed to stop women from coming to West Point. After women were admitted he tried to reverse his previous statement by saying that he "decided to put that behind me and do what a good soldier does." He added, "upon re-examination, I have concluded that West Point will be strengthened by the admission of women."

In an effort to garner support for the integration of women into the Academy Superintendent Sidney Berry outlined his personal philosophy on the issue in a letter to the Academy in the December 1975 edition of the *Assembly*.⁸ He matter-of-factly declared that "women are coming to West Point." He acknowledged that from the time the bill was introduced in 1972 until the time it was passed in 1975 himself, the previous Superintendent General William Knowlton, officers, cadets as well as senior civilian and military officials in the DA publicly opposed admitting women into West Point. He justified this by arguing that USMA existed primarily to develop combat leaders and policy precludes women from serving in combat units. He continued that since the House and Senate passed the bill West Point "has its orders." The Superintendent argued that he and others had worked "positively, professionally and effectively" to prepare for the admission of women and their plan was sound.

Superintendent Berry reassured graduates that the mission remained the same: to educate and train top quality soldier-leaders for the United States Army. Trying to convince everyone that West Point would not change with the inclusion of women, Berry contended the Long Gray Line would remain a "unified, talented group of aspirant Army officers." However, this followed an earlier statement that the academies would face "a real challenge for each academy to make a success of the introduction of women without

⁸ *Assembly* December 1975 Vol. 34, No. 3. USMA.

lowering its standards.”⁹ This assumption that women could not reach current standards placed the blame for any lowering of standards on the women who had not even arrived yet.

The Superintendent described his visits to other Army bases to observe women in training where he “learned a great deal about the capabilities of women in the Army.” He found that women were capable of more than he had previously thought including “running, rappelling down cliffs, crawling under barbed wire, scaling walls, firing weapons and patrolling right along with the men.” The expectations of female physical abilities were fairly low if it surprised the Superintendent that women could run, rappel, crawl and soldier with men.

When surveyed prior to the admission of women only 27 percent of cadets felt positive about the women coming citing the same reasons that the administration had previously espoused.¹⁰ Among these were that women would lower standards in general and in the physical area specifically; that women should have their own Academy; that “equality of treatment” for men and women, while a desirable goal, would be impossible to achieve; that women would erode Corps esprit, discipline, and cohesiveness; and that women were best suited as wives and mothers, but not as Army officers.¹¹ Vitters argued that perhaps the most difficult notion for the cadets to accept was that women would cause the disappearance of a “masculine community with its own style, its own strengths, and its own uniqueness.”¹² In essence, men resented the loss of their locker room atmosphere. Prior to the admittance of women, Betty Friedan gave a lecture at

⁹ *Assembly* June 1978 Vol. 37 No 1. USMA.

¹⁰ Vitters, “Report: Attitudinal Barriers Facing Women at West Point.” USMA.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

West Point in which she told the cadets that “they had nothing to lose but their machismo.”

Eleven months prior to integration, the Academy surveyed male cadets on their attitude toward women in society, in the Army and at West Point. When asked about women at West Point cadet attitudes were overwhelmingly negative as were the comments. Cadets in every class opposed the admission of women. At this time the negative comments mirrored the arguments used by West Point itself to try to prevent women from coming. The survey found three types of extreme prejudice within the cadet comments: those threatening resignation, those indicating they would try to “run the female cadets out of the Corps,” and those indicating that women were only “good for” sexual gratification.¹³ These extreme responses represented 62 cadet comments or 2.3 percent of the Corps. The authors felt that the data probably underestimated the extent to which cadets think of women as sex objects.

When Congress signed the bill into law the Admissions Office had approximately 7000 candidates on file, 45 of whom were women.¹⁴ So few women were on file because up to that point women were not actively sought out and the admission office discouraged those who did seek out West Point. Following the passage of the law the academy tried to attract qualified applicants by mailing a letter to 18,643 high school counselors and educators informing them of the law admitting women to West Point. The Admissions Office also sent a letter to approximately 2000 women who had previously applied for ROTC scholarships during 1974 and 1975. Finally the American College Testing Program identified 2200 women who were good candidates. As a result of their efforts, 867 applicant files were started on women, 631 were nominated and

¹³ Priest, “Report: Cadet Attitudes Toward Women.” USMA. Cadets were surveyed in August of 1975, 11 months before women integrated.

¹⁴ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors, April 29, 1976, 5. USMA.

examined, 148 were offered admission, 28 declined, 1 was medically disqualified with 119 women ultimately being admitted into the first class of women¹⁵ at USMA joining 1,350 men for a total of 1,469 new cadet candidates.¹⁶

Military Training

Military training was a major area of consideration during initial planning. The original operating plan summarized the philosophy of the military training program simply as “equality.”¹⁷ Officials envisioned the military training program as “being identical for men and women with deviations from the standard equality permitted only when necessitated by physiological differences or directed by Department of the Army policy.”¹⁸ The Academy expected women to maintain the same high levels of excellence they required of the men.

¹⁵ Of the total 324 women in the first gender integrated classes at the three academies eight were black, seven cadets at West Point and one midshipman at the Naval Academy. I have not discussed the potentially critical issue of race in my analysis since so few women or men of color attended the academy during this time period but my project would be stronger by taking them into account.

¹⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 30, 1977, 1. USMA. Numbers for the Class of 1981 There were 6150 candidates nominated and examined for the Class of 1981. 534 of whom were women. Of this total, 2585 were found qualified, and 1471 (104) entered the Military Academy on 6 July. Minority cadets totaled 159. In addition, 92 former members of the Class of 1977 were readmitted as members of the Class of 1978 in accordance with the Secretary of the Army’s plan.

Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 1978, 1. USMA. Numbers for the Class of 1982 5821 candidates nominated and examined for the Class of 1982, 525 of whom were women. Of this total, 2580 were found qualified, and 1396 (125 women) entered the Military Academy on 6 July. 161 minority cadets, 12 percent.

Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1978, 1. USMA. Numbers for the Class of 1983 There were 5153 candidates nominated and examined for the Class of 1983, 477 of women were women. Of this total, 2427 were found qualified, and 1405 (130 women) entered the Military Academy on 2 July. 154 or 11 percent are minority cadets.

¹⁷ OPLAN 75-1 Annex A: Military Training, Physical Education, and Leadership Development Programs, USMA.

¹⁸ Ibid.

When asked by the Secretary of the Army to justify why the academy was giving combat training to female cadets since they still could not serve in combat units, the Superintendent's rationale was that USMA intended to "adhere as closely as possible and sensible to "one track" for all cadets and that all military training, including combat training, experienced at West Point will better prepare women to serve in the non-combat units which support the Army's combat unit."¹⁹ In other areas like physical education future career roles were used to keep women out of certain activities since it was assumed that women would not need offensive physical activities for their future in the army; now this same justification was used to include women in the one track system. The Academy held that the component of the military training program called "combat training" should include both men and women based on sound philosophical and practical reasons.²⁰ It is curious that this same "sound philosophical and practical reasons" would not apply to the physical education training as well and allow women to participate in boxing and wrestling. The Academy was willing to teach combatives to women within military training but not within physical education since boxing and wrestling were combatives unavailable to women.

The only deviation allowed was when similar skills would accomplish the "desired training objectives without requiring the woman cadet to participate in activities that might be hazardous to her health."²¹ As was apparent in the physical education planning, women's health was a concern for the academy and it wanted to protect them from participating in any activities that might be medically dangerous. The summer before integration, the Commandant evaluated the military training program and

¹⁹ Superintendent Sidney Berry to Secretary Callaway, "Memo for Record, Subject: Women Cadets at the United States Military Academy," June 10, 1975. USMA.

²⁰ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors, April 29, 1976, 8. USMA.

²¹ OPLAN 75-1, "10 July 1975 Justification Statement, Subject: Military Training." USMA.

proposed some possible modifications in the bayonet assault course, pugil training, and basic individual training including the obstacle course. The initial planning also allowed for modifications in other areas where women may either lack the upper body strength necessary to successfully complete the training or where the training may be medically dangerous.²²

Even though the Commandant thought these might be areas where modifications would be necessary, initially no changes were made until women integrated and there was clear evidence that the women could not successfully complete portions of the military training program. There was a clear one-track philosophy expressed throughout the military training. The Commandant appointed a committee consisting of both male and female officers and cadets charged with identifying areas that “potentially may be harmful to women and will recommend substitute skill training to accomplish the required training objective.”²³ He noted that he strongly believed that only in exceptional cases should military training of women cadets differ from that for male cadets and stated that he would have to be convinced of the necessity and wisdom of each modification.²⁴

Project 60

Academy officials worried about how women would perform during the initial summer military training called Cadet Basic Training (CBT). The Commandant of Cadets made it clear that “failure of all or most of the women cadets in CBT cannot be permitted.”²⁵ He felt that this type of massive failure would indicate “program

²² OPLAN 75-1, “10 July 1975 Justification Statement, Subject: Military Training.” USMA.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Commandant of Cadets, memo, “Policy Assumptions Regarding Women,” 20 Jan 1976. USMA.

mismanagement, inadequate orientation of candidates, poor screening of candidates for admission, inordinate and unsupportable levels of stress on women in CBT, or deliberate actions on the part of USMA personnel to deny equal opportunity to women.”²⁶ The Academy was aware of the importance of this initial training including women. To that end, DPE developed the study Project 60 (also officially called Project Summertime) to determine if significant differences existed between USMA cadet basic trainees and if CBT affected these differences on selected measures of arm, shoulder girdle, and leg, strength, power and power endurance, hand grip strength, or cardiovascular efficiency.²⁷

Project 60 found significant physiological performance differences between the men and women volunteers in all areas except cardiorespiratory efficiency. In fact, the training brought women up to the same cardiorespiratory efficiency as men. The study found physiological differences in upper body strength, power, power endurance and grip strength and based on these findings officials thought the training program required minimum essential adjustments to ensure success in Cadet Basic Training. Recommendations included adjustments in cardiorespiratory physical activities prior to CBT but not after when women should be able to perform those activities at the same level as men. Based on the results, officials expected CBT to put women on the same level as men with regard to running for the academic year.

This study helped to prove that women were not more susceptible to serious or disabling injury than men during training as officials feared based on their review of previous literature. Many reports relied on literature suggesting women were physically

²⁶ Commandant of Cadets, memo, “Policy Assumptions Regarding Women,” 20 Jan 1976. USMA.

²⁷ Project Summertime “Comparison of United States Military Academy Men and Women on Selected Physical Performance Measures,” 1976. USMA. The researchers asked two local high school physical educators to solicit women students 16-18 years old who had a high sense of responsibility as well as having been previously physically active to volunteer for the study. Sixty-three women volunteered to take part in Project 60.

inferior to men and, as most others did, this study relied on 58 articles about men and only 5 concerning women. It is not a surprise then that literature based primarily on men would conclude that men are better.

Following the study, the Commandant concurred that CBT programs needed minimal modification to the extent allowable under the law while still keeping in harmony with the USMA mission that had physical challenges a cornerstone of the USMA officer preparation.²⁸ He made it clear that the mission of West Point was not to produce a specific number of female graduates regardless of the standards attained and that a common experience for all cadets was a vital part of the West Point education. The result was an essentially one-track system that incorporated justifiable minimal adjustments for physiological differences between men and women.

Cadet Basic Training

The non-academic military training takes place during the summer training. Once joining West Point in the summer of 1976 the Class of '80 would first undergo summer training called Cadet Basic Training (CBT). Described by one USMA Public Affairs Office fact sheet as “the most physically and emotionally demanding part of a cadet’s four years at West Point” CBT includes military and field training in drill, bayonet, foot marches, weapons training, and bivouacs.²⁹ Physically, all new cadets received 69-hours of training in conditioning drills, formation running, obstacle courses and mass athletics.³⁰

The mission of CBT was “to indoctrinate, motivate, and equip each new cadet to be qualified to join the Corps of Cadets, and to further the leadership development of

²⁸ Commandant of Cadets, Memo, “Policy Assumptions Regarding Women,” 20 Jan 1976. USMA.

²⁹ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 45. USMA.

³⁰ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 49. USMA.

each member of the new cadet detail.”³¹ Project Athena researchers noted a lack of agreement on the overall purpose of CBT amongst the cadets. Some cadets saw the training as a means to evaluate and weed-out those new cadets who were weak. Others saw the primary purpose of the training as a way to “motivate, teach, and develop new cadets within a disciplined, military environment.”³²

The overall program of CBT remained essentially unchanged for the Class of 1976 during the first summer of integration. The only changes thought necessary initially were in areas of sanitation, hygiene and billeting.³³ Women participated in all phases of training unless there was reliable physiological research indicating that they would be physically unable to perform certain activities.

While women performed alongside the men in all phases of the physical training, certain adjustments were made to CBT for them. Command encouraged women to wear chest protectors during pugil stick training and only compete against other women.³⁴ Similar to the justifications that focused on potential breast damage, the administration seemed overly concerned with women getting hit in the chest during basic training. On reveille rifle runs officials required women to use the M-16 rifle instead of the M-14 rifle which the men continued to use.³⁵ The M-16 is two and one-half pounds lighter than the M-14 and replaced the M-14 in “recognition of upper-body strength differences between the sexes.” Officials turned rifles into a physiological issue even though the M-16 was the rifle actually used in combat at the time, not the heavier M-14 that West Point used.³⁶

³¹ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 45. USMA.

³² Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 47. USMA.

³³ OPLAN 75-1 Annex A: Military Training, Physical Education, and Leadership Development Programs. USMA.

³⁴ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 19. USMA.

³⁵ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 17. USMA.

³⁶ Ibid.

Women still used the M-14 for inspection arms though the operating rod spring was shortened to enable women (and other new male cadets upon request) to successfully pull the rod back during inspection. Officials created separate “Interval Training” for those new cadets who were unable to keep up with unit physical training.³⁷ As this program was voluntary, most chose to continue to run with their units rather than face the possible “peer sanctions” likely to be levied against anyone admitting weakness by engaging in a less demanding program.”³⁸

The women new cadets performed similarly to the male new cadets in all phases of training except for those requiring “exceptional physical stamina.”³⁹ They did, however, have a greater difficulty keeping pace with the male cadets during formation runs. By the end of CBT, over 20 percent of the women had to report to remedial PT instead of morning reveille exercise.⁴⁰ Of those women still running with their units at the end of summer close to 30 percent were unable to successfully complete the run.⁴¹ In what would be the beginning of a major problem, it became clear that the inability of some female cadets to successfully complete their physical training, especially the runs, contributed to the male perception that women did not belong at West Point and reinforced their negative views about women. When women in the first two classes were asked if the physical training in CBT was too physically demanding for women cadets 13

³⁷ Cadets are called “new cadet” during CBT. Only once they have formally been accepted into the Corps of Cadets at the end of CBT are they cadets.

³⁸ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 49. USMA.

³⁹ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 51. USMA. For example, women performed closely with men in individual weapons training with the M-16 rifle averaging a score of 45 to the men’s average score of 49.

⁴⁰ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 49. USMA. Remedial PT was held for those cadets who had medical excusals from morning training. New cadets at remedial PT were either injured, fatigued, or experiencing temporary soreness.

⁴¹ Ibid.

percent of the Class of 1980 compared to 1 percent in the Class of 1981 agreed. Sixty-eight percent of women in the Class of 1980 felt the physical training program at Camp Buckner was not too physically demanding for women cadets.⁴²

In addition to experiencing problems with the physical training program, many female cadets also had some difficulty with the physical aspects of military training. They had the most trouble completing foot marches and carrying heavy loads of weapons and field gear on tactical maneuvers. According to Project Athena 1, the performance of the new cadets at CBT illustrated that most women, as well as some men, were “physically incapable of successfully performing on the essentially one-track physical exercise program of CBT ’76.”⁴³ In recognition of this officials planned modifications to the program for CBT ’77. Beginning in the summer of 1977 all new cadets took a diagnostic test and then was assigned to a physical training group based on their ability as determined by the test.⁴⁴ Each group then exercised at a pace equal to their skill level.

In his annual report, Superintendent Goodpaster explained the three new running groups created for CBT in 1977 and stated that the change was made to give the maximum benefit to the majority of new cadets.⁴⁵ Goodpaster did not blame any of the changes on women or on physiological differences, he simply said the changes were to provide all cadets with a better challenge and enhance their overall running performances.

Traditionally cadets who did not measure up physically were separated at the end of CBT but the Commandant established a new policy stipulating that those who were

⁴² Questionnaire to Class of 1980, 1981 regarding performance in Fourth Class Physical Education Classes and CBT. USMA.

⁴³ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 145. USMA.

⁴⁴ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 67. USMA.

⁴⁵ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1978, 27. USMA.

“doing their best” would remain with the corps regardless of their physical training achievements. If a new cadet was significantly underachieving physically and unprepared for the physical programs during the academic year that person would be individually evaluated rather than automatically separated.

In one of the few instances of a consideration of the sociological aspects of integration, Major Mary Willis reported that rather than the physical areas the areas of greater concern were attitude change and the “recognition of the fact that women are different sociologically as well as physically.”⁴⁶ Willis noted that the first detail⁴⁷ of cadets appeared to be able to put aside any personal feelings about women attending the academy and act in a professional manner. The cadet cadre credited women with being neater in both their personal appearance and their rooms and also had a better ability to learn fourth class knowledge faster than the male cadets. While officials saw these as signs of women’s acceptance, one must question these “credits.” Male cadets did not give credit to women in the physical realm but in domestic ones. Appearance, good housekeeping and the ability to use ‘brains over brawn’ are traditionally feminine attributes so it is possible men felt comfortable giving credit in these areas while still protecting the physical arena.

The second detail, however, was less successful in this aspect. As more women became injured during the second half of CBT the more the male cadets in charge voiced their displeasure. One cadet interviewed stated that that between 75 and 80 percent of the male new cadets in all male squads had a negative attitude toward women at the academy. Many of those new cadets brought those views with them but Willis believed

⁴⁶ Willis, Maj. Mary. Memo for Commandant, Observations and Recommendations, Cadet Basic Training and Women’s Admissions, 13 Sept. 1976. USMA.

⁴⁷ Two details (groups) of upperclass cadets run CBT, each for a half of the summer, hence the first and second detail.

many others were “indoctrinated” after arrival.⁴⁸ For example, the new male cadets she interviewed stated “they gave little thought to the women members of the class until the detail members started telling them how unchallenging the training was because of changes made in preparation of the admission of women.”⁴⁹ The cadet cadre told the new male cadets that before the women they “ran farther and faster, marched longer distances and carried more equipment, had less supervision and were not told to take it “easy” on the new cadets.”⁵⁰ However, when asked, the male cadets said they had felt challenged and had no way of knowing whether or not what they had been told was true.

During the Lake Frederick bivouac, Willis spoke with members of the detail as well as women in the Class of 1980. She expressed disappointment that so many members of the detail just reiterated all the “old arguments why women shouldn’t be here and blatantly stated the only good women were those who could do everything the men can do.”⁵¹ Many men developed the desire for absolute equality for women in CBT and continued throughout the academic year. Men castigated women who stated that the Bayonet Assault Course was “fun” while the men described it as “challenging.” Cadet Carol Barkalow described the “intensity, the sheer physicality of human assault training” as exciting and as training the women were able to perform well.⁵² Willis reported that the cadet complaining about these women refused to listen to a plausible explanation that the women and men had actually meant the same thing but had used different words.

⁴⁸ Willis, Maj. Mary. Memo for Commandant, Subject: Observations and Recommendations, Cadet Basic Training and Women’s Admissions, 13 Sept. 1976. USMA.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 33.

This cadet was also upset that another male cadet had been told to use only three quarters of his strength when manning the women's lane on the Bayonet Assault Course saying that "if they can't take it like a man, kick 'em out."⁵³ Cadet Barkalow recalled that during bayonet training the more vicious the women appeared the more praise they received. Cadets chanted "Kill! Kill!" or, "Blood makes the grass grow!" One male cadet took notice of Barkalow's performance and said to a fellow firstie, "Damn! This one's doing it like the guys."⁵⁴ To "do it like a guy" required women to display violent and aggressive attributes traditionally ascribed to men, although it could also be argued that these traits are simply the traits of a soldier.

Major Willis concluded that women cadets had developed a "survival" attitude. Those women who did well physically were more confident while those who were injured "expressed serious doubts as to their ability to be successful because of the emphasis on physical prowess."⁵⁵ Cadet Dwyer believed that the upperclassmen were all looking at the women thinking they could not keep up. She remembered obsessing over meeting their approval to the detriment of her personal wellbeing and believed that all female cadets felt the same way, labeling this way of thinking the CBT "let me show you I deserve to be here just like you" mode.⁵⁶

Officials hoped integrated units would foster a greater level of social acceptance for the women during CBT and wanted to place them into every company and platoon but there were only enough to assign to one-third of the squads during summer training. The unfortunate result was that men who had contact with women became more negative

⁵³ Willis, Maj. Mary. Memo for Commandant, Subject: Observations and Recommendations, Cadet Basic Training and Women's Admissions, 13 Sept. 1976. USMA.

⁵⁴ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 32.

⁵⁵ Willis, Maj. Mary. Memo for Commandant, Subject: Observations and Recommendations, Cadet Basic Training and Women's Admissions, 13 Sept. 1976. USMA.

⁵⁶ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 43.

in their attitudes towards them; they “felt more victimized, more jealous, and favored a more inflexible policy of treatment.” This was generally the effect that contact with women during CBT had on male cadets. Still, the administration was pleased that “few serious incidents of overt hostility took place.”⁵⁷

The women in the Class of 1980 experienced higher levels of stress during CBT than did any other class of women, a difference that may well have been because of their pioneering role in integration.⁵⁸ When compared with the first class of women, those of the class of '81 fell out less during runs than did the women in the Class of '80 and also reported less often to remedial PT.⁵⁹

Officials once again made changes to the CBT running program prior to the third coeducational summer training, implementing a new running group design in an attempt to equalize the running training. Beginning with the Class of 1982, three running groups were designated: Black, Gold and Grey. The Black group included the fastest 25 percent of the class, the Gold group (50 percent), the next fastest, and the remaining 25 percent comprised the Grey group. Six women new cadets were grouped in the Black running group. The physical training program included more PT sessions and averaged a faster running pace than in previous years and also, as previously, women tended to have greater difficulty keeping pace with their male peers and every year had a higher fallout rate. Overall, Major Dillon argued, the Class of 1982 participated in a more intensive PT program and this may have accounted for the poorer overall performance of the women in the Class of 1982 when compared to those in the Class of 1981.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Priest, “Coeducation at West Point,” 1977. USMA.

⁵⁸ Adams, “Project Athena III,” xiv. USMA.

⁵⁹ Vitters, “Project Athena II,” 36. USMA.

⁶⁰ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1979, 88. USMA. Class of 1982, 13 women resigned during CBT, a 10.4 percent attrition rate, compared with 11.5 percent for their male classmates. These rates are noteworthy because it is the first occasion for which the attrition rate for women for a period of CBT was lower than for men. By the end of the first academic year,

Cadet Field Training

Cadet Field Training (CFT) is an 8-week training program conducted for Yearling cadets during their second summer at USMA's Camp Buckner where they receive orientations into the combat-arms and combat-support branches of the Army. CFT was meant to prepare cadets to perform in combat arms training. Even though women were forbidden from combat they were given the same training as the men during CFT. West Point gave women the same combatives military training as men yet not the same combatives physical training.

The training comprised both military and physical training including firing weapons, throwing grenades, building bridges, adjusting artillery, commanding tanks, leading patrols in a Recondo exercise, and constant physical exercise including unit runs, obstacle and confidence courses.⁶¹ Early on in the planning three areas were of concern and required more information to decide the scope and participation by women: 1) The Recondo Endurance Run, 2) protective equipment for combatives training, and 3) cumulative fatigue and endurance aspects of the ten-day Infantry/Recondo Training.⁶²

To gather more information about CFT training, eight enlisted women from Fort Jackson began CFT with the 5th Company at Camp Buckner on July 15, 1976.⁶³ Five of the eight women completed the entire CFT program with three women having to drop out due to injuries "not related to the training."⁶⁴ The women successfully completed all of

however, the normally higher attrition rate for women reasserted itself at 25 percent compared with only 22 percent for men.

⁶¹ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 53. USMA.

⁶² OPLAN 75-1 Annex A: Military Training, Physical Education, and Leadership Development Programs USMA.

⁶³ Memo for Commandant, Debriefing of Enlisted Women Concerning Cadet Field Training, Camp Buckner, Sept. 13, 1976. USMA.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the physical requirements of CFT with some requirements being difficult but none being impossible. The consensus was that CFT physical training program did not need to be altered in any way for women.

The women had some difficulty with the morning runs stemming from “running in boots with men who have a longer stride, thus requiring the women to work harder to cover the same distance in the same period of time.”⁶⁵ Officials paired the enlisted women with officers or members of the detail during the Enduro Run and felt this might be continued for the first class of women because “women need to be pushed while running.”⁶⁶

The enlisted women found the tank round “awkward” to handle but by lifting the round “in their own way” they could load the breech by themselves.⁶⁷ The women had no problems operating the 105mm Howitzer, M-60 machine gun and 50 caliber. The enlisted women were able to throw a hand grenade the required distance and had no problems driving the tank. The only difficulty came with reaching the controls on the engineer equipment. During Recondo, three of the women carried either the radio or M-60 machine gun during the extended patrolling phases and experienced no problems carrying those heavy loads.

The women stated they performed as well as the men, both mentally and physically, during the extended patrolling. They definitely felt disadvantaged on the Recondo Run but had no problems with the “slide for life.” The free climb during mountaineering did not present the difficulty anticipated by a lack of upper body strength. During the first period of hand-to-hand combat, the enlisted women were inadvertently

⁶⁵ Memo for Commandant, Debriefing of Enlisted Women Concerning Cadet Field Training, Camp Buckner, Sept. 13, 1976. USMA.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

paired with male cadets. No difficulties arose and the women indicated they received more from the class than when paired with another woman. No major modifications were made prior to the Class of 1980 entering into CFT except the decision to pair a female cadet with a male cadet on the Enduro Run.

After the Class of 1980's CFT, differences in performance appeared between the men and women cadets. In general the women performed similarly to the men in all areas of training except for those requiring a "high level of physical stamina over a period of time."⁶⁸ Physical training, though not formally evaluated, was the most difficult part of CFT for the women. Similar to CBT, many women had trouble completing the morning PT runs⁶⁹ when the "pace was faster than 8 minutes and the run crossed hilly terrain."⁷⁰ At the beginning of training the runs were over two miles at an eight minute pace. The runs progressed to a four-mile run at an 8 minute pace which 99 percent of the men and 57 percent of the women met.⁷¹ These morning training runs were a "quickly established and legitimated way for platoon leaders to inspire and lead platoons and receive members respect." Women who did not do well with the running lost credibility early on in the leadership process.

⁶⁸ Memo, "Notes on Performance of Men and Women During CFT," Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁶⁹ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 64. USMA. Reveille PT— the morning run was conducted in two distinct phases. First, all cadets within a company ran together for a prescribed distance at a given pace. (Usually, this distance was ½ the total distance of the run.) The pace varied from 7:30 minutes per mile to 8:00 minutes per mile. During the second portion of the run, an easily recognizable paceman would continue to run at the prescribed pace. Those cadets who desired to run at a faster pace were released to run ahead of the paceman. Those cadets who were unable to maintain the prescribed pace could run behind the paceman. Those running behind the paceman received credit for completing the run if they completed the remaining distance at a pace no greater than 15 seconds per mile slower than the paceman. The company chain of command monitored the progress of all members of the company with stopwatches and the courses were carefully measured.

⁷⁰ Memo, "Notes on Performance of Men and Women During CFT," Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁷¹ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 56. USMA.

Women also had difficulty on the physical training events that required upper-body strength like the vertical wall on the obstacle course. Also citing upper-body strength differences, women had difficulty on Recondo, the most physically demanding part of training that required them to carry heavy weapons and equipment. It is interesting that, once again, the group of women tested prior to the female cadets participating in training had no problems with the heavy equipment yet the female cadets reportedly did.

During certain training such as engineer training at the tactical raft site, platoon leaders tended to assign women to less physically demanding tasks such as holding bridge pins, checking for safety, or simply observing.⁷² In a few instances women assertively pitched in to assist others carry three hundred pound sections. However, the men would protectively direct other men to assume those roles. Observers believed that the men were not conscious of their actions and instinctively protective.⁷³ At armor training, officials reported some women having trouble operating the charging handle on the M2 heavy barrel machinegun. Reports noted that women also tended to withdraw during physical tasks like loading the 105-tank rounds and had difficulty loading it into the breach to activate it properly.

There was some concern that women would not be able to effectively maneuver tanks and armored personnel carriers over rough terrain but the women had no problems when driving the vehicles. There was also concern that due to the amount of pressure needed to work the brakes women would have trouble stopping the tank; once again, the women encountered no problems. Women performed well in all areas of the Field

⁷² Memo, "Notes on Performance of Men and Women During CFT," Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁷³ Adams, "Project Athena III," 122. USMA.

Artillery training and had no problems handling the ammunitions.⁷⁴ Concerns about women's voices were also unfounded since "although the voice commands were given in a higher pitch, the gun crews did not experience any problems receiving and executing the commands." Although one observer reported that "it was strange to hear a woman's voice when they served as tank commanders or tank platoon leaders."⁷⁵

The authors of Project Athena declared that women cadets generally performed well at Cadet Field Training though some had "predictable" difficulties in areas requiring upper body strength, running and stamina.⁷⁶ They were able to perform equally with men in the military skills category⁷⁷ but scored significantly lower in Recondo. The Superintendent concluded that in CFT the women of the Class of 1980 generally performed well but "their performance was comparable to the men only in the military skills aspect of the training."⁷⁸ The emphasis on only military skills training is very significant, given that the whole point of the Academy was preparing future military officers and in this women were equal to the men and the Superintendent's caveat aside, he argued that the overall success of the women indicated that no significant changes to the program should be made. Yet both officials and male cadets obsessed about women's performance in physical endurance tasks.

⁷⁴ During the Field Artillery training, men and women would rotate between one of three training areas: 1) loading and firing the howitzers, 2) forward observer to adjust the fire, and 3) operating the Fire Direction Center where the forward observer corrections were received, computed and adjustments were transmitted to the gun positions

⁷⁵ Memo, "Notes on Performance of Men and Women During CFT," Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁷⁶ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 56.

⁷⁷ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 57. USMA. Women performed as well as the men in: weapons, communications, land navigation, nbc, infantry, tcat (armor/ada), field artillery, maintenance, and engineer.

⁷⁸ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1978, 51. USMA.

In one example of women succeeding in military training, a female cadet recalled in the final phase of field training that she had led a patrol of twenty-three men in an attack on two machine-gun bunkers atop a nearby hill and was told by several members of her patrol that she had done a “super job.” She felt that “none of them seemed to resent having had a woman in command.” In addition she recalled in triumph that on her final patrol the man with whom she was paired fell asleep from exhaustion during their two-hour stay in a mosquito-ridden swamp. She wanted to tell the world, “look at me—here I am in a miserable swamp with a guy who’s sleeping, and I’m holding a rifle protecting him!”⁷⁹

One report noted that “women appeared to put-out more in training and to be more attentive to instruction” which resulted in good performance and the possibility that women learned more during training than did men.⁸⁰ However, with regard to attitudes and acceptance one observer commented “if women were weak in areas of training they were more often criticized than men [with] similar weaknesses.”⁸¹ Reports also noted that women seemed to be more emotional and likely to quickly lose control of their emotions but were also able to maintain their sense of humor much longer than the men.⁸² Even though some women had difficulty controlling their emotions they were still “quite capable of physical and mental performance.”⁸³ Many men did not know

⁷⁹ Newspaper Clipping. USMA.

⁸⁰ Memo, “Notes on Performance of Men and Women During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁸¹ Memo, “Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁸² Memo, “Notes on Performance of Men and Women During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁸³ Memo, “Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

how to treat women who cried; emotions had never before been included in official reports.

The tone the male cadre (first and second class cadets) set was paramount to women's acceptance. The male cadets in the Class of 1980 modeled their leaders' stance and when the cadre expressed hostility to women, the latter's classmates heard the message – women could not cut it. This tended to build a barrier between the males and females and left the women to fend for themselves instead of working as a team. Superintendent Goodpaster acknowledged that men's attitudes played an important role in the success of the women and that when women felt they had the support or encouragement of the men in their units, they exerted themselves to “an impressive degree.”⁸⁴ He reported further that when their male comrades showed a lack of confidence, women had more difficulty meeting all of the training requirements, a characterization that continued the construction of the women as emotional and dependent on men.

One problem that Project Athena authors noted was the open bay configuration of the barracks at Camp Buckner, which they described as “not satisfactory” but the “only feasible solution.” Rather than integrate the eighty-one women, the administration segregated them in two barracks isolated from the rest of the cadets. Cadet Barkalow remembered that exclusion from the male group was the norm except where training requirements mandated otherwise.⁸⁵ The most explicit instance of this was a result of the Academy's decision to house all the women separately during the summer, rather than expand the existing male's billets. The isolation was difficult for women on two fronts. Physically separated from the men they were denied any bonding opportunities that might result from inclusive billeting and even though they were billeted together, according to

⁸⁴ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1978, 51. USMA.

⁸⁵ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 84.

Barkalow this did not mean that they were brought closer as a group since they were still trying desperately to fit in and “fitting in meant not making too much of women’s solidarity.”⁸⁶ This is another instance of a lack of a support system for women and the concern that even the perception of one would be problematic, although Barkalow suggested that in this situation they were able to draw strength from each individual’s effort to survive.

Men and women were not housed together in barracks at Camp Buckner until the summer of 1979 with the third integrated class when arrangements included a four-person room and separate latrine for women in each platoon-sized barracks. The changes, which helped women build esprit with the men while still affording them a degree of privacy, represented a significant improvement over previous years of separate billeting and isolation from their assigned platoons.

Recondo

Recondo training was the most physically demanding and stressful part of CFT, consisting of hand-to-hand combatives, the Enduro run, expedient stream crossings, mountaineering, survival techniques, patrolling, and a confidence test. A cadet had to complete all of the training requirements to receive the coveted Recondo Patch. Cadet Barkalow described Recondo as three days and three nights of continuous infantry training and patrolling where women taxed themselves beyond their limits.⁸⁷ Cadet Dwyer claimed that Recondo was the worst part of training at Camp Buckner, remembering it as “three night-less days, hour after hour of infantry tactics, leading patrols, getting ambushed, no showers, no hot food, no toilets, no sleep.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 84.

⁸⁷ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 88.

⁸⁸ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 104.

One important aspect of Recondo training was that during combatives women were pitted randomly against other cadets for hand-to-hand combat training; they were not only matched against other women. Additionally, an individual's size was a more significant factor than a difference in sex. While women some had difficulty throwing their larger partners, all of them successfully completed hand-to-hand combatives and they did as well as men in the patrolling training though there were distinct differences in the Enduro Run.

