

Spring 2013

Failure of imagination: Gender integration and negotiated identities at the United States Air Force Academy

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Failure of Imagination:
Gender Integration and Negotiated Identities at the United States Air Force Academy

Amelia F. Underwood

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

History

May 2013

*To the first class of Academy Women.
Thank you for blazing the path for me.*

Acknowledgments:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people and institutions who have helped me intellectually, emotionally, and technically with this project. On June 11, 2012, I arrived in Colorado Springs, Colorado, eager to begin my research concerning the integration of women at the Air Force Academy. With only one month on site, I developed an ambitious agenda that included hands-on research in the Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections as well as oral history interviews with the administrative staff, faculty, and cadets. Colonel James Titus, Friends of the USAFA Library Executive Committee member, willingly served as my liaison and escort during my visit and he provided invaluable assistance in scheduling interviews and providing introductions to key individuals during my stay. I also worked closely with Friends of the United States Air Force Academy Library Executive Committee members BG Philip D. Caine, BG James H. Head, and Colonel Jock Schwank. The committee provided referrals for oral history interviews as well as insightful perspectives concerning this era in United States Air Force Academy history. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Academy Archivist and Chief, Special Collections and Mr. Joseph Barry, Reference Librarian, for donating their time, wisdom and expertise in navigating the archives.

I would like to personally thank the following individuals at the United States Air Force Academy who graciously provided oral history interviews: General Jim McCarthy (Officer-in-Charge of the Integration Plan); General Dana Born (Current Dean, USAFA Class of 1983); General Skip Scott (Superintendent, USAFA 1983-1987); General Mal Wakin (Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department); Colonel Gale Colvin

(USAFA Class of 1980); Colonel Debbie Gray (USAFA Class of 1980 and Vice Commandant of Cadets late 1990s); Dr. Richard Hughes and General Orin Samson.

Thank you to my thesis committee members, Dr.'s H. Gelfand, Kevin Borg and Emily Westkaemper, and additional reader Evan Friss, for their direction, critiques, and countless hours editing my work. I would like to particularly recognize my outside reader and dear friend Dr. Meika Polanco for introducing me to the wonderful new world of ideas in Anthropology and for supporting me professionally and personally every step of the way. To Julie, my most ardent supporter and confidant, to my parents who inspired my love of learning, and to my children Ally, Becky and Jerry, who fill my heart with joy, I thank you for your love and support throughout this amazing journey called life.

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Abstract:

Public Law-106, which authorized the admittance of women into the five federal service academies, was historically significant as it reversed the previous male-only policy at the nation's premier military leadership institutions. Its 1975 passage reflected the groundwork established by military women as well as two decades of feminist activism in America. The entrance of women at the service academies clearly challenged the existing norms for women's roles in the military and arguably in American society as well; furthermore, an analysis of primary source documents and oral histories provides insight into how men and women at the Air Force Academy confronted radically new conceptions of gender roles in society. This analysis is particularly relevant as existing scholarship concerning the integration of women at the Air Force Academy has largely ignored men's and women's own perceptions and responses to their academy experiences.

In studying the integration process at the Air Force Academy, my methodological approach places great value in centering women's voices in this story; therefore, this work will incorporate many of the existing oral histories of female cadets as well as recently gathered oral histories from women who graduated from the Air Force Academy during the integration period. By interrogating these individual cadet experiences within the larger historical context of the integration period, this work yields a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a man and a woman at this moment of radical change at the Air Force Academy. Why did men reject women as cadets? What motivated women to become cadets? How did women create a space for themselves

within this rigid masculine environment? Beyond the now-familiar narratives about male close-mindedness and chauvinism, this study explores the cultural context in which men and women encountered one another in the service academies. Men and women at the Air Force Academy grappled with the integration process in unique ways; this present work focuses on how both men and women actively negotiated and renegotiated their perceptions of masculine and feminine identity during this period of momentous organizational change at the Air Force Academy.

Introduction:

“If some events cannot be accepted even as they occur, how can they be assessed later? How does one write the history of the impossible?”

Michel-Rolph Trouillot,
*Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*¹

Airman Karen Wilhelm swore she would never be an officer. Why should she? Life was exciting as an enlisted soldier; every day promised new challenges and she would definitely stay in for a full twenty-year career in the Air Force. That was before her Master Sergeant convinced her that she should reconsider. “Officers in the Air Force get all the bennies (benefits),” he said.² As Wilhelm pondered her future career choices, President Ford signed a bill allowing women to the federal service academies in 1975. “Well, I might as well go first class. I should apply to the Air Force Academy,” Wilhelm thought.³ That decision seemed like a lifetime ago, although in reality, it had been four years... four long years. Graduation was only a few weeks away and a representative from the History Department asked her for an oral history interview. Sitting at the table in her crisp blue cadet uniform, Wilhelm tried to encapsulate her experiences as a member of the first graduating class of women at the Air Force Academy. It seemed an impossible task. How could she even begin to articulate her diverse and conflicting emotions concerning her cadet experiences? “How did you feel on your first day at the Air Force

¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995): 73.

² Cadet Karen S. Wilhelm, interview by Major Russell W. Mank and Major John E. Norvell, USAF, April 29, 1980, interview 274, transcript, United States Air Force Academy Oral History Collection, United States Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1-2. The introductory paragraph narrative was based on Cadet Wilhelm’s actual oral history interview transcript gathered on April 29, 1980.

³ Wilhelm, 1-2.

Academy?” the interviewer asked. A broad, confident smile crossed her face and

Wilhelm began her interview stating that:

I was really eager and excited. The first few days didn't bother me at all... I had done it before. I knew exactly why I was standing in lines for hours and hours and walking all over creation going here and there, getting issued uniforms, getting a haircut I didn't need. I was just cruising along and basically checking the place out because I didn't have to think: what are they doing to me? So, I just kind of sat back and looked... I learned much to my surprise, that there were people who didn't want me here... I channeled my anger into a determination that, no matter what, I wasn't going to leave and that I was going to prove to them that I should be here, that I had a right to be here and that I could be just as good at the military aspects as any male cadet.⁴

Cadet Karen Wilhelm represents one of the 157 women and 1336 men admitted with the Class of 1980, on June 26, 1976. Public Law-106, which authorized the admittance of women into the five federal service academies, was historically significant as it reversed the previous male-only policy at the nation's premier military leadership institutions. Its 1975 passage reflected the groundwork established by military women as well as two decades of feminist activism in America. The entrance of women at the service academies clearly challenged the existing norms for women's roles in the military and arguably in American society as well; furthermore, an analysis of primary source documents and oral histories provides insight into how men and women at the Air Force Academy confronted radically new conceptions of gender roles in society. This analysis is particularly relevant as existing scholarship concerning the integration of women at the Air Force Academy has largely ignored men's and women's own perceptions and responses to their academy experiences.

⁴ Wilhelm, 1-2, 1-3.

In studying the integration process at the Air Force Academy, my methodological approach places great value in centering women's voices in this story. In her article, "The Evidence of Experience," Joan Wallach Scott challenged scholars to interrogate the experiences of historical actors by stating that:

Experience is not a word we can do without ... It serves as a way of talking about what happened, of establishing difference and similarity, of claiming knowledge that is "unassailable." Experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straight forward; it is always contested, and always therefore political... It also cannot guarantee the historian's neutrality, for deciding which categories to historicize is inevitably political, necessarily tied to the historian's recognition of his or her stake in the production of knowledge. Experience is, in this approach, not the origin of our explanation, but that which we want to explain. This kind of approach does not undercut politics by denying the existence of subjects; it instead interrogates the processes of their creation and, in so doing, refigures history and the role of the historian and opens new ways for thinking about change.⁵

Informed by Scott's experiential approach, this present work will incorporate many of the existing oral histories of female cadets as well as recently gathered oral histories from women who graduated from the Air Force Academy during the integration period. By interrogating these individual cadet experiences within the larger historical context of the integration period, this work yields a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a man and a woman at this moment of radical change at the Air Force Academy. Why did men reject women as cadets? What motivated women to become cadets? Beyond the now-familiar narratives about male close-mindedness and chauvinism, this study explores the cultural context in which men and women encountered one another in the service academies. How did men interpret and respond to challenges of their masculinity? How

⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17, no. 4(Summer 1991): 797.

did women create a space for themselves within this rigid masculine environment? Men and women at the Air Force Academy grappled with the integration process in unique ways; this present work focuses on how both men and women actively negotiated and renegotiated their perceptions of masculine and feminine identity during this period of momentous organizational change at the Air Force Academy.

During the summer of 2012, I received a fellowship to conduct research at the Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections in Colorado Springs, Colorado. As part of my work during this fellowship, I conducted oral history interviews with men and women who were present during the integration period at the Air Force Academy, including some of the first women graduates from the Air Force Academy; these oral history interviews provide a vital contribution to this present study.

Between the years 1972 to 1984, the Air Force Academy actively developed and implemented their integration plans; fortunately, the Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections contain a wealth of primary source documents pertaining to this period including: official Air Force Academy Contingency Plans, Department of Athletics studies, Congressional testimonies from Air Force Academy officials, climate surveys, media coverage, Air Force Academy Official Oral Histories collected by the History Department, as well as quantitative and qualitative studies from institutions undergoing integration during this period. Unlike the other the federal service academies, the Air Force Academy senior leadership proactively examined how to integrate women into the Cadet Wing, and integration documents housed at the USAFA Archives tracks this planning process in great detail. During the initial integration period, officials at the

Air Force Academy conducted a number of studies evaluating numerous facets of the integration process.⁶ Additionally, in the summer of 1976, Air Force Academy officials welcomed outside researcher Dr. Judith Hicks Stiehm, a political scientist and professor at the University of Florida. In 1981, Stiehm published her monograph entitled *Bring Me Men and Women: Mandated Change at the U.S. Air Force Academy*, which documented her experiences as an officially sanctioned researcher and observer of this first class of women to enter the Air Force Academy.⁷ Unlike this present study, Stiehm clearly stated that her work was “not a study of women” at the Air Force Academy, but a study of an institution undergoing revolutionary change.⁸ *Bring Me Men and Women* provided a perspective of many aspects of the integration process as revealed through interviews with senior Air Force Academy officers and male cadets.

This study follows a chronological framework that examines the integration process at the Air Force Academy between the years 1972 and 1984. Chapter One, entitled “The Era of the Cadet Gentleman, 1959-1974: Constructing Masculine Identity,” provides a historical overview of the origin of the Air Force Academy; additionally, this chapter examines the formal and informal structures that facilitated the development of

⁶ For information on female athletic performance, see *Women's Integration Research Project* (Colorado Springs: United States Air Force Academy Dept. of Athletics, 1976). For psychological studies, see Lois B. De Fleur, “Sex Integration of the U.S. Air Force Academy,” *Armed Forces and Society* 36 (Oct 1, 2009): 65-85. For information on physiological performance, see Jefferson M. Koonce and Gene A. Berry, “Comparison of Males and Females in the Prediction of Basic Flight Performance,” *Behavioral Science and Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1980): 612-15.

⁷ Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Bring Me Men and Women: Mandated Change at the U.S. Air Force Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). For scholarship concerning the entrance of women at the United States Military Academy and the Naval Academy, see Lance Janda, *Stronger than Custom: West Point and the Admission of Women* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); H. Michael Gelfand, *See Change at Annapolis: The United States Naval Academy 1949-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁸ Stiehm, 4.

an exclusive masculine culture at the Air Force Academy. A comparative analysis of Air Force Academy materials published before and after integration reveals that the presence of women at the Air Force Academy challenged the established masculine identity of cadet, officer, and gentleman. Academy leadership felt they had to sacrifice the ideal image of a cadet as an officer and gentleman because in their understanding, a woman could not embody this ideal. This loss of the more esteemed, masculine traditions would not go unnoticed by male cadets at the Academy and their response would greatly affect the integration process.

Through an analysis of official Air Force Academy publications as well as informally produced cadet magazines, Chapter Two, entitled “The Era of Integration, 1974-1984: Protecting Masculine Identity,” provides a view of the integration process from the all-male senior leadership and male cadet perspective. During the transitional period of legislatively mandated integration at the Air Force Academy, 1974-1984, the new role of women as cadets significantly challenged the gender norms at this hegemonic masculine institution. Men at the Air Force Academy perceived female cadets as different in the sense that these women did not conform to the prescribed and institutionalized image of a cadet as masculine. From the male perspective, women cadets performed conflicting roles as both masculine and feminine scripts and this blurring of roles represented a serious challenge to their understanding of the cadet as an inherently masculine identity.

Chapter Three, entitled “Negotiating Boundaries, 1976-1984: Gender Integration from the Female Perspective,” incorporates oral histories as well as an analysis of climate

surveys and other Air Force Academy publications to yield a deeper understanding of men's and women's perceptions and responses to the integration process. Although women physically integrated into the Air Force Academy, they remained virtual "outsiders" within their community of male cadets, and this exclusion was a direct result of gender-based discrimination. Female cadets continually reframed the perceived masculine and feminine components of their identities and employed a number of survival tactics in order to gain acceptance from male cadets. Throughout this transitional period of integration, a cadet's gender emerged as a primary qualifier for inclusion, and as a result, female cadets remained on the "outside."

Since its inception in 1959, the Air Force Academy has actively constructed and perpetuated the identity of a cadet as inherently masculine; faced with mandated integration of women in 1976, however, the men at this institution confronted paramount changes that threatened to radically alter their inveterate homosocial environment. Deeply embedded in the traditions of the Academy were the ideals of duty, honor and selfless service to the nation; ideals that are constructed and linked within the masculine identity; a cadet was an "officer and *gentleman*." Within this framework of masculine identity, it was seemingly impossible for men to imagine that women could equally exemplify these ideals of duty, honor, and country. Beyond a seeming malicious, anti-woman stance, men at the Academy were expressing how they expected gender roles to be performed in society. To accept women into this honored legacy at the Academy would require a radically different understanding of what it means to be a cadet and indeed, what it means to be a man or a woman because, by definition, a cadet was not a

lady. Men and women grappled with the integration process in unique ways. This study argues that both men and women acted and were acted upon throughout the integration process; furthermore, both men and women actively negotiated and renegotiated their perceptions of masculine and feminine identity during this period of momentous organizational change at the Air Force Academy.

Chapter 1: The Era of the Cadet Gentleman 1954-1974: Constructing Masculine Identity

*Bring me men to match my mountains, Bring me men to match my plains;
Men to chart a starry empire, Men to make celestial claims.
Bring me men to match my prairies, Men to match my inland seas;
Men to sail beyond my oceans, Reaching for the galaxies.
These are men to build a nation, Join the mountains to the sky;
Men of faith and inspiration, Bring me men, bring me men, bring me men!
Bring me men to match my forests, Bring me men to match my shore;
Men to guard the mighty ramparts, Men to stand at freedom's door.
Bring me men to match my mountains, Men to match their majesty,
Men to climb beyond their summits, Searching for their destiny.
These are men to build a nation, Join the mountains to the sky,
Men of faith and inspiration, Bring me men, bring me men, bring me men.⁹*

Samuel Walter Foss penned his poem, “The Coming American,” on Independence Day in 1894. Celebrating the romanticized notion of American manhood at the turn of the twentieth century, Foss’s poem would also serve as both an inspiration as well as a source of contention for cadets at the Air Force Academy decades later. This poem’s persuasive phrase, “Bring Me Men” inspired American men of his day to embrace their adventurous spirit and pursue the nation’s mandate of Manifest Destiny on a global scale. Published during the height of American imperialistic ambitions at the turn of the twentieth century, “Bring Me Men” captured the masculine sentiment that infused public debate over events

⁹ Samuel Walter Foss, “The Coming American,” in *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, Hazel Felleman, ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1936):107.

such as the Spanish American War and the Philippine War.¹⁰ Fueled by concerns over the perceived weakness of American diplomacy and feminist attempts to renegotiate gender roles in American society, President Theodore Roosevelt advocated for the resurgence of American manhood founded on the “iron qualities” of “true manhood” forged in war.¹¹ In his famous “Strenuous Life” speech in 1899, Theodore Roosevelt reiterated this message of militant masculinity:

If we stand idly by... if we shrink from the hard contest where men must win at the hazard of their lives and at a risk of all they hold dear, then the stronger and bolder peoples will pass us by, and will win from themselves the domination of the world. Let us therefore boldly face the life of strife, resolute to do our duty well and manfully... Let us shrink from no strife, moral or physical, within or without the nation... For it is only through strife, through hard and dangerous endeavor, that we shall ultimately win the goal of true national greatness.¹²

Conflating manly politics and the warrior ethos, Roosevelt argued that America must establish its dominance as a global power; moreover, American men could achieve this goal by embracing an idealized version of militant masculinity embodied in the soldierly virtues of courage, strength, endurance, aggressiveness, and an uncompromising sense of duty and honor. Foss’s gendered rhetoric also echoed this call for militant masculinity; Foss articulated that the nation required men who were brave, strong, and manly enough

¹⁰ For an excellent gendered analysis of the Spanish-American and Philippine War, see Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provokes the Spanish American and Philippine American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). For additional scholarship concerning American masculinity in the late nineteenth-century see: Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940*, J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993); Arnaldo Testi, “The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity,” in *The Journal of American History*, vol. 81, no. 4 (Mar, 1995): 1509-1533; and Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Review of Reviews Company, 1910):3-22.

¹¹ Hoganson, 20-21; Roosevelt, 3-22.

¹² Roosevelt, 20-21.

to “sail beyond my oceans... reach for the galaxies... guard the mighty ramparts.... stand at freedom’s door,” and fulfill their destiny as builders and protectors of the American nation and empire.¹³

While America’s imperialist ambitions cooled at the turn of the century, American involvement in two world wars and the onset of the Cold War sustained this archetype of American militant masculinity. American policy makers in the post-World War II era recognized the necessity for a strong, well-equipped, and well trained military force consisting of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; additionally, the federal service academies would continue to play a critical role in preparing leaders to serve in America’s military forces. The National Security Act of 1947 officially established the Air Force as a separate branch of the United States military; this legislation also designated that approximately twenty-five percent of the United States Military Academy and United States Naval Academy graduates could volunteer to be commissioned into the newly-created Air Force.¹⁴ This collaborative arrangement between the Army, the Navy and the Air Force served as a temporary measure while military, and government officials continued their on-going debate over the need for a separate Air Force Academy. While the United States Army and Navy trained and commissioned officers at their own military academies at West Point and Annapolis, the newly formed Air Force lacked its own institution, thus prompting a debate in Washington over the creation of an Air Force Academy. Following World War I, some Air Service officers felt that the Air Service

¹³ Foss, 2.

¹⁴ U.S. Congress, “National Security Act of 1947,” 18th Cong., 1st sess., July 26, 1947, 1-10.

should have an academy to train future officers. In 1918, senior Air Service officer, Lieutenant Colonel A.J. Hanlon claimed that:

It [is] necessary to have an air academy to form a basis for the permanent backbone of your air service and to attend to the... organizational part of it, very much the same way that West Point does for the Army, or that Annapolis does for the Navy. No Service can flourish without some such institution to inculcate into its embryonic officers love of country, proper conception of duty, and highest regard for honor.¹⁵

Hanlon recognized the need for an institution dedicated to preparing officers for service in the new branch of the Air Force; additionally, Hanlon emphasized the necessity of establishing an air academy to fulfill the critical mission of “inculcating” future officers in the military traditions of duty, honor and service to the nation.¹⁶

In 1950, the Service Academy Board, under the leadership of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, determined that the establishment of an Air Force Academy was necessary to meet the needs of the Air Force; Congress responded in 1954 by passing legislation to authorize the construction of the Air Force Academy. By April 1954, the selection commission identified 582 potential sites, and on June 24, 1954, the commission announced the selection of Colorado Springs, Colorado, as the future home of the Air Force Academy.¹⁷ The commission favored locating the Academy in the western region of the United States for a number of reasons including: topography, natural beauty, community aspects, the location’s suitability for flight instruction, climate, water supply,

¹⁵ Cannon, M. Hamlin and Henry S. Fellerman, *Quest for an Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1974): 10.

¹⁶ Cannon, 10.

¹⁷ Robert A. Nauman, *On the Wings of Modernism: The United States Air Force Academy* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2004):12.

utilities, accessible transportation, and cost.¹⁸ The American West seemed a logical choice as this region experienced a rapid economic growth during and following World War II due in large measure to the federal government's \$40 billion dollar investments in new technological industries, particularly aerospace and electronics, as well as the construction of a number of military installations.¹⁹ On July 23, 1954, the commission awarded the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM) the contract to design the Air Force Academy. Proposing a functional, modern design, SOM architects articulated their design approach stating that:

We believe that the architectural concepts of the Academy buildings should represent this national character of the Academy, that they should represent in steel and glass, marble and stone the simple, direct, modern way of life- that they should be as modern, as timeless, and as style-less in their architectural concept, as efficient and as flexible in their basic layout as the most modern projected aircraft... We believe that this Academy, tucked in among the mountains, proudly standing on our modern Acropolis, will create a vibrant culture and spiritual sense of forward-looking accomplishment in these young people.²⁰

The Air Force Academy's design and choice of glass and steel building materials embodied the ideals of modernity and functionality, confirming this institution as a visible symbol of America's military strength during the Cold War²¹ (Figures 1-4).

¹⁸ Nauman, 12.

¹⁹ Nauman, 60.

²⁰ Nauman, 60.

²¹ Nauman, 73.



Figure 1: United States Air Force Academy, Cadet quarters (Vandenberg Hall)²²



Figure 2: United States Air Force Academy, Dining hall (Mitchell Hall)²³

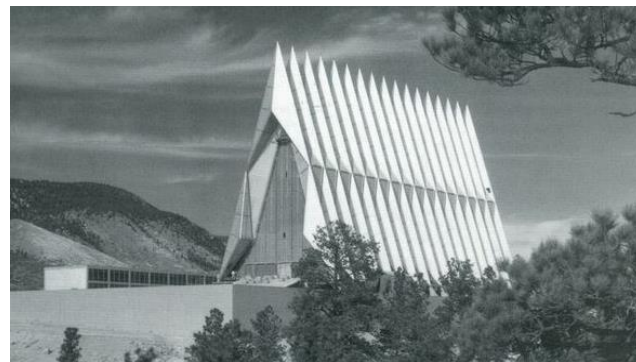


Figure 3: United States Air Force Academy, Cadet Chapel²⁴

²² Nauman, 126.

²³ Nauman, 96.

²⁴ Nauman, 115.

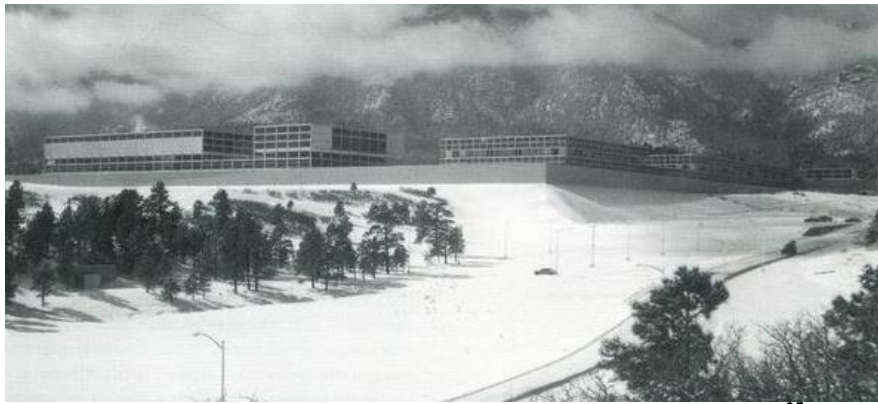


Figure 4: United States Air Force Academy, Cadet Area²⁵

The swearing in ceremony for the 306 men of the Class of 1959, took place on July 11, 1955, during the construction phase of the Air Force Academy; Lowry Air Force Base outside of Denver, Colorado, served as the temporary location of the Air Force Academy during this period.²⁶

Seventy-one years after Foss composed the “Bring Me Men” poem, General Robert Strong, the Commandant of Cadets at the Air Force Academy, ordered the words, “Bring Me Men” to be prominently mounted on the Terrazzo level ramp to inspire the cadet wing²⁷ (Figure 5).

²⁵ Nauman, 2.

²⁶ Muenger, Elizabeth A. Muenger and Charles D. Dusch, Jr., *Our Academy Heritage* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 2010): 5.

²⁷ The Terrazzo is the square common area between dorms, academic building, library, dining facility, and the Cadet Chapel. This is where the cadet squadrons held their Wing wide formations, particularly where the Wing formed up before parades such as the Graduation Day Parade. The ramp leads from the bottom floor of the dorm up to the Terrazzo level. USAFA Folklore Wiki, “Bring Me Men Ramp,” (accessed Feb. 11, 2013), http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Bring_Me_Men_Ramp.

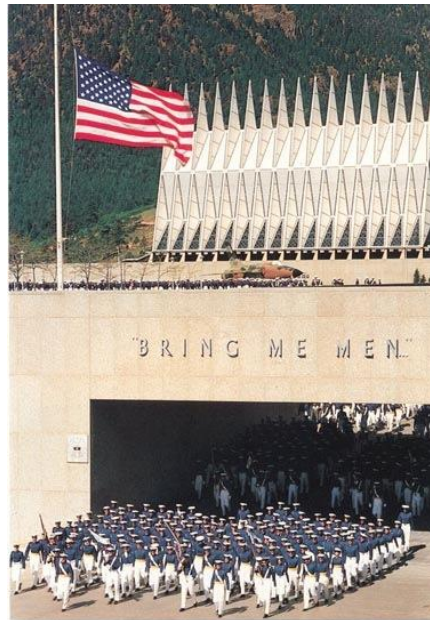


Figure 5: Graduation Parade March through the Ramp²⁸

Since 1965, cadets entered through this ramp on their first day of Basic Cadet Training and cadets marched out through this ramp four years later on Graduation Day, beginning their careers as officers in the United States Air Force. The “Bring Me Men Ramp” served as a prominent visual symbol of the threshold between an old life and a new one. Over time, “Bring Me Men” transformed into the unofficial Academy motto, as these words embodied the ideals, traits, and culture of this all-male institution. As the first women marched up the “Bring Me Men” ramp in the summer of 1976, however, it was apparent that the integration of women would challenge the masculine culture at the Air Force Academy (Figure 6).