For the Class of 1980, 75 percent of men and 73 percent of women received the Enduro Patch.⁸⁹ Eighty-nine percent of the men as opposed to 42 percent of women completed the Enduro run successfully on the first attempt. Several of the men who did not pass on the first attempt were actually strong runners but had been paired with a woman cadet in order to improve her chances of success. This was done to try and ensure that the highest number of cadets possible would earn the Recondo Patch but it was a source of frustration for many male cadets. One female cadet explained the importance of women earning the Recondo patch thus, "I had to prove that I belonged. I had to earn the Recondo patch. I wanted it more than anything. In my mind, if I got that patch, it would prove that I deserved to be there, that I belonged."⁹⁰

Even when a woman earned the coveted patch she was still not necessarily accepted and male cadets were not happy that she might have received help in finishing under the 27 minute standard. After CFT some of the male cadets burned their Recondo Patch when women in their unit also received the patch for this very reason.⁹¹ Yet most male cadets also objected to equivalent standards that allowed for awarding the same patch but incorporating different standards for the Enduro run. DPE reiterated that the

⁸⁹ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 57. USMA.

⁹⁰ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 105.

⁹¹ Memo, "Subject: Pre-Brief on Camp Buckner," February 14, 1978. USMA.

change to equivalent standards was based in part on physiological differences and that a single standard for men and women cadets created a no win situation for the women.⁹²

The Recondo Patch was awarded at a ceremony during which those who had not earned the distinction had to stay in the barracks and clean them. Several women in the Class of 81 passed the run but not all of them received their Recondo Patch. Cadet Dwyer thought she had succeeded in this but she did not get her Patch. When she asked, she was told her name just was not on the list. Years later she ran into a 1979 graduate, the firstie assigned to her squad at Buckner who told her that the officer in charge said “no, she was too small and did not look like she should be wearing a Recondo patch.”⁹³ This outright sexual discrimination disregarded the physical accomplishment that was such a key marker of acceptance at the academy.

An important part, arguably disproportionately so, of Recondo was the Enduro Run which consisted of a timed run-walk exercise up and down a steep, rough, 2 ½ mile area in full field training gear that included a steel helmet, M-14 rifle, field pack, canteen, poncho, and boots. Cadet Dwyer described the infamous Run as “two miles of rocky trails that were so steep, you literally had to crawl, in full gear, combat boots, steel pot, rucksack, carrying your M-16.”⁹⁴ This, she said, was the hardest thing she did her entire time at West Point.

Based on the tests done with the enlisted women, officials paired women with men during the Enduro Run to enable them to meet the 27-minute standard. Cadets in the Class of 1980 ran as two-member teams and in many cases this helped women successfully complete the run; ninety-seven percent of men passed as opposed to only 42

⁹² Memo, “Subject: Pre-Brief on Camp Buckner,” February 14, 1978. USMA.

⁹³ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 108.

⁹⁴ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 104.

percent of the women.⁹⁵ Officials changed the policy after it caused some men fail on their first attempt. For the Class of 1981, each cadet ran the exercise on his or her own but the standard of 27 minutes remained the same. Under these conditions 82 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women received the Recondo Patch.⁹⁶

Cadet Dwyer reflected on the various conditions under which the Recondo Run had been conducted, recalling, “they’d forced bonding in the class of 80 and required the teams to finish together which led to women being yanked by their teeth or hair or whatever their tired, frustrated partner, could find to yank, so they nixed the “Finish Together” rule for our class.”⁹⁷ Overwhelmed by the weight of her gear, Dwyer could not keep up with her male partner and encouraged him to leave her so he could pass after he kept slowing down to help her. She remembered, “I was dying alive and I chugged along, alone, dry heaving and sucking wind. I failed the run.”⁹⁸ Any of the women or men who failed had to wake and rise before everyone else the next morning and load the “loser truck” for a final chance to pass.

The Enduro Run results led the administration to conclude that the 27-minute standard for women running without assistance was not realistic and they discussed several proposals for making it challenging yet obtainable for most cadets. One was simply to accept a 58 percent failure rate among the women by defining the run as a combat skill and therefore one in which women could not be expected to succeed. However, the Superintendent found it difficult to “view a 2 ½ mile run with equipment as an absolute combat skill; rather, a more realistic view is that of a physical test which

⁹⁵ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 128. USMA.

⁹⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 73. USMA.

⁹⁷ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 104.

⁹⁸ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 105.

teaches the cadet a great deal about his or her mental and physical limits.”⁹⁹ Also, from the academy’s training and development perspective, the Enduro Run was “a physical test which teaches each cadet a great deal about his or her mental and physical limits” and as such, was one in which both men and women should participate.¹⁰⁰

A second approach was to view the Enduro run as an area where “physiological differences prevail[ed]” meaning that the patch requirement time for women should be different than for men. Superintendent Goodpaster worried about the “one-way logical process” which would allow women to obtain the “so-called men’s patch” but would not allow men to wear the “women’s patch.” He suggested that if this was the option it should be two-way, allowing men to earn the “women’s patch” if they did not qualify for the “men’s patch.” Goodpaster felt this might be a non-issue because the few men eligible for only the women’s patch would probably choose not to wear it for to psychological reasons.

A third approach was to determine that the 27 minute standard for women was acceptable but should be lowered for men to lower the 97 percent pass rate for men.¹⁰¹ However, option three presumed that the Enduro run should be the major discriminator in even though it only constituted a 27-minute portion of seven days of demanding training. Superintendent Goodpaster agreed that this was not a good idea. He argued that Enduro should be challenging, but attainable and that since patrolling was the longest block of training, it should be the primary patch discriminator, not the run.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Memo to Lieutenant General A. J. Goodpaster. “Subject: Enduro Run/RECONDO Patch,” Sept. 28, 1978. USMA.

¹⁰⁰ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 128. USMA.

¹⁰¹ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 130. USMA.

¹⁰² Memo to Lieutenant General A. J. Goodpaster. “Subject: Enduro Run/RECONDO Patch,” Sept. 28, 1978. USMA.

Ultimately the Enduro standards were changed for the women of Class of 1982 to 31 minutes while the men were still required to finish in 27 minutes.¹⁰³ As a result of this, 88 percent of the women and 95 percent of the men successfully completed the run and 68 percent of the women compared with 81 percent of the men earned the Recondo Patch.¹⁰⁴

Beginning in the fourth year of integration the Enduro Run was eliminated entirely in an attempt to “normalize physical requirements based upon the physical fitness demands expected of female Army officers.” Officials did not feel that “mastery of the full scale version of the activity” was “essential to prepare female cadets for their future roles as officers.” Because there was no rationale given as to why it was necessary for men’s success as an officer, this explanation singled out women as the reason for a change that affected both them and their male comrades. Another justification given for the elimination was that the women in the Class of 1980 had no trouble leading their units in physical exercise activities during Cadet Troop Leader Training so there was no need for the run.

One other Recondo ritual, Survival Night, tested female cadets’ resolve and brought tensions between them and their male counterparts to the surface. During the Class of 1980’s CFT Survival Night cadets were responsible for finding their own food in the immediate area to supplement the live chicken each squad was given. During this exercise cadets were encouraged to bite the head off the chicken, as “was the Recondo way.”¹⁰⁵ A women’s basketball player from the Class of 1981 did this, thereby “succumbing to peer pressure and that insatiable desire to earn the respect of (her) male

¹⁰³ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 128. USMA.

¹⁰⁴ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 73. USMA.

¹⁰⁵ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 89. Survival night where a cadet has to bite the head off a live chicken has since been discontinued but continued into the 1980’s.

peers.”¹⁰⁶ The Survival Night of 1979 resulted in the resignation of one male and one female cadet following summer training because of sexist or anti-female behavior.¹⁰⁷ One of the cadets stated that “peer-pressure tactics and anti-female remarks had been, in part, responsible for their resignations.”¹⁰⁸ There were a number of instances in which female cadets were pressured into “volunteering” to bite a chicken’s head off during survival training. The Superintendent judged that these were not “ill-intentioned” and that killing a chicken during training was “reasonable and prudent.” However, it was not appropriate that “some of the women cadets had been pressured into doing the killing simply because they were women, and thought to be shy or squeamish.” He continued that this was “sexist” prejudice, is unprofessional, and...not to be tolerated.”¹⁰⁹

3rd Summer Training for the Class of 1980

The third summer training included the Cadet Troop Leader Training Program which was meant to provide cadets with a realistic leadership experience while assigned to units of the active Army and performing those duties normally given newly assigned second lieutenants.¹¹⁰ Male cadets were assigned as platoon leaders to the following

¹⁰⁶ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 106.

¹⁰⁷ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors Dec. 28, 1979, 41. USMA. In 1979 another serious incident occurred during CFT at Camp Buckner. The second incident involved over a dozen cadets who dressed in a Klu Klux Klan type costumes to throw their platoon sergeant (a classmate) into the shower. After an investigation the Superintendent declared it a matter of “horseplay” and determined that there “was no intent to threaten or frighten, nor were there racial overtones.” The Superintendent reported to the Board of Visitors that the cadets wore the sheets because “it was humorous and that is what was most available.” There were also instances in which cadets were thrown into showers, into a lake and tied to a tree. The Cadet Chain of Command was aware of this improper behavior and verbal abuse yet did not take any action to stop the behavior “in time to save both incident and attention.” The Commandant assured that the individuals involved in “breaches of regulation and good order” would be appropriately punished.

¹⁰⁸ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors, Dec. 28, 1979, 41. USMA.

¹⁰⁹ *Assembly*, March, 1980. USMA.

¹¹⁰ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 150. USMA. For their first class summer training members of the Class of 1980 furnished the chain of command for the Fourth and Third Classes summer training programs and served as instructors for the Third Class at Camp Buckner.

branches: Infantry, Armor, Field Artillery, Air Defense Artillery, Engineer, and Signal.¹¹¹ Based on the combat exclusion policy for women in the Army, female cadets were assigned as platoon leaders to the following branches: Adjutant General, Field Artillery, Transportation, Military Intelligence, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Military Police, Chemical, Signal, and Engineer.¹¹² Women were not assigned to Air Defense Artillery, Armor, and Infantry branches nor were they assigned to Ranger and Special Forces units. The top three branch assignments for women were in Signal Corps, Transportation, and Military Intelligence.

Since the goal of this training was to provide realistic, practical experience as a junior officer in the Army there were no performance ratings except for comments provided by Army officers. Many of the Army officer's comments made distinctions along gender lines with regard to self-confidence, decision-making, military bearing and conduct, attitudes toward officer responsibilities, and ability to maintain unit standards.¹¹³ The officers consistently gave women more positive statements for their ability to communicate and work with senior officers, peers and subordinates while men received fewer positive comments in this area. The officers cited women as having a particular strength in their ability to "work and establish rapport with subordinates." The officers cited men as stronger in "personality attributes" such as assertive, shows initiative, etc.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Adams, "Project Athena III," 150. USMA.

¹¹² Ibid. This training is not a simulation of command. "The cadets do not merely simulate training roles. Cadet military rank is above that of enlisted personnel, but their rank is below that of commissioned or warrant officers. With some minor exceptions, they are entitled to the legal rights of officers of the Army as distinguished from non-commissioned officers. Cadets may, in connection with their duties, issue orders to subordinates. Enlisted personnel can be court-martialed for not following orders and must salute cadets and address them as 'Sir.'"

¹¹³ Adams, "Project Athena III," 156. USMA.

¹¹⁴ Adams, "Project Athena III," 157. USMA.

At the end of CTLT the authors of Project Athena gave a questionnaire to the cadets about their experience. Men in the Class of 1980 were concerned that women “would receive a greater proportion of first choice assignments” when in reality more men received their first choice than did women.¹¹⁵ Sixty-two percent of the men received their first branch choice while only one-third (33 percent) of the women did yet 83 percent of the women were positive about the value of their experience. Similar numbers of men (71 percent) and women (68 percent) perceived that they held an important leadership position.¹¹⁶

Cadets also could receive Cadet Advanced Training during their third summer at West Point. Ranger school, the most physical program, is the one course closed to women cadets because of Department of the Army policy. Though not allowed in Ranger school, women were allowed in the other physically demanding programs such as the Jungle Operations course in Panama and the Northern Warfare School located in Fort Greely, Alaska. For example, Northern Warfare was an “intensive, physically demanding three-week course designed to teach specialized techniques in land and water navigation, mountaineering and glacier traversing.”¹¹⁷

Prior to this training in the spring of 1978, a few women informed the Commandant of Cadets that “all of the women wanted to take the same physical fitness standards as the men to qualify for Airborne” when, in fact, not all of the women wanted

¹¹⁵ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 157. USMA.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 165. USMA. Other options include the Flight Training program at Fort Rucker, Alabama which includes 45 hours of flight associated ground training and 15 hours in an Army rotary winged helicopter. Also, the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) program, offered at the USAFA, teach cadets how to survive under simulated combat conditions when separated from friendly forces. In all 27 women graduated from Airborne with 4 having dropped for a total of 87.1 percent as compared to the men’s 92.2 percent. 100 percent of men and women graduated from Northern Warfare (4w, 56m), Jungle Warfare (3w, 54m), Flight Training (2w, 26m), SERE (1w, 26m). 89.1 percent of men graduated from Ranger school.

the men's standard.¹¹⁸ As a result, some of the women were tested using the male standard and failed to qualify for airborne school. The authors of Project Athena noted that this illustrates the "erroneous belief that a few women speak for all women cadets."

Conclusion

Military training was the area of physical training that appeared to be the most equal. Unlike physical education or athletics, women did the exact same training as the men in military training. Women were not prohibited from any of the activities and any deviations could only be made for health reason or when an activity was medically dangerous (even though changes were only allowed for physiological differences). Ultimately, officials decided that no activity was medically dangerous for women and chose to give women the same training as the men. This means that officials found that the actual business of soldiering was not inappropriate or dangerous for women. Women were even trained in the same combatives as the men. If any area should have concerned the Academy based on their arguments against women, it should have been combatives. Yet the Academy had no problem with training women in combatives in a military setting (the most realistic) yet not combatives in physical education.

The women not only underwent the same training they were held to the same standards as the men which was not true of physical education. When the first class of women had difficulty with the running program officials adjusted the entire program, they did not just lower the standards for women as was the case in physical education. The Academy truly created a one track system for military training.

No modifications were made prior to the first class of women however after these first women had difficulty with some running aspects of the military training modifications were made to the entire running program, not just the women's. And still

¹¹⁸ Adams, "Project Athena III," 163. USMA.

no modifications were made in specific military activities; women proved they could do those, even if it was in their own way, without modifications. This is not to say that all women were successful in every aspect, but neither were all of the men. When publicized, the women were not blamed for these changes either. They were presented as changes that would benefit and challenge all cadets. By changing the standards for both male and female cadets the Academy preserved the one track system in military training.

It is also possible that had officials waited longer than a year to make changes to the running program the women could have improved. This again put the spotlight on the first class of women as not being able to handle the running standards. Title IX had only been in effect for four years so it was probable that as more women started playing sports and being more active they would improve their running capabilities as well.

Some of the female cadets found refuge from the insults and hazing in the physical military training. One cadet name Lil summarized this feeling:

During my four years at West Point, I found that infantry training gave me the most personal satisfaction and seemed to be what I was best at. I relished the unique combination of mental and physical toughness required and sought out all of the infantry training experiences available to me, including the Jungle Operations Training Course in Panama and the Airborne School at Fort Benning. I was also selected as a cadet instructor for the challenging Recondo Course at West Point my firstie year. I loved the intense physical demands, being outside, braving the elements, carrying everything I need on my back, and finding my way in the woods. I especially enjoyed pushing myself to my personal limits. I enjoy risk, challenge, and adventure, and that is what the infantry offers.¹¹⁹

Many of the women were successful in the physical military training and were able to embrace these new physical experiences. These women were successful in the physical military training that much of the pre-integration arguments centered on them not being able to do.

¹¹⁹ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 42.

It is important that the one area where women proved to generally be capable of equaling the men was in military training. This is arguably the area that should be the most important yet the ability to run outweighed the ability to compete in military training. As evidenced by numerous surveys the women were generally only accepted when they performed the same as the men. Yet this was still not always the case. At times if women did perform at the same level of the men then they were resented for that instead of accepted.

Nevertheless, in an era where women were fighting hard for equal rights, West Point actually gave women equality in the one area they railed so hard against. This was a strong step for equality whether the Academy meant it or not. Based on these actions, internally the Academy did not try to protect the male role in combat. Outwardly, however, the Academy insisted they were not training women for combat to reassure the alumni and the public. They did not publicize, and perhaps did not even realize, the extent of equality they gave the women in military training in deed if not in name. Yet, women could still not branch combat arms so West Point was able to give women equality without fear they would actually use it.

CHAPTER IV

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND EQUIVALENT TRAINING

While women were given equal military training, and generally performed equally in it as well, there were two significant changes within the physical education program. Officials never considered equality within the academic year physical education program. By keeping differences within the physical education program officials were able to keep the appearance of keeping women out of combat training. Officials initially wanted to keep things as equal as possible yet quickly developed “equivalent training” instead of equal training. These differences in standards would not only define the female experience during integration but also follow all women after them. By creating differences in the physical training and standards the Academy sought to keep certain physical aspects of the experiences for men only which not only put women at a disadvantage but also created the perception of women “getting over.”¹

Initial Planning

The initial OPLAN 75-1 listed very few changes to the physical education program. All summer physical education programs stayed the same for men and women and all were coeducational. The physical ability and fitness tests were also initially the same for men and women with the only possible adjustment involving the grading scales. The upperclass academic years classes were all the same for men and women as well as coeducational. The only differences occurred during the Plebe year (the fourth class year). All classes were the same during the fourth class academic year except for Self-Defense I and II and women’s gymnastics replacing boxing, wrestling, and men’s gymnastics.² Officials anticipated that all physical education programs would need

¹ “Getting Over” is a cadet term for having an easy way out.

² OPLAN 75-1. USMA.

reviewing periodically to benefit from the experiences gained from the first class of women. Changes would still happen only when physiological differences dictated that a modification was necessary. This was another way of saying that changes only would happen when the first class of women proved they could not do something due to their physiology. This put significant pressure on the women to perform.

Even though there were few differences in the physical education program the decision to prohibit women from participating in boxing and wrestling was a significant one. Officials justified this decision several times and in various ways since this was a significant deviation from the physical education curriculum, even though it was never presented as such. The justification statement included in OPLAN 75-1 focused on the guiding Department of Physical Education (DPE)³ philosophy that, whenever feasible, “men and women cadets will be afforded identical opportunities in the physical education program.”⁴ There was to be no deviation to this policy unless physiological differences dictated an alternative course of action. This initial justification statement assured that “in areas of physical activity where there is some question as to whether or not women possess the physical ability to perform or compete on the same level as men, women cadets will be given the opportunity to participate.”⁵ The question then is why were women not given the chance to participate in boxing and wrestling as well as certain intramural sports? Perhaps Academy officials already assumed that women could not perform these—that it was already “known” that women did not possess the physical ability for these activities so there was no question as to their abilities and hence women

³ Originally called the Office of Physical Education or OPE then changed to Department of Physical Education. I will refer to it as DPE for consistency. The cadets also sarcastically called DPE the “Department with a Heart.”

⁴ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, “Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets.” USMA.

⁵ Ibid.

did not need the opportunity to participate. Or perhaps it was about protecting certain areas of physical education from women.

The statement assured that all upperclass and summer physical education programs were identical and coeducational. The program also called for “all physical ability and fitness tests, to include test items such as pull-ups and dips, will be administered to both men and women cadets.” Changes would happen only if the performance of the women cadets was poor enough to mandate a change. Since women were given the same opportunity to participate in all fitness tests of strength, strength was clearly not the primary issue, making women’s exclusion from boxing and wrestling more glaring.

Berry emphasized the idea of a one-track system by saying that their basic philosophy was that “all cadets should undergo common training and education” but where adjustments were appropriate women would “undergo training equivalent to that of men cadets.” He even declared all cadets would follow a one track program with “minimum essential adjustments demanded by physiological differences between men and women made in the admission standards and in the “one track” cadet experience.”⁶ Berry told graduates that the military training provided for all cadets will “remain identical for females and males, except those adjustments made due to the physiological differences and to exclude that training specifically prohibited by current Department of the Army policy such as Ranger and Airborne training.”⁷ However, as one official believed, only an “Amazon” woman could succeed in a one-track system.⁸ This stereotypical assumption that no “normal” woman would be able to achieve the male standards was a common theme in the planning phase. Perhaps the argument for the dual

⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent. 1975. USMA.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Memo to Superintendent. USMA.

track was to make sure that no woman *could* achieve those standards, thereby protecting men in the physical hierarchy.

The Board of Visitors also emphasized an essentially one-track system since “the experience of reasonable physical and emotional stress of the kind arising in military exercise, drill, and maneuver is essential in developing those responses which are necessary for disciplining a professional Army officer, regardless of sex.” They continued that “the full acceptance of the female members of the Corps by the preponderate male population depends upon the perception that all are under-going similar training.”⁹ This is precisely why men were angry when changes in standards occurred since they were under the perception that it would be a single track and then it was not. When the perception became that women had “easier” standards it became difficult for many male cadets to fully accept the women.

Cahn notes that historically by “barring women from strength-building contact sports like wrestling or football, the sports world reaffirms the expectation of female passivity, submissiveness, and frailty.”¹⁰ By barring women from taking part in these same activities, West Point also reaffirmed the idea that women were too passive, submissive and frail to successfully participate in those activities. This exclusion from boxing and wrestling constructed female cadets as cadets who were unable to undergo the physical stress needed as the foundation of their physical training. Even though these women were breaking new ground by their presence alone, their exclusion reaffirmed beliefs about the general female public.

In a similar theme, Wanda Wakefield describes how in World War II the military limited and constrained women’s athleticism but promoted and developed the men’s

⁹ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors, 1976, 8. USMA.

¹⁰ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 224.

athleticism, “particularly where that athleticism demonstrated strength and aggression.”¹¹ She argues that sports such as boxing and football were considered manly sports and athletes who “could succeed at those games were among not only the most physically gifted, but among those who would most likely achieve success at war.”¹² There was always a struggle within the military to maintain the belief that men were necessarily stronger than women and that they needed to be so to have the best military even though women needed to be strong to be useful soldiers as well. By keeping women from building strength through boxing and wrestling the Academy was effectively limiting the amount of strength these women could build. According to Wakefield, the military has a clear history of protecting sports considered to be manly, such as boxing and football, and to allow women to participate would diminish the value of these physical activities in proving ones manhood.

Medical Justification

The plebe year, or fourth class year, was the only year women experienced a distinctly different instruction in the physical education program. The justification was such that women cadets would “not be allowed to participate in a physical activity in a capacity which either research or professional authorities in the fields of medicine or physical education indicate might be harmful to women or are precluded by physiological differences between men and women.”¹³ Cahn argues that men and conservatives routinely looked to evidence from science for conclusive proof of the “inherent masculinity of athletic skill.”¹⁴ Although Cahn sees no logical or necessary connection

¹¹ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 120.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, “Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets.” USMA.

¹⁴ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 223.

between biological differences and social and political inequalities she argues that the “fit” among supposedly natural inequalities in sport, deep-seated gender traditions, and commonsense beliefs about sexual difference allowed biological “evidence” from sport to authorize male power in other domains.”¹⁵

Similarly, Patricia Vertinsky argues that “scientific knowledge, medical practice and social perception have interacted to affect views concerning what kinds and amounts of physical activity, including sport and healthful exercise, might be most appropriate for girls and women.”¹⁶ Academy officials consulted these “scientific” sources for their justifications for excluding women from very specific activities. The Academy wanted an essentially one track system, yet used medical and scientific articles as a basis only for excluding women from boxing and wrestling in the physical education curriculum. Medical beliefs about female physical activity have historically reflected popular beliefs about the nature of women, their biological purpose and their social role.¹⁷ In a time when the role of women was being heatedly debated in the public, perhaps using medicine to exclude women from boxing and wrestling was a way of keeping women in a more socially acceptable role within a generally unacceptable educational and career choice.

Vertinsky argues that the long-standing idea that women are the weaker sex who cannot handle the same level of physical activity as men should be a critical focus of historical analysis since it continues to affect women’s involvement in sport and physical activity.¹⁸ She maintains that biology has always been central to beliefs about women’s involvement in physical activities since the perceived biological differences between men

¹⁵ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 223.

¹⁶ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 2.

and women have been and continue to be used as justifications for excluding women from physical activity. West Point used certain perceived physiological (biological) differences between men and women, as allowed by the law, as the basis for their policy decisions even though no recent medical evidence existed about women in particular.

In addition to upper body strength, another physiological reason cited for prohibiting women from boxing was the physiological difference that women have breasts. Officials planning for physical education write that the female breast is very vulnerable to injury if subjected to a direct blow and that breast protectors (breast cups) would be ineffective since they are designed to guard against the accidental blow and not “multiple direct blows to the breast area.”¹⁹ This reasoning assumes that instead of boxing correctly women would simply be punching each other in the breasts.

Vertinsky argues that the pervasive notion that if a woman exceeds her prescribed exercise she might “encounter physical, mental and moral dangers” was deeply embedded in the culture of female sport and exercise.²⁰ These same fears were present in the justifications of keeping women from participating in boxing and wrestling. Nineteenth and early twentieth century medical literature told women that being too active or competing with men would lead to a degeneration of feminine functions making her an unfit mother.²¹ Now in 1975 women were being told they were unfit for this participation simply because they had breasts. Having breasts does not limit strength or endurance yet it was seen as an important physiological difference. Since the primary function of breasts is to nurse a baby women were essentially still being told they would become unfit mothers (even though these are generally only 18 year old women) if they

¹⁹ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, “Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets.” USMA.

²⁰ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 22.

²¹ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 23.

went beyond their boundaries and participated in the too-masculine sports of boxing and wrestling. Concerned with the feminine image of the female cadets, the Academy also clearly worried about women potentially damaging a prominent biological marker of femininity.

Officials considered boxing and wrestling combative activities and as such not suited to coeducation, writing that men “naturally have more muscle mass on their upper torso and, therefore, have greater upper body strength than women.”²² This supposedly gave men an advantage in combative activities like boxing and wrestling and it would be “unfair” to match men and women up just for a physical education grade.²³ Those planning for physical education said that as a result of this unfairness, women would take self-defense courses instead because they posed a less severe potential for injury.²⁴ These justifications often gave conflicting reasons as to why a woman should not participate. Could they not do it because it was unfair or because they could get hurt? Officials seemed to be covering their bases with as many reasons as they could develop. They also would use these same reasons to prohibit women from participating in contact intramural sports.

Research Justifications

A review of research was another justification for prohibiting women from receiving instruction in boxing, wrestling and any contact sport. However, this review was heavily slanted towards literature on male physical abilities and based, in part, on

²² OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, “Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets.” USMA.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1979, 48. USMA. Men were at risk for severe boxing injuries as well. An extensive review of the Fourth Class boxing program was undertaken following the death of a cadet as a result of a boxing injury in 1978. As a result a written document was created to outline procedures and policies designed to reduce the frequency and severity of head injuries.

unpublished research from within the Academy. There was not much existing research on women's abilities. As Vertinsky notes, all too often medical or scientific theories "have been uncritically embraced as self-confirming by those who defend the status quo and welcome its legitimization."²⁵ Those in charge of planning argued that the literature supported the contention that many of the women who engage in these activities "sustain disfiguring and damaging injuries."²⁶ They also argued that "there is not a single piece of research or scientific evidence to prove that women have the physiological capacity to box without undue risk of debilitating injury."²⁷ So it would be "foolhardy" to offer boxing or wrestling to women until information showing that women could do it was available. As would often be the case in the first year of integration, women had to prove they could do something physical and until then it was assumed they could not while the reverse was true for men. Officials were looking for evidence that women could do something while there was no evidence that they could not.

The justification statement makes special note to discredit one article that did believe women could participate in boxing. They argued that a *Women in Sports* article which examined boxing as a sport and DPE was not interested in boxing as a sport but rather as an offensive skill.²⁸ They also dismissed the article because it was not published in a "reference journal by any reasonable criteria or stretch of the imagination."²⁹ They argued that such articles tended to focus more on "the premise that

²⁵ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 2.

²⁶ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, "Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets." USMA.

²⁷ Memo for Superintendent, "Subject: Justification for Planned Combatives Program for Women," Feb. 14, 1976. USMA.

²⁸ *Women in Sports* was a magazine created in 1974 as the first magazine to feature female athletes, primarily female figure skaters.

²⁹ Memo for Superintendent, "Subject: Justification for Planned Combatives Program for Women," Feb. 14, 1976. USMA.

womanhood can do everything than on verifiable facts.”³⁰ They compared using *Women in Sport* to using *Field and Steam* to base policy on. So even though an article existed claiming women could participate in boxing they refused to accept it.

In addition to finding no supportive literature, the committee argued that no university in the country instructed women in boxing so they should not either. However, virtually no other university in the country was educating women to become officers in the military. It is also not surprising that no other institution had boxing for women when universities were just starting to create mainstream sporting opportunities for women. The conclusion was that “until which time that such a program would contribute to the basic mission of the United States Military Academy and until which time that reliable information exists concerning the consequences of such instruction, what useful purpose can be served by offering boxing to women.”³¹

Combatives Justification

In a different memo, officials justified prohibiting women from boxing and wrestling based on the principles underlying the DPE total combatives program which was an integral part of the effort to prepare cadets with the necessary physical attributes for a career in the United States Army. This memo argued that men will eventually assume roles in the Army which necessitated them to handle both “offensive and defensive modes of action,”³² but that women would not “be committed to offensive combat” and as a result the women graduates would not be commissioned in the combat

³⁰ Memo for Superintendent, “Subject: Justification for Planned Combatives Program for Women,” Feb. 14, 1976. USMA.

³¹ Rushatz, Ltc Alfred. Memo to Deputy Commandant, “Subject: Department of Physical Education Planned Combatives Program for Women,” Nov. 14, 1977. USMA.

³² Memo for Superintendent, “Subject: Justification for Planned Combatives Program for Women,” Feb. 14, 1976. USMA.

arms.³³ This justification has nothing to do with physiological differences as allowed by law. This reasoning is about protecting the role of men in combat. Whether accurately or not combat has historically been linked with physicality and the Academy seemed to think that if they did not train women in what they perceived to be offensive skills then this would ensure that women would not be able to branch combat arms. Now that the military academies were open to women combat was (and is) arguably the true last bastion of manhood. Hence, if West Point could protect the role of combat in the Academy the female officers it produced would be unqualified to lead in combat even though they attended West Point.

The authors of this justification found it reasonable to conclude that women would not encounter any need for offensive modes of actions once in the Army (since they would not technically be in combat) and would only encounter responsibilities involved with a defensive mode of action. Hence they also based the decision to exclude women from boxing, wrestling, and combative sports (contact sports) on the roles the administration thought the male and female graduates would have once they were in the general Army. They said that men were given both offensive and defensive combatives instruction but in actuality the curriculum required men to take only the offensive-oriented activities of boxing and wrestling in their fourth class year. During their upperclass years, they have the *opportunity* to take defensive-oriented instruction but are not required to. The Academy only assured that all men would have had offensive training while women would only receive defensive training. The female cadets had the same combatives choices as the male cadets during their upperclass years but received only defensive-oriented instruction (Self-Defense I and II) during their fourth class year.

³³ Memo for Superintendent, "Subject: Justification for Planned Combatives Program for Women," Feb. 14, 1976. USMA.

The difference between offensive and defensive skills should not be taken for granted. West Point was training men to always be on the attack while not giving women the same skills. Not only were women being put in a vulnerable position once out in the field they were also being put in a dangerous position from within the ranks. Preventing women from learning offensive skills also served to further protect the symbolic combat training that focused on less practical offensive skills.

Officials viewed the boxing and wrestling courses as relevant for preparing men but not the women to be leaders. A briefing officer was quoted as saying boxing was required of the males because DPE is “trying to teach them that it is better to give than receive.”³⁴ This implies that women needed to learn how to receive rather than give. The courses required the cadets to “think and react under stress created by fear of bodily harm or instantaneous failure” which is thought to be a valuable trait in a combat leader. Why would this not be a good trait to have in all officers? The justification specifically says that instruction in the martial arts of judo and karate (which was the basis for women’s instruction) would “provide the student very little experience in thinking and operating under pressure or stress.” The boxing and wrestling offensive and defensive moves were also seen as more practical and could easily be put into use if needed. Ironically no one contested the courses in hand-to-hand combat which were actually called combatives in the course catalogue. It was the courses of boxing and wrestling that were so closely guarded as being necessary for offensive skills.

Superintendent Goodpaster described the two combatives courses of Self-Defense I and Self-Defense II as emphasizing “the learning and practice of skills which could be used for personal self-defense in various situations.”³⁵ He emphasized the defensiveness of these courses compared with boxing and wrestling that the men took and the women

³⁴ *Time*, “Long Gray Hemline,” Feb. 9, 1976. USMA.

³⁵ Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 30, 1977, 30. USMA.

did not. This description is not found in other reports but rather is how the Superintendent described it to the Board of Visitors. It is important to note that the Superintendent was highlighting the defensive aspect of the courses to assure the male alumni and cadets that women would not be given the same offensive training as the male cadets. Goodpaster reported that as the courses progressed the women increased their physical fitness and showed the tenacity to “mix it up” and “push” themselves.³⁶

Societal Justifications

Justification statements claimed both physiological and societal reasons although they were only supposed to consider physiological reasons. The fact that men “naturally” have more upper body strength than women was also the reason given for why it would be unfair to allow women to participate in wrestling. Once again it was thought that the “risk of breast injury and defacement” was too high for a female wrestler.³⁷ Again there seems to be a disproportionate amount of importance placed upon the breast and breast injuries. The societal justification was simply that men and women wrestling each other was not acceptable. The only reason given that women could not wrestle other women was that with the small number of women they would wrestle the same opponents several times which was thought would be unfair to women. Again the justifications were usually couched in protecting women from injury or unfairness.

Officials were not supposed to take societal reasons into account when determining what changes officials would implement within the programs. Yet, the social taboo against women physically competing against men in certain sports was so strong as to have West Point make sure it did not happen at the Academy. Perhaps they found that a bridge too far with women already encroaching on male territory simply by

³⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 30, 1977, 31. USMA.

³⁷ Justification Statements July 18, 1975. USMA.

being there. The justification statement claims that the “practice of men pummeling women” was “against societal expectations.”³⁸ This assumes that no woman would be able to hold her own and moreover it would not be seen as training or sport but rather a man assaulting a woman.³⁹ James Anderson, Director of DPE, commented that boxing was not acceptable for women because it “would have turned them into social freaks.”⁴⁰ Outgoing Superintendent Gen. William Westmoreland had publically introduced the idea of women cadets as “freaks” when he famously said “the purpose of West Point is to train combat officers and women are not physically able to lead in combat. Maybe you could find one woman in 10,000 who could lead in combat, but she would be a freak, and the Military Academy is not being run for freaks.”⁴¹

The committee also found it “difficult to imagine many females caring so little about the physical image they project that they would readily engage in a sport such as boxing which is notoriously known as a producer of scarred eyes, bent noses and cauliflower ears.”⁴² This was the reason given to require all women to take substitute instruction for boxing as opposed to letting them choose. They thought this justifiable since it “protects women from the danger of breast injury, unfair competition, and socially and psychologically unacceptable defacement.”⁴³ This is all based on the committee’s assumption that women were more concerned with their appearance than with their training and ability to share a key Plebe experience by boxing.