²⁸ USAFA Folklore Wiki, “Bring Me Men Ramp,” (accessed Feb. 11, 2013), http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Bring_Me_Men_Ramp,



Figure 6: One of USAFA's First Women on In-processing Day, June 26, 1976²⁹

Deeply embedded in the traditions of the United States military as a whole, and the Air Force Academy in particular, are the ideals of duty, honor, and selfless service to the nation—ideals inextricably linked with the masculine identity. According to published Air Force Academy manuals from the 1950s and 1960s, a cadet was an “officer and gentleman.”³⁰ As stated in the *Decorum* manuals, the Air Force Academy adapted its concept of military honor from British and European military traditions; specifically, this code of military honor included four essential components: “gentlemanly conduct, personal fealty, self-regulating brotherhood, and the pursuit of glory.”³¹ As part of the proscribed mission of the Air Force Academy to train future officers for the nation’s Air Force, cadets received instruction on honor, military customs and ethics.³² The 1969

²⁹ USAFA Folklore Wiki, “Bring Me Men Ramp,” (accessed Feb. 11, 2013):1. http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Bring_Me_Men_Ramp.

³⁰ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 157.

³¹ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 1-4.

³² The official mission statement of the Air Force Academy has changed over time. The mission statement between the years 1960-1970 was as follows: “To provide instruction, experience, and motivation to each cadet so that he will graduate with the knowledge, character, and qualities of leadership essential to his

edition of the *Decorum* manual also reiterated the importance of duty, honor, and gentlemanly conduct stating that: “As long as the military profession and members of the Air Force can consider themselves to be special because they embody the martial spirit and are heroic fighters, it is indispensable that they consider themselves gentlemen.”³³ The Air Force Academy’s use of gendered rhetoric to describe military professionals as warriors and gentleman elucidates this institution’s presumption that only men could “embody the martial spirit” and be “heroic fighters.”³⁴ While women served in the U.S. Air Force since 1948, the gender segregated policies of the Air Force Academy prior to 1976 sustained the notion that women were somehow excluded from this definition of the heroic military warrior.³⁵ Beyond a seeming malicious, anti-female stance, men at the Air Force Academy who resisted women’s initial enrollments were expressing how they expected gender roles to be performed in society. To accept women into this honored legacy at the Air Force Academy would require a radically different understanding of what it meant to be a cadet— and indeed, what it meant to be a man or a woman because, by definition, a cadet was a gentleman, not a lady. Within the framework of traditionally

progressive development as a career officer in the United States Air Force.” In 1980, the first year with women graduates, the official mission statement was changed to omit gender reference: “To provide instruction and experience to all cadets so that they graduate with the knowledge and character essential to leadership and the motivation to become career officers in the United States Air Force.” USAFA Folklore Wiki, “Mission of the United States Air Force Academy,” (accessed Feb. 11, 2013):1.

http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Mission_of_the_United_States_Air_Force_Academy.

³³ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 1-6.

³⁴ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 1-6.

³⁵ On June 12, 1948, President Harry Truman signed Public Law 625, The Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, which allowed women to serve directly in the U.S. military; additionally, the Women in the Air Force (WAF) program also formed in 1948, with the goal to bring women into the Air Force. The Air Force restricted women from becoming pilots despite the fact that the Women’s Air Corps trained women as pilots during World War II. Bettie J. Morden, *The Women’s Army Corps, 1945-1978*, Center for Military History, United States Army (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990):48-62, (accessed April 17, 2013 <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wac/chapter2.htm#b3>).

masculine and feminine roles at the Air Force Academy, women represented the gentle, fairer sex who were in need of protection; furthermore, this hegemonic institution conceived that women lacked the physical and emotional capabilities necessary for the rigorous military lifestyle. The integration of women into the Air Force Academy appeared to men to be counterintuitive to this institution's purpose of transforming young men into cadets, officers, and gentlemen; moreover, the inclusion of women at the Air Force Academy ultimately required the institution to redefine its rhetoric and training practices. What exactly did it mean to be a gentleman? Was being a gentleman simply a performative character trait? What other attributes were required to fulfill this definition of gentleman?³⁶ An examination of these questions, and how the answers shifted in response to women's presence in the Cadet Wing, provides insight into how men at the Air Force Academy view performative gender roles in society.

During the Air Force Academy's first two decades, from 1955 until 1975, the institution's leadership constructed a unique masculinity of "cadet, officer and gentleman."³⁷ Furthermore, Air Force Academy publications prior to integration in 1976 romanticized the notion of nineteenth century militant masculinity epitomized in the "Bring Me Men" poem. A comparative analysis of Air Force Academy materials published before and after the integration of women reveals that the entrance of women at the Air Force Academy radically challenged the prevailing masculine identity of cadet,

³⁶ For a further of the relationship between masculinity and the warrior ethos see: Herbert Sussman, *Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012); R.Claire Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republican Tradition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); and Charles Moskos, John Allen and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁷ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 157.

officer and gentleman. Admitting women into this sacred sphere of heroic masculine warriors and gentlemen would require constructing a new and inclusive understanding of cadet identity as both masculine and feminine.

In 1972, the impending legislation requiring the integration of women into the federal service academies compelled Air Force Academy officials to set aside any personal gender biases and begin the task of constructing a new cadet identity that included both men and women.³⁸ Senior Academy officials approached this task in a pragmatic, mission-oriented fashion by initiating the development of: *Integration of Females into the Cadet Wing*.³⁹ As part of *Contingency Plan Number 36-72* directives, the Air Force Academy appointed a designated team of officers to review and edit all pertinent Air Force Academy publications to ensure these documents appeared gender neutral and, correspondingly, inoffensive to incoming female cadets.⁴⁰ Stripped of masculine or feminine references, these documents actually portrayed a genderless rather than gender neutral tone. By opting to remove gender-exclusive language in these publications, the Academy articulated a new genderless image for cadets which allowed Academy officials to avoid more troubling discourses concerning representations of male and female cadet identities. Replacing the masculine rhetoric in these manuals and publications was a systematic and mechanical directive; however, this action did not

³⁸ While the integration of women at the Air Force Academy occurred only twenty-one years after the Academy was founded in 1955, this institution incorporated many of the formal and informal traditions, regulations, and practices of its parent and model academy, the United States Military Academy. In the mid-1970s, the Air Force Academy, and the U.S. military at large, still retained firmly entrenched, patriarchal views of gender roles in society.

³⁹ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72: Integration of Females into the Cadet Wing*, United States Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976).

⁴⁰ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72: Integration of Females into the Cadet Wing*, United States Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976).

necessitate that men at the Air Force Academy would adopt this genderless sentiment on a personal level. An analysis of post-integration publications reveals an underlying tension felt by men at the Air Force Academy who presumed that the integration of women would result in a devastating loss of the highly esteemed, masculine traditions of duty, honor and country symbolized by the wearing of a cadet uniform.

Since its inception, the Air Force Academy has published an annual booklet for cadets designed to teach manners and the formal rules of etiquette entitled *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum*⁴¹ (Figure 7).

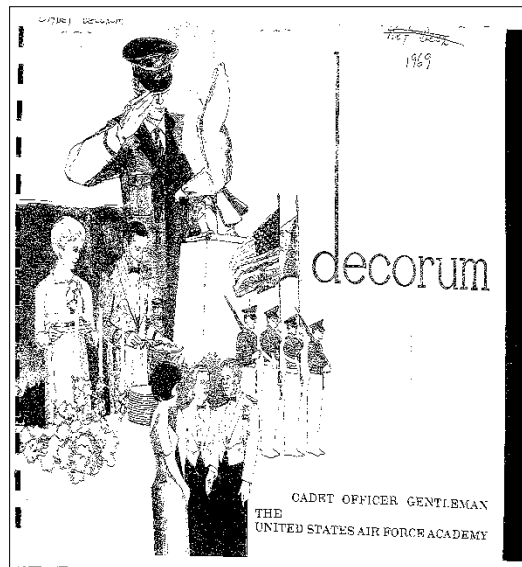


Figure 7: *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual 1969*⁴²

The cover of the 1959 issue of *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* pictured four distinct images of cadets engaged in various aspects of military social activities. In one image, a male cadet attired in full dress uniform rendered a proper military salute. In a

⁴¹ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1959): cover.

⁴² *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969).

second image, four male cadets who served as the official color guard for the Air Force Academy marched with flags and rifles. In the third image, there were two male cadets in full dress uniforms engaged in a polite conversation with a lady attired in a ball gown. In the fourth image, a male cadet in full dress uniform and his date served themselves at a formal banquet table. Each of these images depicted the formal social and military duties expected of a cadet, officer, and a gentleman. *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* provided instructions on the appropriate social graces expected for any situation that a cadet may encounter in his career. To further assist cadets in developing proper decorum, in 1955, the Air Force Academy appointed Mrs. Ruth Gail McComas as the first Cadet Wing Hostess.⁴³ The 1975 issue of *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* provided a detailed description of the duties of the Cadet Wing Hostess stating that:

She is responsible for planning and implementing your social programs including dances, parties and Graduation Week activities....Your hostess can and will be of much assistance to you in all your social activities... she will introduce you to young ladies... Should you desire a date for a social activity, she will help you....She will give you insight into many customs and courtesies of the Air Force. Her advice about what to do in unfamiliar social situations can save you from embarrassing moments.⁴⁴

Air Force Academy officials considered a cadet's instruction in the rules of gentlemanly conduct and social decorum necessary and integral to a successful career as an officer in the Air Force (Figure 8).

⁴³ Mrs. McComas served as the Cadet Wing Hostess until 1977. Mrs. Louise Brown served in this position until 1987 and Mrs. Cinda Thorhauer served until 1992. The Cadet Wing Hostess position was eliminated in 1992. USAFA Folklore Wiki, "Wing Hostess," http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Wing_Hostess (accessed March 1, 2013):1.

⁴⁴ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1975):8-3.



Figure 8: The Superintendent's official receiving line at an Air Force Academy Ball. Cadet Wing Hostess, Mrs. Edward O. McComas, is pictured at the far left. ⁴⁵

An excerpt from the 1959 issue of *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* stated that “It is part of the code and tradition of the service that the cadet, the potential officer, is as much a gentleman as a commissioned officer.”⁴⁶ This manual fervently reminded the cadets “they have been accepted as a gentleman; great prestige and respect are accorded to [them] as a cadet and future officer; [and] the general good of the Air Force demands that [they] display the qualities of a gentleman.”⁴⁷ The 1969 issue of *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* emphasized this gentleman concept within the military by affirming that “the military officer is considered a gentleman...because nothing less than a gentleman is truly suited for his particular set of responsibilities.”⁴⁸ Moreover, the 1968 issue stated that “an enlisted man expects an officer to be a gentleman, for unless he is a gentleman he can never become an officer regardless of how

⁴⁵ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1975):8-4.

⁴⁶ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1959):45.

⁴⁷ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1959):1-5.

⁴⁸ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969):157.

technically competent he becomes.”⁴⁹ The Air Force Academy placed a high priority on training its cadets in decorum; furthermore, as these statement asserted, unless a cadet becomes a refined gentleman, he could not fulfill his duties as a military officer.

Decorum manuals also provided specific instructions on the treatment of ladies because, as the 1959 edition noted, “the fairer sex deserves special consideration from gentlemen.”⁵⁰ Examples of these courtesies include opening doors, taking a woman’s coat, lighting her cigarette, and standing in the presence of a woman. Each cadet received instruction on how to conduct himself as a proper gentleman; this aspect of cadet training reflected how the Academy actively constructed a masculine identity for cadets.

Additionally, *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* prescribed the accepted roles for men and women in society; men served as gentlemen soldiers who protected and honored their ladies. In this context, ladies respected and honored their gentlemen and occupied subservient and supporting roles to men.

In preparation for the legislatively mandated integration of women, the Air Force Academy initiated the production of *Contingency Plan Number 36-72: The Integration of Females into the Cadet Wing*. This plan directed Academy officials to systematically review and edit all their publications and regulations to ensure that these documents presented a gender neutral tone. As a result, the Air Force Academy edited *Decorum*

⁴⁹ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1959): 20.

⁵⁰ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1959): 20-22.

manuals published after 1976, and the title changed to the *Cadet Decorum Handbook*⁵¹ (Figure 9).