³⁸ Justification Statements July 18, 1975. USMA.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Rowes, Barbara, “Fighting Chance.” USMA.

⁴¹ Newspaper Clipping, “Women at West Point? ‘Silly’ to Westmoreland” *The Evening News*, June 2, 1976. USMA.

⁴² Justification Statements, July 18, 1975. USMA.

⁴³ Ibid.

Several male cadets based their objections to women on societal reasons which this type of reasoning reinforced. Many cadets made comments that women belonged in the home as a wife and a mother. Others believed that God wanted women to avoid the military completely. One comment written by a cadet prior to women entering which was representative of these feelings claimed that,

“The basis of all societies is the mother and child relationships as well as the family unit. With the changing role of women in today’s society, who will replace the woman’s traditional role as mother and housewife? My objections to women attending West Point is that the socialization of women in our present society does not adequately prepare for the physical and competitive demands of West Point.”⁴⁴

Cadets worried that women should be responsible for raising their children as the man is busy providing for the family and should not be seeking jobs and particularly not jobs as demanding as an Army officer. Several shared a similar sentiment to one cadet who believed, “the world is really becoming morally messed up, and I believe it is because of the deterioration of the mother’s guidance on her children and the deterioration of the family.”⁴⁵

Telling It Like It Is

The Academy initially conveyed some of these decisions through a supplemental issue to *The Pointer* entitled “Women at USMA” designed as a note to the Corps in December 1975.⁴⁶ The purpose of the special issue was specifically to combat the numerous rumors spreading throughout the Corps and “tell it like it is.” The administration told the cadets they would “be briefed nearly to death” concerning the admission of women during the summer. Issued prior to winter break, this supplement

⁴⁴ Office of the Director of Institutional Research. “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women,” 1976. USMA.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *The Pointer View*, “A Note to the Corps,” Dec. 1975. USMA.

gave the cadets information that the administration wanted them to know and information the administration thought their friends and family would ask when they went home for break.

This supplement addressed the physical requirements as one of the biggest questions in the minds of cadets, parents, graduates, and candidates. The superintendent said the physical program would “remain unmodified” for the most part. From the beginning the Superintendent portrayed the program as still essentially single track. Even this early the Superintendent wanted to make it clear that boxing and wrestling would still “make the plebe’s day complete, but women will not participate in these classes.” Women were immediately distinguished as a different type of plebe since they would not be participating in the boxing and wrestling classes. He said the answer was “really fairly obvious” due to physiological differences between men and women (although he never specifies the differences) along with the “extreme likelihood of breast injury resulting from blows received in these sports.”⁴⁷ He also made special note that the self-defense class the women will take is “not the unarmed combat class that is now offered to the male cadets.”⁴⁸

This special supplement also introduced the modifications to gymnastics as a “more realistic approach of women’s competitive gymnastics” instead of the “heavy emphasis on upper body strength.”⁴⁹ Both men and women cadets received instruction in gymnastics as part of the physical education program, however, the instructional emphasis varied based on the physiological capabilities of the men and women. Since women “possess less strength and mass in the upper body” it was necessary to design a gymnastics program for women cadets which emphasized “balance and movement

⁴⁷ *The Pointer View*, “A Note to the Corps,” Dec. 1975. USMA.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

distinct from the men's course" by adding the uneven parallel bars and balance beam and eliminating upper-body exercises.⁵⁰ A Board of Visitors report noted that some changes were made to aspects of the gymnastics program which "demand a degree of upper body strength that the typical entering female simply does not have."⁵¹ When describing changes made to the physical training Superintendent Goodpaster also frequently referred to upper body strength as the reason for the change. This constant emphasis on upper body strength was another signifier of women's perceived physical inferiority. "Upper body strength" was often a stand-in when no other justification could be given.

The special supplement also assured all "that women *are not* (original emphasis) being trained as combat leaders, men are." Once again, the role of combat was being protected. Even though women were given the same military training the symbolic role of combat was protected through the exclusion of women from boxing and wrestling classes. The Superintendent wrote that DPE would assume that a woman could do something until experience shows she cannot. This was not true, however, in the sense that women were not given the opportunity to participate in several areas of athletics and physical education without ever being given the chance to see if they could be successful at it.

The Academy told the alumni that they were keeping the cadets informed about all phases of the planning as well as assuring the cadets that the standards would not be lowered. Cadets still worried that women, who they generally assumed to have less strength and endurance than men, would be able to meet "reasonable physical challenges" at West Point.⁵² In part due to the way in which information was presented

⁵⁰ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, "Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets." USMA.

⁵¹ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors, April 29, 1976, 6. USMA.

⁵² *Assembly* June 1976. USMA.

to the alumni and cadets all of the emphasis and worry was placed on the physical program. Even though the vast majority of the curriculum and experience was the same, by focusing on the difference in a few physical activities the spotlight was focused squarely on the physical performance of the female cadets.

Physical Aptitude Examination

In addition to intellectual ability and demonstrated leadership, one of the scores of major significance to determine whether a candidate does or does not qualify for admission was the physical aptitude examination (PAE). West Point judged a candidate in the three areas of medical profile, academic record and physical aptitude to construct a “whole candidate score.” Evaluated by the admissions office, the PAE was “a critical entrance test because it is used to predict the potential of entering candidates to successfully complete the physical aspects of USMA training.”⁵³ To help determine if any changes should be made, the admission office administered the PAE on a trial basis to high school and college women, women ROTC cadets, and women officers and enlisted soldiers. The PAE consisted of four parts: 1) throwing a basketball for distance while on your knees; 2) a standing long jump; 3) a shuttle run between two lines for a total distance of 300 yards; and 4) pull-ups.⁵⁴ The admissions office determined that while women’s scores were generally lower than the men they were able to successfully perform the first three events. Few of the female volunteers could perform even one pull-up, however. 92 percent of the women tested were not able to do one pull-up. Less than 1/10th of 1 percent of those tested could perform the six pull-ups which was considered average for a male cadet.⁵⁵

⁵³ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 16. USMA.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Even though women's scores were significantly lower than men's in the remaining three tests no adjustments were initially proposed. Officials determined that the PAE needed adjustments to provide a way to evaluate differences for upper-body strength between weaker women and stronger women in order to provide a more realistic assessment of that aspect of physical fitness. The flexed-arm hang, which the Army had previously used in fitness tests for women in the Army, would therefore replace the pull-ups for women in the PAE.⁵⁶ Officials in the admissions office questioned whether the difference in the women's ability to complete a pull-up was truly a physiological difference or rather a cultural one. They recognized that few women had ever been required, or even asked, to do a pull-up. Most officials agreed that developing women's upper body strength through the physical program would improve women's performance in pull-ups. This, however, did not happen as most activities that would develop women's upper body strength were actually replaced in the physical program.⁵⁷

OPLAN 75-1 justified the proposed change from the pull-up to the flexed-arm hang while leaving all other tests the same for women.⁵⁸ While the flexed arm hang replaced the pull-up in the PAE officials intended to keep the pull-up in the regular DPE program. Using the flexed arm hang as a predictor of success did the women no favors if they were then expected to do pull-ups after entering West Point. Again, keeping with the plan to keep requirements exactly the same as much as possible, officials would adjust the PAE accordingly after collecting information during the 1976-77 academic year.

⁵⁶ The flexed-arm hang consists of hanging from a bar with both hands, chin over the bar, similar to the up position of a pull-up. Candidates are timed for the number of seconds they maintain this position. Time is marked when the chin falls below the bar.

⁵⁷ *Assembly*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1976, 14. USMA.

⁵⁸ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix I to Annex F, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, Subject: Proposed Physical Aptitude Examination for Women Candidates to USMA. USMA.

Comparisons across classes are difficult to draw because the PAE changed after the Class of 1980 entered the academy. Women in the Class of 1980 were evaluated using the physical standards of the men's scale which was based on all men tested during the last ten year period. Following the first year, the PAE for women were based on the scores obtained by the women in the Classes of 1980 and 1981. The women in the Class of 1981 showed higher physical aptitude scores than the women in the Class of 1980. While one could interpret this as women improving their physical skills many interpreted it as a general lowering of standards. Making changes in an area only after the first class of women had participated had the effect of making those women look worse not only compared to men but to the women in subsequent classes.

Women Cadets' Views

DPE gave a questionnaire to the women in the classes of 1980 and 1981 concerning their physical performance in the Fourth Class physical education classes and Cadet Basic Training.⁵⁹ When asked if their Fourth Class physical education program had been too physically demanding 92 percent of the women in the Class of 1980 and 96 percent of the women in the Class of 1981 responded that no, the classes had not been too physically demanding. The women in the Class of 1980 responded identically with regard to the physical fitness tests with slightly more women in the Class of 1981 feeling the physical fitness tests were too physically demanding (10 percent). Again a significant majority of women from both classes felt the fourth class physical education program did not put excessive stress upon the women (1980 no 77 percent, 1981 no 86 percent). It was closer when asked if the physical tests put excessive stress upon the women, with only 55 percent of the women of 1980 saying the tests did not and 45 percent believing they did put excessive stress upon women. The vast majority of women in both class felt

⁵⁹ Questionnaire to Class of 1980, 1981 regarding performance in Fourth Class Physical Education Classes and CBT. USMA.

the physical education test standards were not too high for women (1980 no 89 percent, 1981 no 86 percent). Again, the vast majority of women in both classes felt the Fourth Class physical education program for women should be as equal as possible to the men's program (1980 yes 89 percent, 1981 yes 82 percent). More women in the Class of 1980 (92 percent) felt that it was reasonable to require the level of physical fitness of the women cadets to be higher than that required of the women in the Regular Army compared with 82 percent for women in the Class of 1981.

The women in the Class of 1980 were more closely split over possible changes to the physical education standards for women cadets in Fourth Class physical education or the physical training at CBT or at Camp Buckner. Only 58 percent of the women said they would not change the standards with 42 percent wanting the standards to change.⁶⁰ More women in the Class of 1981 were supportive of keeping the current standards in the Fourth Class physical education and CBT (sixty-eight).

In February of 1979 DPE gave a comprehensive attitudinal survey regarding physical education, intramurals, athletics, and club sports to all women cadets at West Point.⁶¹ Overall, the Academy interpreted the results as positive and indicated that it was positive that 47 percent of the women felt the courses were worthwhile.⁶² Eighty-two percent of the female cadets indicated that "instruction and enjoyment are the same regardless of whether the instructor is male or female", however the Class of 1980, specifically, felt the sex of the instructor did, in fact, create different classroom

⁶⁰ Questionnaire to Class of 1980, 1981 regarding performance in Fourth Class Physical Education Classes and CBT. USMA.

⁶¹ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. "Profile of United States Military Academy Women's Physical Education Program," Department of Physical Education. 1979. USMA. There was a 100 percent return with the breakdown of the classes as follows: Class of 1980-63 cadets (27 percent); Class of 1981—70 cadets (30 percent); and Class of 1982—104 cadets (44 percent) for a total of 237 women cadets (100 percent).

⁶² Ibid.

atmospheres. Many of the women agreed that there is “often inappropriate verbal sex stereotyping in class” which they thought was inappropriate and frustrating.⁶³ Cadets were also uncomfortable when instructors made a point of correcting themselves after saying “guys” and then differentiating between men and women. The women did not like to be singled out by instructors saying “Gentlemen and Lady” or “Men, oh, and woman.” Many of the women commented that they would like to receive more verbal praise in class.

Women cadets, as well as male cadets, found the department of physical education to be among the most difficult aspects of Academy life. According to the survey there was strong agreement among the women that physical education was not a favorite course. Many of the women indicated physical education classes during their first year to be another form of hazing because of the “intense pressure and rigidity of the classes.”⁶⁴ The women commented that the instruction heavily emphasized grades to the detriment of cadets who were uncomfortable trying new activities for fear of getting a poor grade. They also noted that the length of the class made it difficult to learn a new skill. The women felt that especially in their plebe year there was no room for beginning students and it was “difficult to attain same grades as men.”⁶⁵ Some felt there was still too much emphasis on upper body strength in gymnastics. Cadets found upperclass courses to be more relaxed than those in the plebe year. Many also felt that they were not given enough time to learn the new skills putting previous experience at a premium, especially in gymnastics which women found only somewhat valuable.

⁶³ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Department of Physical Education. 1979. USMA.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The majority of women found plebe swimming to be the most valuable course since, for example, “swimming is the only course where, if you are a good swimmer, can perform on the same level as men.” Another female cadet said she “hated the course but it was the most rewarding.” It is possible that women found this class most rewarding of the plebe classes because it was coed. One female cadet described being in a coed class and believing that her male classmates “had a better opinion and acceptance of women in that being in the same class they saw that I could perform just as well or better than they could.”⁶⁶

Administrators of the survey tended to look for the positive in the responses. For example, a majority of the women indicated that the Company Guidance Officer was not helpful. The administrators interpreted this finding as positive since it perhaps “meant that the majority of cadets do not need help from the guidance officer.” It is also possible that women sought the advice of the guidance officer and found him to be unhelpful. Or they did not feel comfortable approaching the officer at all.

The female cadets strongly agreed that there should be different physical performance standards for men and women. Some female cadets agreed that testing standards were not too difficult. It is interesting that most women felt separate testing standards was a fair measure of physical performance when that was often one of the most contentious aspects of physical training.

The women had serious concerns and complaints about Self-Defense I and Self-Defense II. More negative and lengthy comments centered on these classes than on any other question on the survey. Fifty-eight of eighty-six women in the Class of 1980 did not think the self-defense classes were valuable. The majority of the women in the Class of '81 (48 vs. 38) felt it was valuable, while women in the Class of '82 seemed more

⁶⁶ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1982, 1979. USMA.

ambivalent about the self-defense classes with 40 in favor and 41 against. However, all of the negative comments regarding these classes were similar, calling the classes “boring”, “useless”, “unrealistic,” and a “waste of time” for example. The women also complained about the incompetent instructor and her subjective grading method in the courses. The women also felt strongly that a second class in self-defense was unnecessary. The majority of the women felt that the course would benefit from being coed as some of the best classes had been the ones in which the males had participated.

Contrary to some of the published reports which extol the virtue and popularity of the self-defense courses, the majority of women did not see them as valuable. Perhaps if given the opportunity, these women would have chosen to participate in boxing or wrestling instead of self-defense. In response to a regulation stating that 3rd and 4th class women must sleep at least two to a room for safety, one woman wrote in *The Pointer* “Who is to say that the one year separating the 2nd and 3rd classes makes a woman any better able to defend herself than she was when she walked through Thayer Gate on R-day. Granted, she may now have had self-defense I and II but if any female cadet learned anything in those courses, I would challenge her to step forward and be recognized.”⁶⁷

One female cadet commented, “the self-defense classes need to have men in them. It’s easy to fight a woman but what are the chances of us being attack by our own sex?”⁶⁸ Another argues “if you try to defend yourself the way they teach you where I come from you’d be an instant goner.”⁶⁹ Many complained about the atmosphere in the class and the content being impractical and not based on realistic situations. One cadet noted that “the instructor seems to think the course is essential to our survival which it is

⁶⁷ *The Pointer*, Feb. 1981. USMA.

⁶⁸ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1980, 1979. USMA.

⁶⁹ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1982, 1979. USMA.

not” and another that “it doesn’t seem to give your body any physical benefit.”⁷⁰ Not only were the women not being trained in offensive skills they were also not being trained realistically in defensive skills in an all-female class. Unless, of course, the Academy was worried about the stereotypical ‘aggressive’ lesbian attacking other women.

Women requested more conditioning courses and wanted to be required to take strength development in lieu of self defense II.⁷¹ Women routinely requested programs that would help them develop more upper body strength such as being required to perform pull-ups. One female cadet commented, “women should be allowed time to develop upper body strength skills before DPE starts penalizing them grade wise (i.e., loss of points for not being able to do a pull up)”.⁷² Some women felt as if DPE too often compared them to the men and expected women to keep up with them. Another female cadet wanted DPE to “use realistic standards for women and more concentration in traditionally weak female areas (i.e. upper body strength).”⁷³ One female cadet believed that women “should be able to use the weight machines in their company areas and also have chin-up bars provided to practice on.”⁷⁴ Based on this statement it seems as if women were not only not required, but not even encouraged, to work on their upper body strength.

⁷⁰ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1982, 1979. USMA.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Changes Made After the First Year

Col. James Anderson concluded that at the end of the first year of coeducation women cadets' performance "made it clear" that separate courses and orders of merit⁷⁵ for male and female cadets in physical education were necessary.⁷⁶ Susan Cahn argues that throughout the twentieth century "constant, almost compulsive comparison of male and female athletic performance "proved" the biological basis of gender inequality."⁷⁷ Cahn continues that when this comparison showed a performance gap male superiority appeared both normal and just.⁷⁸ All previous discussion and decisions centered on including women into the physical education program with minimal changes and emphasizing an essentially one-track system. However, the Department of Physical Education concluded that the physical performances were different enough that "two different courses emerged."⁷⁹

DPE believed that it became evident during the first physical fitness test that changes in the testing program would be necessary. For example, if the female and male cadets' performances on the two mile run were graded on the same scale, 61 women (86 percent) would have failed the test while only 52 men (4.8 percent) would have.⁸⁰ Similarly, if using the same grading scale for men and women in the physical ability test

⁷⁵ Order of Merit is a cadet's class standing among his or her peers.

⁷⁶ Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 93. USMA.

⁷⁷ Cahn, *Coming On Strong*, 224.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Adams, "Project Athena III," 93. USMA.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

77 (95 percent) of the women would have failed.⁸¹ Hence, officials changed the grading scale during the first year of integration.⁸²

As a result, on May 16, 1977 the Academic Board approved separate men's and women's fourth class physical education courses beginning the next academic year.⁸³ The Board approved continuing to instruct only men in boxing and wrestling and having women take two courses in self-defense instead. After the first year of integration, Project Athena reported that 69 percent of the women evaluated the self-defense classes as "above average" and "of great value" which officials seem to have used to continue to justify keeping the dual track in plebe courses.⁸⁴ The modified women's gymnastics course eliminated many upper body activities, replacing them with balance and agility exercises. Men and women continued to meet the same requirements in swimming. During the first year of coeducation, women did as well as the men in the swimming program. The upperclass physical education courses were still the same. Separate grading scales were only to be used on activities where physiological differences required them. The Academic Board justified separate standards based on the average women's times on tests being well below the minimums required for the men's standards. Men and women continued to be tested on the same items during the physical fitness tests but

⁸¹ Director of DPE, Memo to Office of the Dean, "Redesignation of the Fourth Class Physical Education Course," May 2, 1977. USMA.

⁸² It should be noted that the physical standards for women at West Point today are much higher than those in 1976 and West Point's standards for women both then and now have always been higher than those of the general Army.

⁸³ Adams, "Project Athena III," 95. USMA. The Academic Board made changes once again to the Fourth Class curriculum for the academic year 1979-80. The standard courses of swimming and wrestling for both men and women, boxing for men, and self-defense for women continued, but a course on the Foundations of Physical Performance replaced men's wrestling and women's self-defense II. The eliminated courses were then required for Third Class Cadets beginning in AY 1980-81. The Board felt the foundations course was more beneficial to the personal conditioning of the cadets as well as being beneficial later in their careers when they would be responsible for their unit's physical fitness.

⁸⁴ Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 96. USMA.

were graded using separate men's and women's scales. The adjustments made to the Indoor Obstacle Course included modifying the horse vault, the shelf, and the horizontal ladder.⁸⁵

Adjustments became necessary after women initially struggled in achieving single track standards. However, the reasons for these changes in standards were not well publicized, especially to the male cadets. As a result the male cadets perceived a lowering of physical standards to accommodate the women cadets. The cadets saw lower standards where the academy wanted them to see separate but equal standards and this perception hurt the acceptance of women by the male cadets. This was especially apparent when reviewing the data on leadership ratings and physical performance during CBT.⁸⁶

After three years standards had to be made tougher since women generally performed well. It begs the question that if standards had not been reduced in the first place would women have been able to reach them after all. For example, the flexed arm hang was used for the PAE but then women were required to do pull-ups once they were at West Point for their physical fitness tests. Thus, women were required to perform a more difficult test once they were actually there which could be interpreted as the Academy (perhaps unconsciously) setting up the women for failure. West Point standards were more stringent than Army standards anyhow. In addition, the scoring scale for the two-mile run for the women differed dramatically for women at West Point than for women in any other branch of the service. For example, women in the army,

⁸⁵ Beginning in the second year the courses were officially: PE 100 (men): Boxing, wrestling, swimming, men's gymnastics, 2-Mile Run (men's scale), PAT (men's scale), Obstacle Course (men's scale) PE 100 (women): self-defense, self-defense, swimming, women's gymnastics, 2-mile run (women's scale), PAT (women's scale), Obstacle course (women's scale)

⁸⁶ Questionnaire to Class of 1980, 1981 regarding performance in Fourth Class Physical Education Classes and CBT. USMA.

performing in running shoes, could receive a max score (100 percent) by completing two miles in 17:05. Female cadets, running in combat boots, failed the run at 17:20.

Equal Training vs. Equivalent Training

The initial emphasis on a single track followed by the inevitable dual track illustrates arguably the most important and most problematic concept during the integration of women: that of equal training versus equivalent training. Billie Mitchell argues that the American Army's "gender lie" is that of the woman officer's equality where military women receive equal pay for equal work yet face real, invisible barriers to the benefits of being an officer.⁸⁷ Since West Point trains many of the Army's female officers this gender lie of equality might start at the very beginning of their career. She argues that this gender lie is at the heart of the Army's thinking: the notion that "because intentions are "good" and standards are "gender-blind," there cannot be any gendered tension in the military except in the pathological thinking of a female malcontent."⁸⁸ Simply because West Point generally had good intentions in their planning does not mean that inequality was not the result. Mitchell argues that women cannot expect equality from the military or equal treatment from men unless women's standards on the Army Physical Readiness test are identical to men as only this could be true equality in the mind of the male-cadet.⁸⁹ She argues that the standards for women could be raised or the standards for men could be lowered but the important aspect is that they would be the same.

West Point planned to maintain strict equality in all nonphysical standards of admission and training. The justification statement for changing some of the physical

⁸⁷ Mitchell "The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie," 36.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Mitchell, "The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie," 42.

standards included in OPLAN 75-1 focused on the guiding Department of Physical Education (DPE) philosophy that, whenever feasible, “men and women cadets will be afforded identical opportunities in the physical education program.”⁹⁰ The vast majority of physical standards also remained identical however certain important changes occurred in the physical area.

Based on the “generally acknowledged” differences between the size and upper body strength between men and women officials decided to offer “selected equivalent training” to women. Based exclusively on physiological differences this different training was for the women only and would not be available to the men. In its first iteration, “selected equivalent training” called for simultaneous completion of “somewhat different exercises or training.”⁹¹ For example, officials foresaw lightening the back loads of women during extended road marches as long as minimum equipment essential for training was retained.⁹² The program of equivalent training supported the academy policy of “providing the women “equivalent” training in those areas where it is not possible or in the best interest of the cadets or the Army to provide “equal” training.” If based on the best interest of cadets or the Army then not all decisions were made solely on physiological differences as mandated by Congress.

⁹⁰ OPLAN 75-1, Appendix III to Annex A, Justification Statement, Planning for Women Cadets, Physical Education Curriculum for Women Cadets. USMA.

⁹¹ Brigadier General Walter F. Ulmer, “Policy Assumptions Regarding Women” Jan. 20, 1976. USMA.

⁹² If the exercise is primarily to develop endurance and march discipline, the weight of the load is relatively immaterial as long as the bearer is challenged. Women might not carry extra boots or extra ammunition. However, if the purpose of the exercise is to march to a rifle range and upon arrival fire a specified number of rounds of individually-carried ammunition, then all cadets must carry the same weight of ammunition or the objective content of the training is significantly altered.

In a January 1976 memo to commanders and directors, the Commandant of Cadets, Brigadier General Walter F. Ulmer wrote that “Equivalent Training” could be considered when:

A significant number of women cannot perform an activity due to physiological differences and it is obvious that repeated failure of the unaltered event will psychologically damage the motivated woman...

and

Mastery of the full scale version of the activity is not essential to the successful completion of military training⁹³

and

The equivalent version provides essentially the same type of training experience as the unaltered version...

and

The equivalent version is considered by the trainers and by both men and women cadets as an acceptable modification.⁹⁴

Equivalent training, also referred to as the “doctrine of comparable training” in one early document, was described as where the “relative times and performances reflect equivalent effort and/or output for both men and women.” In essence, officials addressed the perceived differences in physiology through comparable activities rather than identical ones so all cadets were theoretically challenged to equivalent levels of performance.

Further justifying differing physical standards, Superintendent Goodpaster reported that the Academy “was interested in equal effort rather than equal performance” and as such men and women were graded on separate scales in testing.⁹⁵ He also

⁹³ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 46. USMA. After three years this was changed to: Mastery of the full scale version of the activity is not considered essential to prepare female cadets for their expected duties as a commissioned officer.

⁹⁴ Brigadier General Walter F. Ulmer, “Policy Assumptions Regarding Women” Jan. 20, 1976. USMA.

⁹⁵ Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 30, 1977, 30. USMA.

explained the decision by the Academic Board to create separate men's and women's physical education as being "in the interest of equity, clarity and individual motivation" which also resulted in the creation of a separate physical education Order of Merit for men and women.⁹⁶

The Academy introduced the idea of "equivalent training" to the graduates as a justification for modifying parts of the physical training program.⁹⁷ The Academy explained equivalent training as readjusting "performance objectives for women to some point at which women would receive the same degrees of challenge that stronger men cadets would have reached in completing their more difficult programs." In this instance the Academy described equality as performing the same activities with different performance standards to give everyone the same challenge.

Prior to women's admittance, cadets questioned if being a leader meant treating everyone equally. Clearly the men were already wondering about how equal treatment would play out.⁹⁸ Cadets also wanted to know what type of training women would participate in and would it be easier training than the men would have. The number of questions regarding equality and training implies these issues were of significant importance to the male cadets. Most questions revolved around equality in training and menstruation.

The program also called for all physical ability and fitness tests, including items such as pull-ups and dips, to be administered to both men and women cadets. Changes would only happen if the performance of the women cadets was poor enough to mandate them. Consequently all physical tests were based on absolutely equal standards meaning women were initially tested with the same tests as well as same standards yet were not

⁹⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent, June 30, 1977, 30. USMA.

⁹⁷ *Assembly* June 1976. USMA.

⁹⁸ Cadet Questions on Policies Pertaining to the Admission of Women. USMA.

given the same physical training. It is little wonder that women had difficulty achieving the male standards at times when they were not given the same opportunities to improve their strength.

The plebe summer produced the first of many issues with equality. During Cadet Basic Training (CBT) women, more than men, frequently cited “equal treatment at West Point” as a reason for leaving after CBT.⁹⁹ Many women in the first class, especially during CBT, thought the male cadres treated them with “rigid equality” especially as related to physical training. However, inequitable treatment during CBT was the more frequent complaint by both men and women.

A study of perceptions of treatment during CBT concluded that women more frequently experienced instances of inequitable treatment.¹⁰⁰ This meant that both men and women felt that women had received more preferential, as well as harsher, treatment during CBT than other cadets. Women themselves reported more victimization (harsher than average treatment) and also more protection (kinder than average treatment).¹⁰¹

The authors of Project Athena interpreted the “kinder than average treatment” as women viewing the “legally prescribed changes in training standards” as special protection or kindness. The authors ascribed the harsher treatment to frustrated cadet leaders in charge of training who had to use different standards in physical training of men and women. As a result of this frustration the cadet leaders took out their frustration on poorly performing female cadets.

Male cadets saw women as receiving “inequitable treatment” during their plebe year from both cadets and officers. The men cited all of the following as examples of plebe women being given inequitable treatment:

⁹⁹ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 69. USMA.

¹⁰⁰ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 79. USMA.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

women being dated by upperclassmen (a regulations offense at USMA), of media coverage focusing exclusively on women, of women being provided greater privacy by having doors on latrine stalls and curtains on showers, of women's club teams, especially basketball, having larger budgets and more away games than plebe men's teams, of men being found deficient in OPE with absolute physical performance surpassing that of women, and women frequently being sponsored by officer's families anxious to meet the pioneer women.¹⁰²

Particularly upsetting to the male plebes were the perceived instances of special relationships or formal recognition prior to the traditional recognition day ceremonies at the end of the year. Men appeared to be most negative toward any perceived instances of officers, or high ranking cadets, overreaction and preferential treatment toward women.

The women plebes, on the other hand, cited numerous instances of experiencing particularly harsh treatment during their first year. They reported being the target of harsh rumors and jokes but more importantly, reported the toll it took psychologically of being physically integrated into the Corps but not having been accepted into the Corps as a fellow peer by many of the cadets.¹⁰³ Women were also constantly made aware of "basic sex differences" that were difficult to overcome such as "higher pitched voices, which weren't "commanding," and shorter marching strides, which weren't "military.'" Some women felt that even if they made it through their first year their male classmates would not take orders from them in subsequent years. Another significant complaint was that some women felt it was necessary to sacrifice their femininity and basic self-image to appear as one of the boys in order to gain acceptance.

The study also showed that there was a widespread perception among all of the cadets that other cadets, not themselves, received special consideration due to race, ethnicity, or sex. The authors found the extent of jealousy to be alarming. They felt

¹⁰² Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 137. USMA.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

cadets used different standards, based largely on individual beliefs about women's roles in society, for reporting discrimination directed at themselves versus others.

Male cadets most closely critiqued the women in all areas related to physical performance. The Department of Physical Education never expressed anything other than a one-track philosophy in evaluating men and women, causing men to resent women being evaluated separately in certain physical ability tests like the 2-mile run. Project Athena authors acknowledge that this turn of events could have been predicted and men more prepared for the eventuality that DPE would have to grade women separately on certain physical events. The men were constantly told that women would be held to a single track and then to have it suddenly change created a significant problem for the women.

According to Project Athena I, nearly all women, and many men, accepted an "approximately-equal-with-exceptions policy."¹⁰⁴ This report acknowledged that a large minority of men did not accept this idea and wanted equal treatment with no exceptions. However, towards the end of the first year of integration the majority of men surveyed wanted absolutely equal treatment for both men and women in the physical arena, regardless of the exception granted to women by the law admitting women to the Academy.¹⁰⁵ This means that, at least when surveyed, male cadets wanted women to participate in boxing and wrestling. The vast majority of comments wanted absolute equality even within the physical education classes including boxing:

since women are coming here though, I do believe they should be treated exactly as men. I in no way enjoyed boxing and punching my classmates and being punched by them. It hurt to stand in tough and retaliate. It is an experience no Plebe will ever forget. It is grossly unfair to male cadets if women do not have to go through boxing and hurt and have to dig inside themselves in the

¹⁰⁴ Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 31. USMA.

¹⁰⁵ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, "Women Cadets at the United States Military Academy." USMA.

same way. I often was hurt gradewise by boxing because my jaw or head or arms ached all day from it and I in no way wanted to go to school. I couldn't think as well when my head ached or it hurt to move my jaw as I could otherwise. No one has any kind of Plebe year without boxing, and women will be much less welcomed and respected for not taking it.”¹⁰⁶

Male cadets also complained that some men were separated from the Academy for physical performance that was acceptable for women.¹⁰⁷ Since DPE used separate grading scales for men and women on several tests men generally had to perform more repetitions of an event, lift more weight, or perform an event in a shorter time period to earn the same grade as a woman doing fewer repetitions, lifting less weight, or taking a longer time.

The Academy used the male as the norm when equality was interpreted literally. Officials and cadets thought that what worked for men should work for women. Men especially wanted absolute equal treatment on several policy issues regarding hair-cuts, pushups, admission standards, and others. As Judith Stiehm points out, “the idea that women’s heads should be almost shaved, as were men’s, was acceptable, while the idea of men’s wearing women’s haircuts or clothing was so unimaginable as not to be queried.”¹⁰⁸ Male cadets, as well as some officials, also feared reverse discrimination.

As indicated in the 1980 Superintendent’s Annual Report, even after four years there was some confusion over what was meant by the term “equivalent standards” which became a serious problem to the success of integration.¹⁰⁹ Men wanted everything “completely equal” in both training and branch assignments.¹¹⁰ This means that many

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women.” USMA.

¹⁰⁷ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” xv. USMA.

¹⁰⁸ Stiehm, *Bring Me Men and Women*, 123.

¹⁰⁹ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 76. USMA.

¹¹⁰ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women.” USMA.

men wanted women to become combat leaders in order to have equality at West Point. Superintendent Goodpaster recognized that this problem needed to be resolved before the integration of women at West Point could be complete. He noted that the academy recognized prior to the admittance of women that some physical standards for women would need adjustment to make exercise or training more realistic. This begs the question why they did not say this initially instead of constantly heralding the one-track standard. However, some cadets and faculty did not accept the idea that “evaluating standards for men and women can differ in the same event and still be equally demanding.” The Academy believed they had adequately demonstrated to the cadets that the different standards were necessary but that they should not take that as an indication that women were in some way less capable of serving in the military after graduation. However, this was clearly not the case and in their justification to the cadets the Academy did not say the women were equal cadets but merely that they required separate standards. The Academy did realize however that as long as the idea of equivalent training was not accepted, men “will continue to use physical performance differences as an artificial headwind to the integration of women in physical development.”¹¹¹

Project Athena IV concluded that over the first three years women had more trouble in physical development and training than in any other aspect of academy life in part because many male cadets did not fully understand and support the doctrine of equivalent training. Many male cadets and faculty still did not see the equivalent version as an acceptable modification to the physical program. This final report concluded that these different physical training standards based on physiological differences remained as a barrier of non-acceptance for women. Much of this manifested itself in the leadership ratings given to women by male cadets who evaluated the women’s leadership performance primarily on their physical performance activities.

¹¹¹ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 140. USMA.

The general conclusion of Project Athena IV was that as a group, women had not reached their full potential primarily due to the physical standards and equivalent training. One problem complicating the physical training standards was the fact that performance standards for men were always based upon at least ten years of previous data on male performances whereas no such data base existed for the women. This data was still being collected for women thus the equivalent training would potentially continue to change.

West Point was a unique situation during this time period because of this debate about equality vs. equivalency. While the national debate generally centered on the idea of granting women equality, at West Point women generally had equality of opportunity. More importantly, in the areas in which women were not receiving equal treatment, it was the men who needed convincing that it was equal, not the women. The women were generally in agreement with the idea of equivalent being equal while the male cadets, at least on paper, were the ones who wanted strict equality for women. It was the men who wanted women to be treated equally, not necessarily the women, which was the opposite of what was occurring outside of the Academy with the Women's Movement. The male cadets generally believed that women were not equal to men physically but they wanted them to be treated equally.