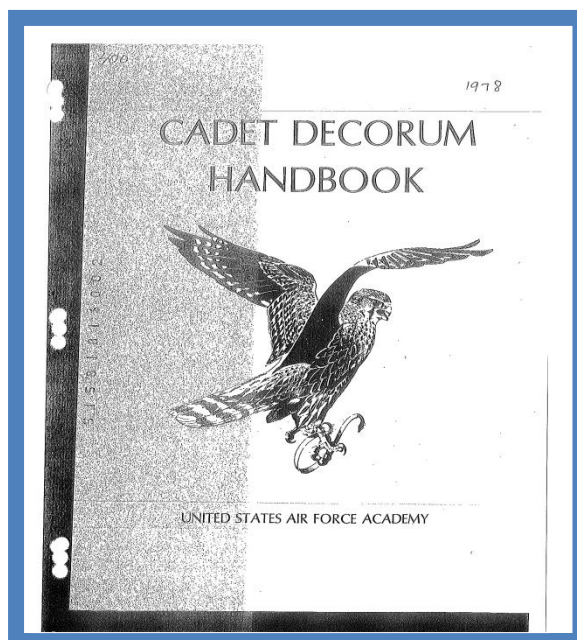


Figure 9: *Cadet Decorum Handbook 1978*⁵²

Images of cadets in social settings or performing military courtesies disappeared so that there were no humans on the cover at all thereby removing any reference to masculine or feminine images. Thereafter, *Decorum* pictured a falcon, the Air Force Academy mascot, on the cover.

This publication became significantly shorter in length than previous issues as large sections referencing the origins and necessity of gentlemanly conduct were omitted. New editions of *Decorum* eliminated statements that conflated the identity of a cadet and military officer with gentleman; additionally, *Decorum* did not address womanly conduct as it pertains to a female cadet or officer. The edited versions of *Decorum* omitted

⁵¹ *Cadet Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1978): cover

⁵² *Cadet Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1978): cover.

specific discussions of manly and womanly conduct as the embodiment of a cadet's sense of duty, honor, and selfless service. Did this imply that the "particular set of responsibilities" of a cadet and military officer had changed with the integration of women at the Air Force Academy?⁵³ Did gender exclude one from performing gentlemanly conduct? This failure to discuss honorable womanly conduct reiterated the point that authors found themselves unable to imagine both men and women as noble and honorable cadets and officers. The Academy chose to avoid such topics completely in *Decorum*, thus illustrating their reluctance to include women in this culture of cadet, officer, and gentleman.

The 1976 gender neutral version of *Decorum* manual became a vehicle for Academy leadership to prescribe appropriate and inappropriate relationships between cadets. With the presence of women in the cadet wing, Academy officials were concerned that unauthorized fraternization between women and men would develop. In a 1977 interview, Colonel James McCarthy, Vice Commandant of Cadets at the Air Force Academy, clarified the Air Force Academy definition of fraternization. Colonel McCarthy stated that fraternization was "any social relationship which has as its potential interfering with training...The whole idea is that if you get emotionally involved, you can't carry out the training program, you can't enforce the standards, and that's been historic not just among men and women, but among men, or among women on active duty in the Air Force."⁵⁴ The Academy leadership acknowledged the potential for

⁵³ *Cadet Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969):157.

⁵⁴ Colonel James P. McCarthy, United States Air Force Academy Vice Commandant of Cadets, interviewed by Colonel Philip D. Caine and Capt. Robert S. Bartanowicz, Feb. 18, 1977, USAFA Oral History Project, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, 57.

heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships to develop between cadets and this was considered highly unprofessional as this would jeopardize the impartiality of those in leadership positions.

Earlier versions of *Decorum* discussed inappropriate friendships between men of unequal rank and status; furthermore, *Decorum* did not contain admonitions concerning homosexual romantic or sexual relationships between men as this was viewed as unnecessary. Within the highly masculine, homophobic environment of the Air Force Academy and the U.S. military viewed, homosexuality a taboo subject; moreover, homosexual acts were punishable offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.⁵⁵ After 1976, *Decorum* included warnings against inappropriate senior-subordinate relationships between men and women at the Academy. This manual used the example of a freshman female cadet and an upperclassman male cadet to illustrate this inappropriate relationship. By enforcing strict fraternization rules, the Academy leadership aimed to prevent the development of personal relationships, and potential pregnancies, between the new female cadets and upperclassmen male cadets.

The stark contrast between the *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman: Decorum* manual produced before 1976 and the *Cadet Decorum Handbook* produced after 1976, illustrates how the Air Force Academy attempted to create a gender neutral identity for cadets. The resulting product, however, was a stark list of rules and regulations that lacked the emotional appeal of transforming cadets into officers and gentlemen that was found in the earlier versions of this manual. The re-construction of the *Cadet, Officer, and Gentleman:*

⁵⁵ Uniform Code of Military Justice, No. 925, Article 125, "Sodomy," (accessed March 28, 2013), <http://www.ucmj.us/sub-chapter-10-punitive-articles/925-article-125-sodomy>.

Decorum manual into the de-socialized, sanitized version was a provocative example of how men at the Air Force Academy conceptualized women as inherently different from their masculine conception of a cadet.

The Air Force Academy also published and distributed an annual promotional catalog for prospective candidates (Figure 10).

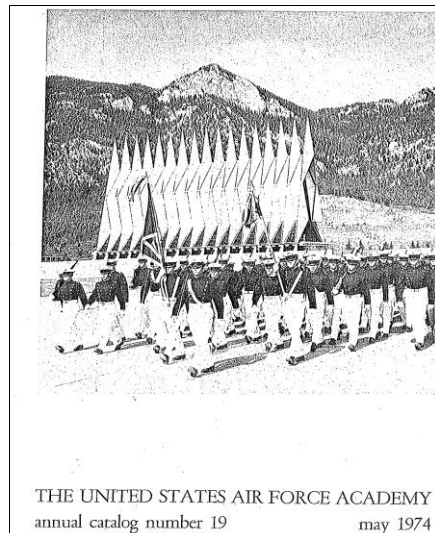


Figure 10: United States Air Force Academy Annual Catalog, May 1974⁵⁶

On the inside cover of this catalog, the acting Superintendent at the Academy wrote a personal message to challenge young men and women to consider a career in the Air Force. Prior to 1976, the messages contained in these promotional catalogs were highly gendered in nature (Figure 11).

⁵⁶ *United States Air Force Academy Annual Catalog* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1974): cover.

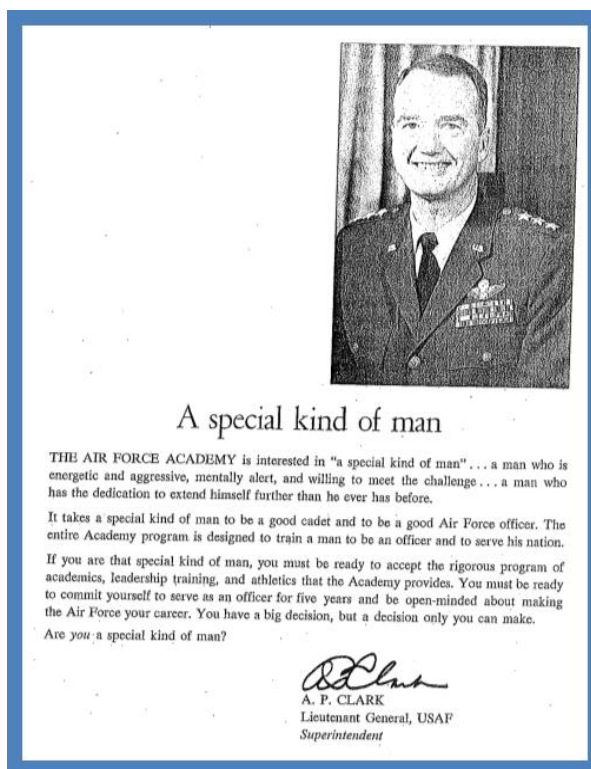


Figure 11: Message to prospective cadets from Superintendent Clark, May 1974⁵⁷

In the May 1974 issue, Lieutenant General Clark entitled his inspirational message, “A Special Kind Of Man,” and he stated that the Air Force Academy was seeking a “special kind of man . . . who is energetic and aggressive, mentally alert, and willing to meet the challenge.”⁵⁸ He concluded his message with the question, “Are you a special kind of man?”⁵⁹ The *Air Force Academy Annual Catalog* served two purposes: first, to challenge young men to embrace this challenge of manhood and come to the Academy; and second, to establish the Air Force Academy’s definition of masculinity. Inherent in these publications was the premise that through the rigorous program of military, academic,

⁵⁷ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1974):3.

⁵⁸ *United States Air Force Academy Annual Catalog* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1974): 3.

⁵⁹ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1974):3.

athletic, and leadership training, the Academy would transform a young boy into a highly respected officer and that only the most capable young men who could meet this standard of masculinity would become cadets and future officers.

Similar to *Decorum*, *Catalogs* published after 1976 were also edited to achieve a gender neutral tone. For example, the 1977 issue of the *Catalog*, printed one year after the integration of women, contained Superintendent General Allen's message, simply titled, "To interested young men and women"⁶⁰ (Figure 12).

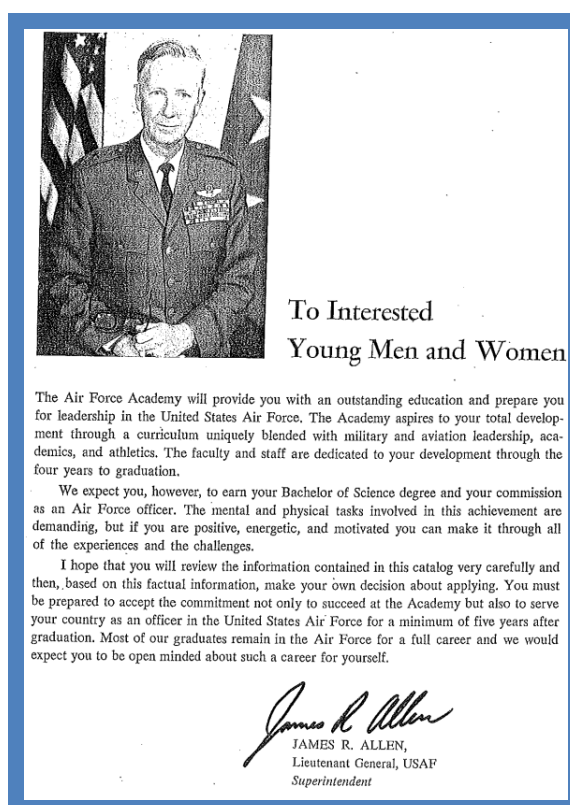


Figure 12: *United States Air Force Academy Annual Catalog*, May 1977⁶¹

⁶⁰ *United States Air Force Academy Annual Catalog* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1977): 3.

⁶¹ *United States Air Force Academy Annual Catalog* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1977): 3.

Removed from this issue and all subsequent issues of this promotional catalog was the inspirational call for a special kind of man; instead of this emotional appeal to manhood, General Allen stated that the Air Force Academy would provide prospective candidates with “an outstanding education” while preparing them for “leadership in the United States Air Force.”⁶² The tone of General Allen’s message differed from General Clark’s as it seemed to be a marketing pitch that discussed the various advantages of attending the Air Force Academy rather than becoming the ideal of a respected cadet, officer and gentleman. This new rhetoric, stripped of emotion and descriptive language, articulated the Academy’s reluctance to admit that women could also embody the special characteristics necessary for inclusion within the traditionally masculine world of the military. The omission of this motivational call to manhood, as evidenced in the Air Force Academy produced literature both before and after integration, served as a source of disappointment and frustration for men at the Academy.

One of the most visible expressions of masculine identity at the Air Force Academy, the “Bring Me Men” Ramp, remained in place after the integration of women in 1976. Academy leadership considered its removal “unacceptable” for several reasons: its removal would be “detrimental to the Academy tradition and heritage;” alumni and male cadets would greatly oppose its removal this would “create more resentment toward woman cadets;” and “it was not cost effective.”⁶³ While the Air Force Academy had only been in existence for a few decades, this ramp represented a tie to the historically

⁶²*Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1974):3.

⁶³ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, Women’s Integration Research Project, Issue #131, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976):3.

masculine culture of the military that men at Air Force Academy were unwilling to relinquish.

In addition to the overtly masculine symbol of the “Bring Me Men” Ramp, certain publications also continued to reflect the masculine character of the Air Force Academy ten years after the integration of women despite directives to edit these works. In July of 1984 and March of 1989, the Integration of Women Committee (IOWC) Task Force published their findings concerning the progress of integration at the Air Force Academy.⁶⁴ Both reports recommended that “a thorough review be made of all publications at the Academy to identify any conflicts with... the overall concept of integration of women.”⁶⁵ In their 1989 report, the IOWC stated that:

Gender-exclusive language still persists in regulations and inscriptions. For example, the cover of the 1989-90 Curriculum Handbook states, “The Courage of A Soldier is Heightened by His Knowledge of His Profession.” Another example of gender-specific language is found on the sculpted inscription above the archway leading to the cadet area which reads, BRING ME MEN. While it is quoted from a poem, certainly some concessions should be granted to include women cadets. Although women have been present at the Academy for over a decade, pronouncements such as these send a message to cadets, faculty, and visitors alike. They serve as a symbolic reminder of a masculine tradition of days past, and perhaps, days present. In addition, they demonstrate an institutional inertia in shifting from a masculine-dominant culture towards gender pluralism.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ In 1984, the Superintendent’s Survey Team conducted an eight month intensive investigation which studied all facets of the integration process. One critical component of the committee’s work was a climate survey. Based on the findings of this survey, the Superintendent directed the organization of the Integration of Women Committee; committee representatives came from across the Academy and they were tasked with investigating the problems which surfaced in the survey and making recommendations for improvements. Superintendent’s Survey Team, “Report on the Integration of Women into the Cadet Wing: Recommendations,” (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, July 1984):1; and Integration of Women Committee, “Integration of Women at the U.S. Air Force Academy: Preliminary Findings,” (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, March 1989):3.