Regarding women entering the academy, one male cadet said he “would be for it if women were treated exactly as men—but they won't be; already things have been made too easy for women.”¹¹² This was a popular sentiment, as most male cadets thought too many things had been changed to make the system easier for women to come here. The men accepted women coming only if officials “make them meet our standards—don't bring us down to theirs. There is going to be a lot of reverse

¹¹² Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women.” USMA.

discrimination because of the women coming. If everything is going to be equal let's make everything equal and not just make the standards lower for women."¹¹³

Men were especially worried about double standards and did not want standards changed at all by the admittance of women. One cadet wrote, "If there are girls willing to try this place, let them go ahead, but don't change the standards at all. No double standards especially."¹¹⁴ Another worried that, "if standards are dropped in any aspect of cadet life or training because of the female, then I would feel a personal loss as to the individuality and reputation of the Corps. If women can't do what we've done, everything, then they're not cadets and don't belong here."¹¹⁵ The Academy virtually set women up to fail by insisting on the dual track initially while publicizing a single track and by keeping women from participating in boxing and wrestling.

It was once again the male cadets who were pushing for women to be given a chance for equality. One cadet believed, "next year will be a good chance to test the 'women's lib' belief that women can do anything men can do. I don't think things should be made any easier for them, nor do I believe things should be made harder. They should be given a fair chance to prove whether or not they can 'cut it' as cadets. If not, then make the changes necessary, but give them a fair shot first."¹¹⁶ In these certain instances within physical education DPE did not give women the opportunity to see if they could "cut it" as cadets. A small section of male cadets thought equality was necessary for West Point to remain effective.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, "Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women." USMA.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Office of the Director of Institutional Research, "Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women." USMA.

¹¹⁷ Priest, "Content of Cadet Comments on the Integration of Women." USMA.

Those male cadets who did not want equality based their views on societal beliefs such as one male cadet who wrote, “since the inception of Christian society, the women’s virginity and femininity have been cherished qualities, and her role in the home as the mother and homemaker have placed her on a plateau above the normal level of life. To make her the male’s ‘equal’ would be to bring her down into the gutter of everyday life; the greatest fall since the fall of Eden.”¹¹⁸ Similarly, another wrote:

“To me, women hold a place higher than man. By striving for equality, they’ll lose much. Now they have the option of marriage or a career when choosing what to do with their lives. Men cannot choose marriage or a career when choosing what to do with their lives. Men cannot choose marriage as a means of support. By seeking real equality, women will lose their advantage.”¹¹⁹

Several women, also, did not feel as if equality was necessarily in their best interest. Many agreed that standards should be different for male and female cadets. Some thought that standards should be the same in classes but different for the two mile run and physical aptitude test. Female cadets also suggested making even more alterations to gymnastics to have even less in common with the men. One female cadet wanted the indoor obstacle course eliminated entirely as a test for women “due to this lack of upper body strength, the test is not a fair evaluation of women’s physical fitness” and that “modifications have proved inadequate.”¹²⁰ Others agreed arguing, “the O.C. needs to be revised for women or work more on the building of upper body strength for women” and “the tests don’t even begin to evaluate women’s physical fitness. They were developed to test men and women should be evaluated emphasizing something other than upper body strength.”¹²¹ One woman suggested that DPE modify the obstacle course

¹¹⁸ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women.” USMA.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1980, 1979. USMA.

¹²¹ Ibid.

not for women but for short people since she was “tired of being told I’m deficient in height.”¹²² Several women requested better running programs in order to help better prepare for physical fitness tests.¹²³

Others wanted standards in classes based on a separate scale consisting of attitude, degree of improvement and amount learned rather than strictly physical outcomes. One female cadet wrote, “I find some difficult because of my lack of ability but if other girls can meet the standards than I either work at it or take the average grade because I am average compared to the rest of the women. Though when they don’t change the scale for men and women I find it extremely difficult to compete with the men and feel defeated from the start.”¹²⁴ Some women did want tougher standards even if they were separate from the men. For example, one female cadet agreed that standards should be different but “more realistically different! Women’s standards are too low (original emphasis).”¹²⁵

Wanda Wakefield argues that in the past sports often served to divide and alienate those in the military rather than create a unified, fit fighting force.¹²⁶ This is certainly the case even though the vast majority of the physical program was identical for men and women. The decision to have women take self-defense courses instead of boxing and wrestling created more division amongst the cadets. These deviations occurred during the plebe year when unity is first created. The upperclass courses were the same but the split had already occurred during their first year and it was difficult to unify the class and

¹²² Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1982, 1979. USMA.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1980, 1979. USMA.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 139.

the corps after that since the rift had already been created. The plebes did not share an identical foundation which set the scene for the next four years.

Cadet Gail Dwyer noted that the different classes caused animosity among the males who thought the females were “getting over.” Dwyer did not see these classes as an easy way out as they were taught by Sue Peterson who the women referred to as The Dragon Lady since she was so hard. Dwyer described one situation that she thought exemplified the fact the women were not “getting over”:

She blows her whistle and you scurry up and try to defend yourself, but before you're even off the ground, you have failed to successfully block a round-house kick and you've been hurled through the air across the room. Then you hear the Dragon Lady say, very matter-of-factly, “That was O'Sullivan! You can throw her farther than that!” This was “getting over”?¹²⁷

The result of the Academy constantly highlighting differences in physiology in hopes of helping male cadets accept the changes was in effect causing more problems. Male cadets routinely believed women were “getting over” because of the different standards. One comment written by a member of the first co-ed Class of '80 representing the strongest feelings was written by one male cadet who wished “they would stop letting the girls get over so easily and live up to the same standards as men, including and especially the physical standards. It's amazing how most (90 percent) of the women here are physical disasters who cannot even do 1 pullup. It makes me sick how they are giving this place a bad name.”¹²⁸ One female cadet from the Class of 1980 reports that, “a frequent complaint is that women haven't experienced the “stress” of boxing/wrestling. “If you haven't been hit in the face—you'll never lead during war!” Perhaps a more stressful program, such as boxing, would be helpful. I've attended boxing “clinics” and I

¹²⁷ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 78.

¹²⁸ Priest, “Content of Cadet Comments on the Integration of Women.” USMA.

believe a woman could adapt to and perform in boxing.”¹²⁹ Some women did want to participate in boxing if for no other reason than to earn more acceptance.

Conclusion

The initial operating plan called for few changes in the overall program and only within the physical arena. All summer training would be identical for the first coed class as would be all physical fitness and ability tests. All classes would be the same that first year with the exception that women would not be allowed to participate in boxing and wrestling but rather would have to take self-defense I and II instead.

Officials publicized that changes were only going to be made based only on a physiological difference or when women could not perform an activity. However, women were not given the opportunity to see whether or not they could perform in boxing and wrestling which labeled them as other from the start since a fundamental experience during the plebe year was plebe boxing.

The Academy justified their decision to exclude women from boxing and wrestling through various means including physiological, medical, and societal reasons even though the mandate allowed only for physiological differences. West Point created the perception that women were too weak to participate and could not handle the physicality since they were not even given the opportunity. This reaffirmed the belief that it was already “known” that women were too weak to participate in the ‘manly’ or strength sports. The Academy also constructed women as eternally wounded simply through the difference that women have breasts. The majority of the medical research centered on the female breast and the supposed danger posed to the breast through physical activity. Officials looked to medical and scientific professionals and research for reasons to exclude women and paint them, whether consciously or not, as the weaker

¹²⁹ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1980, 1979. USMA.

sex who was in danger of becoming an unfit mother based on dangers to their breasts and menstruation.

The Academy also justified their decision by claiming they were basing it on the roles they assumed men and women would have once in the regular army. This was another way to protect the symbolic role of combat as the last remaining area in the military off limits to women. Officials believed based on the possibility, not certainty, that men might be in the infantry they should be trained in both offensive and defensive skills. Since it was believed women would never be in combat the Academy felt women needed to be trained only in defensive skills. By not training women in offensive moves West Point was essentially assuring that no woman officer could have the possibility of going into combat since she was not trained to do so. However West Point inadvertently put women at risk from both the enemy and from within the military by giving them no means of attack assuring that they would always play the role of victim on defense.

West Point based their final justification on societal reasons which were legally not allowed to be considered yet formed a significant basis of their argument. Much of the reasoning focused on men's "natural" advantage in upper body strength, the risk of breast injury and the risk of defacement. Officials worried that women would be "social freaks" and that men fighting women was socially unacceptable. They do not mention why women could not box or wrestle other women except to say it would be unfair to them. The Academy believed that women would care about their physical image and as such would not want to risk damaging her face or breasts.

In general the women thought the physical education program was not too physically demanding nor were the physical fitness test standards too high for women. The majority of women also felt the plebe year physical education program for women should be as equal as possible to the men's program. However, a different survey at the end of the first year indicated that many women agreed that testing standards should be different for men and women.

Contrary to Academy reports, the women hated the self-defense classes and many would have welcomed the chance to participate in boxing to help earn the respect and acceptance of her peers. The self-defense course was not valuable in numerous ways not the least of which was the fact it was not coed and women were only learning to defend themselves by attacks from their female classmates. The Academy was withholding both offensive training as well as defensive training since being attack by another woman was not a realistic situation. Women requested more conditioning courses and wanted ways to develop their strength in lieu of taking the self-defense courses. By denying women the opportunity to develop their upper body strength the Academy is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of women's lesser upper body strength.

Officials recognized a problem with the pull-up requirement of the Physical Aptitude Examination and chose to change it to the flexed-arm hang. Yet they chose to keep the pull-up as the fitness requirement once admitted to West Point. Aside from the fact that the four tests on the PAE hardly relate to actual military skills, they are supposed to predict how well an applicant will perform physically once at West Point. In a bait and switch, most women were able to perform a flexed-arm hang but then failed when asked to perform pull-ups as part of the physical education fitness testing. So West Point allowed women in publicizing that they could meet all of the physical requirements. This made things more difficult on them when male cadets expected them to be able to do pull-ups and then they could not.

West Point insisted on publicizing a single track for men and women the first year which made the inevitable change to a dual track all the more obvious. Since the reasons for the change were not well publicized men interpreted the different standards as a lowering of standards to accommodate the women who were "getting over." Women were still tested on the same activities but now had different standards. Standards would eventually be made tougher after a few years.

The concept of equivalent training versus equal training became a central part of the problem with physical requirements. Even though the dual track was still essentially the same program initially created men wanted strict equality especially in the physical arena. Women would receive equivalent training based on physical differences that would theoretically challenge them to the same levels of the men. The men were not interested in the Academy's wishes for equal effort rather than equal performance.

Both men and women saw equal treatment at West Point as a problem since women did not want rigid equal treatment in physical training and the men did. Even though Project Athena I reported that nearly all women and men accepted this idea of "approximately-equal-with-exceptions policy" the majority of men after one year wanted absolutely equal treatment in physical training with no exceptions including boxing and wrestling. After three years, women still had more trouble in physical development and training than in any other aspect of academy life due, in part, to the idea of equivalent training.

CHAPTER V

ATHLETICS

As Messner and Sabo argue sport is an institution created by and for men.¹ As such it has helped to perpetuate the ideology of male superiority and masculine hegemony.² They continue that women's movement into sport has "challenged the naturalization of gender difference and inequality, which has been a basic aspect of the institution of sport."³ Since West Point was literally an institution created by and for men, when combined with women's entrance into the military academy, women's athletics played an important role in its integration by women especially since "all cadets are athletes; they breathed, they ate, they were athletes."⁴ The fact that the Academy placed so much importance on athletics and it was such a key component of being a cadet makes it especially important that the Academy denied women access to certain aspects of the athletics program. Not surprisingly athletic opportunities and resources were not equal when women entered the academy. However, the Academy gave significant attention to the women's basketball team as a way to promote women at the Academy and acknowledge their success in athletics in lieu of their success in the military. In another instance of the Academy ignoring the fact women were succeeding in military training they preferred to focus on showing the public, and the cadets, women succeeding in athletics, specifically women's basketball. Apparently, showing women in athletic uniforms was less threatening than showing them in military uniforms. The Academy's

¹ Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, 9.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 82.

approach to women's sport undermined the solidarity of the men and women as well as amongst the women themselves.

Changes to Intercollegiate Program

Competition has always been paramount at West Point especially in athletics. As Herman J. Koehler, Master of the Sword said, "If we have athletes, we shall never be without soldiers."⁵ Psychiatrist Richard U'Ren argues that during his time at West Point he observed that any cadet who was physically inept received more harassment than one who showed athletic ability.⁶ U'Ren notes that the companies are in perpetual competition in every aspect of academy life. Cadets who belong to companies which attain superiority, especially in athletics, receive special privileges. U'Ren argues that the academy spends so much time and money in athletics because they believe sports develop "special qualities as essential in a fighting man: an aggressive, competitive spirit and the strength and endurance to overcome severe physical hardships."⁷

Cadets who do not participate in intercollegiate athletics must participate in intramural competition with their cadet companies. Officers serving in World War II remembered West Point's intramural program as being invaluable to their training as it allowed them to "develop skills of leadership, poise under pressure, and confidence that they could give and receive physical pain" and encouraged their men to play sports.⁸ The support for sports programs for male and female cadets derives from the following philosophy of the Academy's concept of physical development: "The development by means of participation in athletic programs of the attributes of aggressiveness, self-

⁵ Betros, *West Point*, 233.

⁶ U'Ren, *Ivory Fortress*, 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 136.

confidence, perseverance, courage, determination, the will to win, and the ability to think and to act purposefully under physical stress.”⁹

OPLAN-75 justified the changes made to the athletic program determining that there should be a “full range” of intercollegiate sports participation for women cadets and that women’s athletics program would be an integral part of the institution’s intercollegiate program. The only modifications were that women were not allowed on men’s football, 150-lb. football, lacrosse, soccer, basketball, baseball, or wrestling squads,¹⁰ because these were contact sports involving “exceptional skill levels and physical attributes.”¹¹ Nothing in this policy necessarily excludes women; but they have historically been denied the right to play contact sports and this history shaped West Point’s vision of female cadets’ athletics. They noted that women were at a “severe disadvantage competing with and against men at the intercollegiate level,”¹² and while a special supplement to the post newspaper assured cadets that DPE would “like to see women participate in any sport they can” there were several that would only be open to them when there were enough women at the academy to field an all-woman team.¹³ The academy was supportive of contact sports if women were playing other women.

Superintendent Berry approved these adaptations in concept but also wanted to know the justification for each sport for which women were denied permission to participate. The Board of Visitors position was that the Academy “must wait to see what talents and what level of competence the admitted women bring with them” with regard

⁹ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 53. USMA.

¹⁰ OPLAN-75-1, Justification Statement, Subject: Women’s Intercollegiate Athletic Program, July 10, 1975. USMA.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Pointer View*, “A Note to the Corps,” Dec. 1975. USMA.

to intercollegiate athletics. Once again women had to prove themselves to be athletes or competent in sport before being allowed to have a team.

The various justifications articulated all centered on the violence of the particular sport and the presumed strength required to play it. Officials believed football was a “violent sport with frequent, explosive body contact which may subject a woman player to serious injury.”¹⁴ They described hockey as an “extremely rough” sport in which body checking plays a constant and important role. They also barred women from lacrosse because that sport was “an intensely rough sport” in which body contact was encouraged and the “use of the stick increases the ferocity of play.” Officials thought that even though soccer was not as rough as other contact sports, it had the possibility of body contact which could injure a woman. Finally they described wrestling as a sport in which “upper body strength” was most important and would give an overwhelming advantage to the man.

The architects of the women’s intercollegiate program designed it in phases that “gradually integrated women into selected men’s teams and lay foundation for separate women’s teams if appropriate.”¹⁵ Athletics is an important and visible part of being a cadet and in taking so long to create any varsity level teams West Point diminished the importance and status of women’s athletics. During Phase I, meant to take two years, women would not actually be a part of any varsity level intercollegiate athletics; more specifically in the first year they were limited to intramural activities. Individual women were allowed to try to join the individual men’s sports of cross country, rifle, fencing, skiing, golf, squash, gymnastics, swimming, track, tennis and pistol but they could not participate in the “contact sports” of baseball, basketball, boxing, football, 150-lb

¹⁴ OPLAN 75-1, Annex K, Intercollegiate Athletics. USMA.

¹⁵ Ibid.

football, hockey, lacrosse, rugby, soccer and wrestling.¹⁶ Exceptions for the “unusual woman athlete” could possibly be made in baseball, basketball and soccer.¹⁷ So the only way to have a chance to play a contact sport would be as an unusual and somehow a different type of woman. Phase II was planned for years 3 and 4 and it was only then that women’s teams for the following sports were organized, and only if interest and numbers permitted: basketball, field hockey, volleyball, lacrosse, fencing, golf, track, soccer, tennis and gymnastics.¹⁸ Phase III included the implementation of the program to include athletic screening of incoming classes and membership in the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW).

Planning and Evaluating the Athletics Program

In the first year the Academy limited women’s athletics to intramural participation only, establishing basketball, gymnastics, softball and volleyball as club sports in the winter of 1976. Women participated against men in track intramurals even though women were thought to be at a definite disadvantage and, even when presented with the opportunity to change sports or preferences, chose to continue doing so. Women also indicated they would “rather compete in their companies than on women-only teams at battalion or regimental level.”¹⁹ DPE anticipated adding field hockey, swimming, and tennis teams as club sports during the second year. Officials planned intercollegiate teams for women for “the future” and only when women’s club teams could prove that they could be competitive at that level. However, it would be difficult to know if they could play at that level if they were never scheduled to play better competition. A

¹⁶ OPLAN 75-1, Annex K, Intercollegiate Athletics. USMA.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 100. USMA.

primary argument against creating intercollegiate teams was that there were “too few women at USMA to support any intercollegiate teams.”²⁰ This, however, was not true based on the number of women on the club teams. For example, women’s basketball had plenty of numbers for a team since 14 women participated in club basketball. Similarly, 11 women cadets participated in gymnastics, 17 in soccer, and 15 in track.

During the second year (1977-78) a memo claimed “sports would be fully integrated into the overall athletic program depending on cadet interest and talent.”²¹ This did not hold true however. Even though when surveyed women expressed an interest for more sports, the Academy did not consider expanding the sports available to women. Officials reiterated a commitment to integrate women cadets into the total athletic program yet only the women’s basketball team became a varsity intercollegiate team during the second year of integration. As members of the varsity sports teams, women were eligible to receive varsity awards. With only one varsity team only those on women’s basketball were eligible for awards.²² Women were still able to compete with men in all intramurals except contact sports. More women cadets competed on intercollegiate and club squad teams than on intramural teams since there was only one intercollegiate team. Women cadets were allowed to compete for positions on the following men’s varsity intercollegiate teams: fencing, golf, pistol, rifle, skiing and squash.²³ This year a caveat was added to the requirement that women’s club sport teams must show they were ready for intercollegiate competition. Now, the elevation to varsity intercollegiate status would also depend on availability of facilities, finances and

²⁰ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 106. USMA.

²¹ Major General Raymond Murphy, Memo to Athletic Committee, Analysis of the Women’s Athletic Program, June 8, 1979. USMA.

²² Army ‘A’, JV ‘A’, Monogram and Class Numeral

²³ Vitters, “Project Athena II,” 65. USMA.

personnel. Women's club teams included: gymnastics, cross country, indoor and outdoor track, team handball, tennis, softball, swimming, and volleyball.²⁴ Contrary to the planning, no field hockey team was added since it was a contact sport. The authors of Project Athena assumed that "one area in which interest may already exist, unsupported to date, is in dance and ballet."²⁵ They ignored the interest women actually expressed yet assumed that being female women would be interested in dance and ballet. The authors argue that "the opportunity for athletic competition for women cadets is just as diverse and challenging as it is for men cadets." What they neglect to mention is the stark differences in varsity status and general support.

Beginning in the third year (1978-79) officials designated the nine women's teams of basketball, softball, track (indoor), track (outdoor), swimming, cross country, gymnastics, tennis, and volleyball as intercollegiate (but not all varsity) and the AIAW which West Point joined for women's athletics this year recognized them all.²⁶ West Point was forced to designate these sports as intercollegiate sports (some still at the club level) in order to compete on the AIAW national level and to schedule AIAW member institutions. The two club sports of women's team handball and women's lacrosse were also available yet there were still no separate women's teams at the intramural level, as the Academy felt that it had met its obligation in terms of offering enough athletic opportunities for women (even though the AIAW was the cause for the elevation of most of what was offered) and that to add any more would further dilute the numbers of good women athletes per sport.

²⁴ Vitters, "Project Athena II," 65. USMA.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Adams, "Project Athena III," 103. USMA. 9 intercollegiate sports for women, 23 for men; total participation is 183/257 for women versus 1000/3600 for men.

Each of the nine teams was assigned a specific level which indicated its rank in the athletic hierarchy and the amount of support given. Those designated as Level I were full varsity, Level II was junior varsity, and Level III denoted a club sport. The athletic committee reviewed the level designations annually and recommended either to elevate or to lower a team's level. According to the team's "caliber of competition, the demonstrated performance of that team, its indicated potential, demonstrated interest, and the recommendation of the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics."²⁷

After two years of DPE controlled women's sports, which was similar to how physical education departments in civilian colleges oversaw women's athletics, the women's intercollegiate athletic program moved under the management and administration of the Office of the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics (ODIA), a relatively quick shift in control to the department which also controlled men's athletics. The ODIA was responsible for all aspects of the women's program including determination of team strengths, length of season, number of contests, scheduling contests, development of budgets, procurement of uniforms, supplies and equipment, facilities scheduling and prioritization, team support activities, recommending the contracting of coaches, sports publicity, and establishing criteria for athletic awards.²⁸

There was much talk of equity from the ODIA yet the facts and their actions showed the disparity between men's and women's athletics. ODIA stated that beginning in this year if there were not enough women to form a full intercollegiate team, those women who had the ability would be allowed to train on a comparable men's team. The Director also said that the financial support for women's sports was "similar" to that for men, although surveys show that the women would not agree with this. ODIA allocated

²⁷ Memo for Head of Departments and Activities, General Policies and Responsibilities for the Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Program, Jul 28, 1978. USMA.

²⁸ Ibid.

women's sports approximately 6 percent of the 1977-78 athletic budget. Another disparity was that even by the third year there was no "key sport" for women. "Key sport" was a designation given to a primary sport in season like football or basketball which would get priority in scheduling facilities. Even though women's basketball had been elevated the previous year and was the most high profile female sport, ODIA still did not designate it as being important.

One of the most important and public aspects of the intercollegiate program that women were denied access to until the fifth year was the Army-Navy rivalry. Arguably the best rivalry in college sports, the first Army-Navy football game took place on November 29, 1890. Mazur, et al. argue that the academy and its alumni "place heavy importance on the success of the varsity sports program, particularly football, and particularly against the U.S. Naval Academy."²⁹ John Feinstein describes the Army-Navy contest as a unique rivalry that stands above the rest.³⁰ For the week leading up to a contest against another service academy, the cadets plan and participate in "different activities the week of the contest to raise team spirit and enthusiasm for the event."³¹ A former Army football coach recounted that nothing came close to the Army-Navy rivalry saying, "Nothing in the world is quite like Army-Navy week at the two academies. For all intents and purposes, all rules cease to exist."³² A former Navy coach called it a "round-the-clock, twelve-months-a-year obsession with Army-Navy."³³

Navy coach Weatherbie said the Army-Navy game was unique since "no rivalry had the kind of history that it had; no two teams shared the same kind of experiences their

²⁹ Mazur and Keating, "Military Rank Attainment of a West Point Class," 133. USMA.

³⁰ Feinstein, *Army vs Navy: A Civil War*, xi.

³¹ Stewart, *The Corps of Cadets*, 63.

³² Feinstein, *Army vs Navy: A Civil War*, 11.

³³ Feinstein, *Army vs Navy: A Civil War*, 47.

two teams shared—and might share in the future.”³⁴ Feinstein argues that the game is important because it is not a hostile rivalry, but rather one of spirit and the student bodies and teams all “understand that although they are battling each other on the playing field, they may join forces to fight another day on the real field of battle.”³⁵ This feeling is summed up by a famous quote immortalized at West Point by General Douglas MacArthur who said, “Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that, upon other fields, on other days, will bear the fruits of victory.”

The women wanted to play Navy as evidenced by their comments. Yet even though women wanted it West Point and the Naval Academy agreed that competition between Army and Navy women’s teams would not begin before the 1981-82 season.³⁶ This meant that two classes of women would go their entire West Point careers without ever getting to compete against another academy, especially their rival Navy. The academy denied these women the competition and importance of this rivalry recognized by the entire corps as being a vital part of the West Point experience. This also denied women the opportunity to unite with other academy women after they leave their respective academies based on the belief that the Army-Navy game unites players later in their careers. Limiting women from the Army-Navy rivalry was a key way to contain the spread of women in the military and into those activities that are coded most as masculine.

After three years the athletic committee analyzed the progress of the women’s athletic program and concluded that the number of sports for women at West Point had a “deleterious effect” on the quality. Noting that West Point attracted a more well-rounded type of female athlete rather than an individual who was highly skilled in one particular

³⁴ Feinstein, *Army vs Navy: A Civil War*, 337.

³⁵ Feinstein, *Army vs Navy: A Civil War*, 338.

³⁶ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 56. USMA.

sport, the committee saw it as a problem that the top female athletes were spread thin among the various teams meaning that lesser skilled women participated in intercollegiate competition for which they were not properly qualified.³⁷ This not only had an impact on the intercollegiate program but the intramural one as well. After three years, too many women were on Corps Squad teams leaving too few for any type of women's intramural program and those who participated in the men's program had a hard time. They were the "least skilled" athletes on their teams, had the least amount of playing time, and their male teammates mostly saw them as a "hindrance."

The committee proposed several options to improve the performance of the women's sports program with the most realistic suggestion being to begin recruiting in most sports in order to raise all women's teams to Division I and be competitive at that level.³⁸ There were mitigating factors to be considered however. The USMA balanced profile as determined by the Academic Board provided that 10-20 percent should be athletes. That means for a women's class of 110, 11 to 22 could be recruited athletes. However to reach the desired numbers the Academy would need to recruit approximately 55 women each year which would exceed the limited number of women West Point wanted. The committee also worried that if 50 percent of each class were athletes it would create two types of cadets and would be unhealthy for the Corps. The committee also worried that as more institutions became compliant with Title IX West Point would lose its financial advantage as other institutions began to offer scholarships.

³⁷ 94 percent of women were in intercollegiate athletics as opposed to 36 percent of male cadets.

³⁸ The estimated minimum numbers of highly skilled women required at West Point was: basketball 12, gymnastics 10, tennis 10, track and field 20, swimming 15, volleyball 12, cross country 8, and softball 15.

Title IX

The passage of Title IX in 1972 played little role in the planning for women's athletics. In fact, it was not until 1979 after women had already been at the Academy for three years that a USMA Athletic Committee developed a Title IX Working Group to determine if West Point was in compliance. This working group was concerned only with varsity level athletics and not club squads and any recommendations would begin in the 1979-80 academic year.

It should be noted that technically West Point is not required to comply with Title IX. Section 901 of Title IX requires that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." One exception to this rule is "this section shall not apply to an educational institution whose primary purpose is the training of individuals for the military services of the United States, or the merchant marine."³⁹ This exception does not apply when military training is tangential to the primary purpose of the institution as in the case of ROTC courses at a public university. In a memo to Col. Anderson in DPE the Superintendent declared that "policy and constitutional considerations (in the broad sense of "equal protection") required USMA to equitably support women's intercollegiate athletics."⁴⁰ Therefore, although strict compliance was not required, it was "advisable" to comply "with the spirit" of Title IX.⁴¹

³⁹ Sex Discrimination Regulations; Hearings before the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education of the Committee on Education and Labor. House of Representatives, Ninety-fourth Congress, Review of regulations to implement Title IX of Public Law 92-318 conducted pursuant to sec. 431 of the general education provisions act. 1975

⁴⁰ Memo to James Anderson in DPE, Draft USMA Title IX Study April 24, 1979. USMA.

⁴¹ Ibid.

In the third year of integration, the working group examined the women's athletic program to determine the level of compliance. The working group felt that no more sports could be added for women without disrupting the existing programs. The participation rate for women was already greater for women than for men (95 percent vs. 36 percent) so to achieve equality of per capita expenditure West Point would be going beyond what they felt would be a "reasonable division of resources based on the male and female share of student population."⁴²

As a result, the athletic committee decided the best way to show compliance with Title IX would be through the rule of proportionality and a demonstration by West Point that the interests and abilities of female students were being met and were funded with a "fair share of resources" based on male-female percentages of the student population while "causing less impact on the men's program."⁴³ To determine if West Point was in compliance through the rule of proportionality the athletic committee took stock of the various aspects of the athletic program and made recommendations accordingly. Not surprisingly, the academy was not in compliance in nearly every category.

One such area concerned the opportunity to compete and practice. The working group debated the merits of continuing the current practice of scheduling women's practices and contests around the men's schedule or to require "integrated, non-discriminatory" scheduling.⁴⁴ There was a general concern that the option to require integrated, non-discriminatory scheduling would inconvenience the men's program and disturb their exclusive use of the facilities. Yet despite these concerns the committee decided that "the benefits of eliminating this discriminatory procedure and source of

⁴² Memo to James Anderson in DPE, Draft USMA Title IX Study April 24, 1979. USMA.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

irritation for women's coaches seem worthwhile" as long as the resulting inconveniences for the men's programs could be minimized through efficient scheduling.⁴⁵ The language used makes it seem as if fixing the discriminatory procedures was done simply because it was irritating to the women coaches. The fact that it was indeed discriminatory did not seem to be a major factor because had it been they would not have worried so much about inconveniencing the men's programs.

In this area the committee recommended adoption of an integrated, non-discriminatory scheduling policy and to authorize women's basketball to play night games. The group also recommended that the scope of women's competition be comparable to that for the men. They recommended schedules for football, men's and women's basketball that reflected a national level of competition while the remaining sports would compete regionally. The working group was aware that intercollegiate athletics was "probably the facet of West Point in which women have most rapidly and successfully been assimilated" yet "women's coaches and athletes still perceive, whether true or not, an institutional resistance to development of the women's program."⁴⁶

The women athletes and coaches had reason to suspect the authorities intentions based on certain policies which they saw as being based on discriminatory criteria. One factor appearing discriminatory was the fact that the ODIA did not directly employ a single women's coach. There were no full time coaches for women for 225 athletes whereas there were 43 full time coaches for men for 1402 athletes. The committee again used infantilizing language by stressing communication and patience with the impatient women's coaches who "may seem insensitive to the resulting impact (financial or

⁴⁵ Memo to James Anderson in DPE, Draft USMA Title IX Study April 24, 1979. USMA.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

otherwise) upon men's athletics."⁴⁷ The committee noted that women's coaches may become frustrated if they are not granted requests and "fail to understand why requests have been disapproved, for valid nondiscriminatory reasons." The committee acknowledged that to counter this policy decisions should be fair and supportive of both the women's and the men's programs and based on sound rationale. While this seems like common sense the committee needed convincing that equality was worth occasionally inconveniencing the men.

Women did not have the same opportunity to compete or practice since all men's teams always had priority, whether they were in season or not, if there were ever any conflicts in scheduling games, practices, or facilities. USMA policy restricted women's basketball to afternoon competitions in the 250-350 seat Central Gymnasium unless granted prior special authorization while the men's basketball team could play evening games in the 3350 seat Field House. This was the women's "major" sport and yet it was still relegated to the Central Gymnasium which the women's basketball team called "The Pit" because the room was "so small, had no windows, and was always beastly hot." A small set of bleachers less than ten tiers high ran the length of the court along only one wall. Embraced by the administration and many of the cadets, the women's basketball team was the most high profile women's sport yet it was the only women's sport where the facilities were not comparable. Finally, during the academic year 1979-80, five women's games were tentatively scheduled for the Field House.

Even though most of the practice and game facilities were comparable, excluding women's basketball, most of the locker rooms were not. Men's teams always had priority in scheduling all facilities. The track and cross country women's locker room was substantially smaller with poorer quality lockers. The men's swimming team had its

⁴⁷ Memo to James Anderson in DPE, Draft USMA Title IX Study April 24, 1979. USMA.

own locker room while the women shared a locker room with the general public. The visiting men's swimming teams used a furnished private locker room while visiting women's swim teams had to share the general public locker room. While the men had their own team locker rooms in the Field House, in the Central Gymnasium separate locker rooms were not available for the different women's varsity athletes. The women athletes all dressed in the Corps Female Cadet locker room. Volleyball, gymnastics and softball all had comparable competitive facilities; however, none of these women's teams had their own locker room either. Men and women did have access to the same medical and training services and facilities.

Recognized as an important step in developing the women's athletic program, recruiting was also unequal. In 1979, USMA spent \$91.50 per male athlete recruit versus \$10.22 per female athlete recruit.⁴⁸ Once at USMA, ODIA spent \$430 per male athlete versus \$268 per female athlete. Disregarding the first two years of integration, the committee placed some of the discrepancy in recruiting on the differences between the NCAA and the AIAW recruiting rules.⁴⁹ However, pursuant to Title IX, these differences did not excuse the disparity in recruiting expenditures. Hence, West Point felt caught between violating AIAW regulations and violating Title IX guidelines and facing disciplinary measure in either instance.

Women's Basketball

Women's basketball is a prime example of how important athletics was at the Academy to both the administration and the cadets and the various ways sport was used in the integration process. Basketball was the first women's sport elevated by the

⁴⁸ Memo to James Anderson in DPE, Draft USMA Title IX Study April 24, 1979. USMA.

⁴⁹ AIAW rules permitted subsidy of one trip to the campus from "a local mass transit point" whereas NCAA rules permitted subsidy of the entire trip. AIAW rules also prohibited "off-campus contacts with women athletes whereas NCAA rules permit such contacts."

Academy to varsity status beginning in the second year of integration, academic year 1977-78. The women's basketball team became a varsity sport based on the "aggressive showing" that the women's team achieved during their first club season. The cadets "affectionately" called the women's basketball team the "Sugar Smacks."⁵⁰ This created another difference between the men's teams, called The Black Knights, and the one women's team who were not even allowed to claim the official school team name. Including "Sugar" in the title was also a way to code the team as feminine. The women would continue to be known as the Sugar Smacks until August of 1979 when the name changed officially to Army Women's Basketball.

The team had a successful first year compiling a record of 14 wins and 5 losses and became "a focal point for male cadets seeking an acceptable way to express approval toward women."⁵¹ Women's basketball became known for tough, gritty play and eventually drew a devout following by the cadets who praised the women's performance. Even though football was still in a league of its own, the fact that Army was struggling during the mid-1970s helped attention turn towards the women's basketball team as a winning Army team the cadets could get behind. Having a winning team during this time helped women gain some measure of acceptance during the first year of integration.

Speculation abounded amongst the corps of cadets if the women cadets could possibly create a winning team. Officers, instructors, and cadets from all classes attended that first game filling the small set of stands to capacity. The commandant of cadets introduced the team and numerous reporters attended who spent much of the game interviewing those in attendance. When asked why he was attending the game a male cadet responded that he had come "to see the freak show, of course."⁵² "Freak" was a

⁵⁰ Smack is another name for Plebe.

⁵¹ Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 106. USMA.

⁵² Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 63.

common descriptor of women whenever they first stepped outside an established gender role. Gen. William Westmoreland felt any woman entering the academy would be a freak, Anderson felt women would be freaks if they participated in boxing or wrestling and this cadet felt the women participating in basketball were freaks. This cadet most likely represented the initial reason that the majority of the cadets attended the game.

Carol Barkalow, a member of the women's basketball team, recalled her participation on the basketball team with pride. Even when going through a difficult first year, basketball caused her to be proud to represent West Point. Athletics was a way for women to be proud and for the Academy to appear proud of women albeit not in a military sense. She recounted winning their first basketball game by a score of 74-48 on December 1st:

We won! There were so many people there. The brass was everywhere. A lot of my company was at the game—that felt good. Even the Rabble Rousers were there. We had a press conference afterward in the locker room, then we ate dinner with the girls from Skidmore in the mess hall. I think they were really impressed. I was so proud to be a part of this place.⁵³

She believed:

We had won for West Point, but we also had won for the women that day. The skeptics had come to see us fail, and saw us succeed instead. Unknown to us at the time, we were making it possible for the Academy to project a public impression of women cadets as an aggressive, hard-charging, all-American team, regardless of what was happening to us behind the fortress walls.⁵⁴

An unnamed member of the first women's basketball team felt that the team had “proved we could play basketball well” and “had also done our part reducing the hostility some of the men at West Point felt toward female cadets.”⁵⁵ She said that the first time they played “a few male cadets came to see the joke” but that they “didn't leave laughing.”

⁵³ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 62.

⁵⁴ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 64.

⁵⁵ Kevels, Barbara, “Notes of a West Point Woman.” USMA.

She continued that “we were in such good condition and were so determined to prove ourselves worthy of the academy that we won that game—and nearly every one we played—simply by running the other teams to exhaustion.” By the end of the season men would stop the players, when no one else was looking, to compliment them on their basketball team.

Women’s basketball eventually gave the women on the team some measure of acceptance among the male cadets and initially the women cadets. Sunny Jones of the Public Affairs Office noted how the women’s basketball team helped women to fit in by giving the women “something of their own on campus.” She said basketball helped draw the women together and that “makes them a bit stronger in facing the hardships of their first year here.”⁵⁶ She commented that during the first game against Skidmore College “the game started and the men didn’t say much. They just sat there and watched. But it wasn’t long before they got into the spirit of the contest and were yelling, cheering and getting behind the girls.”⁵⁷

It is important that basketball was accepted as a space where women could be aggressive and competitive yet in military settings these same attributes often brought scorn and ridicule upon women. According to a member of the women’s basketball team:

When the word got around that women cadets were playing gutsy basketball, the guys loved it. It was true—we played like brutes. What we lacked in talent, we made up for in heart. The gym was always packed for our games—standing room only. At last, here was one way to get a little positive attention for ourselves. We were playing a so-called man’s sport, and we were doing well. Somehow that seemed to translate into the idea that we were women who were tough enough to take risks and make decisions. We wouldn’t hesitate to take aggressive action, even if it meant we might be physically hurt. Women who took those kinds of

⁵⁶ Newspaper Clipping, “West Point six months after the feminine invasion the walls still stand.” USMA.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

chances, we learned, were the only women these men would ever trust in a leadership role.⁵⁸

Women's basketball was also a space where men could see women physically performing well in an aggressive and competitive setting. Project Athena credited the women's basketball team with helping to facilitate the acceptance of women into the corps based on this interaction. One report showed how contact between men and women cadets at West Point affected the attitudes of the male cadets toward women's roles in society and women at West Point specifically.⁵⁹ The report found that the more voluntary contacts a male cadet had, which included attending women's basketball games, the more positive his attitude towards women. The authors concluded that "the emergence of a highly successful women's basketball team, though it did not result in male-female contact directly, may have had the effect of creating a perception that women cadets were working toward the same goals of interscholastic competitive achievement as the men; thus, it might contribute to a perception of common goals, and be favorable to the reduction of intergroup prejudice."⁶⁰ One finding claimed attendance at basketball games correlated significantly with attitudes to women in the Army meaning that the more frequently a male cadet attended women's basketball games, the more favorable and less traditional was his attitude. Men who had fewer interactions with women were among those who strongly believed that too many allowances had been made for physiological differences between men and women.⁶¹ This means that men who had

⁵⁸ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 64.

⁵⁹ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, "Group membership, status, and contact effects on male sex-role attitudes." USMA.

⁶⁰ Ibid. To explore the effects of voluntary contact, male responses to questions on attendance at women's basketball games, participation in extracurricular activities with women, and dating were associated with attitudes toward women at West Point and women's roles in general.

⁶¹ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 49. USMA.

firsthand knowledge of women's physical abilities felt favorably about women but those who did not have as many interactions held to more old-fashioned beliefs.

During World War II, women played civilian teams to promote good military-civilian relations and help with recruitment.⁶² The military also used these contests to combat the negative rumors concerning women in the military and the "demonstration through sports that military women were just like the girls next door served to alleviate civilian concerns about the service women's sexuality."⁶³ The academy also invested in athletics to enhance the image of the institution through the quality of performance. Most famously, Army football has been the sport to accomplish this at West Point. During integration women's basketball became the women's sport that the Academy used to enhance the image of West Point and bring a certain type of attention to the women cadets and to help with recruitment.

The Academy used women's basketball to help promote good public relations regarding how well integration was supposedly going. For example, West Point designated April 2, 1977 "women's basketball day" at West Point with over 1500 high school women basketball players and their coaches expected to attend.⁶⁴ These potential recruits along with other interested women took part in briefings and tours conducted by the Registrar's Office before attending the basketball game between the Sugar Smacks and Princeton at 2 pm in the Army Field House. This was the first time the women's basketball team was allowed to play in the Field House. Half-time activities included Superintendent Lt. Gen. Goodpaster presenting a framed copy of the lithograph, "Women

⁶² Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 113.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Pointer View*, April 1, 1977. USMA.

at West Point,” to Kathrine Switzer, Margaret Roach and Candace Hogan for their efforts and accomplishments relating to the advancement of women and sports.⁶⁵

Wanda Wakefield argues that by the end of World War II, sports and athletics were an integral part of military life and it would be almost impossible to imagine daily life without them.⁶⁶ However this sporting life came with a cost and rather than unite groups of soldiers, athletics always “posed the danger of separating them, alienating from their peers.”⁶⁷ This also happened with sports at the Academy. Not only were some male cadets resentful that women were not participating in sports like boxing some men and women were resentful of women’s basketball. Some men were upset that women’s basketball, as a club team, had a larger budget and more away games than plebe men’s clubs teams.⁶⁸

Many of the women were upset when only the women’s basketball team was elevated to varsity status while other women’s club squads were not, and they felt that women’s basketball was given a disproportionate piece of an already unequal pie. Officials elevated women’s basketball after one year and promised other women’s sports would follow after two years yet women’s basketball still remained the only varsity sport. A common complaint was that all women’s club sports seemed to be overshadowed by the women’s basketball team. One particular comment felt that “the budget for this team is oversized whereas other young club teams could gain more money and uniforms, etc.” Another woman bluntly stated, “give a squad status to someone else besides the over-

⁶⁵ Kathrine Switzer, the first woman to run in the Boston Marathon and one of America’s best known woman long distance runners; Margaret Roach was a columnist for the New York Times who has substantially contributed to communicating and promoting women and sports; and Candace Hogan, editor for Women Sports magazine, America’s foremost magazine devoted to women and sports.

⁶⁶ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 137.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” xv. USMA.

rated, under-able women's basketball team." One female was angry about "being treated as subordinate to the basketball team." Others commented "try to remove emphasis from women's basketball as being the women's sport" and to "give more recognition to other sports besides basketball." Another emphatically wrote "get rid of exclusive rights held by the women's basketball team!" Several comments centered on the idea that women's basketball was favored above all other women's teams and received "undue attention" and more funding than other women's teams. Rarely was the women's basketball team given credit by other women except for one comment that admitted, "granted, it has contributed to women's acceptance here; but it is time to accept and recognize other sports."

Even after three years there some women still resented the women's basketball team which was still the only Corps Squad sport with A Squad status and able to receive their letter. Most women wanted the chance to earn a letter in something besides basketball. Basketball was blamed for the disparity that existed even among women corps squad sports. Women in the third class still asked why basketball players were more privileged and said that "it's bad for morale when the girl's tennis team is third rate to the basketball team." While many women were upset with the attention the women's basketball team received, original members of the team in the Class of '80 complained that they were pushed out as West Point recruited more women to play specific sports.

Cheerleading/Rabble Rousers

While not considered a sport under Title IX, cheerleading (called Rabble Rousers) included cadet women along with male upperclassmen on the squad for the first time during the first year. West Point had previously included women on the Rabble Rousers by bringing in women from nearby colleges. Once women integrated into the academy six of the twenty places on the squad went to plebe women. There was a strong backlash to the inclusion of female plebes when they first began cheering at events. Male cadets

believed plebes had never been allowed the “prestige” of leading cheers at varsity events. They also argued that women cheering at football games in highly visible, leadership positions constituted a form of “reverse discrimination.” Finally the leader of the Rabble Rousers sent a memo to all cadets justifying his decision to allow women plebes to cheer and explained that a precedent existed for allowing plebes to cheer. One female cadet recalled thinking that high school cheerleaders were cool so she assumed college cheerleaders were even cooler. At this time in West Point’s history, this was not the case.

One of those female plebes was Joan Smith who claimed that her biggest problems began when she became a cheerleader.⁶⁹ Smith’s classmates accused her of becoming a cheerleader simply to get away from her company during afternoon practices. Some women were worried about less qualified cheerleaders representing the Corps. In one cadet’s opinion, plebes should not be allowed to cheer at football games in front of the Corps since it led to feelings of jealousy and resentment.⁷⁰ Resentful of the female plebes taking their places on the squad, the upperclassmen staged a protest at one pregame rally. Rabble Rousers became significantly less popular when female cadets were allowed onto the squad and replaced the civilian cheerleaders that had often joined the male Rabble Rousers. During the first football game involving female cadet cheerleaders the women were introduced in a Volkswagen wrapped as a present as a “gift to the corps.” The corps responded with thunderous applause only to be silenced when the cheerleaders name and company were announced. The men had thought the cheerleaders were civilian cheerleaders as they had been up to that point and were sorely disappointed when the ‘wrong type’ of women emerged from the car. Some men also saw this as yet another group of women trying to steal the spotlight. The male rabble

⁶⁹ Stamell, Marcia, “The Basic Training of Joan Smith,” *Ms.* August 1977. USMA.

⁷⁰ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” *Written Responses to Questions*, 1979. USMA.

rousers were still well liked but the squad was now seen as less macho with the addition of female cadets even though the squad had included women before, albeit from civilian colleges. While walking by barracks after an impromptu spirit rally, a female rabble rouser wearing her gold sweater was hit in the head with a tomato thrown from one of the windows.

Cadet Donna Peterson described the initial women's uniforms as "severe black and gold vests and skirts with unflattering stripes, which incited the Corps to refer to them as "bumblebees.""⁷¹ These uniforms were an easy target for ridicule aimed at the first cheerleaders including a commercial that ran at the cadet radio station which fueled the criticism. The commercial started off with small buzzing noises which increased in intensity until someone screamed as if they were being attacked by the swarm. The announcer would then say, "The Swarm. Coming soon to a football stadium near you." The commercial ended with a single buzzing noise followed by a swat.⁷² Cadet Dwyer also recalled the difference in appearance between civilian college cheerleaders and cheerleaders at West Point:

The normal college cheerleader wore cute, teeny, tight uniforms that hung somewhere about mid-buttocks, snazzy bleach-white sneakers, had long wavy hair, usually blond, and frequented a tanning booth prior to showing her eight foot long legs. The West Point cheerleader, circa 1977-1978 wore big gold sweaters, gold wool skirts, hideous gold pumas, had their hair shaved by Big Ed with one single blade, and hadn't seen the sun in anything but fatigues and a steel pot for three months.⁷³

The women in the Class of 1980 generally had it tougher than subsequent classes and the same was true for women from that class who were the first to join cheerleading. In what became a common practice, Rabble Rousers was another way for women in

⁷¹ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 167.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 82.

subsequent classes to distance themselves from women in the first class. Women on later squads described the former squad as having a “less than feminine reputation.”⁷⁴ Donna Peterson, a member of the class of ’82, recalled that the Academy sponsors of the initial squad felt “that the women on that squad should portray the ultimate standards of cadet life, in an attempt to show the Corps that they, as women, were equally as qualified as the men to be in attendance. Therefore, the female cheerleaders’ haircuts were the shortest in the Corps; they rarely, if ever, wore any makeup; and they joined the male rabble rousers under the goalposts for push-ups whenever our team scored.”⁷⁵

The wife of the commandant wanted the cheerleaders to be both feminine and sexy while performing yet sweet at the same time.⁷⁶ Cadet Dwyer, a member of the Class of ’82 recalled that:

It would be the first time cadets and graduates saw cadet women in a feminine role; the first attempt to show the world that, contrary to the more popular belief, female cadets were not ugly, masculine, knuckle-draggers. We were normal, healthy females who were average cadets during the week, but who, when the football players donned their gear on the gridiron, donned our short pleated skirts and sweaters.... We wore makeup and curled our short hair for our performances at the games, and we did not do push-ups under the goalposts as the male cheerleaders (and the female cheerleaders of the previous two years) did.⁷⁷

Cheerleading was meant to enhance the femininity of all of the female cadets through a few female cadets especially after the first class of women who joined were thought to be unfeminine. Articles frequently referenced this with captions such as “Members of the West Point Dance Team are just as tough as other cadets—but they try not to look it” and “With military bearing befitting future officers, Jeanette Regan and Angie Messer prepare

⁷⁴ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 167.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 166.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

for a parade in the same uniforms worn by male cadets. But there's nothing masculine about their cheering outfits."⁷⁸ One popular press article from 1983 described the women as "stunning" as they "shimmy and shake their way through the sexiest plays of the afternoon." This article focused mainly how these women styled their hair and what their makeup routine was.

The initial situation that West Point cheerleaders found themselves in was unique from most other cheerleading squads. As Laurel Davis argues, cheerleading has always been a feminine preserve as it has been perceived as a naturally feminine activity.⁷⁹ Davis argues that female cheerleaders are stereotyped as good looking, sexy, supportive, bouncy and bubbly with an important part of the feminine image of cheerleading being the notion of female cheerleaders as petite and attractive.⁸⁰ Davis argues that when you think of cheerleading, you think of girls. This was not the case at West Point. The cheerleading squad, or Rabble Rousers, was a male affair with an assist from civilian women. The male cadets did not want women cadets to be cheerleaders. This was the opposite of the general consensus outside of the academy where women's preferred role was in cheerleading. Generally men were more comfortable seeing women in a cheerleading role as opposed to a sporting role.

Laurel Davis argues that cheerleading sends messages about what are appropriate activities for females or for females in sport and symbolize dominant ideals about how females should look and act in our society.⁸¹ Cheerleading helps to construct what is perceived as natural for females. However, the opposite was true at West Point. Women who would be soldiers did not also fit the stereotypical image of a cheerleader. And

⁷⁸ Rowes, Barbara, "An Officer and a Lady," *Woman's Day*. USMA.

⁷⁹ Davis, "Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender," 154.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Davis, "Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender," 155.

when they tried to fill that role they were rebuked, in part because they destroyed the fantasy that the civilian cheerleaders helped to create. She also argues that female cheerleaders are seen as representing an ideal female body. Again, this was not true at West Point. The female cadet cheerleader body did not represent an ideal female body. The civilian cheerleader's body was the ideal type and introducing the female cadet disrupted this.

Women also disrupted the stereotypical role of male cheerleaders when they demonstrated strength during the game. Davis understands cheerleading as a space where the demonstration of strength is the central aspect of what males do and female cheerleaders were seen as unable to perform activities that required strength.⁸² This physical strength is how masculinity was defined. However the women cheerleaders at West Point initially did all of the pushups the male cheerleaders did demonstrating the same strength. This challenged the masculinity of the male cheerleaders.

Davis also argues that male cheerleaders are stereotyped as being feminine and perhaps homosexual.⁸³ Generally male cheerleaders are seen as secondary cheerleaders who assist the female cheerleaders which Davis argues facilitates the presentation of the female cheerleaders and maintains and reinforces the traditional image of the female cheerleader.⁸⁴ Yet at West Point it was the male cheerleaders who held the dominate role with civilian women supporting these men. The men were not secondary in nature at the Academy, nor were these men stereotyped as being feminine. If anything, bringing in civilian cheerleaders increased their masculinity and perceived virility.

Davis contends the secondary role of male cheerleaders allows the public to accept the male cheerleader's support for male athletes since the male cheerleaders is

⁸² Davis, "Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender," 160.

⁸³ Davis, "Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender," 155.

⁸⁴ Davis, "Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender," 159.

seen as supporting female cheerleaders, who support the crowd, who support the male athletes.⁸⁵ In a homophobic military, male cadets supporting the male athletes was never questioned. As Davis argues, men supporting men was not seen as “less than men.”

Women’s Attitudes Towards Corps Sports

When surveyed about their experiences in Corps Squad women generally agreed that it was an enjoyable experience because of the high level of competition and team spirit.⁸⁶ A smaller number agreed that women had equal opportunity to participate as the men but wanted more corps squad women’s teams. In addition to wanting more sports, many women also wanted the existing women’s teams to be at the same level. There was a strong feeling that women’s basketball was being treated as “too special.”⁸⁷

Women used the word “equality” most often when discussing sports. They frequently cited Title IX and wanting to be “equal to the men.” They wanted the same status of the men. They also wanted the same competition as men. Women wanted the chance to compete with more established teams and against a high caliber of competition. Some women wanted individual competitors to be allowed to participate on the male corps squad team.

Women wanted an equal opportunity to earn varsity letters (called A letters) by having more varsity teams. One swimmer argued they had an excellent record and “instead of making shallow excuses and trying to deny women equal opportunities to gain recognition (via a letter) they should support our efforts.”⁸⁸ Several women

⁸⁵ Davis, “Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender,” 159.

⁸⁶ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” 1979. USMA. There was a 100 percent return with the breakdown of the classes as follows: Class of 1980-63 cadets (27 percent); Class of 1981-70 cadets (30 percent); and Class of 1982-104 cadets (44 percent) for a total of 237 women cadets (100 percent).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

wondered why they worked as hard yet did not receive the same level of support.

Women on those club sports wanting to be varsity argued that these programs could not “prove” themselves “worthy” of A-Squad status without the necessary support. Some women had the perception that the men in charge of Corps Squad sports “undermine all of our requests for varsity status only because we are women.”⁸⁹ Another continued:

it is well known that it is felt that women shouldn't get letters because a much larger percentage of them would earn them than the percentage of men. Women would earn letters because they are able to compete with other teams from other colleges and do well. We don't want them given to us, we only want the Academy to allow us to receive the recognition which we feel we deserve.⁹⁰

Women felt the vastly differing levels of support, both monetarily and emotionally, by the academy towards women's sports were unfair. There was a general feeling that athletics did not support the women's clubs. Many complained that the worst aspect was having to pay for all of their own support including hotel, transportation, and meals. Several cadets thought “a person could go broke on club squad.”⁹¹ Those that participated in club sports generally wanted more gym space and equal availability for women during the off season as the men received. Female cadets also wanted more sports like field hockey, soccer and lacrosse, and some specifically for women, added to the club sports program. Those participating in club sports also wanted more recognition and special privileges that those in Corps Squad received.⁹²

Even those few sports that were elevated to varsity after three years were still not supported like the men's. For example, a couple women noted that gymnastics became varsity in name, but not in support. Critical of the lack of support, one woman explained,

⁸⁹ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women's Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Paid trips, PMI on days of events, missing parades and practice tables.

“when we go to other colleges we are also representative of the Army team but can one really represent a place that won’t support their women athletics or that give them always some type of trouble when we ask for money, support or uniforms.”⁹³ Women felt that all the women’s teams had the potential to be nationally ranked due to the physical environment at West Point yet many still did not give them their due credit since they were women’s leagues even though the women often did better than the men did in their leagues.

Clearly even after three years the financial support was still not equal as many women complained that all men’s teams receive varsity level standards of finances for trips, privileges and help. Still in the third year women’s teams were suffering due to lack of funding. One female cadet said “we have to exchange uniforms in the middle of meets, wear our own USCC sweats to meets because of lack of funds. It is very degrading.”⁹⁴ Several times women wrote variations on “we work just as hard as…” and because of that they wanted the privileges and respect that came with corps squad sports. Several of the women asked for more publicity for women’s sports claiming that most cadets didn’t know when games and meets were. Several female cadets noted those women’s corps squad sports playing at the same level of competition as the men were given C squad status like volleyball. Most felt that “men and women’s corps squad teams playing at the same varsity level should receive equal status.”⁹⁵

Major William Ritch, a volunteer coach who had been trying to help women cadets start teams in field hockey, soccer, and lacrosse since 1978 wrote the Commandant

⁹³ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

of Cadets to argue for a stronger and fuller emphasis on intercollegiate competition.⁹⁶ Ritch argued that the intercollegiate program made a unique contribution to developing cadets into officers and women should be given more of a chance to utilize that contribution. The men were allowed “combative sports” which offer contributions that cannot be equaled by individual sports, non-contact team sports or the intramural athletic program.

When the academy did add a women’s sport it was made clear that the women’s game would be different than the men’s. For example, when women’s lacrosse was added to the program the Pointer View made it clear that it would not resemble men’s lacrosse. The article claimed the image of a “more diminutive build, agility, speed and kilts” would replace the image of a “husky brute” that resorted to bodily violence to win.⁹⁷ As a club sport, women’s lacrosse became the first field sport for women. The Pointer View billed it as a sport of “agility, speed, coordination and teamwork” that only shared its name with the men’s game.

Women often cited a lack of support from officials and male cadets. Most of the women felt that their TAC Officer was not supportive of their efforts in athletic activities. One commented that her TAC had been “downright hostile about the number of females participating in sports.”⁹⁸ Another said there was no support, only harassment from the TAC. Others thought that once their TAC saw them perform they were more supportive. Some men still would not ask women to play sports with them because they felt the women would “get over.” Another complaint about women on corps squads, and not men, was that they were “kiss-offs” who were only on a corps squad to avoid

⁹⁶ Director of Cadet Activities, Memo for Commandant of Cadets, Women’s Athletic Program, Oct. 30, 1979. USMA.

⁹⁷ *Pointer View* “Army’s newest sport Women’s lacrosse,” 36. USMA.

⁹⁸ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

participation in unit military duties. Some women still noted resentment from the men regarding women in corps squad. One female wrote that “several despise me because of it.”

Women did find support in being able to participate on a corps squad team. Women felt that corps squad created team spirit and was one way to develop camaraderie with other women. The opportunity to be around other women was good for the morale of the women. Basketball, as well as other sports, became a refuge for women. After playing on a basketball team on her first assignment in Germany, Carol Barkalow recognized that participating in sports remains one of the few acceptable ways for military women to connect.⁹⁹

Intramurals

By the beginning of the fourth year, almost three-fourths of the women participated in some intercollegiate sport during the academic year with the remaining one-fourth participating in company intramurals. In comparison, only one-fourth of the men compete in intercollegiate sports with the remaining three-fourths in company intramurals.¹⁰⁰ Due to these proportions, male cadets often generalized women’s athletic performance through their contact with women in intramural activities. Officials hoped this would possibly result in an increased camaraderie and promote integration between the male and female cadets as they work toward the shared goal of winning. However, it also placed the blame for a loss on the women on the intramural teams who were not as athletically talented as their male teammates. One woman summed up a majority of the feelings towards intramurals as “women cannot participate on a level

⁹⁹ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 183.

¹⁰⁰ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 57. USMA.

equal with men in the majority of available sports, are encouraged not to sign up for certain sports, and are allowed to play only the minimum required time if that.”¹⁰¹

When surveyed about intramurals female cadets had varying opinions. In the year the survey was given, 1978-79, 50 percent of the women participated in intramurals. Women seemed to enjoy intramurals and the majority responded that they would participate in intramurals even if they were not required to. However many indicated that they would “do anything” to get out of intramurals. Many of the women found the most enjoyable aspect of intramurals to be enhancement of company spirit. Out of the three classes, the Class of '82 had the most positive attitude towards intramurals. However attitudes towards women in intramurals generally became more positive as women became a more accepted part of the culture at West Point.

There were several areas of concerns, however. Fifty-seven percent of the women felt they did not have as equal an opportunity to participate in intramurals as the men due to the types of sports offered.¹⁰² The women acknowledged there were sports they were not even allowed to participate in like boxing, wrestling, lacrosse, football, etc and felt at a decided disadvantage in other sports like soccer, basketball and track. They felt that offering different activities such as flag or touch football could improve the situation. There was no consensus on whether they wanted intramurals strictly for women but most of the women indicated it would not be in their best interest. Many women were also significantly concerned about grading in intramurals. Most of the women felt it was unfair to measure them against the men since they tend to be the worst in the “male” sports offered. Many suggested individual sports as a means of earning points for the company since they felt their skills did not often help in team sports.

¹⁰¹ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

¹⁰² Ibid.

One woman commented “we are tokens” while another wanted to be “put on teams where we won’t hinder” while yet another complained that she was “not good enough for the team so was put away in strength development.”¹⁰³ Women also felt they were not taken seriously by the cadets or instructors or seen as “tokens” or “burdens.”¹⁰⁴ Women complained about being put on poorer teams that already have little chance of winning so as not to hurt the company’s chances in other sports or only being put in for the required time. Women were routinely “shoved off to “left over sports” empty slots and then just put on the sidelines the majority of the time.”¹⁰⁵ Often cadets relegated lesser skilled women to strength development to give the companies the best chance of winning. One woman reported that her athletic sergeant put women on strength development so he could have “lean benches” since he did not think the women would win the games. Many felt the overemphasis on winning caused the men to relegate women to the sidelines. The drive to win the intra-company competitions caused coaches to keep women off of their sports teams in order to win.

Many of the women felt men only let them on the team because they had to. They felt their physical skills did not help the team. One female commented that she felt like she held back the team instead of helping it. Another wrote that she was “made to feel I’m a liability to the team, or aren’t trying.”¹⁰⁶ The general consensus was that women could play but they would not have equal opportunities for the team. Women were generally put on non-aggressive sports only to fill the roster. For example, women found it difficult to get onto and then actually play on the basketball intramural teams. Quite often women said they were “dumped” in swimming.

¹⁰³ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

One female cadet played intramurals for three years and found it “disheartening to be treated consistently as the weak link in the effort.”¹⁰⁷ She continued that she played “only the time or events absolutely necessary, and always begrudgingly by team coaches—no matter what class or sport.”¹⁰⁸ Many women commented that intramurals should be set up so that women could make a real contribution to the company through intramurals rather than having women merely as tokens or just necessary spot fillers. Other women said they would participate more if women could become a more active part of the teams. The system did not allow for maximum participation by women causing apathy in some women. One female noted that even if she gives “500 percent I still could not compete against the men and I do not feel a contributing part of the team.”¹⁰⁹

Even with concerns, the vast majority of the women did not want intramural activities strictly for women. This was primarily based on not having enough women in a company to field an intramural team and the desire not to be separated further than they already were. One cadet noted that “separation of this type, when not needed, only puts a stigmatism on women.”¹¹⁰ Women felt it was important for men and women to be in contact with intramurals for the “necessary adjustment to women at the academy.”¹¹¹ Some felt that segregating intramurals would not benefit the acceptance of women in the Corps and would only serve to emphasize the differences between men and women. One wondered why they should be segregated from men now when they would be working

¹⁰⁷ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

with men in the Army. Another enjoyed the company spirit that came with coed intramurals. Separation would nullify the good aspects of team competition with the men. Some women felt the men generally understood that women were trying their best and would “usually reward our efforts with a pat on the back, a good job, etc.”¹¹² The only female cadet who wanted separation wanted it so she could simply stay in shape and enjoy herself, something she felt was not possible in the current intramural program.

Most women were strongly in favor of coed intramurals not wanting “to be separated from my company team like an alien”¹¹³ though many felt a different scale should be used to score the women who participated in the strength and endurance related activities (i.e., not pistol, etc.). For example, even when a woman performed exceptionally well in a track race, she could not score one point for her team by the men’s time table. Track seemed to be a particular source of discouragement for women where one said that women were “at the least 100 years behind the male runners.”¹¹⁴ One woman wrote that “most of the time the event taking place was already considered over before the woman cadet came over the finish line.”¹¹⁵ Women were graded on whether they won a race or not and she claimed that all of the women cadets came in after the male cadets. Another woman felt she was just on the track team to run just to run and it was a waste of time since she “could never hope to beat the males.”¹¹⁶ She also received a low grade based on performance that, when compared to the men, was relatively poor. Several wanted the scale adjusted since “just because a girl doesn’t place 1st against guys does not constitute a C grade when she has placed 3rd against guys, that’s an A in my

¹¹² Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

book.”¹¹⁷ Women also suggested including sports which would minimize the differences between men and women.

Others wanted separate contact sports for women during the upperclass years to allow women to play contact sports. Some women felt it was “too frustrating, demoralizing and ego-deflating to compete against men in basketball, racquetball, and other sports.”¹¹⁸ Women wanted the opportunity to try new sports where they lacked experience but against other women. A common complaint was that if a woman was not on a Corps Squad team she would never get to compete in a team sport. Some team sports were considered contact sports and as such prohibited to women and others that women were allowed on restricted their playing time since many men believed women could not compete with men. Some, instead of wanting separate sports for women, just wanted better integration of women.

During the first semester of integration the athletic sergeants (positions filled by male cadets at this time) of A, D, and G Companies met to discuss women in intramurals.¹¹⁹ The men initially strongly supported separating men and women in intramurals, wanting company teams for men and regimental teams for women. However, as the meeting went on the group softened their stance and ended the meeting in favor of keeping women in intramurals as they currently were but making some accommodations in order for women to participate in sports in which they “would add some contribution to the team effort.”¹²⁰ The athletic sergeants supported women competing against women in certain instances like having women’s events in the Brigade

¹¹⁷ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions, 1979. USMA.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Memo, Results of Meeting with Athletic Sergeants of A,D, and G Companies on Women in Intramurals, Nov. 2, 1976. USMA.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Open Track Meet. They did not however, seem to support a strict co-ed rules concept which would require rules to ensure women's participation.

The athletic sergeants initially wanted women to compete separately since "women can't realistically compete with men" and women "get taken advantage of" when women come into the game for the quarter they get to play. One cadet claimed that women were not having any problems with intramurals in his company yet it should be noted that his particular company had no women in intramurals. The athletic sergeants also tried to argue that co-ed rules would be "bad and dangerous." Male cadets wanted women to follow the same rules as the men for intramural competition. They felt that to dictate fairness would adversely affect the men. They also tried to argue that if there were special co-ed rules for women then the women would feel bad thinking that the rules were made to "compensate for their inadequacies."

Cadets based several of the arguments on this need to protect the women and their feelings. One cadet argued that "women feel they must do better than men in order to prove themselves, they can't in intramurals and this makes them feel bad." Another commented that "women feel inadequate if they cannot stand out." Some cadets also thought that in order to spare the women from too much competition and rather give them a learning experience, women should be on their own teams and not on men's. Men thought that perhaps battalion women's teams would "cater to sensitivity" and give women some sense of belonging through the battalion rather than the company.

One cadet felt women were being treated unfairly in the respect they were treated better than the men.

Where were the concerned members of the tactical department when the worst plebes were put in intramural boxing and they got beat up (and still do). No one came to their defense. Now women are not even being beat up, just suffering some hurt feelings and everyone is all concerned – just because they are women. Let them stay in their companies and let them take their knocks, they will survive and develop right along with their classmates. They should be treated the same as

men. I thought it was under this understanding that they join the Corps – and so do they.¹²¹

However, most athletic sergeants had decided by the end to keep women in intramurals and “let them select the sport they think they can do best.” Another concluded, “women are under the gun 24 hours a day. Some guys think they are getting off. Let’s keep them in intramurals as is. Women do not want preferential treatment – they know what light this puts them in and makes them feel doubly bad.”¹²² Another cadet was supportive yet still paternalistic when he wanted to recognize the women’s improvement to date to help them get through the program and “pat them on the back for their progress and make them feel they have accomplished something.”¹²³

Conclusion

Initially women were not allowed to participate in any contact sports due to the violence of the games and the strength needed to play them. The Academy envisioned women being able to play contact sports once they could play amongst themselves. Yet from the beginning women were allowed to compete against men in non-contact intramurals and eventually in select contact sports like basketball. Women wanted to compete with the men yet experienced some difficulty when doing so. However, the fact that men and women were competing with and against, especially in contact sports, made the academy a rare institution. Yet the general exclusion of women from contact sports continued to preserve those “masculine” sports for the male cadets. Why did the Academy choose not to expand the sport offerings for women after gathering the information that women were definitely interested in more sports, especially contact

¹²¹ Memo, Results of Meeting with Athletic Sergeants of A,D, and G Companies on Women in Intramurals, Nov. 2, 1976. USMA.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

ones? It's possible that either the Academy assumed the talent did not exist among the women to support a team or they were keeping that aspect of the cadet experience as male only.

Major William Ritch argued that intercollegiate combative sports provided the “opportunity to stimulate the rigorous mental, physical, and moral demands that young officers will face in the Army.”¹²⁴ He also argued that these types of sports develop many of the character attributes that West Point found important including self-discipline, courage, self-confidence, tenacity, aggressiveness, leadership under physical stress, and selflessness. They also provided an opportunity for the cadet to think and react quickly, often “in the context of violent action, some physical danger, and great confusion.” These were all of the experiences that women were being deprived of through sport.

Wanda Wakefield argues that women in World War II found that the sports which they were allowed to play, and the way in which their play was presented, reinforced gender stereotypes.¹²⁵ She concluded that the message from this was that “no matter how athletic, no woman could ever be as strong as the weakest male within the military organization.”¹²⁶ This message depended on every man being able to repeatedly demonstrate through sports and physical activities the level of strength and aggression deemed to be gender appropriate. By excluding women from sports of strength and aggression the academy ensured that men alone could use these contact sports to demonstrate their masculinity. And any woman the academy thought capable of playing with the men would be an “unusual” woman.

¹²⁴ Ritch, William, Memo, Contributions of Intercollegiate Combative Sports. USMA.

¹²⁵ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 131.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Superintendent Goodpaster noted that for the cadets, “excellence in athletics provides a source of pride and serves as a visible unifying force.”¹²⁷ So if that were true, women remained invisible, with only one intercollegiate team visible through two years. The slow growth of the women’s athletics program limited women from the benefits that accompanied athletic participation. By limiting the number of teams at the varsity level, the Academy limited women’s ability to earn recognition and a varsity letter.

The women’s basketball team narrative was complicated. The women’s basketball team became a focal point for the officials, men and women cadets, as well as the public. The Academy used the women’s basketball team to promote the image of West Point. They used them to give a public impression of women cadets that they were comfortable with. These women were able to demonstrate the desired military qualities through sport and the academy was comfortable promoting women doing this through sport rather than military activities.