⁶⁵ Superintendent’s Survey Team, 3.

⁶⁶ Integration of Women Committee, 3.

The IOWC's 1989 report also raised the issue of how gender-specific rhetoric affected women cadets stating that "Gender-exclusive language omit[s] women, making them "invisible... do they [women] belong to the Academy when the language and inscriptions omit women? Are they soldiers when the soldier's knowledge and profession are described in masculine language?"⁶⁷ The IOWC reports provided a valuable snapshot of the successes and shortcomings of women's integration at the ten and fifteen year mark. According to the 1984 report, "the survey team discovered that many of their preconceived notions of the problem were inaccurate, unfounded, misguided and/or shallow insights into what the real issues are surrounding the admittance of women into the Cadet Wing."⁶⁸ This transparent effort by the Air Force Academy to confront "what [they] thought [they] knew" compared to "what [was] really so" was commendable; however, both the 1984 and 1989 reports warned that "anything short of full and enthusiastic support for our recommendations [would] vastly undermine our efforts to rid the Academy of sexual discrimination and harassment."⁶⁹ Unfortunately, these reports were an accurate predictor of sexual assault scandals that would plague the Air Force Academy in the future.⁷⁰

A comparative analysis of Air Force Academy materials published before and after integration reveals that the presence of women at the Air Force Academy challenged the established masculine identity of cadet, officer, and gentleman. Academy leadership

⁶⁷ Integration of Women Committee, 3.

⁶⁸ It is unclear by this statement exactly what this committee defines as the "problem" concerning integration. While perhaps unintentional, this statement seems to suggest that women are the real problem at the Air Force Academy. Superintendent's Survey Team, 1.

⁶⁹ Superintendent's Survey Team, 1.

⁷⁰ See the conclusion for information pertaining to the 2003 sexual assault scandal at the United States Air Force Academy.

felt they had to sacrifice the ideal image of a cadet as an officer and gentleman because in their understanding, a woman could not embody this ideal. The era of the cadet, officer and gentleman would be replaced with a more individualistic, non-gender specific, approach to military service. This loss of the more esteemed, masculine traditions would not go unnoticed by male cadets at the Academy and their response would greatly affect the integration process.

Chapter 2: The Era of Integration 1974-1984: Protecting Masculine Identity

In November 1975, the Air Force Academy student-run magazine entitled *The DODO* ran the following front page article: “Dogs Enter Academy”⁷¹ (Figure 13). Published only a few weeks after President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-106 admitting women into the federal service academies, this article sarcastically revealed the author’s negative sentiment about the impending new demographic. The author stated that there will be 100 to 150 dogs entering the Academy with the Class of 1980 and that with the coming of the hounds, training would have to be drastically modified. This article described necessary changes to Air Force Academy facilities and training procedures in order to integrate dogs into the cadet wing such as: dogs would have two minutes to dig a hole as fast as they can; the installation of a fire hydrant in every latrine; blue flea collars and rabies tags to designate rank on dog uniforms; and training cadet dogs to tuck their tail between their legs. Under a thin veil of tongue-and-cheek cadet humor, the dark, sarcastic tone that reflected the male cadet’s negative attitudes concerning the impending entrance of women into the Air Force Academy in July of 1976 was unmistakable. By presenting dogs as symbols for women, the author underscored the supposed absurdity of incorporating women into the highly esteemed and traditionally masculine environment at the Air Force Academy.

⁷¹ “Dogs Enter Academy,” *The DODO* (November 1975): 6.

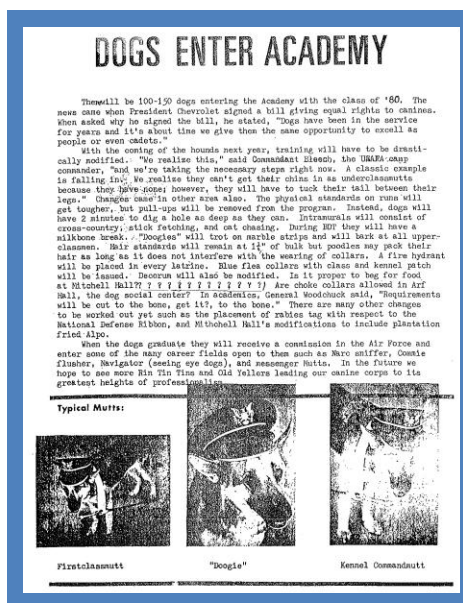


Figure 13: "Dogs Enter Academy" from *The DODO*, November 1975.

Public Law-106, which authorized the admittance of women into the five federal service academies, was historically significant as it reversed the previous male-only policy at the nation's premier military leadership institutions. Its 1975 passage reflected the groundwork established by military women as well as two decades of feminist activism in America. In the mid-twentieth century, feminist organizations such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) began actively lobbying for social, economic, and political equality for women including legislation, such as the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), that would eliminate sexual discrimination in the workplace. While the required number of states failed to ratify the ERA, one key legislative victory for women's rights occurred in 1972 with passage of Title IX, an Equal Opportunity in Education Act which stated: "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...”⁷² Title IX provided the legal framework needed to establish that the exclusion of women from the federally supported military academies represented gender discrimination and was therefore unconstitutional; four years later, in July of 1976, women entered the federal service academies as cadets and midshipmen for the first time in the history of these institutions.

The entrance of women at the service academies clearly challenged the existing norms for women’s roles in the military and arguably in American society as well. After the conclusion of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Congress created an all-volunteer force which resulted in a shortage of personnel and the subsequent recruitment of more and more women into the military. While combat-related positions remained closed to women, by 1980, women made up eight percent of the entire active duty force—a twenty-six percent increase in less than a decade ⁷³ (Figure 14).

⁷²United States Department of Labor, *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, Public Law No. 92-318, 20 U.S.C.A. § 1681-1688, 86 Stat. 235 (June 23, 1972), accessed February 11, 2013, <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm>.

⁷³ In 1974, 45,000 women were serving on active duty in the four Department of Defense branches of service. By 1980, this number increased to 171,000 women. These figures include both enlisted personnel and officers. The Department of Defense proscribed that women could not serve in any position that would likely see direct combat including infantry, armor, fighter pilots, and submarine and ship duty. .National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, *America’s Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics* (Washington, DC: Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011): 3.

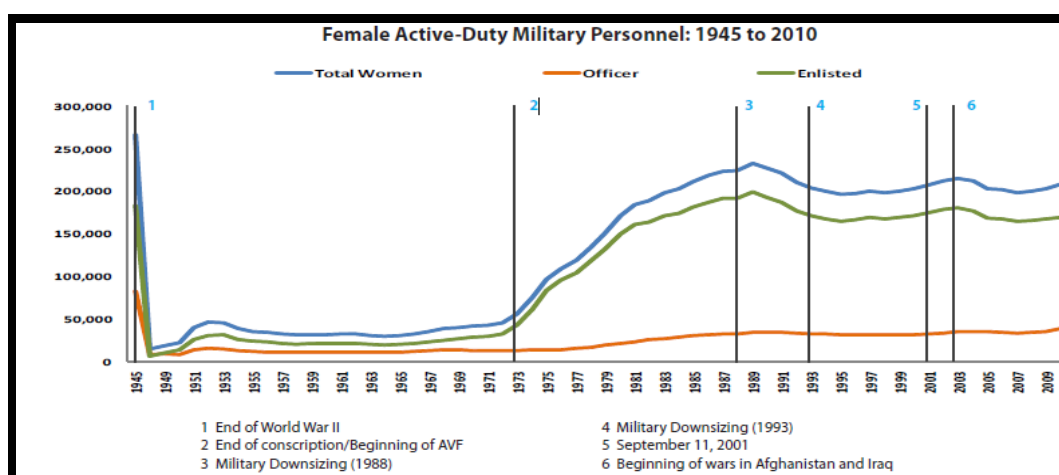


Figure 14: Female Active-Duty Military Personnel 1945 to 2010
Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2011⁷⁴

At this moment of significant gender integration into the U.S. military, officials at the federal service academies were struggling with a number of elemental questions and biases concerning the imminent and unwelcomed arrival of women into their masculine institutions. Did women actually possess the strength, fortitude, and abilities to navigate and succeed in these male-dominated bastions? Why would women want to attend a military academy? How would the traditions and standards of the academies alter with the arrival of women? An examination of these questions provides insight into how men at the Air Force Academy viewed the performance of gender in society.

Historians and scholars in the field of gender and sexuality argue that military institutions are prime locations where certain norms of masculinity have been entrenched and institutionalized.⁷⁵ Australian sociologist R. W. Connell, widely respected for her

⁷⁴ "America's Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics: Female Active-Duty Military Personnel 1945 to 2010," *National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics* (Washington, DC: Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011): 3.

⁷⁵ Annica Kronsell, *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012):45.

foundational work in masculinity studies, argues that the military represents “the most important arena for the definition of hegemonic masculinity in the United States.”⁷⁶

Considering the historic predominance of men in the U.S. military and at the federal service academies, the connection between soldier and masculinity has become inextricably linked. In her examination of power relations between men and women, Connell argues that the attributes of hegemonic masculinity “confirm the power and prestige of men at the expense of the opposite sex.”⁷⁷ Building off these concepts, political scientist Annica Kronsell argues that in hegemonic masculine institutions, “gender and sexuality are largely silenced issues... in the military, silence relates to men, their gender, and their heterosexuality... women have a gender and a sex; men do not.”⁷⁸ The theoretical concept of hegemonic masculinity is particularly useful when analyzing the integration period at the Air Force Academy. A pertinent example of this gendered silence existed during the integration period at the Air Force Academy; men were referred to simply as cadets, whereas the women’s title, female cadet, required a gendered identifier.

⁷⁶ Kronsell, 45. For an introduction to Connell’s work, see: R.W. Connell, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” in *Gender & Society*, 19, no. 6(December 2005):829-859; and *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). See also: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁷⁷ John Tosh, “Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender,” in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, MI: Manchester University Press, 2004): 51.

⁷⁸ Kronsell, 46. In his 2012 work, *Bring Me Men*, Aaron Belkin provides an alternative but useful definition of military masculinity stating: “Military masculinity consists of...beliefs, practices and attributes which enable individuals (men and women) to legitimize their claims to authority by associating themselves with the military or military ideas.” Aaron Belkin, *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Façade of American Empire, 1898-2001* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012):3. See also: R. Claire Snyder’s “Troubling Armed Masculinity: Military Academies, Hazing Rituals, and the Reconstitution of the Citizen-Soldier,” in *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999):137-169.

During the transitional period of mandated integration at the Air Force Academy, 1976-1984, the new role of women as cadets posed a threat to established gender norms; moreover, men at the Air Force Academy constructed their masculine boundaries in direct opposition to their definition of femininity. From the male perspective, women cadets represented a blurring of performative gender roles; consequently, women cadets constituted an aberration as they did not fit neatly into prescribed masculine or feminine categories.⁷⁹ An analysis of primary sources and oral histories during the preparation and the integration phase reveals how men at the Air Force Academy responded as they struggled to re-conceptualize the identity of a cadet as both male and female.

Unlike the other federal service academies, the Air Force Academy senior leadership proactively examined how to integrate women into the Cadet Wing. Anticipating a less-than-smooth transition, in May of 1972, Lieutenant General Albert Clark, Superintendent of the Air Force Academy, sent a letter to Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. General Robert Dixon, expressing his concern for the “need for proper planning, lest an unworkable program await the first female cadets.”⁸⁰ In June of 1972, Lt. General Dixon responded that the Air Force Academy should initiate a plan that evaluated the following areas: admission, military training, academics, physical education and living accommodations.”⁸¹ General Dixon emphasized, “Only those modifications essential to accommodate the basic physiological and strength differences between men

⁷⁹ According to Judith Butler, gender is performative; “Gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts... which shows gender to be an internal feature of ourselves... that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts.” See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999): xv.

⁸⁰ E.A. Meunger, Command Historian, “*Fact Sheet on the Integration of Women at the Air Force Academy*,” *United States Air Force Academy*. Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, March , 1987, 1.

⁸¹ Meunger, 2.

and women should be made. Female cadets should meet the same or comparable replacement, graduation requirements as the male cadet.⁸² General Dixon believed that female cadets should not receive preferential treatment due to their gender; on the contrary, the Academy leadership insisted on developing a program where women would be expected to meet the same standards as men. In 1974, political pressure over the issue of integration mounted when two women who were denied nominations to the Air Force Academy and the Naval Academy filed a formal lawsuit against the government.⁸³ This prompted Congressional debates in Washington, D.C., and in June of 1974, the House Armed Services Committee subpoenaed the Superintendents of the five federal service academies to testify on Capitol Hill concerning the admission of women at the service academies.⁸⁴

In preparation for these hearings, the Undersecretary of Defense William Clements met with Lieutenant General Clark and the other four Academy Superintendents to communicate the official Department of Defense policy against women at the academies.⁸⁵ When interviewed just prior to his retirement in May of 1978, General Clark recounted the military's official stance that women should not be allowed in the academies. General Clark stated "that was our position...we were drilled in it...we

⁸² Meunger, 1.

⁸³ E.A. Meunger, Command Historian, "*Fact Sheet on the Integration of Women at the Air Force Academy*," *United States Air Force Academy*. Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, March , 1987, 1-2.

⁸⁴ Interview with United States Air Force Academy Superintendent Albert P. Clark, interviewed by Major Robert S. Bartanowicz and Captain Phillip S. Meilinger, May 18, 1978, USAFA Oral History Project, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, 37-38. In this interview, General Clark discussed his tenure as Superintendent at USAFA from 1970-1974.

⁸⁵ Bartanowicz, May 18, 1978, interview with General Albert P. Clark, 38.

all spoke with one voice.”⁸⁶ Undeniable in this statement was the conscious awareness and a sense of urgency that these key military leaders remain united in their opinion against women entering the academies. These senior military leaders believed that women could not and should not be warriors; furthermore, these leaders sought to preserve the heritage of the all-male culture at the academies. In his 1978 interview, General Clark reiterated the importance of this unified intent by stating that his comment before Congress was “probably the most hard core of all the general officers testifying as to the women.”⁸⁷ In his testimony before Congress, General Clark unequivocally stated his position against women entering the academies:

It is my considered judgment that the introduction of female cadets will inevitably erode this vital atmosphere. This will be true regardless of whether females are to be entered into combat roles or not. What I am saying is that the academy will inevitably find it necessary to create a dual track program to accommodate the female cadet, or, God forbid, be required to water down the entire program to accommodate female cadets into a single track program.⁸⁸

General Clark articulated the common male conception at this time that women lacked the mental, physical, emotional or moral stamina to be a cadet. As a respected and dutiful senior military officer, however, General Clark acknowledged that regardless of his private feelings, if directed, he would follow orders, overcome all obstacles and successfully accomplish the mission of integrating women into the Cadet Wing. Men at the Air Force Academy considered the admission of women as a mission, a battle fraught with obstacles, because in their judgment, women did not belong in the

⁸⁶ Bartanowicz, May 18, 1978, interview with General Albert P. Clark, 38.

⁸⁷ Bartanowicz, May 18, 1978, interview with General Albert P. Clark, 39.

⁸⁸ U.S. Congress, House Armed Services Committee. 1974. *H.R. 9832, H.R. 11268, and Other Bills Regarding Admission of Women to the Service Academies*: Hearing before the Armed Services Committee, 93d Cong., 1st sess., June 4, 11.

masculine world of the soldier. In a 2002 interview, General Clark restated his position against admitting women into the federal service academies stating:

The Department of Defense tried to take the position that we shouldn't do it because the academies were for fighting men... I was opposed to it. It was dishonest for us to claim that the academies were to develop fighting men only. That wasn't true at all. As a matter of fact, 50 percent of our officers and graduates never would see combat... and I wouldn't use it as part of our defense. But I had a great respect for the female mystique. I felt that women were losing it and that, once they stepped off that pedestal, they would never recover, and that forcing women into the hideous ugliness of combat, when you didn't need them, was a crime.⁸⁹

General Clark believed that women were not warriors and did not belong in the man's world of combat. Furthermore, General Clark referred to the "female mystique" as a feminine quality that would be irrevocably damaged were women to become military warriors.⁹⁰ To imagine women as warriors would require men at the Academy to completely re-conceptualize their understanding of masculinity and femininity.

The Department of Defense and senior officials at the United States Air Force Academy initiated the production of *Contingency Plan Number 36-72: Integration of Females into the Cadet Wing* with the expectation that Congress was preparing legislation requiring the admission of women at the service academies⁹¹ (Figure 15). One integral component of this comprehensive plan was the *Women's Integration Research Project*, code named *Project Blue Eyes*, because the admission of women into the academies turned the "eyes" of "blue-suiters" in the Air Force; furthermore, all

⁸⁹ Interview with United States Air Force Academy Superintendent Albert P. Clark, USAF, Ret., interviewed by Colonel James C. Gaston, USAF, Ret., January 31, February 6, and February 27, 2002, USAFA Oral History Project, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, 3.

⁹⁰ General Clark's reference to the "feminine mystique" may have been influenced by Betty Friedan's 1963 foundational work in feminist scholarship, *The Feminist Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963).

⁹¹ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): 1.

“eyes” were waiting to see how the women would respond to the challenge⁹² (Figures 15 and 16).

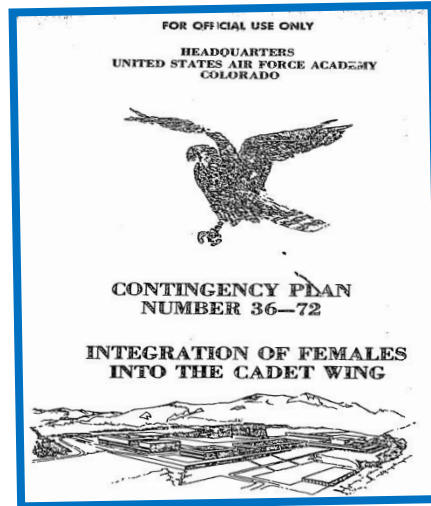


Figure 15: USAFA Contingency Plan Number 36-72, *Integration of Females Into the Cadet Wing*, July 1972⁹³

This rhetoric predated the scrutiny under which the first group of women at the Air Force Academy was scrutinized, as if under a microscope. Broadly speaking, the integration plans thoroughly examined the organizational structure, mission, and traditions of the Air Force Academy; senior officials attempted to quantify all aspects of cadet life and then anticipate what changes were necessary in order to accommodate women at their institution.

⁹² *Women's Integration Research Project: Phase II, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1976):1.

⁹³ *Women's Integration Research Project, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): 1.

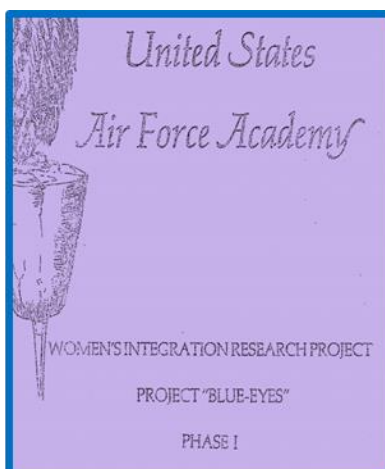


Figure 16: *Women's Integration Research Project, Project "Blue-Eyes" Phase*, July 1972⁹⁴

One area receiving such scrutiny was the question of women's physiological capabilities under extremely stressful conditions, particularly at medium altitude (7,200 feet above sea level). In an effort to augment the limited information available on this topic in the 1970s, the Air Force Academy established the ATO, or Air Training Officers program, which consisted of fifteen active-duty female Air Force Lieutenants who served as test subjects for Phase I of *Project Blue Eyes*. The Air Force Academy implemented a similar ATO program in 1955, when sixty-six active-duty male Air Force Lieutenants served for two years as surrogate upperclassmen for the inaugural class of cadets at the Academy.⁹⁵ Representatives from the Air Force Academy Department of Athletics stated that the ATO's provided critical data for developing "a well-designed physical education and intercollegiate athletic program for female cadets; additionally, *Project "Blue Eyes,"* assisted Academy staff in "designing an acceptable feminine athletic role-model, appropriate physical fitness performance standards and realistic

⁹⁴ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): 1.

⁹⁵ M. Hamlin Cannon, *Quest for an Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1974):206-207.

motor performance skill standards.”⁹⁶ Fifteen ATO’s arrived at the Air Force Academy in January of 1976 and they spent six months training in the Cadet Wing as mock cadets.

The ATO program provided vital feedback on how male cadets might interact with female cadets. According to General James McCarthy, the officer in charge of the Air Force Academy Integration Program, the ATO’s also played a critical liaison role by “teaching men how to relate to women in the training environment.”⁹⁷ General McCarthy explained that:

I would suggest to you that probably the most important aspect of it of all was the fact that six months in advance of women cadets arriving here a small group of women arrived and we put them through a training program that the cadet wing was able to look at and relate to, and they began to make judgments about how women would perform as cadets, which probably created a positive attitude on the part of the Cadet Wing more than anything else we did.⁹⁸

In an effort to place the performance of the female cadets in a positive light, the ATO’s provided the male cadets with a physical representation of how women would dress, talk, train, march, and perform. The ATO’s also served as leaders and mentors for the entering class of women, and in a June 2012 interview, Lieutenant General James McCarthy stated the most important role of the ATOs was that of “role models for the women cadets in the Class of 1980.”⁹⁹ Considering the informal process where upper-class cadets mold fourth-class cadets into what they think a cadet should be, General McCarthy expressed the overall concern that women cadets in an all-male environment “might tend to adopt, either intentionally or in most cases unintentionally, mannish

⁹⁶ *Women’s Integration Research Project*, 3.

⁹⁷ Colonel James P. McCarthy, 30.

⁹⁸ *Women’s Integration Research Project*, 3.

⁹⁹ Lt. General James McCarthy, United States Air Force Academy, interviewed by Amelia Underwood, June 20, 2012.

characteristics or mannish responses.”¹⁰⁰ According to General McCarthy, the Air Force Academy wanted to stress that women cadets could perform all necessary tasks “without the loss of femininity.”¹⁰¹ By having female officers as leaders and role models for the new female cadets, the Academy proactively addressed these concerns while also prescribing a model of appropriate behaviors for female cadets.

As part of *Contingency Plan Number 36-72*, Academy leadership examined eighty-eight separate issues under a virtual microscope and they carefully documented their findings in the Contingency plan. Chapter titles included: Biological Sex Differences, Structural Sex Differences, Physiological Sex Differences, Cultural Sex Differences, and Physical Conditioning Sex Differences. The primary objective of *Project Blue Eyes* was to specifically highlight and emphasize repeatedly the differences between men and women with the goal of modifying the existing standards of performance in order accommodate the arrival of women at the Air Force Academy.¹⁰² An analysis of the eighty-eight issues contained in *Project Blue Eyes* illuminates the male conception of gender at the Air Force Academy which emphasized men and women were indeed opposite and distinctly different while simultaneously ignoring any similarities the two groups share, or differences that fissure along other lines such as race and class.

Project “Blue Eyes” examined a number of women-specific issues that Academy officials believed might impact upon cadet training. Issue #43 considered whether

¹⁰⁰ Colonel James McCarthy, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Women’s Integration Research Project: Phase II*, 3.

¹⁰² Each of these 88 issues was documented in a specific format that included: Issue Title, Date, Description, Factors Bearing on the Issue, Conclusion and Actions Recommended. *Women’s Integration Research Project*, vi.

women's menstrual cycles would affect scheduled physical training; to address this question, Academy officials conferred with the American Medical Association Committee on the medical aspects of sports to determine how menstrual cycles affect women athletes.¹⁰³ Based on this information, *Project Blue Eyes* Issue #43 concluded that "some women may use this complaint as an excuse to get out of training by exaggerating their symptoms," leading to the recommendation that "menstrual cycles be treated like any other medical problem."¹⁰⁴ While menstrual cycle abnormalities and disorders do exist, a woman's normal menstrual cycle was not considered a medical problem as indicated in the above findings. The "Actions Recommended" section of Issue #43 included the creation of an Academy policy to counsel female cadets who exhibited any "undue anxiety about menstrual problems" or used menstrual cycles as an excuse to avoid training.¹⁰⁵ The underlying message in these assumptions about female cadet's menstrual cycles was that men at the Air Force Academy did not believe concern that female cadets could handle the difficult physical training at the Academy.