The male cadets accepted the women’s basketball team because of the aggression they showed during the games and this became an accepted way for men to show approval of women at the academy. However, even though all officials and most men were supportive of the women’s basketball team, the team caused division amongst the women themselves. Women wanted teams other than the women’s basketball team to be recognized and became resentful of their apparent special status. Although varsity sports in general gave women a refuge and support system.

Women seemed to be more readily accepted with respect to the athletic role of women’s basketball (but not in intramurals) rather than their physical role in the military training or physical education. Women’s basketball was the only sport singled out in the Assembly, Board of Visitors reports, and Superintendent’s Annual Reports. The majority of the Pointer View coverage of women’s athletics was women’s basketball articles.

¹²⁷ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1978, 60. USMA.

Sports were also the only way women were seen for the first two years in the Howitzer (the Academy yearbook). Cadets were comfortable putting pictures of women in athletic uniforms into the academy yearbook but not in military uniforms.

In this specific moment in history the roles reversed and women were accepted as basketball players but not as cheerleaders. The roles would revert after only a few years yet initially women playing basketball helped the image of the female cadet at West Point yet women cadets as cheerleaders actually hurt it. Although cheerleading would eventually become a way to promote a more feminine image of women at West Point, the initial members of the Rabble Rousers had a less than feminine reputation. Men did not want women in the cheerleading role which had traditionally been the role society was most comfortable seeing women in. Civilian cheerleaders represented the stereotypical role of cheerleader and women cadets disrupted that. The civilian women looked like all-American co-eds while the West Point woman had short hair, little to no make-up and West Point uniforms. These women cadet cheerleaders also disrupted the traditional roles by demonstrating the strength traditionally reserved for male cheerleaders by doing pushups along with the male cheerleaders. This practice was stopped however which ensured strength in cheerleading would remain the domain of the men. Cheerleading at West Point was seen as a masculine activity until cadet women were added which rendered it less so.

West Point allowed women to take part in military combatives but not combative sports. Women were not allowed to participate in intramural or intercollegiate boxing or wrestling. Women did participate in at least one contact sport with men in intramurals. The academy also protected the status that accompanied Corps Squad varsity level participation. In addition to a difference in the number of sports available, women also had unequal access to coaches, recruiting, funding, privileges, and opportunity to compete and practice. The Academy also denied women the important experience of playing in the storied rivalry against the Naval Academy.

Athletics played an important role during the integration of women into West Point. Women were excluded from several aspects of the program, which also meant they were excluded from the privileges and recognition that came with athletic participation. More importantly it excluded them from activities that were traditionally masculine in nature and prized by both the cadets and officials. Ultimately the Academy was more protective of athletic participation than participation in military and combat activities.

CHAPTER VI

COVERT TRAINING

On paper, men and women were completely equal in all areas of the Academy except in certain aspects of physical training. So when viewed from that perspective it appears that those first classes of women had a fairly equal experience to their male counterparts. However, similarly to Prokos and Padavic's study on women in the police academy and the "hidden curriculum" they found which teaches both female and male recruits that women do not belong and that masculinity is an essential requirement for being a successful police officer,¹ there were other, more covert, aspects which often created a different and unequal experience for the women that was not apparent to the general public. Both the Academy and male cadets used other means to distinguish male and female cadets and, for the most part, these means were out of the control of the women.

Leadership in Summer Training

As part of the Leadership Evaluation System, (used to evaluate cadet leadership potential) in Cadet Basic Training of 1976 a rating system was employed to determine "how women might be expected to be evaluated in the academic year when these evaluations take on more significance and what potential system modifications might be required."² One significant finding was that the peer evaluations of women tended to be more "highly correlated with physical performance than peer evaluations of men."³ While this relationship between physical activity and leadership disappeared for men

¹ See Prokos & Padavic, "There Oughtta Be a Law Against Bitches: Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training."

² Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 62. USMA.

³ Ibid.

during the academic year, it remained for women. This manufactured relationship between physicality and leadership significantly affected women and how they were viewed at the Academy.

Ratings indicated that while upperclassmen in the chain of command tended to rate female new cadets similarly to male new cadets, the male new cadets (the classmates of the women) tended to rate the women significantly lower than the men.⁴ On their first leadership ratings, women received comments like “she walks like a girl” and were ridiculed because their voices were higher pitched and not as “commanding.” Their short marching stride was described as unmilitary.⁵ The rating system has a significant impact since it influences a cadet’s military grade which ultimately affects class standing and thus has career implications because it determines military specialties and locations of first assignment.

The biggest factor in a female cadet’s leadership rating was her ability to run. One report noted that “women who can meet male standards are accepted and appreciated for their ability” and, “women who could not meet pace requirements on runs were not accepted, in general, and often belittled.”⁶ This relationship between physicality and leadership ratings is best illustrated through cadets who “fallout” (dropping out of the two-mile runs) during CBT. The more a woman fell out during CBT, the lower her leadership rating was after CBT and women did tend to drop out more frequently than men but, as significantly as fallout was related to women’s leadership ratings, it was not related to leadership ratings taken for men.⁷ James Anderson would later claim that the

⁴ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 62. USMA.

⁵ “West Point: The Coed Class of ’80,” *Time*. USMA.

⁶ Memo, “Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

⁷ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 76. USMA.

physical training program results could be seen after women had graduated and were taking their units out for a run and leading them; leading the run gave them instant credibility.⁸

Cadet Dwyer recalled that if a female cadet wanted the respect of upperclassmen she must not fall out of physical training or road marches.⁹ She likened falling out of a run to “being stood up on prom night after you’d had your hair done and bought a new dress—but stood up by eight hundred guys because that’s how many saw you and passed you and labeled you a loser.” She continued that “right or wrong, at West Point and in the Army, people are judged on their physical fitness ability in a very, very, very big way.”¹⁰ Cadets humiliated any peer, mostly female but also some males, who fell out. Kathy, another female cadet, recalled, “success in the morning runs was the only thing that got you accepted. It was the sole measure of physical fitness, and that equaled leadership.”¹¹

Cadet Kathy Gerstein remembered not being able to complete many of the runs the first three weeks of CBT. She recalled that, “falling out of a run effectively ruined one’s entire day. Almost immediately, this discounted the individual’s performance in any other area. Both the cadet and officer leadership treated the individual who fell out of the run with disdain.”¹² Hazing from the cadre intensified for any cadet who fell out. Cadet Gerstein summarized this attitude toward running competency:

I remember trying to memorize everything and ‘pop off’ without any hesitation. Regardless of one’s proficiency in mundane tasks

⁸ “Women at the Academies: They Came, They Saw. But have they conquered?” *Time*, June 3, 1985. USMA.

⁹ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 44.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 36.

¹² McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 38.

such as shining shoes, marksmanship, drill and plebe knowledge—the regurgitation of everything from the front page of *The New York Times*, to various figures about the number of certain lights in various buildings—nothing mattered if you fell out of a run. The ability to run equaled the ability to lead.¹³

Women did get better at the runs as their fitness levels increased, and their desire to minimize hazing but they endured serious injuries to avoid falling out or getting on the sick call truck. One female cadet named Linda who marched the fifteen miles back from Lake Frederick with her feet covered in blisters ended up with cellulites and could not walk. A friend who visited her in the hospital recalled,

I almost threw up when I saw her feet, the huge flaps of pale skin, the glossy red splotches of infected skin, but was I ever impressed. It was amazing that she made the entire march back with those feet. All of us females felt the pressure of being able to hang, but she had the added pressure of being the daughter of the commander. She refused to give either her sex or her father a bad name.¹⁴

During Cadet Field Training (CFT), one tactical officer noted that the women who fell out tried hard to earn acceptance from their peers by running during free time but succeeded only in further tearing down their bodies rather than building up stamina. His report also noted the existence of a small core (5-10 percent) of third class men who were openly hostile to women and this was often regardless of performance.

In what would later be a general conclusion about women's acceptance, women were not totally accepted in CFT unless they performed as well as men in all areas, although this is contradicted by one note that claims some women who performed well during Recondo became the target of criticism of men in their units who had failed showing that sometimes women could not win either way.¹⁵ It is also contradicted by the fact that even though men and women performed similarly in marksmanship,

¹³ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 38.

¹⁴ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 69.

¹⁵ Memo, "Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT," Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

marksmanship scores during CBT were positively related to leadership only for men and not for women. Women's performance in physical training influenced their peer ratings as did the male attitudes toward women.

Physical Education instructors tried to answer complaints about women being "poor runners" with a lecture about women's physiology:

Okay, guys, physiologically the women have 40 percent more body fat, so just to make it even, let's give you a seventy-pound weight to carry. They have only 60 percent as much lung capacity, so let's degrade your breathing by making you wear this mask. They have a little mechanical disadvantage in their hip structure, so we'll put a brace between your legs to make you pigeon-toed. Now go run a mile, guys, and see if you can keep up with the women.¹⁶

Lessons in physiology generally fell on deaf ears. Perhaps another point that should have been made was that when women entered the academy Title IX was only four years old. Women had not been exposed to the plethora of sports that future girls would be. The women entering West Point had little exposure to sports and would have no idea what to expect in a military setting, and they certainly would not have realized how they would be rated by how well they could run in formation with combat boots on and often holding a rifle.

Women were hard on other women as well and constantly tried to best them. A member of the second class explained, "females had the potential to ruin my reputation. I'm here busting my butt to try to earn respect and if you can't hang, you'll make us all look bad, an attitude that most females shared."¹⁷ This led to heavy competition among the females, within classes and within the corps, and helped to explain some of the hostility she felt from the first class of women.

¹⁶ Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line*, 413.

¹⁷ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 114.

Women also policed one another and pushed anyone they deemed too weak “to the limit to see how much they could stand before they broke down and quit.”¹⁸ The smallest infraction by one woman reflected on all because it was an excuse for men to comment, “look at that one. I told you females don’t belong here.”¹⁹ Outstanding women were considered an exception as were flawed men. Barkalow believed that in the view of men, one ‘bad’ woman would erase twenty ‘good’ ones. A woman who could:

Make the runs, who could pitch a tent, who could fire a rifle well, who didn’t snivel or cry, this woman would earn friendship and support. But if a woman was incompetent we would destroy her—even quicker than the men would—because she threatened all of us. Some women felt that the most compassionate thing we could do for a female who couldn’t cut it at West Point was to help her to leave.”²⁰

Few women would tolerate weakness any more than the men. Cadet Paula Stafford recalled “if a woman cadet couldn’t do a pull-up, I didn’t have much respect for her. I have reformed my views very much since then. But, at the time, it was a big deal. It really was.”²¹

Everyone’s image was linked to one another’s and there were times when women cringed at the performance of a less capable female classmate as they knew they “were living according to an intensely competitive system governed by a stopwatch.” The choice was often between showing solidarity with female classmates or the entire group, and as Lori Eller said, “sometimes, you just wanted to belong. For crying out loud, you just wanted to *belong*.”²²

¹⁸ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 109.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 110.

Women distanced themselves from any woman who was not performing up to par. With regard to physical performance they would:

Damn her with silence by refusing to defend her against a male classmate's negative observations. Because, factually, the men's assessments of the women were generally true—yes, the women did fall out of a number of runs. If the men were saying something slanderous, we might have said something in her behalf, but if it were related to performance, we wouldn't. We didn't want to get into the issue of performance indicators; we just didn't want to open up that wound.²³

One female cadet named Debra complained, “For every one example they give of a girl who didn't make it, you can give two examples of a girl who did, but they just won't listen.”²⁴

Women's leadership was seen and responded to differently based on stereotypical attributes during summer training. Project Athena found that in the CFT setting, subordinates felt differently in response to the actions of female leaders as opposed to the actions of male leaders. The male cadets reported feeling worse after negative actions (reprimand, blame, poor rating) by the female leaders than by the male leaders and felt better after positive actions (praise, respect, help) from women leaders. Subordinates gave more credit to women leaders with regard to their information sharing as opposed to male leaders who kept them less informed. However, the opposite was true during CBT where subordinates indicated they felt better following male leader praise and worse with male leader reprimand than with female leaders. CFT was less structured and cadet leaders had more latitude to influence results and the leaders might be more comfortable telling subordinates they did a good job as opposed to plebes. It is also possible that CBT training may simply favor the masculine role. The authors of Project Athena theorized that the difference may have been due to the fact that during CBT the subordinates were

²³ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 110.

²⁴ Newspaper Clipping, “At USMA, Debra over Hurdle.” USMA.

new plebes who were “being socialized into the traditional masculine character of West Point and military training.”²⁵ This socialization is one example of the hidden messages both the male and female cadets received during their training; masculinity was always paramount.

Men also displayed stereotypical paternalistic gender roles when they tended to be overprotective towards the women during CFT training. Male classmates gave women in leadership positions unsolicited advice, a practice that one observer felt “indicated a lack of confidence on the part of men in the abilities of their female classmates.”²⁶ Women often reinforced this by taking themselves out of a situation or lessening their participation in an activity. Some cadets also developed protective feelings for women who struggled with the runs with one cadet initially saying he “would shoot any woman who fell out of runs” but after he became the commander and “saw the effort those women put out and how they had to work so much harder to stay up” he “suddenly felt like a father who had to protect a daughter.”²⁷ Another described women cadets as “very determined” and indicated that some would not heed his warnings not to participate in activities “for their health.” He continued that it was important to “be up to date on what they’re excused from doing” because “we have to protect them from themselves.”²⁸

One report stated the key to women’s acceptance was “allowing women to participate in all phases of a unit’s activities” and in “establishing a positive leadership climate receptive to women and all minority groups.”²⁹ Billeting at Buckner was a

²⁵ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 12. USMA.

²⁶ Memo, “Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

²⁷ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 160.

²⁸ Memo, “Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT,” Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

problem for several reasons one being that housing the women separately affected their leadership performance. To be accepted in a leadership position a female cadet needed to spend much of her time with her squad in the men's billet area; if she stayed with the women she was regarded as an outsider and experienced more problems with leadership.³⁰

The Academy clearly recognized the need to allow women to participate in all phases of a unit's activities to promote acceptance yet it did not extend this crucial aspect of promoting the acceptance of women in every area of training. By this reasoning, women needed to participate in all areas including boxing and wrestling to be accepted. Also important to women's acceptance was the "tone that first class and second class cadre leaders set within their units toward women." If the cadre leaders were fair, helpful and encouraging toward women then the third class acted similarly to their women peers. If the cadre expressed hostility and resorted to "hard charging troop pushing methods when women had difficulty, the message conveyed to third classmen was that women couldn't make it."³¹ This resulted in another male/female division between the third classmen with the men letting the women work separately rather than as a team. One report noted that at least one instructor made an "indiscrete" comment to his trainees about his personal negative view toward women in the Academy and his belief it should remain all-male. It was hardly likely that such expression of negative attitudes would facilitate women's acceptance.

The authors of Project Athena recognized the need to convince the male cadets that there is more to leadership than physical performance since the typical male cadet places an overemphasis on physical performance. The cadet was not solely to blame in

³⁰ Memo, "Notes on Leadership/Acceptance/and Attitudes During CFT," Dec. 16, 1977. USMA.

³¹ Ibid.

this since West Point itself placed an overemphasis on female physical performance by creating separate standards. The authors also suggested formally and explicitly telling women that their physical performance was a major determinant of their acceptance as cadets as a way to help women adjust to their roles as cadets.³²

Another important fact underscoring the importance of masculinity is that “men and women who rated themselves as being more masculine received higher leadership scores than did their counterparts with less masculine self-image.”³³ These results suggest that leadership ratings were related to stereotypically masculine characteristics such as physical prowess, positive attitude about physical activity, and a masculine self-image. Hence, leadership for members of the first gender integrated class was related to masculinity for both men and women.

The cadet chain of command and the tactical officers rated the women in the Class of 1980 similarly to men, but cadets in the Class of 1979 and 1978 as well as by members of their own class rated the women significantly lower in the cadet components. This pattern was the same after training at Camp Buckner where women were rated significantly lower by their classmates in their platoons but not by the chain of command.³⁴ However, the men and women of the Class of 1981 were rated similarly by all categories of raters.³⁵ It appears that those in leadership roles rated the first class of women the most objectively while the cadets of the all-male classes and the classmates of the first women continued to view and judge them as a different, poorer type of cadet.

Even though the first class of women was so poorly rated, the administrators of the leadership evaluation system decided not to change the rating system until they had

³² Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 51. USMA.

³³ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 76. USMA.

³⁴ Vitters, “Project Athena II,” 69. USMA.

³⁵ Ibid.

more data. They felt that physical ability would have a lesser impact on leadership ratings during the academic year. The administration eventually replaced the Leadership Evaluation System with the Cadet Leadership Assessment System for the academic year 1978-1979 and changed again to the Military Development system beginning in the 1979-1980 academic year.³⁶ It seems that rather than address the issue of relating leadership to physicality, and running in particular, the academy tried to continually change the way it was evaluated to produce different results. Due to these numerous revisions and the fact that each class used a different rating system, it is difficult to make comparisons for the Class of 1980. Women in the Class of 1980 and 1981 received their highest ratings above the mean score from the Tactical officers and the chain of command rather than from their classmates.³⁷ Not surprisingly, members of the Class of 1979, the last all male class, had the fewest percentage of women rated above the men in both semester details. As a group, women tended to receive the lowest ratings from the members of the class immediately senior to their own.

The women in the Class of 1980 appear to have had a harder time gaining respect as leaders than women in other classes. Conducted in 1977, Project Sentinel determined that cadets attributed the success of women leaders in the Class of 1980 to external factors such as luck and skill of followers.³⁸ Project Athena suggested that it was unexpected when women were successful since women were generally expected to perform less effectively than men hence external attributions such as luck or simplicity of task is assumed as the reason. Clearly the men, and the authors of Project Athena, assumed that women would naturally perform poorer than men and it was shocking when they did not, thus their success was attributed to luck or the skill of the men she was

³⁶ Adams, "Project Athena III," 110. USMA.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 30. USMA.

working with. However, according to Project Athena these biases might no longer be operating for the other classes as no significant relationship was found for the later classes between women's success and external attributes. By Project Athena's interpretation only the first class of women encountered any bias or prejudice and after their class these issues ceased to be a major factor in the leadership ratings for women. A more accurate assessment might be that these biases and prejudices played more of a major role in leadership ratings for the women in the Class of 1980 yet remained, however lessened, for the following women.

Throughout the cadet careers of the women in the Class of 1980 a persistent problem was a systematic bias in ratings of women. Rice, Richer and Vitters conclude that "sex bias can be seen in attributions regarding women in the leadership context." Male cadets who held traditional attitudes toward women attributed the performance of female leaders to negative factors like luck and attributed the performance of male leaders to positive factors like ability or motivation.³⁹ Male cadets routinely resisted being led by a woman due to a strongly negative attitude toward women in the army in general. Their prejudice against women kept some male cadets from benefiting from female leadership. The authors believed that the attitudes of those evaluating leadership and performance, both officers and cadets, might be biased based on their individual perceptions of masculinity and femininity. For example, if an officer viewed the leadership position as a traditionally masculine role or viewed women in a traditional role, there might be a difference in the ratings given to the male and female cadets.

In addition to their physical performances being assessed for leadership potential women's physical performances were also assessed for the role it played with those choosing to leave the Academy. Project Athena found that attitude toward physical exercise was a significant discriminator of attrition for women but not for men,

³⁹ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 30. USMA.

concluding that physical performance had a tremendous influence on the cadets. Priest notes that: “surprisingly, women in the early attrition groups had more positive attitudes to exercise than women who stayed. This suggests that certain women had unrealistically positive attitudes to their own physical skills, became discouraged when they were exposed to the tough physical demands of West Point, and left as a result.”⁴⁰ In the final Project Athena report, 78 percent of the women stated that physical performance did not influence their decisions to leave. Also, 85 percent of the women sampled who left said that they did not believe there was too much emphasis on physical training and development. Yet, 64 percent of the women who left felt that their own physical performance was a major factor for acceptance by their male peers.⁴¹

In his annual report three years after integration, Superintendent Goodpaster noted the assessment of women’s physical performance as a fundamental problem in the ongoing assimilation of women. He wrote that it will take a “concerted effort on the part of the command to communicate to both cadets and officers alike that the physiological differences between the sexes do not (original emphasis), in and of themselves, restrict women’s ability to serve in the Army, nor the propriety of their involvement.”⁴² Again the Academy clearly recognized the heavy importance it placed on women’s physical performance and the problems that it emphasized. Much of this harkens back to the rhetoric the administration employed about women’s physical inferiority and physiological differences while trying to keep them out of West Point. Now the administration was trying to convince the cadets to forget all of that and believe that women could perform similarly to men even though the administration held them to a

⁴⁰ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 107. USMA.

⁴¹ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 62. USMA.

⁴² Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 85. USMA.

lesser standard. Not surprisingly the cadets resisted this and did not buy into the notion that women were giving an equivalent physical performance to their own.

Menstruation

Menstruation served as another covert way in which women were distinguished from the male, or normal, cadet. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the Academy appeared concerned that physical activity was, or would, fundamentally changing women due to their loss of menstruation which would result in a loss of motherhood or femininity; neither of which particularly matter for being a good soldier but rather in being a good woman. Patricia Vertinsky examines the discourse surrounding the idea that women are ‘eternally wounded’ because of their menstruation and as such were “doomed to compete and lose, or not to compete at all.”⁴³ West Point also seemed to believe women were ‘eternally wounded’ because of their breasts and menstruation. Menstruation was a concern for Academy officials throughout the early years of integration. The Superintendent became concerned when the majority of women in the first class experienced a cessation of their period, or amenorrhea. He wanted to know whether this was normal or a medical disorder brought on by physical activity. As with most concerns, the Department of Physical Education gave a questionnaire to the Class of 1980 and 1981 to determine any menstrual problems.⁴⁴

Before entering West Point, 86 percent of the women in the Class of 1980 reported having a regular monthly menstruation.⁴⁵ During their plebe year, 73 percent of the women experienced irregular menstruation missing at least one cycle. Ten women

⁴³ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 22.

⁴⁴ Department of Physical Education Questionnaires on Class 1980, Sep. 29, 1977 and Class 1981 Nov. 2, 1977. USMA.

⁴⁵ Anderson, James, Memo for Commandant of Cadets, Menstruation Questionnaire Results Women Cadets—Class of 1980, Sept. 29, 1977. USMA.

did not menstruate at all during their entire Plebe year and five women in their second year at West Point still had not menstruated since beginning at the Academy (some women would not menstruate their entire four years). When specifically asked about menstruation while at Camp Buckner (the second summer of training), 67 percent indicated they had no change in menstruation during those weeks. However, 75 percent of the women reported that menstruation and particularly feminine hygiene was a problem while in the field.⁴⁶ Women in the Class of 1981 reported that prior to entering West Point 82 percent had a regular monthly menstruation.⁴⁷ Since starting at West Point, 75 percent of the women experienced irregular menstruation missing at least one cycle. Out of those 75 percent, 45 percent did not menstruate at all in 6 months.

MEDDAC reassured the Superintendent that these menstrual problems were simply a hormonal adaptation to a stress environment and “in itself harmless and not of medical import.”⁴⁸ Other officials advised the Superintendent of findings of the May 1977 meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine in which trainers, physical educators and physiologists expressed concerns about the lack of menstruation in women.⁴⁹ Other non-physicians noted that following years without menstruating, track athletes went on to have normal pregnancies after they stopped training for competition. They argued that healthy women have disruption or cessation of the menstrual cycle at a

⁴⁶ Anderson, James, Memo for Commandant of Cadets, Menstruation Questionnaire Results Women Cadets—Class of 1980, Sept. 29, 1977. USMA.

⁴⁷Peterson, Susan, Memo to Commandant of Cadets, Menstruation Questionnaire Results Women Cadets Class of 1981, Nov. 2, 1977. USMA.

⁴⁸ Memo, Menstrual Variances Among Young Healthy Women, Dec. 16, 1977. USMA. MEDDAC noted that there have been other incidents of women in the military ceasing to menstruate previously. In 1945 a report noted that 100 Wave inductees found a relationship between the emotional shock of military service and a lack of menstruation. In 1973, 48.6 percent of 148 Wave recruits reported experiencing abnormal menstrual cycles during a ten week basic training course. Of those nearly fifty percent, 83.3 percent did not menstruate at all during the ten week training period.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

time of physical or emotional stress. Panelists declared it a “medical mystery” why some women endure stress without a noticeable change in their menstrual cycle while others do not. A sports physician suggested there was little cause for concern since women should return to normal menstruation once they cease strenuous training however, others suggested that women should discontinue strenuous activity if they have difficulty conceiving.

Given the results of the menstruation questionnaire the Superintendent became concerned about the physical health of the women cadets due to a lack of menstruation.⁵⁰ He was especially alarmed that five women in the Class of 1980, now in their second year, had not menstruated at all since entering West Point. He requested written responses to the questions of 1) will the failure of the women to menstruate harm them in any way and 2) are there any reasons a mandatory physical examination program cannot be established for third and second class women cadets?⁵¹ The Superintendent wanted to implement a “mandatory physical examination (gynecological) program for women cadets in their third and second class years to preclude the development and non-detection of physical problems.”⁵² Superintendent Berry believed MEDDAC needed to initiate a program of mandatory appointments to insure that women cadets receive the necessary physical examinations.⁵³

⁵⁰ Department of Physical Education Questionnaires on Class 1980, Sep. 29, 1977 and Class 1981 Nov. 2, 1977. USMA.

⁵¹ Willis, Major Mary, Memo, Medical Care for Women Cadets, December 9, 1977. USMA.

⁵² Anderson, James, Memo for Commandant of Cadets, Menstruation Questionnaire Results Women Cadets—Class of 1980, Sept. 29, 1977. USMA.

⁵³ Historically the military has forced women in the military into receiving pelvic exams as was required during World War II before they could receive their paychecks. See Meyers, *G.I. Jane*.

Historically female athletes have been warned that by being too fit they may damage their potential for motherhood.⁵⁴ By worrying about the cessation of their periods officials were assuming that all female cadets (who were generally around 18 years old) would want to get pregnant and become mothers. By wanting to implement mandatory gynecological exams, he wanted to be assured that women were not being damaged reproductively or perhaps also wanted to be reassured they were not turning into men. This continues the centuries old debate that Vertinsky examines about the “impact on the female physique of competing demands of academic study and menstruation, replacing concerns about higher education (over-brain-work) with those about athletic training (over-body-work).”⁵⁵

The men were clearly concerned about how to handle a woman and her period and were generally uneducated about a woman’s menstrual process and capabilities during it. Prior to the admittance of women the male cadets had many questions about the process and policies regarding women.⁵⁶ Their questions illuminate the concerns and uncertainty that many male cadets had toward the admission of women in general and towards menstruation in particular. One cadet asked what a cadet should do when “you think women are using menstruation as an excuse in training?” They also wondered if cramps was a legitimate excuse from training. Clearly the male cadets thought women would use cramps or menstruation as a reason to be devious and get out of training. They also wanted to know if feminine hygiene would be included in field training and if women were able to enter water during their period. Male cadets also wanted to know if women undergo any additional physiological stress during their period or if birth control

⁵⁴ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 4.

⁵⁵ Vertinsky, *Eternally Wounded Woman*, 5.

⁵⁶ Cadet Questions on Policies Pertaining to the Admission of Women. USMA.

pills could be given to regulate women's cycles. The men also asked first about what would happen to the male when (not if) a female gets pregnant?

Women reacted differently to having their periods while at West Point. Cadet Dwyer best expressed those mixed feelings:

If a female cadet fell out of a run because she had her period and felt lousy, my gut reaction, I'm not proud to say, was Take Your Period to Boston College. Of course, this was easy for me to say because I had none. None! Not the entire four years! During that lecture in Beast, when the Dragon Lady talked to us about periods, she mentioned amenorrhea but I wasn't really listening. Besides, why I didn't get periods didn't matter to me. Life is easier without periods at West Point. My mother made me go to a doctor over summer break before my yearling year. I was so lucky to not have periods during Buckner. A friend had hers on Recondo, changing a tampon in the woods on a night patrol, sticky and dirty, M-16 leaning against a tree, hoping the ambush waited five more minutes. I couldn't even imagine it.⁵⁷

Another female cadet noted the reaction of the male cadets regarding women and menstruation: "Any mention of cramps and the upperclassmen reacted almost the exact same way, 'Quick! Get the Midol.' It was like they could just give us a pill, and they wouldn't have to think about women and their periods."⁵⁸ Cadet Carol Barkalow thought the male cadets acted as if the first class of women were the first women they had ever seen.

Barkalow described the situation many women who did have their periods would find themselves in where, unless a woman had severe cramps, she simply had to grit her teeth and continue on with whatever she was supposed to be doing. Female cadets were often so busy they would miss a moment to change a tampon consequently staining their uniform pants. Barkalow recounted the Academy noting this problem by distributing a bulletin among all of the companies telling the women, in effect, "Women, if you have to

⁵⁷ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 127.

⁵⁸ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 42.

change your tampon, just get up and leave class.”⁵⁹ Aside from the fact that this bulletin drew the entire corps of cadets’ attention to women’s problems with their periods, cadets were punished for falling asleep in class let alone having the nerve to actually get up and walk out of class. Plus, had any woman done so it would have been conspicuous and immediately obvious what she needed to go do. Barkalow described many women’s reaction to this bulletin:

So when we got the note, some of us laughed, but many of us thought, How dare you tell us to change our tampons? It’s none of your damn business. Of course, some of us never had to face that problem, because we had stopped menstruating altogether. It was frightening, but it was also one less thing to worry about. Women were reluctant to visit any of the Academy’s gynecologists—one of them was a fat little man with a block moustache who doubled as the officer representative to the hockey team and used to talk intensely about the games while we were getting our Pap smears—but those who had stopped menstruating and did go to see a doctor were issued birth control pills, which usually started things flowing again... We knew they were very worried about us not having our periods. I think they were secretly terrified that they were turning us into men. At any rate, it gave the Academy the topic for its next questionnaire. The day the Menstruation Questionnaire arrived, we took one look at it and thought, Oh Lord, what next? On top of everything else we had to do, it was just too embarrassing making ourselves the menstruation experts of North America.⁶⁰

Clearly most male cadets were unfamiliar with women’s menstruation and held very stereotypical and naïve beliefs about the process and the capabilities of women during her period. The Academy also reacted in a fairly uneducated way by being overly concerned with menstruation, or lack thereof, and tried to regulate it not realizing that their actions would draw more attention to women.

⁵⁹ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 99.

⁶⁰ The constant surveys given to the entire corps served to but more unwanted focus on the women and their differences. Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 100.

Physical Appearance

While concerned with sameness in most aspects, officials felt changes to part of the uniforms were necessary. Those planning for women thought that the problem was in finding how to make a woman look like a woman *and* a West Point cadet.⁶¹ Project Athena concluded that “care was taken to insure that women cadets would “blend” with the men during military formations.”⁶² If this were true it is odd that they would make a serious deviation from the most noticeable uniform worn during military formations. Officials had the women’s full dress coat (the coat worn during the most formal parades) made without tails. They justified this decision with claims of making the coat “more stylish” when worn and to “facilitate the fit of the coat to the woman’s anatomy.”⁶³ It is curious that officials felt women needed to look more stylish while accentuating a woman’s posterior and hips. In hindsight, Project Athena acknowledged that “an implication of this decision, however, was that the absence of tails on the full-dress coat when worn with white trousers in parades served to increase the visibility of a certain portion of the female anatomy.”

The full dress uniforms reflected the Academy’s perception of women’s bodies. They cut the tails off at the waist believing this would help women’s backsides look less prominent. However, no tails actually accentuated their backsides instead and made it easy to pick out a woman during parades. One female cadet recalled her squad leader telling her to keep a low profile yet she remembered, “This was just not possible as a female cadet, especially during parades. The women’s full dress uniform was made without the tails of the male full dress because it was believed the tails would protrude off

⁶¹ *Assembly* March 1976, 15. USMA. For an excellent examination of the academy uniforms and women’s uniformed bodies see Elizabeth Hillman’s Master Thesis.

⁶² Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 20. USMA.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

the butts of the women. The difference in uniforms just brought more attention and mockery.”⁶⁴ It was three years before the Academy corrected this mistake and gave women the traditional full dress uniforms.

There were problems with the uniforms during the first summer training as well. During CBT, female cadets complained about: trousers equipped without pockets and with inadequate plastic zippers; shirts designed for the male torso with excess material in the waist causing the tail to come out and produce a bunching effect; men’s pajamas with flys issued to women; material defects in female hats, boots and berets; and poorly fitting bathing suits.⁶⁵ Officials decided to allow women to carry the “school pouch” (purse) while wearing their white over grey uniforms so female cadets were not forced to carry sanitary supplies in their socks. The women were originally assigned nightgowns to sleep in but then issued men’s pajamas when they complained about a lack of privacy with the short nightgowns.

The hops (dances) required a large number of blind dates so the cadet hostesses made arrangements to bus girls in from surrounding colleges.⁶⁶ One cadet said, “There’s something dehumanizing about it. Cadets drift in and out as they please. There’s no sense of responsibility toward the girls. ‘They came on a bus, they can go back on a bus’ is the prevailing attitude.”⁶⁷ Even though women were at the Academy, officials still bussed in these civilian women for the cadet hops for five years following integration.

⁶⁴ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 39.

⁶⁵ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 68. USMA.

⁶⁶ In addition to acquiring women for dances the hostesses also keep women on file if a cadet wanted a blind date. Staffed by several widows of West Point graduates, the office of the cadet hostess was a place where cadets could go during the day for coffee and doughnuts and to look for potential dates. The hostesses transcribed the vital information (name, address, age, height, color of hair and picture) of those girls interested in blind dates with a cadet and kept their information on file. If a cadet wanted a date he simply went to the file and made a selection based on the vital information and then would either write or phone the girl.

⁶⁷ U’Ren, *Ivory Fortress*, 103.

One change that was quickly made on November 15, only a few months after integration, was to order that women cadets could only wear skirts to hops if they wanted to dance.⁶⁸ The Commandant believed that “at hops there is a male-female primary distinction.”⁶⁹ The brass had been too upset by seeing two cadets in trousers dancing even though it was still a male and female couple. The perception of trousers equaling maleness was too strong which caused officials to be uncomfortable with even the perception of males dancing together.

Cadets had frequent room inspections to ensure everything was in its proper place. Male cadets frequently had problems trying to figure out how to fold a bra correctly with one cadet taking six minutes to do it while clearly being uncomfortable touching it. A female cadet recalled stepping in and saying “Hey, Sir, relax. It’s just one cup inside the other.” Upperclassmen were furious with Cadet Julie Hawkins because her drawer seemed packed with stuff while her roommate’s drawer was nice and neat yet both were only allowed a certain amount of underwear. It took them weeks to figure out it was because Cadet Hawkins’ bras were bigger.⁷⁰

With regard to hair styles, the Academy developed three specific short hair styles (2 for white women, 1 for black women) for women meant to “facilitate femininity, conformity to the cadet uniform, and cleanliness during rigorous physical and field training.”⁷¹ New regulations ordered that “extreme or bizarre hairstyles” as well as “ponytails, pigtails, braids, “corn-rows,” corkscrew or “ding-a-ling” curls” will not be

⁶⁸ Memo to Superintendent, Changes Implemented, Admission of Women to the USMA, changes made since July, Dec. 10, 1976. USMA.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 99.

⁷¹ Vitters and Kinzer, “Project Athena I,” 21. USMA. Specifically, Hair will not extend forward of a vertical line established at the outer corner of the eye. Hair forward of the ear will not extend below the jawbone. No hair shall extend in depth or width beyond the upper brim of the dress hat when viewed from front, side or back.

worn.⁷² Also not allowed were hair ornaments including: ribbons, rubber bands and barrettes. Hair was not allowed to be tied up in any manner. Cadet Marene Nyberg recalled having a platoon sergeant who wanted her hair as short as the men and by August of 1976 she had less than one inch long hair all over her head. The tactical officer ordered her to stop getting haircuts while her platoon sergeant continued to make her get haircuts.⁷³

Following the admission of women officials altered the hair policy. Instead of requiring women's hair to be cut to the top of the shirt collar the policy changed to allow women's hair to reach the bottom edge of any uniform collar. This policy change was due to the "negative impact of ultra short hair on the feminine self-image."⁷⁴ This could also be another way of saying that an ultra short hair cut was too close to a lesbian stereotype for the comfort of the Academy.

Regulations did not allow women to wear any "conspicuous or garish items of jewelry or adornments" and were only allowed conservative cosmetics which did not include false eyelashes, excessive mascara or garish colors. A moderate amount of lipstick, eye makeup and rouge was acceptable along with only clear fingernail polish. Similar to the mandatory charm schools Susan Cahn describes during the AAGBL to ensure that the female baseball players still embodied the correct "feminine mode and attitude" West Point tried the same thing with female cadets.⁷⁵ The league brought in experts to teach the women about makeup, posture, table manners, fashion, and "graceful

⁷² Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 21.

⁷³ "At the Gates of West Point: The Story of Marene (Nyberg) Allison and the 1st Class of Women at the USMA."
http://www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/Oral_History/oralhistoryhl.html

⁷⁴ Memo to Superintendent, Changes Implemented, Admission of Women to the USMA, changes made since July, Dec. 10, 1976. USMA.

⁷⁵ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 150.

social deportment at large.” All female cadets were called to a similar mandatory meeting where professional makeup artists from Revlon taught the women about the use of cosmetics, skin care, and the care and styling of hair.⁷⁶ This meeting angered many of the women who wondered why they were being forced to do this. Cadet Barkalow summarized what women thought the administration must have been thinking: “the female cadets aren’t wearing makeup, they aren’t wearing skirts, they don’t look like women, therefore, we’ll show them what to do and that’ll fix all the problems.”⁷⁷

However, by doing this the administration seemed unaware as to why those problems existed in the first place. Some cadets forced women to get weekly haircuts insisting on women getting haircuts as short as men’s. Any time a woman would dare to wear a skirt with her uniform instead of trousers not only did the men ridicule her, the women also did since no other woman was wearing her skirt. Women would talk amongst themselves during physical training in the morning and ask each other if anyone was going to wear a skirt to formation. One time after saying no to the skirt and no to wearing her black beret one woman wore both and was severely hazed by nine upperclassmen because she was wearing a skirt which was probably the first time men had ever seen a skirt in a cadet formation.⁷⁸ Not looking stereotypically “feminine” was not necessarily a choice by the women but by the academy. Through this mandatory workshop the academy gave the impression that a little make-up would keep the women looking feminine. Some of the women already owned makeup and knew how to apply it yet chose not to. To make a mockery of the makeup class these women took the blush, powder and lipstick and started war-painting their faces. The make-up class was not repeated after that.

⁷⁶ Memo to Superintendent, Changes Implemented, Admission of Women to the USMA, changes made since July, Dec. 10, 1976. USMA.

⁷⁷ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 71.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

While the academy tried to teach women about makeup if the women actually wore makeup then cadets hazed them. Sometimes women did not even need to be wearing makeup but just give the impression of it to get hazed. One such incident involved Cadet Virginia Taylor who was pulled inside her room by an upperclassman who held her for an hour and a half because he thought she was wearing makeup.⁷⁹ He accused Taylor of wearing rouge on her cheeks yet she never wore makeup since her cheeks were just naturally rosy. The upperclassman was convinced she had on blush and ordered her to stay at attention while he phoned another cadet to inquire about makeup regulations. Not even knowing the name he kept saying, “you know, that red stuff they wear on their faces.”⁸⁰ After hanging up the wet a washcloth and grabbed her by the back of the neck and repeatedly scrubbed her cheeks trying to get the “red stuff” off. He continued to claim Taylor was lying to him and only left her room when he was convinced he had cleaned her cheeks.

Weight Control

Women’s weight, or the perception of their weight, was another hurdle for women at West Point. The Academy administered height and weight surveys to all classes during the DPE Indoor Obstacle Course and Two-Mile Run tests to identify overweight cadets and direct them to the Weight Control Clinic. The expected goal for a male’s percent body fat was 10 percent and 17 percent for females.⁸¹ Cadets could be at or under 15 percent for males and 22 percent for females and still be within the acceptable body fat limits. Regulations required all cadets over this acceptable weight limit to weigh in at the Weight Control Clinic every fourteen days. Those who did not show significant fat loss after one month were recommended for other action.

⁷⁹ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 27.

⁸⁰ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 28.

⁸¹ Memo, USCC Weight Control Program, Dec. 12, 1977. USMA.

Making matters more difficult was the fact that the menu for the Cadet Mess was 4500 calories per meal both for summer training and during the academic year.⁸² Regulations required cadets to attend every meal and they normally ate between five and six thousand calories a day.⁸³ Plebes generally did not get to eat as much during cadet mess as the upperclassmen due to the rules of how to eat however they still consumed several thousand calories a day.⁸⁴

One new term male cadets coined after the integration of women was “Hudson Hip Disease” meant to describe the women who they felt were overweight. This, along with the constant weigh ins created serious eating disorders for many of the women. Several women noted that their weight went from being a non-issue in high school to being an issue for years after entering West Point. Remarks, innocent or not, by male cadets often created concern for women about their weight. For example, a male cadet told Cadet O’Sullivan, a member of the Class of 1981: “You’d better watch it, O’Sullivan. The women in the Class of ’80 got real serious Hudson Hips Disease.”⁸⁵ Figuring that he meant all of the women in that first class gained weight she now worried that he thought she was going to get fat. O’Sullivan described her reaction to this:

So I did what I thought I had to do to avoid the Hudson Hip Disease. I cut all fats and starches from my diet. I drank only water, not fruit punch or juices. If we had hamburgers for lunch, I ate the meat patty, the lettuce and tomato, skipped the bun and the dessert. It wasn’t even hard for me. This new eating was just an

⁸² Memo to Commandant of Cadets, Study on the Need for Diet Tables, Aug.16, 1976. USMA.

⁸³ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 48.

⁸⁴ Dwyer, *Tough as Nails*, 33. Guidelines on how to eat (or not eat) as a plebe at West Point: Keep your eyes fixed on the USMA crest on your plate. “Pick up your knife and fork. Cut a bite-size piece of meat. Spear the piece you cut (there should be room on the fork for about three more regular sized pieces). Put the piece of meat in your mouth. Put the knife and fork down. Put your hands on your lap. Keep your eyes on the crest on your plate. Chew the meat. Swallow. Repeat the process and you’d better still be staring at the USMA crest on your plate.”

⁸⁵ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 53.

extension of the very disciplined and regimented way of life I was leading. I didn't even think about it. It was like waking up early for PT or learning my knowledge. It was all part of being a good cadet.⁸⁶

Cadet Dwyer described the different sizes that female cadets came in and how many women viewed eating:

Female cadets came in all sizes. Some large, some medium, a few small, some accordions, who went in and then out, from rail thin to tubby, plump-faced, then back to thin again. The accordions spent a lot of time at the tailor's having their uniforms altered. In *Beast*, we learned the Basics. Eating Disorders 101. We can't fail. We can't get fat. Biting, angry comments about the women in the Class of '80 or gentle, concerned warnings about the gobs of calories on the mess hall tables-It all boiled down to one rule, one road to respect: Don't Get Fat. Fear of Fat, perhaps, or maybe a power thing or maybe just stress relief, led to Closet Eating. I don't want you to see me Eat, so I won't Eat in front of you. I want you to think I don't Eat! Then you'll like me! Or maybe we were saying: I have the Power! I have Control! I will eat until my heart is content and my stomach is overflowing and what can You do about it? You can't do anything about it! But I can purge! And the Purgers, after downing buckets of Haagan Daz and Chips Ahoy, retched in the latrines after Taps. Whatever size we were, we all wanted the same thing. We wanted to please. We wanted to belong...I ignored my roommate's concerns, my mother's questions. I denied myself pleasurable food because I thought that was part of playing the game. Food, never a big deal to me, just became way less important. The path I thought was marked "Good Cadet" was in the opposite direction of the path marked "Normal"—and I marched down it, thin, dumb and happy.⁸⁷

When surveyed those women who had either been required or sought help had mostly negative comments about the weight control program and felt they were constantly hazed. Most thought the program was of no help and used "negative reinforcement," "verbal abuse and threats" and was "detrimental to moral."⁸⁸

Carol Barkalow explained that jokes about female cadets ranged from looks to love life, but the majority of the jokes focused on weight. For example: "What's the

⁸⁶ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 53.

⁸⁷ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 54.

⁸⁸ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. "Profile of United States Military Academy Women's Physical Education Program," Department of Physical Education. 1979. USMA.

difference between an elephant and a female cadet? About five pounds, but you can force feed the elephant to make up the difference. Another joke asked what do you call a bunch of beanettes (female cadets) in a swimming pool? The Bay of Pigs. Once the Class of '81 came in: What do you call a female yearling and two plebes? Pork and beans.”⁸⁹ Professors and cadet clubs also told jokes about female cadets one of which had a running joke that there was a government conspiracy to create an all female army so “if the Russians beat us, we could say “So what? You beat an army of women!”⁹⁰ Perhaps the cruelest of the jokes, however, were the “pig pool” contests in which cadets would wager to see who had the ugliest date at a dance.

Much of women’s acceptance at the Academy seems to have been centered on her appearance. One male cadet, who strongly disagreed with the idea that women had been accepted into the corps of cadets, thought women should be removed from the Academy. He stated “it is a disgrace for women to be here. I think that most of the women here are repulsive in looks. They are overweight and gross.”⁹¹ Another male cadet from the Class of 1980 commented that, “Women here at West Point are looked down on because they have gained so much weight making them uglier than they really are. A lot of the girls who came to the Point came looking for a husband. If they would act like females instead of bounty hunters they would be accepted. Girls figure that they will be cut some slack because of their sex.”⁹²

The women generally found DPE’s method of weight control unhelpful. One commented that “you cannot eat the right types of foods to reduce and end up getting sick

⁸⁹ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 47.

⁹⁰ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 48.

⁹¹ Priest, “Content of Cadet Comments on the Integration of Women,” Class of 1978. USMA.

⁹² Ibid.

by not eating.” Another woman from the Class of 1980 wrote that DPE’s “methods make one want to spite them rather than lose weight.” Many complained about the negative reinforcement with one writing, “Verbal abuse and threats do not help as much as a helpful attitude and praise.” Another noted that DPE seemed much more concerned about women’s weight than the men’s.⁹³ One woman was five pounds overweight but only 18 percent body fat and complained about being constantly hazed to get her weight checked. Another female was being threatened with dismissal for being “too fat” even though she was under the weight requirement for her height. She wrote that “the hassle from my TAC is oppressive, especially when I can’t see that it is affecting my performance. They want girls at around 17 percent body fat, preferably less, yet many of those who are have menstrual problems and joint pain. Is all this necessary to our success as Army officers?”⁹⁴

Support Systems (or Lack Thereof)

Male cadets have always had a strong system of support and mentoring at West Point while the first classes of women were noticeably left on their own. There were few female officers, only seven women officers were assigned to staff and faculty when the women entered the Academy, and no female upperclassmen to seek advice or help from. This meant the women needed to rely on the men around them for feedback and help. Subsequent classes of women would face less of a problem but the women in the Class of 1980 received virtually no feedback, let alone positive feedback.

Female cadets reported they were disturbed by the lack of female officers who could serve as role models.⁹⁵ In general officers at West Point remained aloof from

⁹³ Davenport, J. and R. Stauffer. “Profile of United States Military Academy Women’s Physical Education Program,” Written Responses to Questions Class of 1980, 1979. USMA.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Vitters, “Attitudinal Barriers Facing Women at West Point.” USMA.

cadets but that was particularly true of women officers, and especially with regard to women cadets. Female officers wanted to avoid accusations of showing favoritism or worse yet, charges of fraternization. Women, both cadets and officers, had to always check her behavior since “given half a chance, almost anything could, and would, be taken for impropriety.”⁹⁶ This effectively prevented women cadets from having contact with women officers and deprived them of their experience, advice and example. Carol Barkalow recalled, “We needed to be able to talk to them without suspicion or fear. We needed their empathy and their concern. We needed to be brought up the way men at the Academy had been brought up by their own for almost two hundred years.”⁹⁷

The cadets noticed problems with the male faculty as well. One cadet reported having a professor who said on the first day, “I welcome you to this class. You’re probably the first girl in this course. Professionally, I don’t believe you belong at the Academy but there are opportunities for women in the Army. I won’t let my views interfere with your class evaluation.” Another cadet reported a professor who frequently said “well gentlemen and ladies I’d tell you a good war story if there weren’t women here.” Other cadets felt they were often ignored by the professor or were made to feel like they were not welcome to participate. In one military science class a female cadet received a C on an essay while a male class mate got an A minus writing a comparable essay. When the female cadet approached the instructor to inquire as to why she had gotten such a low grade he responded, “A woman shouldn’t be doing well in tactics.”⁹⁸

The women in the first class did seek a certain amount of refuge amongst themselves, however. Plebes were not allowed to speak in the bathrooms but they were allowed to be “at ease” in there. Cadet Carol Barkalow explained how the bathroom

⁹⁶ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 97.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 60.

became the women's haven: "We'd go way in the back by the showers and turn on the water so no one could hear us, and we'd gossip and cry and giggle like normal teenagers until we'd get to laughing so hard that an upperclassman would come banging on the door."⁹⁹

One group created specifically to support women was the Corbin Society, named for Margaret "Molly" Corbin from the Revolutionary War. According to Project Athena the Margaret Corbin Society served "to promote interaction between men and women, and to stimulate awareness and academic interest in topics relating to the emerging role of women in the Army and in society" and was specifically designed by the Academy as a forum to discuss women's issues.¹⁰⁰ A memo detailing the first meeting of the Margaret Corbin Seminar indicated the first meeting on Sept 16, 1976 had three women attend, two of whom were black.¹⁰¹ Seven women attended the next meeting where women expressed interest in hearing from successful women speakers, particularly those who have been successful in the Army. The women cadets in attendance were also concerned about their image, the frequent rumors of sexual incidents, and their perception that their associations with men were all subject to speculation and investigation which limited their interactions with men in all classes. Women in the 2nd Regiment reported having to fill out cards nightly on any upperclassmen that entered their rooms during study hours stating the nature of the visit. In addition, the training sergeant then checked with the upperclassmen to determine if those visits had in fact been necessary. The women wanted to meet privately to discuss their feelings and to make contact with other women cadets. Basketball team members felt less of this need but said they would support all endeavors to do so.

⁹⁹ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Vitters and Kinzer, "Project Athena I," 120. USMA.

¹⁰¹ Memo for Ltc. Buttolph, "Margaret Corbin Seminar." USMA.

The authors of Project Athena claimed that support groups were helpful for women in their social adjustment and development with the Corbin Society playing an important support role. They did acknowledge that some women might have avoided activities such as this which might have called attention to them as women and as such sacrificing their personal identity as women in favor of the role as cadets. Although women were encouraged to attend the meetings, lectures or special events for women many women did not go because it was too high profile and therefore risky. When these meetings were announced over the public address system the announcement was met with boos and hisses from the male cadets. No one would risk attending something that the men hated so much.

Although the Corbin Society was intended as a place where women could find institutionally approved solidarity and support during their exit interviews several women indicated a strong “underground movement” which consisted of cadets and faculty members who labeled the Corbin Seminar as a Communist Organization and discouraged participation in it. The Corbin Seminar was stigmatized as a “women’s group” and women frequently felt bad about wanting to group together with other women for this reason.¹⁰² The men’s attitude made them feel as if the women could do what the men could do then that meant they were one of them and as such should not stand out as a separate group.¹⁰³

Sexual Harassment

Only after women had been attending the academy for three years did officials become concerned with the possibility of sexual misconduct and assault. Officials gave little to no attention to this issue when only one class of women were at the academy. In

¹⁰² Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 102.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

fact, the environment often made sexual harassment seem normal. For instance, at that time cadets were still expected to stand up and shout “Sir, the dessert has been raped and I did it!” when they marred the icing on a cake while eating.¹⁰⁴ Officials enacted several rules and regulations to prevent misconduct or perhaps more importantly to the academy, prevent even the appearance of misconduct. This misconduct was “discouraged” rather than forbidden. Through these procedures officials meant to “convince cadets of the certainty of stern punishment of sexual assault offences.”¹⁰⁵ Even in the official Project Athena reports on the complete process of integration there is not a single mention of any incidents of sexual harassment or assault. In addition to creating rules about misconduct, the Superintendent also formed a human sexuality committee.¹⁰⁶

After graduating and discussing their experiences Cadet Dwyer wondered why she had experienced minimal sexual harassment when another woman had experienced significant harassment. The other cadet’s simple reply was that “I had boobs.” Dwyer considered,

I never thought about the fact that being boob-less probably helped me endure four years at West Point with little sexual harassment. Of course! Nothing bounces when I run. Nothing sticks out in my uniform. No problems with adjusting the load bearing equipment during the military training or the nametag on my class uniform. If I’d had a penis and had to shave in the morning, I’d have fit right in.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Janda, *Stronger than Custom*, 92.

¹⁰⁵ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 185. USMA.

¹⁰⁶ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 187. USMA. The goals of the human sexuality program were: 1) For the cadet to understand the physiology of reproduction and the functioning of human reproduction systems. 2) To develop in the cadet an acceptance of the norms of sexual responsibility. 3) For the cadet to clarify personal expectations about marital relationships. 4) For the cadet to develop a conceptual basis for establishing and maintaining honest, open relationships with members of the opposite sex at the informal and formal organization levels. 5) For the cadet to understand the process of sex role socialization in our culture.

¹⁰⁷ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 131.

Cadet Lil Pfluke anticipated some of the challenges and hazing that came with breaking into a formerly all male club however she did not expect so much of it to be sexually degrading. She recalled:

I never seemed to get a fair shake. Sure, everyone expects to get harassed as a plebe, but we women all seemed to get more than our share. It's no secret that we were regularly called bitch, whore, and worse; that we were accused of sexual promiscuity or lesbianism; that we were subjected to such inappropriate 'pranks' as shaving cream filled condoms in our bed or semen in our underwear drawer. What most people don't realize is the toll that juvenile and hateful treatments take on a person after a while. The constant barrage of insults, harassment, and inequities made even the strongest among us harbor self-doubts. We all felt very isolated and defensive as a result of never being accepted as contributing members of the institution, and we became extraordinarily sensitive to all issues of prejudice.¹⁰⁸

Carol Barkalow recalled that “one disgruntled fellow snuck into the women’s locker room one night and discovered an anonymous way to express his feelings on the subject of women at the Academy. The next morning, my classmate found her bathing suit sticky with his opinion.” Male cadets also anonymously wrote crude sexual slurs on the barracks wall and bathroom mirrors, scattered condoms on women’s bunks, and sent vibrators to them through the mail.¹⁰⁹ On Veterans’ Day 1979 someone drove a saber through a woman’s bed and smashed a bottle of ketchup on top. The incident was investigated but the culprit was never found.¹¹⁰ Another cadet, Aline Gobillot resigned from the academy after her male squad leader Richard Wylly entered her room while she was dressing and kissed her.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line*, 26.

¹¹⁰ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 139.

¹¹¹ Newspaper Clipping, “Kiss Ends Stint: Female Cadet Quits USMA,” *Newburgh News*, Sept. 3, 1977. USMA.

Another incident involved Cadet Megan Price who had been awakened by the touch of a man's hand between her legs while she slept.¹¹² The first to ever report an incident, she was immediately moved to another company. Even though other women had seen Price upset and shaking the next morning, rumors started that Price had consented or that she had "asked for it" and then called it sexual assault. During the trial the only thing that could be proved conclusively was that the male cadet had entered Price's room "unauthorized." The resolution was that the male cadet was allowed to graduate from the Academy, but he would not receive his Army commission. Some of the men were resentful saying that she had made a big deal about nothing since she was not pregnant. The women also resented protesting how easily the cadet had been let off since he was being allowed to graduate in addition to being excused from his five-year obligation to serve in the Army. The commandant maintained that the punishment had been severe since the male cadet's dream of being an Army officer was shattered. The women saw it that the cadet had received a free college education without having to pay anything back. However, the women did think this event was an important turning point in getting the administration to begin to understand that there were issues happening to the women and get everyone talking, even if with hostility, about what constituted provocation and whether women were a demoralizing factor at the academy.

Price decided to leave the Academy and her departure caused the creation of new rules. Women were no longer allowed to sleep alone, even if it meant a woman had to go to another company to sleep. If a woman's roommate was away for the night she had to sleep on an old World War II Army cot in someone else's room. The women were not satisfied with this new rule as they were the ones who were inconvenienced rather than a rule concerning the male cadet's behavior or to simply put locks on the doors. As they

¹¹² There were no locks on the doors because cadets do not steal according to the honor code which was the only reason locks would be needed according to the academy.

did to cope with other instances, women chose to make fun of this rule by pinning notes on the cot labeling it the “anti-attack cot.”¹¹³

The Academy attempted to address sexism by bringing in an “equal opportunity” consultant to conduct a sensitization workshop for the entire corps to make people aware of their own sexism and racism. Unfortunately, this experiment backfired. The consultant walked on stage and immediately said women had no business being anywhere near the military. At this point, the male cadets gave him a standing ovation. The speaker continued saying all of the things about women that cadets were feeling and they loved it. After he spoke for a while about women he switched over and started talking about blacks. The cadets became quiet and uncomfortable until the speaker switched back to talking about women and the men cheered again. Eventually the consultant acknowledged who he was and told the cadets they had been participants in a controlled exercise designed to raise their consciousness. The cadets divided into groups to have discussions. However, there was only one woman per group so each had to defend her position alone. One of the male cadets said, “I understand your objection to all the crap he said about blacks, but when he was talking about women, he was telling the truth!”¹¹⁴ When one male cadet tried to defend the women a few other men immediately challenged his masculinity saying he obviously had homosexual tendencies. The exercise backfired and only served to divide the class. Even the consultant admitted to officials that he had never seen any crowd have such a violent reaction or such incredible hostility toward women in his life.

The academy felt some of the hazing and harassment took “relatively innocuous forms” such as: firecrackers thrown into the barracks area, barking at the women, throwing dog biscuits into the dorm area, leaving a mess table whenever a woman sat

¹¹³ Now a male cadet is separated if found guilty of sexual assault.

¹¹⁴ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 124.

down, sweeping dust on women's shoes, and stealing the women's dorm cleaning supplies.¹¹⁵ The women did not report incidents of harassment because they did not want to generate further hostility or appear to be too sensitive or weak. One memo suggested that these pranks would not have been tolerated if the cadets had been black males or Jewish for example. At this time at the academy it was against policy to make racial jokes but cadets could make gender jokes. One report made a disturbing conclusion that was reminiscent of the "she was asking for it" defense. While acknowledging that women complained of increased incidents of "unfavorable discrimination" the report concluded "but many have stayed at the Academy, and they have returned for more."¹¹⁶

Hazing was especially difficult and constant for women. Women generally had to prove themselves strong before they were spared the hazing while men had to prove themselves weak before they were subjected to the type of harassment the women endured. In one company men formed a secret committee that would target one female a month for exceptional hazing to try to get her to quit or just to make her life miserable.¹¹⁷ Most women heard more than once from some male cadet that he was going to run her out of the academy or get rid of all women in the corps. However, for some women this harassment and lack of respect strengthened the resolve of women and motivated many of them to stay and graduate.¹¹⁸ Upperclassmen also often tried to get women in late classes to hate their predecessors. A member of the second class said her classmates did not look up to the class of '80 as mentors. Their perception was:

¹¹⁵ Memo, Report on Trip to USMA and USMA Prep School, March 16, 1976, USMA.

¹¹⁶ Priest, "Coeducation at West Point." USMA.

¹¹⁷ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 25.

¹¹⁸ McAleer, *Porcelain On Steel*, 42.

That the female cadet jokes were not really about us, they were about them. All through Beast Barracks we were told how rotten and terrible and ugly the class of '80 women were. It was hammered into us from the first day—Don't do what the class of '80 did. Don't call attention to yourself. Those women all got fat during plebe year. They just wanted media attention. Naturally, the women in my class didn't identify with them. Our attitude was, "Hey, don't worry. We're not going to be like that."¹¹⁹

Women in the first class were often set apart from not only the male cadets but the other female cadets as well.

Project Athena IV reported that female cadets in the first class attributed higher levels of severe treatment during their senior year over their plebe summer training.¹²⁰ The authors argue that the higher level of severe treatment attributed by First class cadets may be a willingness to reveal such treatment more than when they were plebes. Alternatively, it is possible that the level of discriminatory treatment had increased. This could be the result of the increase in interest the press and other media had given to women just prior to graduation. Experience showed that male cadets in the past have reacted quite negatively to the greater attention given to women in their class.

However, when interviewed individually women said the frequency of gender-based harassment had generally decreased over the four years.¹²¹ They reported that it still existed but in more covert forms and occurred less frequently. One female cadet said,

The attitudes of the male cadets have changed greatly. It used to be the accepted norm to get in a large group of people and cut down the girls, make fun of the girls...Now the norm is to keep quiet about your feelings about the girls, even if you don't particularly care to see them at West Point...You might discuss that with your good friends if the subject should come up, but you wouldn't sit in a large group and openly talk badly about any

¹¹⁹ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 81.

¹²⁰ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 111. USMA.

¹²¹ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 113. USMA.

females...that kind of behavior is not supported that much anymore.¹²²

The report also indicated that women cadets had become much more assertive in dealing with adverse gender-related comments. Academy policy was clearly designated to decrease anti-female expressions by cadets. There are cases where male cadets were disciplined administratively for adverse comments which were made to, and reported by, other male peers.

The hazing the women endured followed them after graduation as well. Donna Peterson argued that West Point desensitized women to pain. As an Army officer she endured acquaintance rape, stalking, sexual harassment and sexual assault yet never complained. While at Fort Hood the sexual harassment from her rating officer became so bad that soldiers from other platoons complained on her behalf. The post Inspector General called an informal meeting for Peterson and other women officers in similar situations who also refused to file complaints. When she arrived at the meeting there were two other West Point graduates among the women. The Inspector General asked the graduates, "What is it with you West Point gals? Have you been put through such hell that you think it's okay to be treated this way? Do you think that "taking it" makes you tough or strong or courageous? Do you think these men are only behaving this way with you and will never behave this way with other women? Let me tell you, it takes no strength, no leadership to remain quiet, but it does take real courage to speak up."¹²³ Peterson recalled knowing that he was right but that it "just didn't seem like the "West Point way" to complain."¹²⁴

¹²² Adams, "Project Athena IV," 114. USMA.

¹²³ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 244.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Women's Sexuality

Shortly before women entered West Point the only concern about sexuality was a fear of homosexuality in cadets or graduates.¹²⁵ Sexuality was not a term that the academy or its' officials used frequently. The first time the word sexuality appears in an official report about the integration of women is not until Project Athena III in 1979. And then human sexuality was only in reference to heterosexual relationships between male and female cadets. The Academy did not acknowledge the possibility of any other type of sexuality.

Susan Cahn argues that in the early 1900's the sexual debate in sport centered on the problem of excessive heterosexuality brought about by "masculine" sport.¹²⁶ However, by the 1930s female athletic mannishness began to symbolize homosexuality rather than excessive heterosexuality. Training for sport supposedly made women unattractive to future husbands and it was feared that they might also become unattracted to men. Following World War II the "mannish lesbian athlete" became entrenched as a powerful stereotype signifying female masculinity. This stereotype led people to believe that too much athletic activity would damage women's reproductive capacity; that women athletes would adopt masculine dress, talk and mannerisms; and that women would possibly have a moral, physical and emotional breakdown due to the excitement of sport.¹²⁷ Women cadets certainly had to adopt masculine dress and many voluntarily adopted masculine talk and mannerisms. Officials also worried excessively about women's lack of menstruation and damaging their future reproductive capacity. These all played into the stereotypes.

¹²⁵ U'Ren, *Ivory Fortress*, 88. In 1971 a recent West Point graduate admitted to homosexuality causing the Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. William Westmoreland to request Superintendent William Knowlton to look into "the feasibility of screening all seniors for sexual deviation."

¹²⁶ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 165.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Women at West Point faced the same stereotype that previous military women had to endure: if they did not heavily socialize with men or were too masculine then they must be lesbians but if they did or were too feminine then they must be promiscuous. A woman at West Point was judged by what men deemed appropriate regarding her sexuality and appearance. The slightest innuendo about a female cadet would traverse the entire Corps quickly.

Women worried about how their sexuality was perceived. The perception was that any woman who would want to come to West Point had to be masculine to begin with since the academy was such a masculine place where they did masculine activities. One woman believed “the tough, athletic, no-nonsense, no frills personality that fit so well with the machismo atmosphere at West Point was the classic stereotype of a lesbian.”¹²⁸ The fact is that these were young women ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-six years old and were probably just beginning to learn about their sexuality. Cadet Patty Collins claimed “There was a fine line that all the women had to walk while at West Point—as if every male cadet and officer was looking at them and asking, ‘Which are you? A dike or a whore? You must be one or the other or you wouldn’t be here!’”¹²⁹ Several women worried they would appear to be lesbians because of the haircuts they were required to have.

During World War II, the most persistent rumor about women in the military was that they were man-like lesbians and if they played sports at a high level, that athletic skill fit the stereotype that assumed that lesbians were in fact very athletic. However, the military needed to keep women involved in sport to keep them fit and occupied even while risking further negative publicity. Wakefield argues that during the Second World

¹²⁸ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 143.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

War the military used sport as a way to show femininity. Using sport in the military to show femininity was risky since most sportswomen faced lesbian rumors.

Lesbian stories were rampant at the academy. The women's basketball team took the brunt of the rumors as the corps labeled the entire women's basketball team as gay. Rumors included believing that away games were "wild lesbian orgies" and that the female coach encouraged "togetherness" during Sunday afternoon socials at her house.¹³⁰ Two members of the class of 80, both of whom were on the women's basketball team, were supposedly caught kissing in the barracks.¹³¹ They were actually only hugging while one consoled the other on the loss of a boyfriend yet the incident made women very afraid to comfort each other for fear of being labeled as lesbians. This was yet another way that women lacked support at an institution where cadets often need comforting. There were also allegations of homosexual behavior between members of the women's basketball team and a female officer representative and the officer was immediately reassigned. Instructors were often not subtle in their dislike of women at the academy. An instructor spoke for ten minutes in class about how he thought "the women on the basketball team were dykes." However, one player said her femininity had not suffered, despite the rigorous physical requirements that came with being in better shape and running the opposing team to exhaustion.¹³²

The normal resignation process at West Point took one to two weeks to complete however when the resignation was due to alleged homosexuality the cadet disappeared immediately. For example, one female was accused of homosexual behavior when she wrote a love letter to another female cadet. The letter was discovered on a Friday and by

¹³⁰ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 144.

¹³¹ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 229.

¹³² Newspaper Clipping, "Point 'Greatest'—Fem Cadet." USMA.

Monday “it was as if she had never existed.”¹³³ According to a member of the class of 1981 to her knowledge four women and two men were “allowed to resign” from the academy for alleged homosexual or deviant behavior during her four years.¹³⁴ Another incident came as a result of ‘innocent’ star gazing from a telescope borrowed from the Astronomy Club by some Firsties who “inadvertently” saw two women together in bed in a barracks. The Firsties called several friends who all went to their room to spy on these two women. A cadet on the brigade staff also took a look and then both women were gone in three days.

Both cadets and officers heavily policed sexuality, and more specifically homosexuality, at the academy. The focus was not on male sexuality however since the men did not suspect homosexuality among themselves the way they suspected lesbianism among women. A female officer allegedly gave the commandant a list of women who she suspected might be lesbians.¹³⁵ Male cadet groups would go on hunts hoping to accuse women. Rumors had to be substantiated before they could ruin a woman’s career but even an accusation could create suspicion in people’s minds. Women were forced to discreetly create their own support network since it was not institutionally available for them and any associations could be seen as sexually suspicious.

Femininity

The Academy attempted to stave off fears of women’s sexuality and to reassure themselves and the public that these female cadets were, and would remain, women. In a Board of Visitors report the Academy’s admissions objectives as they pertain to women was as follows: “to accept and graduate young women well prepared to carry out the

¹³³ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 230.

¹³⁴ Peterson, *Dress Gray*, 229.

¹³⁵ Barkalow, *In the Men’s House*, 143.

duties the Army will require that they perform; young women who have so met the standards of West Point that they will be fully accepted by West Point as true products of the institution; and young women who, in the process, have retained their femininity.”¹³⁶ This again put the onus on the women to meet all of the standards set out by the men, which included femininity, in order to be fully accepted by West Point as belonging.

A black cadet said he had to change to become more white to fit in with the majority.¹³⁷ He recalled that he had to be two people and he deliberately modified his walk and accent as a plebe in an effort to appear more “white.” He said, “The real you was offensive to the white majority. You were accepted in accordance with how white you could become.”¹³⁸ Similarly, the women had to change to become more masculine to fit in with the majority beginning with rarely, if ever, wearing skirts or makeup. Women tried to modify how they walked so they could be less easily picked out and therefore hazed. Many also worked on lowering their voices to sound more like men and to sound more commanding and military. Cadet Robin Fennessy was called into an upperclassmen’s room to see if she was allowed to wear “this red stuff” on her face. She said she “stopped wearing skirts and makeup that first year. I started talking in a deep voice. I just wanted to blend in.”¹³⁹

Female sponsors encouraged women to play up their femininity and wear makeup. Most female cadets agreed that it was better not to wear anything than to deal with the harassment that came with wearing makeup. Women did not want to wear make-up because it drew more attention to them. Most women “tried to hide our

¹³⁶ Annual Report of the Board of Visitors, 29 April 1976, 6. USMA.