Project Blue Eyes also addressed specific athletic curriculum and equipment modifications necessary for female cadets. Issue #44 discussed the need for protective clothing and devices and stated that "since female cadets would not engage in the most

103 Over the course of the twentieth century, Americans radically altered their views concerning menstruation. In response to sex education and improved menstrual technologies and practices, by the 1970s, physicians and women no longer treated menstruation as a medical condition that prevented normal physical activity. As part of the integration plan, the Air Force Academy consulted the American Medical Society for specific medical guidance concerning women's physical limitations due to menstrual cycles; the AMA responded that menstrual cycles were not considered a medical problem. For scholarship on the social constructions and representations of menstruation, see Andrew Shail and Gillian Howie's, *Menstruation: A Cultural History* (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2005); and Laura Freidenfeld's, *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁴ *Women's Integration Research Project*, Issue #43, Aug. 28, 1975, 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ *Women's Integration Research Project*, Issue #43, Aug. 28, 1975, 1-2.

rigorous intramural sports, there was no conclusive evidence that substantiated the need to issue female cadets special protective athletic bras.”¹⁰⁶ At the Air Force Academy, all cadets were required to participate in athletics year-round; women, however, were not allowed to participate in the full-contact sports of boxing, wrestling, and football. In their physical education classes at the Academy, women participated in fencing instead of boxing, ice skating instead of wrestling, and badminton instead of volleyball and handball; additionally, Academy officials discouraged women from participating in intramural sports such as rugby and football.¹⁰⁷ Commenting on the Academy’s physical education program, Col. R. K. Strickland, head of the Physical Education Department stated, “We’re not trying to make women [into] Amazons, but just to turn out the best possible product. We expect the same level of effort-not of performance. There are differences between men and women, and we’re not here to fight nature. We have to accommodate these differences but not to make the program easier.”¹⁰⁸

As evidenced in these comments, the Academy administration acknowledged the physical differences between men and women; furthermore, they were concerned that the Academy’s rigorous physical requirements would potentially transform female cadets into masculine “Amazon” women and this image of a masculine, physically over-developed woman was simply unacceptable. While sexual dimorphism between men and women exists in some measure, the administration’s lack of information and conception of women as the “weaker sex” translated into lower expectations and

¹⁰⁶ *Women’s Integration Research Project*, Issue #44, Aug. 28, 1975, 1-2.

¹⁰⁷ E. A. Muenger, *Fact Sheet on the Integration of Women at the Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, March 1987):4.

¹⁰⁸ “So Far, So Good: A Report Card on Coed Military Academies,” *U.S. News and World Report*, July 11, 1977, 31.

different standards for female cadets. These differences in standards were a contentious issue for male cadets as they perceived that female cadets were given preferential treatment by lowering the overall standards of the Academy.

Project Blue Eyes also considered the exigencies of female grooming and hygiene practices that would impact upon Air Force Academy facilities. Issue #41 pertained to hair grooming and it stated that unlike male cadets, female cadets would groom their longer hair at their sinks, and that this could cause sinks to clog. Additionally, female cadets “[would] require electric curlers, portable hair dryers, hot combs, or other commercially available hair grooming electrical appliances,” and the use of these electrical appliances might overtax the electrical system.¹⁰⁹ In order to avoid these potential problems, the administration wrote policies governing the use of electrical appliances as well as restricting the use of dormitory sinks for hair washing. Underlying each of these eighty-eight “issues” was the assumption that female cadets were fundamentally different from male cadets; furthermore, the arrival of women at the Academy posed many potential “problems” that would need to be addressed in specific policies and cadet regulations.

Members of the senior academy leadership were also concerned about constructing an appropriate feminine image of the female cadet, and this focus on outward appearance surfaced in numerous archival documents. Code-named *Operation Pink Plan*, Academy officials hired professional models to try out a number of potential

¹⁰⁹ *Women's Integration Research Project*, Issue #41, Aug. 28, 1975, 1-3.

female cadet uniforms; these uniform choices, however, clearly differentiated female cadets from male cadets (Figure 17, 18, and 19).

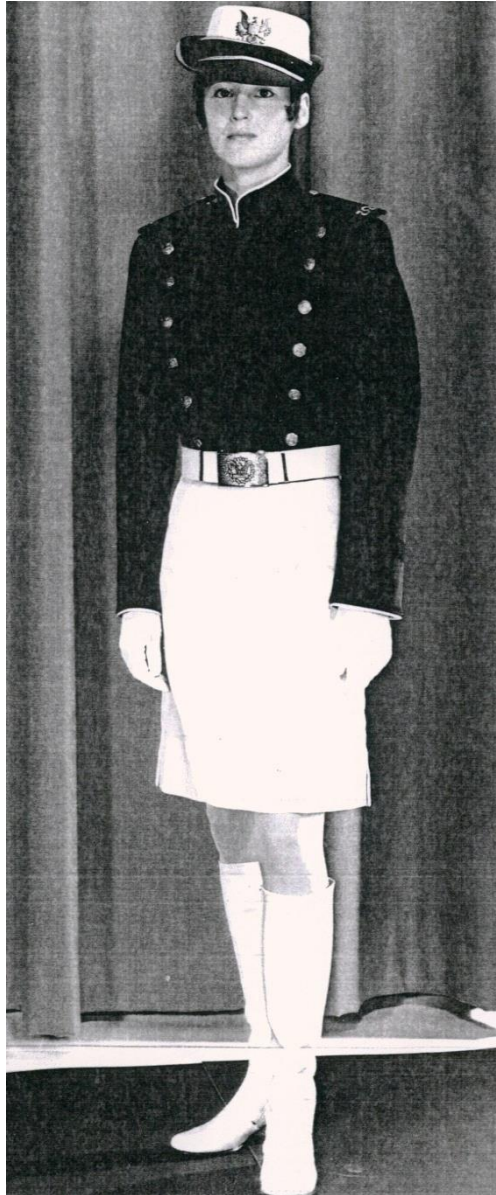


Figure 17: Proposed Class Uniform for Female Cadet at the Air Force Academy¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): Appendix.



Figure 18: Proposed Class Uniform for Female Cadet at the Air Force Academy¹¹¹

¹¹¹ *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): Appendix.

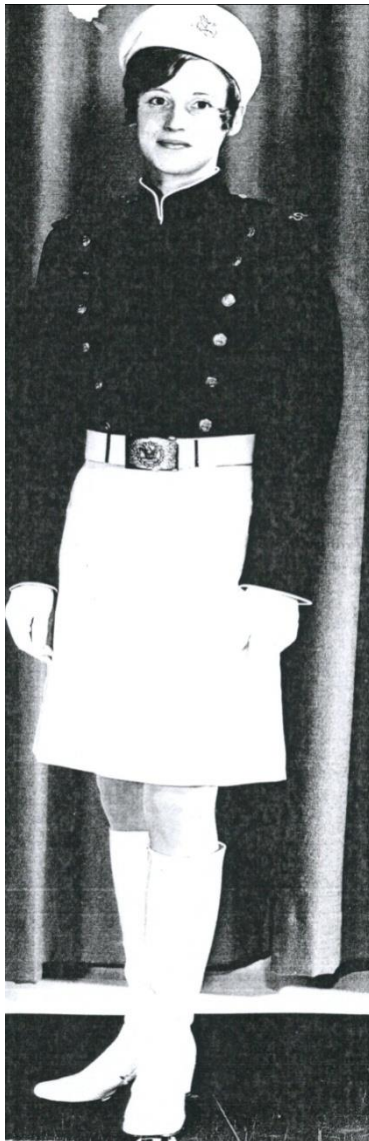


Figure 19: Proposed Class Uniform for Female Cadet at the Air Force Academy¹¹²

¹¹² *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): Appendix.

In these photographs, the models were smiling, attractive women posing with perfect posture, wearing a fashionable jacket, skirt, hose, and heels, accessorized with a handbag and a stylish hat. A local reporter for the *Colorado Springs Sun* wrote that, “the coeds at the Air Force Academy will be wearing the latest in military apparel: low-heeled pumps... peter pan collars buttoned to the neck, blue blazers and blue ties.”¹¹³ In actuality, these models more closely resembled a Barbie doll than a future military officer. In an interview with Lt. General McCarthy on June 20, 2012, he stated that the model in these pictures was actually an enlisted soldier assigned to Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, CO. Lt. General McCarthy nicknamed her “Julie Doolie Doll” as her name was Julie and freshman cadets are referred to as “doolies.”¹¹⁴ The comparison of “Julie Doolie Doll” to a Barbie doll is unmistakable.

General Jeanne Holm, the first female flag officer in the United States Air Force, commented that the female cadet uniforms more closely resembled those of a flight attendant than of a future pilot in the Air Force.¹¹⁵ It is evident that these fashion show images of female cadets formed a composite picture that depicted the male conception of female beauty juxtaposed with a military uniform. Men at the Air Force Academy struggled with their feminine image of women as beauty queens, not as soldiers in uniform; these models represented this image of femininity transposed onto a cadet body. Men at the Academy rejected the notion that women could maintain their

¹¹³ Tessa Merriz, “Female Cadet Ruling Brings Out the Humor At Academy,” *Colorado Springs Sun*, October 15, 1975, 17.

¹¹⁴ Lt. General James McCarthy, 6.

¹¹⁵ Jeanne M. Holm, “*Manpower and the Military: An Example of Affirmative Action in Action*,” speech delivered at the Fourth Annual Regional Conference of the Federal Women’s Program, Dallas, Texas, April 23, 1974.

femininity in the masculine cadet uniform. When asked by a reporter what kind of woman would want to attend the Academy, Cadet Doug Nelson stated, “me and my friends automatically think of a Russian athlete.”¹¹⁶ This statement reflected the male perception that women who wanted to become cadets must be overtly masculine in appearance because only men would want to be cadets. Rather than design uniforms that simply mirrored those of the male cadets, the Academy leadership suggested uniforms for female cadets that conformed to their image of women as stylish beauty queens.

In 1975, faculty members from the Air Force Academy Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership (BS&L) were tasked with compiling data from twelve other institutions in the United States that had recently undergone gender integration of their student bodies.¹¹⁷ The goal of this research was to identify components of the integration process in these universities where women experienced significant psychological stress; the Academy would then use this information to assist in their own integration planning process.¹¹⁸ The BS&L committee also reviewed psychological professional journals, surveyed university presidents concerning the integration process, and reviewed special committee reports produced by these specific universities.¹¹⁹ At the conclusion of their research, the BS&L committee published their

¹¹⁶ Kathryn Woestendlek, “Female Cadets: Social Enlightenment?” in *Colorado Springs Sun*, March 9, 1973, 11.

¹¹⁷ BS&L consulted the following twelve who schools went coed in the early 1970s: Princeton, University of Notre Dame, Yale University, Dartmouth, Phillips Academy, Amherst, Colorado State University, University of Northern Colorado, Denver University, Arizona State University, University of Virginia and Marion Institute. Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, “Integration of Females into Previously All Male Universities,” *Contingency Plan Number 36-72, United States Air Force Academy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1972-1976): 1-2.

¹¹⁸ Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, 1.

¹¹⁹ Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, 1.

findings and conclusions as part of the integration plan. In its final report, the BS&L committee suggested that:

When the mix exceeds one female to three males, there is a tendency for the following problems to occur:

1. Women are treated as different.
2. Women are regarded to have superior intellect.
3. Women will be regarded as inferior to men in most abilities.
4. Women are socially rejected by men, not dated, and treated as pigs.
5. Women attempt to make more men friends than normally possible to gain a part of the power base.
6. Women need an unusual sense of self order to maintain their self-respect. High ego strength is required.
7. Some women are content with their minority, subordinate role.
8. Some assume the super woman role.¹²⁰

The BS&L report stated the social aspects of the report were based upon the “opinions of the special committees tasked to study the integration situation.”¹²¹ These points were noteworthy as the Academy leadership used this report to establish and reinforce their assumptions concerning the intellectual, physical, and social capabilities of women as well as the psychological anxieties of prospective female cadets.

Within this hegemonic masculine institution, men did in fact view females as different because men were inherently the real soldiers who protected women. Concerning the second point, in a 1975 newspaper interview, Cadet Wayne Smith voiced a prevalent male cadet fear that female cadets would be intellectually superior when he noted, “girls study harder [and] they will probably raise the mean grade point average.”¹²² Male cadets resented the fact that women would potentially outperform men academically; this directly challenged their understanding of existing power structures

¹²⁰ Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, 3.

¹²¹ Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, 3.

¹²² Tessa Merriz, “The Emerging Female Cadet,” *Colorado Springs Sun*, October 12, 1975, B1.

where men demonstrated superiority over women. Brigadier General Stanley Beck, Commandant of Cadets, addressed this insecurity of the male cadets when he suggested that, “I believe most cadets’ egos suffered because of plans to accept women at the military school next year. I suspect a typical viewpoint of cadets at the academy is that it is an affront to their male ego to think that a young lady could go through this demanding program that they feel is so tough for them to get through.”¹²³ Similarly, in his testimony before Congress in August of 1974, General James Allen voiced the opinion that women did not belong in the masculine world of the military. General Allen stated, “Women weren’t tough enough to be admitted into the nation’s military academies [and that] I could not imagine a future when we are challenged in a way that people are landing on our shores and we need our women in foxholes and trenches with guns in their hands- then I will change my views on that.”¹²⁴

Current Air Force Academy Director of Staff, Dr. Richard Hughes, served as the Head of the Department of Behavior Sciences and Leadership (BS&L) during the integration period. In a June 2012 interview, Dr. Hughes reflected upon the initial years of the integration process stating that:

My department (BS&L) was hugely involved throughout the whole process. The Academy leadership had their head and heart in the right place. They tried to create as supportive climate as possible in order to make the integration initiative successful. We had an all-male, all-military faculty and no one here had the faintest thought that women would ever come to the Academy... then we had a couple of years notice to prepare for their arrival. The Academy leadership took a very constructive approach during the integration phase... many attitudes did not

¹²³ “Cadets Resent Women at Military Academy,” *The University of Texas Pan-American News*, October 14, 1975.