¹³⁷ Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line*, 63.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Newspaper Clipping, “Women Cadets Find West Point Harsh.” USMA.

femininity, tried to fit in as regular sex-less cadets.”¹⁴⁰ Debra Johnson agreed that she did not wear makeup or skirts because of harassment by male cadets. But still she felt “I don’t feel I’m losing my femininity. You can still be feminine, but you have to know when. I feel whatever you’re doing you don’t lose your femininity.”¹⁴¹

Other women were concerned about their appearance. Cadet Dwyer remembered that by the middle of the summer training her “looks had taken a serious nose-dive, spiraling daily into the land of no return. The haircuts had put the nail in the coffin. Big Ed attacked my hair like a lunatic with a weed-whacker, leaving me with but an inch of hair on my head. Janet and I figured that our looks were part of the sacrifice, but we didn’t like it.”¹⁴²

One report noted that when women did demonstrate the characteristics and traits of the “ideal” cadet or soldier, they violated the expectations of the female role and her status as a woman diminished and came to be viewed by others as an “unpleasant person.”¹⁴³ Yet if she exhibited traits appropriate to her role as a female, she jeopardized her standing in her role as a professional soldier. They concluded that many men at West Point were willing to accept female cadets as women but not as fellow soldiers. One primary distinguisher in the minds of the males was openly expressing emotions and feelings which male cadets found “clearly unprofessional.” One female expressed concern when she said “I’m concerned about the emotional change which might be occurring in women. I can’t even cry anymore—I can’t. I’m afraid I’ll wake up one day and have men’s emotions.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 69.

¹⁴¹ Newspaper Clipping, “June Week Debra’s Big USMA Goal.” USMA.

¹⁴² Dwyer, *Tough as Nail*, 59.

¹⁴³ Vitters, “Attitudinal Barriers Facing Women at West Point,” 15 Feb. 1977. USMA.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Other women felt pressure to be more like the men. Billie Mitchell argues that women in uniform live on the edge of one's gender.¹⁴⁵ She claims to be a successful Army officer one has to be, by definition, a man or as she calls it a phallic woman. Speaking about it twenty years later, Marene Nyberg Allison (Class of 1980) recalled a Cadet Battalion officer who grabbed her by the back of her skirt and stopped her from moving forward. She turned and he screamed, "How dare you wear a skirt in my formation?"¹⁴⁶ She remembered the pain and humiliation and said, "On that day in 1976, there was an attempt to intimidate and make the girl conform to being a male cadet, to become a man. Instead, forged in steel, the girl became a woman. The attempt to make me male solidified my differences and made me a strong woman."¹⁴⁷ Cadet Denise Gavin recalled it was a "daily struggle to 'get with it' physically. I kept banging my head against the wall, trying to be a man. It was a relief to discover that it wasn't necessary."¹⁴⁸ Cadet Carol Young felt that the men did not want them and "they were trying to turn us into men."¹⁴⁹ The caption of one article proclaimed that "losing feminine touches a must at military academy."¹⁵⁰ Young contended that West Point women were not out to prove anything, especially their femininity. It was those on the outside who doubted their femininity.

While women often chose to change these characteristics, the Academy feared these changes and was honestly worried that women were losing their femininity and turning into men. After all, academy training was meant to turn boys into men and now

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell, "The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie," 40.

¹⁴⁶ Carter and Rosenberg, *Athena Speaks*, 42.

¹⁴⁷ Carter and Rosenberg, *Athena Speaks*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*, 232.

¹⁴⁹ Newspaper Clipping, "Women Cadets Find West Point Harsh." USMA.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

they worried that they were also turning women into men. With many women developing a deliberate androgyny, officials worried about women's femininity.

The authors of Project Athena argued that West Point's masculine environment did not adversely affect the feminine side of the female cadet's self-concept even though the report by Vitters showed that their femininity self-attributes had decreased. They had all maintained or slightly increased the masculine aspects. Cadets of both genders attributed to themselves higher levels of stereotypically masculine qualities the longer they were at the Academy.¹⁵¹ Both genders of cadets also attributed lower levels of stereotypically feminine qualities over their first two years. After the same time period, female cadets decreased the amount of feminine qualities they attributed to themselves in what the Academy considered to be a large sized decrease.¹⁵² Male cadets, on the other hand, increased their self-attributed femininity qualities (more understanding, expressive) after four years but not as drastically. While men increased in both, women declined in psychologically feminine attributes after four years. However, the authors concluded that the four-year experience at West Point was not psychologically damaging to the self-concept of male and female cadets.¹⁵³ Men and women who gave higher self-attributions of psychological masculinity had a higher physical self-concept. For both men and women masculinity was highly correlated to moral, family and social self-concept.

¹⁵¹ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 105. USMA. When academy reports discuss "psychological masculinity" and "psychological femininity" they define it as psychological, not cultural measures, qualities considered desirable for each gender to have. Psychological masculinity referred to "agentic attributes such as competitiveness, independence, and roughness" which have typically been ascribed to men in American society. Psychological femininity was used to identify attributes such as kindness, expressiveness, and understanding of others which have typically been ascribed to women.

¹⁵² Adams, "Project Athena IV," 107. USMA. Female cadets scores decreased by 1.39 after four years. Males increased their femininity attributes by .92.

¹⁵³ Adams, "Project Athena IV," 108. USMA.

Project Athena III summarized that there was “no evidence that West Point training and experience is psychologically defeminizing for women in the Class of 1980.”¹⁵⁴ This was a frequently publicized finding which indicates a need to reassure everyone that the women were not, in fact, turning into men. The authors admitted that women might have had to sacrifice aspects of their cultural femininity but not their psychological. The authors defined the qualities of cultural feminism as those related to appearance, hair style, clothing, use of perfume and makeup. Women in the Class of 1980 avoided these qualities in an attempt to blend in as cadets. The women, especially in the first class, avoided traditional culturally feminine behavior by favoring trousers over skirts, no make-up and short hair styles, although they had no control over the length of their hair. Most women, and nearly all of the first women, went all four years without wearing her cadet-issued skirt. It was an immediate marker of difference. As Billie Mitchell points out that after an incident in which cadets castigated women for wearing skirts a woman cadet was left with the impression that “the skirt as a weapon that could not defeat pants in a political battle. Woman as woman was no match for man as man.”¹⁵⁵

Alan Vitters reported that women learned to succeed by walking a tightrope between being feminine but not overly so and being assertive but only in limited amounts. The female cadets paid attention to how they conducted and presented themselves. Women had to walk a fine line to “adjust themselves to a quite narrow definition of appropriate female cadet behavior which involves not allowing oneself to be either too professional or too feminine, but also not too little of a professional and not too little of a woman.”¹⁵⁶ Vitters concluded that women would have to accept that “they are

¹⁵⁴ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 63. USMA.

¹⁵⁵ Mitchell, “The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie,” 51.

¹⁵⁶ Vitters, “Attitudinal Barriers Facing Women at West Point, 15 Feb. 1977. USMA.

indeed women first, and cadets second.” The Academy believed women should be women first and soldiers second when for men they were one in the same. Men could be men and cadets at the same time. This still marked the women as ‘other’ since they could not be both a woman and a cadet at the same time.

Even women instructors were held to a different “woman standard” and felt intense pressure to prove competence and meet military standards. A hand-to-hand combat instructor, Lieutenant Kim Rorabaugh remembered men being disappointed when they walked into class and saw a female instructor. She said she had to put on “quite a show, to prove that we were confident in what we were teaching and were able to demonstrate it.” Women, cadet and officer alike, could not get away with mediocrity. When DPE added Sue Peterson, the first female physical instructor, to the staff she was introduced to academy graduates first as the wife of James Peterson, the director of DPE, and as “trim and attractive.”¹⁵⁷ According to one female physical education instructor the physical education department hoped for a “Farrah Fawcett” instructor. She said “they wanted a bionic woman who could perform every physical skill in the world, who could equal the strength of Arnold Schwarzenegger, but who also looked like Farrah Fawcett, to establish the idea that “One doesn’t have to look like a lady wrestler to be physically fit.”¹⁵⁸ Even women instructors were expected to be a woman first and a West Point instructor second.

When interviewed prior to graduation, the majority of female cadets in the Class of 1980 did not feel they had become less culturally feminine. During the spring of 1980 the academy historian conducted interviews with over 90 percent of the women in the Class of 1980 by the Academy historian. In these interviews, he asked cadets to state what the term “femininity” meant to them. Most women perceived it as something

¹⁵⁷ *Assembly*, June 1976, 13. USMA.

¹⁵⁸ Barakalow, *In the Men’s House*, 97.

involving conduct and behavior, rather than a matter of physical appearance.¹⁵⁹ Project Athena concluded that for that reason femininity was something that “could be exhibited at some times and not in others. Thus, you could retain your femininity in a low crawl through the mud, but not exhibit it until later.”¹⁶⁰ Most women felt that they had not lost their femininity since it was more a feeling than appearance.

Many women believed femininity had to be something more inside at West Point since it was not something you could wear there. The uniforms did not fit well and tended to make women look heavy so they had to redefine what outward femininity was. One woman noted:

I never worried about losing my femininity. I thought it was totally ridiculous that anyone even thought that we would lose our femininity. Exercise and everything else is good for you; it makes me look better; physically, it makes women look better, and I have always been brought up to believe that. The first time I wore my fatigues I felt strange, but that was only because of society’s symbol of fatigues. It really didn’t violate my own sense of femininity.¹⁶¹

Another woman said, “I had to learn that femininity wasn’t perfume and little pink bows so I had to define femininity for myself. I picked more of an androgynous type of femininity than probably a lot of women have.”¹⁶² One woman felt that she had not changed since coming to the academy and that it was “just traditional that you equate leadership and aggressiveness and physical with masculinity, and gentleness and everything else with femininity.”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 108. USMA.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 109. USMA.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 110. USMA.

Officials took any opportunity to promote women's femininity. The superintendent noted that the second most noteworthy media event involving women cadets in 1979 was the selection of Cadet Joan M. Smith (Class of 1980) as one of Glamour Magazine's "Top Ten College Women" in the country from over 700 candidates.¹⁶⁴ Superintendent Goodpaster was pleased that Smith's selection in "this particular magazine" would serve to "highlight a neglected facet" in the integration of women. He believed this would show that "West Point women cadets can be military professionals while retaining their attractiveness and a flair for fashion, style, and good grooming."¹⁶⁵ He thought this message was also important to help appeal to young people in their late teens that they were trying to attract. The importance the Academy, and hence the male cadets, placed on femininity put the female cadets in the difficult position of having to exude femininity while being a soldier since it was assumed a soldier would naturally exude masculinity.

Conclusion

In addition to certain differences in physical training, women also faced covert means that served to set them apart from the male cadet. One such way was the fact that running became the primary way for the women to be accepted and seen as a leader. When a woman fell out of a run cadets interpreted that to men all women were weak, but when a man fell out of a run it only meant that he personally was weak. Is it a coincidence that with women performing well in military activities men judged them by the one aspect they had difficulty in: running? For example, while running was more strongly related to leadership for women, marksmanship was only positively related to

¹⁶⁴ Annual Report of the Superintendent 1979, 92. USMA.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

leadership for men. Even though women performed equally to men in marksmanship, a significant military skill, it only benefited the men in the leadership ratings.

This emphasis on physicality for women continued throughout the academic year as well. The relationship between physical activity and leadership disappeared for men during the academic year yet it remained for women. Even though they performed well during the summer military training women had to continue to prove themselves physically through physical education and athletics throughout the academic year. The Academy put women in a difficult position by creating separate standards in these two areas while coming from a one track program in military training.

A focus on the female body as well as its appearance also served to separate the male and female cadet experience. The focus on women's menstruation highlighted a biological difference between men and women that reminded men that women were different. Both the Academy and male cadets focused on a woman's weight as a way to single her out. Rather than help, the Academy drew attention to these issues causing further problems. Initially the uniforms also drew attention by accentuating the difference in a woman's body type allowing them to be picked out more easily and as a result, hazed more. Women were afraid to wear their skirts or make-up because it made them stand out as women. Any difference needed to be avoided in order to minimize hazing. Their perpetually short hair cuts also called into question their femininity even though they had no control over the length of their hair. In addition to the typical hazing all plebes endure, women also endured sexual harassment. All too often the result of these incidents was a dismissal that "boys will be boys." Eventually the administration set more serious consequences for such actions.

The women were given conflicting messages that they were either being too feminine or were losing their femininity. It was probably easier for men to believe that women had to lose their femininity to fit into West Point as opposed to West Point not being as masculine as they thought. The Academy worried that the training was

masculinizing the women and tried to determine through numerous surveys if this was the case. Officials wanted women to act and be women first and cadets second. Men did not have to be told to act masculine because it was assumed that a cadet was masculine so simply being a cadet made one masculine. However, officials did not want women to be masculine so they had to be 'more feminine' than a cadet. One male cadet commented, "If they can crawl through trenches with me, score high points in nuclear engineering class and still look gorgeous, then they certainly have what it takes to be an officer and a lady."¹⁶⁶ This typifies the approach to the female cadet: they must be able to do everything that the men could do yet still be feminine in order to be an officer.

Women at West Point were caught in the same bind that military women encountered before them. Their sexuality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, threatened the military establishment and was used against them to control their actions. Women also encountered incidences of sexual harassment as a means to control or intimidate them. The women's basketball team was a frequent target of lesbian rumors. The first class of women took the brunt of the lesbian and unfeminine accusations from both the male and subsequent female cadets. Along with the accusation that women lost their femininity the next step was to say that she had lost so much of it she was a lesbian. This fits the historical pattern of believing that no 'real woman' would be able, much less want, to be successful at the military academy.

The women were also concerned with physical performance. Women paid attention to other women's performances just as the men did. If one woman was physically underperforming then the other women would try to weed her out so she did not make the other women look weak. Women understood that they were judged heavily on physical performance, whether justly or not, and they also understood that they all could be judged by the performance of one woman. While men were judged

¹⁶⁶ Rowes, "An Officer and a Lady," *Woman's Day*, 1983. USMA.

individually, cadets often judged all women by the physical ability of one woman. One woman underperforming somehow 'proved' to cadets that women did not belong. Hence, women began to preemptively weed out those women on their own.

One member of the Class of '80 summed up the various perceptions of female cadets: "People say we can't run, we're big, and we're ugly, and it's just not true. They think we're either butches or amazons, looking for a man, superbright or superdumb. Actually, we're very serious."¹⁶⁷ Women wanted to be soldiers just like all of the men that attended West Point. People tried to label women cadets in various negative ways yet the truth was that these were young women who were just trying to get an education and become officers like everyone else.

¹⁶⁷ "West Point: The Coed Class of '80," *Time*. USMA.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the ways in which decisions about gender and physicality as well as issues of equality constructed the identity and experience of the female cadet during the integration of women into the United States Military Academy at West Point. These decisions set the pattern to which all subsequent female cadets were held which makes it important to explore the origins of such policy. After examining the areas of training where differences occurred as well as unofficial ways in which difference was emphasized I conclude that the decisions made during this time period created and perpetuated the perception of women as a second-class tier of cadet and soldier and were based not on combat and military skill and potential but rather on physical capabilities and attributes. Ultimately these decisions served to protect the symbolic role of combat associated with masculinity and but this was mediated through physical attributes, abilities, and activities and especially athletics.

When surveyed prior to integration one cadet commented that:

“Women are not physically equal to men in any way, shape or form. The best women athletes in high school and colleges are most often not any more athletically or physically capable than the poorest of men. West Point is to train soldiers capable of leading troops into battle. Women are not physically capable of leading men in combat situations which require much strength and endurance. Very, very few women could ever provide the physical leadership example necessary to lead men, and a woman who could possibly physically lead her troops would quite possibly not be respected by her men as a woman.”¹

This quote sums up the stereotypical beliefs and problems that women faced upon entering the Academy. Neither the officials nor male cadets thought them to be physically equal to men in the ways that training or athletics or athletics demanded. Few,

¹ Office of the Director of Institutional Research, “Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women,” 1976. USMA.

if any, believed women were capable of leading men when leadership was so attached to physicality and athleticism and those women who were capable were not thought of as “real” women. So female West Point cadets were often left with the choice of being a good soldier and leader or being a good woman.

Congress wanted equal treatment for women at the academies except for minimum essential adjustments allowed for physiological differences, they believed women could, and should, be held to the same training standards as men. For the most part, USMA followed that directive as closely as they could the first year of integration. However, from the start they chose to restrict women from certain aspects of physical training and soon decided to create different standards in some areas in order to help women be more successful. Prior to women joining the academy simply graduating had been a way to prove one’s manhood. When women were included, how could men continue to prove themselves if women were being successful and graduating too? I argue that they were able to still claim superiority by creating the two-track system that held women to lower standards physically. “Physiological differences” soon became code for female inferiority and an inability to meet the male physical standards.

Officials initially wanted to keep things as equal as possible yet quickly developed “equivalent training” instead of equal training. Both men and women saw equal treatment as problematic but the solution of instituting an “approximately-equal-with-exceptions policy” for training pleased few. Women received equivalent training based on physical differences that would theoretically challenge them to the same levels but men were not interested in the Academy’s wishes for equal effort rather than equal performance.

If equality meant receiving the same training then women had a nearly equal experience to men. They had the same military training and except for the plebe boxing and wrestling classes the same physical training. If equality meant meeting the same performance standards, then only the first class of women had equality for the first two

months of training. After that physical testing standards were implemented that were built around difference. If equality meant having the same experience at West Point male and female cadets were treated unequally. In addition to different physical opportunities and experiences that came with women's exclusion from boxing and wrestling and different physical testing standards, attitudes towards and actions of men and women were distinct. Men thought women had an easier time while women believed they had it worse because of the constant hazing and harassment. If equality meant giving the same effort then male and female cadets were probably equal even though neither was convinced the other was making an equal effort. If effort was judged by physical results, the men generally found the women wanting simply because they did not run as fast as men or meet the male standards.

One area in which USMA did grant equality was in military training. Even though officials had vigorously fought against integration because the army barred them from combat, they chose to give women the same military training as men, including combat training. While USMA did not publicize this fact, they offered the clearest equality in what was, and continues to be, the most controversial area of an integrated military. Boxing and wrestling were considered inappropriate and dangerous but there was evidently nothing inappropriate or dangerous about women soldiering and fighting or even training in combatives in arguably the most realistic setting.

Also important was the fact that women were held to the same standards as their male classmates in military training and when modifications were made to the running program they applied to all, they did not lower only the women's standards. When held to equal standards women generally performed as well as men in these, in arguably the most important aspects of training. Yet the ability to perform physical tasks unrelated to military training and which have historically played to male strength became more important once women entered the academy.

Male cadets emphasized the importance of running once women joined the academy and the ability to run became a crucial discriminator for women's leadership potential. The relationship between running and leadership was stronger for female cadets than it was for male cadets and it continued to be so throughout the academic year. Running – the one activity that some women found difficult – was the primary way in which they could be accepted as a leader. This was so even though they performed similarly to men in military skill. When a woman fell out of a run, cadets concluded that all women were weak, but when a man fell out of a run it only meant that he personally was weak.

With military training and women's performances in it being equal, as they generally were, it was apparent that changes in physical education had created a two-track system for men and women. The establishment of separate standards in physical education for the academic year after there had been a one-track program in summer military training made it very difficult for the women. The different standards stigmatized and followed them throughout the careers. Billie Mitchell argues that every discussion about the integration of women at West Point ends up “at the same irreducible point: women cannot expect equality from the institution or equal treatment from men unless women's standards on the Army Physical Readiness test are identical to men.”² Whether it was to be achieved through raising women's standards or lowering men's, in the male cadet's view, only equal standards meant that female cadets were equal to them.

Prior to the first class of women coming to the academy, officials heavily publicized a single track for men and women even though they believed that only “amazons” would be able to cope. In one brief to Secretary of the Army Callaway, Superintendent Sidney Berry used the word “amazon” four separate times to describe the

² Mitchell, “The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie,” 42.

only type of woman who could be successful at West Point under such circumstances.³ Publicizing their commitment to a single track made the quick change to dual standards more obvious but the reasons for the change were not well publicized and cadets and outsiders interpreted them as a general lowering of standards to accommodate women.

Only women were criticized for not making the male standards, yet not every man met them either. A 1979 proposal regarding football advocated a year-round program to help football players maintain their weight and develop their strength yet no such program was ever suggested for women. The proposal also called for summer assignments for football players that avoided certain options which were detrimental to weight and strength maintenance and which would have changed training more fundamentally than having separate testing standards did.⁴ It also suggested adjustments in the physical education program solely for football players to “provide greater flexibility and incentive for meeting physical education requirements.”⁵ The fact that football players did not meet the physical requirements in summer training and physical education was never seen as a problem, but when women did not, it was.

The academy rarely, if ever, emphasized the fact they were giving women the same military, and in essence combat, training skills as men. It was as if the institution did not want outsiders to realize they were giving equal opportunity in the one area that they, the alumni, and the Army fought so strongly against. Officials repeatedly emphasized to that women were not being trained for combat and as they were still not allowed to branch combat arms they were able to give women equal opportunity in combat training without fear they would actually use it.

³ Berry, Sidney, Memo to Sec. Callaway. USMA.

⁴ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 63. USMA.

⁵ Ibid.

Yet the Academy was giving women the same combat training so how could they make that claim? What they kept women from were the physical education program's boxing and wrestling courses, the physical skills most symbolically related to combat. They thus protected not the actual skills used for combat but rather the symbolic ones of physicality. Women being strong physically and proficient in combat sports appeared to be more of a threat than women being in combat and by keeping these differences officials were able to give the appearance of keeping women out of combat training.

Women also became a second-class tier of soldier as a result of being denied the opportunity to participate in the fundamental plebe experience of boxing and wrestling. Citing a variety of physical, medical and societal reasons cadets could point to numerous ways in which the academy saw women as different and not as 'real' a cadet and soldier including the fact that they could not handle boxing and wrestling. Contrary to Academy reports, most women hated the self-defense classes and many would have welcomed the chance to participate in boxing to help earn the respect and acceptance of their peers. Keeping women from boxing and wrestling as plebes also served to alienate women from their male classmates since they had not shared the same ordeal that all cadets had traditionally endured. The physical experience of going through Plebe boxing, seen as a rite of passage, was preserved for men only. Women were also denied the chance to improve their upper-body strength through these classes which served to perpetuate the weaker woman stereotype.

Forcing women to take self-defense instead of boxing and wrestling also ensured that only men would acquire offensive skills while women had to learn defensive skills. This was another way to protect the symbolic role of combat as the last remaining military area into which women were not admitted. Officials believed that because of the possibility, but by no means certainty, that men might be in the infantry, they should be trained in both offensive and defensive skills. Women on the other hand women would never be in combat and so they only needed to be trained in defensive skills. By not

training women in offensive moves West Point was essentially assuring that no woman officer could have the possibility of going into combat since she was not trained to do so. Not only were women not taught any offensive skills they were not taught practical defensive skills either. Self-defense courses were not coed either so women were only defending themselves against other women.

The Academy chose to publically emphasize women in athletic roles rather than military ones. USMA used the women's basketball team as a way to promote women at the academy and to give a public impression of women cadets they were comfortable with. These women were able to demonstrate the desired military qualities through sport and the academy was more comfortable promoting sport rather than military activities. They would rather show a woman in a basketball uniform than in a military uniform and they would rather focus on a woman succeeding athletically than militarily.

Being an athlete, or at the very least being athletic, was also an important part of a cadet's success. Yet women were not given the opportunity to be athletes at the varsity level at all the first year and then only in women's basketball the second year. The academy protected the status and privileges that accompanied Corps Squad varsity level participation. Only beginning in the fourth year that women were at the academy was there more than one women's varsity team. This also meant that women were kept invisible since, as Superintendent Goodpaster noted, for the cadets, "excellence in athletics provides a source of pride and serves as a visible unifying force."⁶ Women were also kept from playing the Naval Academy which was another source of pride and unity for cadets and a means to access a storied part of West Point history.

Initially women were not allowed to participate in any contact sports because they were considered too violent and officials they were not strong enough for those sports. Eventually women were able to play contact sports but primarily amongst themselves.

⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1978, 60. USMA.

As in physical education, they were also forbidden from participating in boxing and wrestling intramurals. This general exclusion of women from contact sports continued to preserve them as a space for male cadets only.

Denied the opportunity to play combative (contact) sports, women were denied the “opportunity to stimulate the rigorous mental, physical, and moral demands that young officers will face in the Army”⁷ since it was through combative sports where USMA saw the strongest connection between athletics and combat. These contests provided “an opportunity for the cadet to think and react quickly, often in the context of violent action, some physical danger, and great confusion.”⁸ By excluding women from sports of strength and aggression the academy ensured that men alone could use these contact sports to demonstrate their masculinity. Men were able to demonstrate through sports and physical activities the level of strength and aggression deemed to be appropriate for a cadet. More importantly it excluded women from activities that were traditionally masculine in nature and prized by both the cadets and officials.

Any woman the academy thought capable of playing with the men would be an “unusual” woman. So once again, the Academy used sport as a means to protect the role of combat. If it was not about protecting strength why else would have male cadets sought to protect the role of cheerleading, a traditionally feminine activity? At West Point the Rabble Rouser demonstrated strength and masculinity and this was disrupted when the first women did pushups alongside the male cheerleaders. This practice was stopped however, conceding the strength role in cheerleading to men. Ultimately the Academy was more protective of athletic participation than participation in military activities.

⁷ Ritch, William, Contributions of Intercollegiate Combative Sports. USMA.

⁸ Ibid.

On paper, the female experience looked very similar to that of her male counterpart but that did not take into account all of the covert ways that women were treated as different. Apart from focusing on physical testing standards, a focus on the female body as well as its appearance also served to differentiate the male and female cadet experience. The focus on women's breasts and menstruation highlighted the biological differences between men and women. Women were not only separated from the cadet identity for being women but some women were sexually harassed or attacked simply for being women.

In addition, women were given conflicting messages about their femininity. They were accused of both being too feminine as well as losing their femininity. Officials also wanted women to remain and appear feminine as did the male cadet yet, if a woman tried to appear feminine by wearing skirts or make-up, she was hazed for standing out. Officials worried that the short haircuts and uniforms would make women appear unfeminine and perhaps also call into question their sexuality and they and male cadets wanted all women to be attractive. No one expected all of the men to be handsome. In wanting women to act like women first and cadets second, officials further separated women from the cadet identity since they could not be one and the same. This typified the approach to the female cadet: they must be able to do everything that the men could do yet still be feminine in order to be an officer.

It is a common strategy to believe that women in non-traditional activities are losing their femininity rather than to believe that places like West Point were not as masculine as everyone thought. Officials worried that the training was masculinizing the women and encouraged women to stay feminine. Superintendent Berry was worried about a "public de-sexing" of women at West Point. They produced several studies to assure themselves that women were not, in fact, being turned into men. Cadet opinions and observations were often sought in these surveys.

After two years of integration, the all-male Class of 1978 was asked for their observations on women cadets over the last two years at West Point.⁹ Several questions focused on a woman's femininity and appearance and it was on these aspects that women were most harshly reviewed. For example, when asked how many of the women exhibited "excellent personal appearance" over 36 percent of the cadets felt not a single woman exhibited this. Only 3.7 percent felt that most women had excellent personal appearance. One attribute was listed only as "feminine" which nearly 40 percent of the male cadets found 0-20 percent of the women to hold. Five point three percent thought most women were feminine. The male cadets were also asked to assess if the women were physically attractive. Again, nearly 70 percent of the cadets (67.7 percent) thought zero to 20 percent of the women were physically attractive and only 0.3 percent found most women physically attractive. The attribute receiving the highest number of males reporting the fewest number of female to hold was if they were "potentially a good spouse." Nearly 70 percent of the cadets found zero to 20 percent of the women to have no spousal potential. Only 1.6 percent of cadets found most women to exhibit this trait.¹⁰ The fact that male cadets were asked to judge female cadets at all on these attributes reinforced the belief that it was important for female cadets to exhibit femininity.

Women at West Point were caught in the same bind that military women encountered before them and continued to encounter after them. Their sexuality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, threatened the military establishment and was used against them to control their actions. Women were either accused of being promiscuous or lesbian. They were accused of either sleeping with the men to further their careers or sleeping with the women because they wanted to be a man. There was a fear that a

⁹ Questionnaire asked to Class of 1978. USMA.

¹⁰ Ibid.

woman would lose so much of their femininity that she would become a lesbian. The women's basketball team was a frequent target of lesbian rumors as was the first class of women in general. Even the first class of cheerleaders was thought to be unfeminine. This fits the historical pattern of believing that no 'real woman' would be able, much less want, to be successful at the military academy.

Another interesting finding was how often what was happening inside the academy was opposite from what was occurring outside of the academy. In the time directly leading up to and into integration many gender roles were reversed at West Point. The female dates were the ones who picked up the cadets and later dropped them off; the cadets were the ones with a curfew, not the girls; and the cadets were the ones chaperoned by tactical officers who "zealously guarded the virtue of their charges."¹¹ Outside of the academy women wanted an equal opportunity and access to non-traditional careers and faced stiff opposition. However, the academy immediately gave women equal training in arguably the most non-traditional of careers, the military. Women were training right alongside the men in areas previously reserved for men only.

While women were fighting hard for equal rights outside of the academy, inside it was the men who played the role of liberal feminist. It was the male cadets who wanted equality for the women while many of the women wanted separate standards. The majority of men wanted absolutely equal treatment in physical training with no exceptions including boxing and wrestling. One cadet summed this feeling up by stating,

"To be quite blunt, the women should suck just as much as the men do. They must do the same PE, academics, and military training. Their PE should be the same as the men's, and their scores on competitive PE tests should be averaged in with the men's, and no special increments. If they can't cut it on a two mile run, or a revile run, they should be treated the way men are. They should

¹¹ Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line*, 108.

also be sent into combat units. Why should she get special branch preference?"¹²

Also contrary to popular culture, the Academy highly publicized women in athletics, particularly women's basketball, when many in the broader society were still fighting to keep women out of athletics after the passage of Title IX. Athletics became an accepted way for men to show approval of women at the academy and the aggression shown by women during contests was applauded. Similarly, while women were forced to bring lawsuits in order to gain access to certain sports or play with the boys, from the beginning academy women were allowed to compete with and against men in non-contact intramurals and eventually in certain contact sports. Also, West Point women were more readily accepted in a contact sport like basketball than in cheerleading where they were seen as hurting the institution's image. While cheerleading has historically been seen as feminine, and would eventually be seen as such at the academy, the first female cheerleaders at West Point were seen as highly unfeminine.

The symbolic role of combat had to be protected or why was it acceptable for women to receive the same training in military training but not in physical education or athletics? Why was it acceptable to train women in combatives during military training but not in physical education? Why was it acceptable for women to get hit in the head during pugil stick training yet not in boxing? Why would West Point be so adamant about not giving women the same training in all areas when they were already given equal military training? I argue that the answer is because they were protecting combat through other means when they were not able to keep women out of the actual combat training. With women performing as well as the men in what had up to that point been a solely male domain, other areas of difference had to be found.

¹² Office of the Director of Institutional Research. "Analysis of Spontaneous Cadet Comments on the Admission of Women," May 1976. USMA.

According to numerous surveys women generally were accepted only when they performed to the same standards as the men, and not always then. Sometimes they were still resented for being able to perform to the same standards as men. After three years, women still had more trouble in physical development and training than in any other aspect of academy life due, in part, to the idea of equivalent training. Project Athena IV concluded that the physical performance arena had shown more differences between male and female cadets than any other area.¹³ Perhaps if the academy had continued with the equal standards they initially began with physical training would not have been such an issue.

At the end of three years, the authors of Project Athena declared the integration of women into the Corps of Cadets a success since “the majority of male cadets understand that coeducation can and will work at West Point.”¹⁴ The purpose of the final Project Athena report was to highlight how well women were being integrated into the Corps of Cadets, but it did not include many of the problems that occurred. Certainly many men had accepted women into the Corps and the Academy believed the social development of men and women were mostly positive. They did acknowledge that sexism remained, however, yet generally in the form of jokes and disparaging remarks. Anything further than that was not discussed. Officials did believe that a perception remained by many that women were still not fully accepted at the Academy or in the professional realm since many felt women held command positions only as tokens or that they had not earned them.¹⁵

The Superintendent made of point of saying that as recently as 1975 the Academy had publically fought against women having a place in the academy. In the entire history

¹³ Adams, “Project Athena IV,” 45. USMA.

¹⁴ Adams, “Project Athena III,” 200. USMA.

¹⁵ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 78. USMA.

of the Academy, the four years since women were integrated was only a short piece of time and true assimilation would necessarily take longer.¹⁶ Those 62 women who graduated in the Class of 1980 began the difficult process of assimilation and paved the way for women to become a bigger and more important part of the Long Gray Line. One graduate felt, “We were vindicated. I did it, against all odds, against a society that didn’t know if it was ready for us, against a culture that didn’t want us there, and in a lot of ways, still doesn’t want us there.”¹⁷ Most of the planning and decisions made by West Point were in good faith and with the intention of integrating women into the academy as smoothly as possible. Yet, not all decisions ended up being in the best interest of the women but of the Academy. Still the women persevered and opened the door for women who are now a vital part of both the United States Military Academy at West Point as well as the United States Army.

¹⁶ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1980, 85. USMA.

¹⁷ “At the Gates of West Point: The Story of Marene (Nyberg) Allison and the 1st Class of Women at the USMA.”
http://www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/Oral_History/oralhistoryhl.html

APPENDIX A

TERMINOLOGY AND ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDE

USMA: United States Military Academy at West Point (established 1802)

USNA: United States Naval Academy (established 1845)

USAFA: United States Air Force Academy (established 1954)

Organization of USMA

Squad = 8-10 people

Platoon = 3 squads

Company = 3 platoons

Battalion = 3 companies

Regiment = 3 battalions

Corps of Cadets = 4 regiments

Plebe: Freshman

Yearling: Sophomore

Cow: Junior

Firstie: Senior

CBT: Cadet Basic Training (Prior to 1st Academic Year)

CFT: Cadet Field Training (Prior to 2nd Academic Year)

CTLT: Cadet Troop Leadership Training (Prior to 3rd Academic Year)

PAE: Physical Aptitude Examination

DPE: Department of Physical Education

3 levels of athletic competition:

Intramurals (Company Level)

Competitive Clubs (Club and Intercollegiate Level)

Corps Squad (Intercollegiate Level)

A Squad = Varsity

C Squad = Junior Varsity

A letter = a Varsity Letter

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OPLAN 75-1

Annual Report of the Board of Visitors

Annual Report of the Superintendent

Assembly

Historian's Background Material, 1973-1978

Admission of Women into USMA

Admission of Women into Corps of Cadets

House Armed Services Committee/Legislation of Women at the Service Academies

Army position on the admission of women to USMA

Memos for record on policy

Memos from trips to observe other academies and training facilities

Memos from conferences

USCC Folders

Folder: Physical Education

Folder: Women's Sports Highlights

Folder: Women, Service Academies Conference On

Folder: DPE Program

Folder: Title IX-Final report & Briefing

Folder: Cost of Renovations When Females Admitted to USMA

Folders: Planning and Organization for Women Cadets, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977

Folder: Physical Education

Folder: Integration of Women

Folder: Studies on Women – Leadership

Folder: Integration of Women

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