¹²⁴ U.S. Congress, House, Armed Services Committee. 1974. *H.R. 9832, H.R. 11268, and Other Bills Regarding Admission of Women to the Service Academies*: Hearing before the Armed Services Committee, 93d Cong., 1st sess., June 4, 11.

change, however... many of the junior officer faculty who were graduates, and the majority of the cadets were disgruntled... and for the most part, these disgruntled attitudes remained behind closed doors in the classroom.¹²⁵ At the Air Force Academy, junior military officers served as instructors for the cadets; additionally, these all-male, all-military academic instructors, many of whom were recent graduates of the Air Force Academy, also served as mentors for the cadets. The importance of this officer-cadet relationship cannot be overstated as male cadets looked to their instructors as role models; the instructors often “fueled resentment towards female cadets both before and after their integration at the Air Force Academy.”¹²⁶

General Clark and General Beck and the junior officer instructors represented the all levels of the chain of command at the Air Force Academy; consequently, their willingness to publically acknowledge their belief that women would negatively affect the Air Force Academy had a powerful affect upon the male cadets. In effect, negative statements by Air Force Academy leadership established and reinforced the “accepted” view that women did not belong in this institution. In a July 1977 interview, Cadet Wing Commander Steve Miller, the top cadet at the academy, stated, “I would rather not have had the women here. I think I have to be honest by saying that. Here, like in any established institution, any dramatic change is difficult to accept.”¹²⁷ The BS&L committee report illustrates the existing paradigm of the Academy leadership and these views dramatically shaped the planning and initial stages of the integration process.

¹²⁵ Interview with Dr. Richard Hughes, Director of Staff, United States Air Force Academy, interviewed by Amelia Underwood, June 19, 2012, 2.

¹²⁶ Hughes, 2.

¹²⁷ “What Top Men in Service Academies Say About Women as Classmates, in ”*U.S. News and World Report*, July 11, 1977, 31.

During the transitional period of legislatively mandated integration at the Air Force Academy, 1976-1984, the new role of women as cadets significantly challenged the gender norms at this hegemonic masculine institution. Men at the Air Force Academy perceived female cadets as different in the sense that these women did not conform to the prescribed and institutionalized image of a cadet as masculine. From the male perspective, women cadets performed both masculine and feminine scripts and this blurring of roles represented a serious challenge to their understanding of the cadet as an inherently masculine identity.

Chapter 3: Negotiating Boundaries: Gender Integration from the Female Perspective

I learned, much to my surprise, that there were people who didn't want me here. That was the biggest shock of coming here. No one had warned me about that. I thought everybody would be just as happy about it as I was. When it finally filtered down that there were upperclassmen and officers who thought that women shouldn't be there, I got kind of angry about it. I just couldn't understand why. Now I kind of understand why because of the institution. But at that time I didn't understand why they didn't want us here. I was really dismayed to learn that there were people that were unhappy.

Cadet Karen S. Wilhelm, April 29, 1980¹²⁸

Young women growing up in the decades of the late 1960s and 1970s aspired to careers their mothers and grandmothers could not even have imagined; furthermore, these aspirations had transformed into concrete possibilities in the wake of the feminist movement and Title IX legislation. Popular culture outlets of this period, namely television commercials and magazine advertising marketed images of women as liberated and empowered. An iconic slogan from a Virginia Slims cigarettes campaign initiated in 1968 stated, "You've come a long way baby."¹²⁹ Advertisements pictured housewives of bygone years "back then" laboring with such chores and hanging out laundry. The advertisement also contained the contrasting image of a gleeful contemporary woman who was not confined to domestic duties. On the contrary, this advertisement suggested that the American woman had indeed come a long way from her housewife days and the alternative image depicted this transformation into the confident, empowered, modern woman who was free to direct her own life make her own decisions, including smoking

¹²⁸ Cadet Karen S. Wilhelm, interview by Major Russell W. Mank and Major John E. Norvell, USAF, April 29, 1980, interview 274, transcript, United States Air Force Academy Oral History Collection, United States Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1-2.

¹²⁹ "You've Come a Long Way, Baby, Virginia Slims," *Time* (Feb. 20, 1978), Phillip Morris Collection, Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, University of California-San Francisco, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/lqw55e00/pdf?search=%22virginia%20slims%20back%20then%20every%20man%20gave%20his%20wife%22>.

cigarettes.¹³⁰ Targeting an audience of young women between the ages of 18 and 35, this advertisement is a poignant example of how gender roles were rapidly changing for women of this generation.¹³¹ This 1970s pop culture example coupled with the initial selection of Air Force Academy uniforms for women demonstrated that even when women ventured into new careers and opportunities, women were expected to adhere to traditional fashionable ideals; furthermore, these stereotypical images of feminine and sexualized women revealed that there were limits to the changes in women's roles in society. While the rhetoric of these Virginia Slims advertisements suggested that the modern woman was liberated and independent, the images in these ads depicted beautiful women in sexually revealing attire, thus reinforcing existing stereotypes of women as sexual objects.

Embracing their seemingly unlimited professional possibilities, pioneering young women of the mid-1970s considered a career as pilot or an astronaut a reasonable and attainable goal; accordingly, with the passage of Public Law 94-106, many young women pursued an education at the United States Air Force Academy.¹³² In early 1976, the Air Force Academy began receiving application packets from women for the first time in this institution's history; for these confident women who aspired to become pilots and astronauts, attending the Air Force Academy appeared to be a logical choice, just as it was for men. In an interview just prior to her graduation in 1980, Cadet Paula Thornhill

¹³⁰ While this advertisement promoted images of the liberated American woman, the slogan ironically referred to women as babies, thus diminishing women's status as capable, mature and equal to men.

¹³¹ B. A. Toll and P.M. Ling, "The Virginia Slims Identity Crisis: An Inside Look at Tobacco Industry Marketing to Women," *Tobacco Control*, vol. 14, no. 3 (June 2005): 174-175, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1748044/pdf/v014p00172.pdf>.

¹³² Public Law-106, which authorized the admittance of women into the five federal service academies, is historically significant as it reversed the previous male-only policy at our nation's premier military leadership institutions.

reflected on experiences at the Air Force Academy stating: “But my initial recollections, I guess, my biggest one to this day, (I still can’t understand why people wanted to make such a big thing out of me doing what I wanted all along) is that reporters were running all around. They were following us getting haircuts, getting shoes issued and all sorts of stupid stuff. To me, it was all a waste of time. I couldn’t understand why people would be so interested in me just pursuing my natural career goals. It didn’t make sense.”¹³³ For Cadet Thornhill, attendance at the Air Force Academy was just part of “pursuing her natural career goals.”¹³⁴ These young women embodied the popular conception of the new and empowered modern woman; as such, they viewed themselves as fully capable of becoming pilots and astronauts. Cadet Wilhelm and Cadet Thornhill’s statements demonstrate, These women did not express concern that they would not be able to perform as well as men; on the contrary, these statements lacked any reference to gender at all most likely because it had not occurred to them to think in that manner. gender appeared to be an irrelevant issue for women who pursued an education at the Air Force Academy.

An analysis of primary source documents and oral histories provides insight into how women at the Air Force Academy confronted radically new conceptions of gender roles in society. This analysis is particularly relevant as existing scholarship concerning the integration of women at the Air Force Academy has largely ignored women’s own perceptions and responses to their academy experiences. While men and women grappled

¹³³ Cadet Paula Thornhill, interview by Major Russell W. Mank and Major John E. Norvell, USAF, April 30, 1980, interview 270, transcript, United States Air Force Academy Oral History Collection, United States Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1-3.

¹³⁴ Thornhill, 1-3.

with the integration process in unique ways, the present chapter will focus specifically on how women actively negotiated and renegotiated their perceptions of feminine identity during this period of momentous organizational change at the Air Force Academy.

Although women physically integrated into the Air Force Academy, they remained virtual “outsiders” within their community of male cadets, and this exclusion was a direct result of gender-based discrimination. Gender difference created a paradox for female cadets; consequently, female cadets continually reframed the perceived masculine and feminine components of their identities in order to gain acceptance from male cadets.¹³⁵ Female cadets attempted to validate their intellectual, physical and emotional parity with male cadets; additionally, female cadets employed a multiplicity of survival strategies to gain acceptance. These strategies included molding and changing their perceived feminine identity to reflect being one of the guys, being sexually promiscuous, and being bitches; male cadets interpreted these renegotiated identities and likewise, categorized female cadets as sisters, sluts, or bitches. Throughout this

¹³⁵ Joan Wallach Scott introduced this idea of gender identity paradoxes in her foundational work “Gender as a Useful Category of Analysis,” in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). For further information on the social construction of masculine and feminine identities within the context of the military see: Robert A. Nye, “Western Masculinities in War and Peace,” in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 2 (April 2007): 417-38; “Gender, Sexuality, and Institutions of Hegemonic Masculinity,” in Annica Kronsell’s *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); “Saving the Males at VMI and Citadel,” in Michael Kimmel’s *Misframing Men: The Politics of Contemporary Masculinities* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010); “Troubling Armed Masculinity: Military Academies, Hazing Rituals, and the Reconstruction of the Citizen-Soldier,” in R. Claire Snyder’s *Citizen Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999); Carol Burke’s *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and The High and Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); Leo Braudy’s *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York: Random House, 2003); and Paul R. Higate’s *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003).

transitional period of integration, a cadet's gender emerged as a primary qualifier for inclusion, and as a result, female cadets remained on the "outside."

In his work, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued that "in the making of history there exists what actually happened and what is said to have happened."¹³⁶ As a result, every historical interpretation contains silences — stories, events, and voices that are not heard.¹³⁷ Source creation is a product of conscious choices; as a result, sources provide inherently incomplete pictures of the past. One of the most apparent silences of women's voices at the Air Force Academy occurred in the collection of oral histories. Despite the historical significance of its first graduating class of women, the Air Force Academy interviewed only three of the ninety-seven women who graduated in 1980, and there are no other contemporaneous oral histories from women during the first decade of integration.¹³⁸ Unfortunately, the Air Force Academy initiated only one other set of female cadet oral histories. As part of an Air Force Oral History Project in 1995 and 1996, Captain Beth Hillman, a professor in the Department of History, conducted interviews with twenty-two female cadets. Twelve women were in the Class of 1995 and were interviewed just prior

¹³⁶ According to Trioullot, "silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the making of *sources*, the making of *archives*, the making of *narratives*, and the making of *history* in the final instance." Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995): ix.

¹³⁸ Captain Hillman's interviews are housed in the Air Force Academy Archives. According to Mr. Joseph Barry, Air Force Academy Research Archivist, these interviews have not been used as part of any scholarly research project to date. During the summer of 2012, I received a fellowship to conduct research at the Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Part of my work during this fellowship included conducting oral history interviews with men and women who were present during the integration period at USAFA. Many of my interviews are with some of the first women graduates at USAFA. As part of my PhD research project, I plan to incorporate cadet oral histories from the 1990s and early 2000s.

to graduation; ten women from the Class of 1996 were interviewed in the spring before their senior year. The questions covered topics such as background, interest in USAFA, initial experiences, academics, honor, human relations training, race, sexual harassment and assault, and overall gender issues. Captain Hillman collected twenty-six tapes and over 700 pages of interviews. With the exception of three women from the first class of women in 1980, this collection of interviews represents the only effort by USAFA to capture the experiences of women at the Air Force Academy.¹³⁹ In studying the integration process at the Air Force Academy, this present work places great value in centering women's voices in this story. Consequently, this study will incorporate many of the existing oral histories of female cadets as well as recently gathered oral histories from women who graduated from the Air Force Academy during the integration period.¹⁴⁰

In a 2012 interview, Colonel Gale Colvin, a 1981 Air Force Academy graduate, pondered her time there:

I am the oldest of six children. My younger brother was in the Class of 1975. I was in awe of cadets... they seemed like perfect people... I made no gender attachment... they were perfect people, articulate with no defects. I saw how the Academy had shaped my brother into this perfect image. I wanted to be like that

¹³⁹ The Air Force Academy website stated that "the USAFA Oral History program originated in the 1960s at the direction Col. Alfred F. Hurley, Permanent Professor and Head of the Department of History (DFH). Over the course of subsequent decades, the program continued sporadically, as officers were tasked with a variety of oral history efforts. However, when forced to choose between responsibilities involving direct contact with cadets (teaching, counseling, flight instruction, squadron representation, athletic teams, and cadet sponsorship), and responsibilities such as oral history, cadet related responsibilities took priority. Consequently, even before the beginning of the 21st century, DFH reported its own oral history program was 'in a bad state of disarray.'" In 2009, the Air Force Academy initiated the establishment of the Center for Oral History, and cadets will play a role in collecting and preserving oral history interviews. "When Was the USAFA Center for Oral History Started?," United States Air Force Academy Center for Oral History, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://www.usafa.edu/df/dfe/dfer/centers/oralh/>.

¹⁴⁰ During the summer of 2012, I received a fellowship to conduct research at the Air Force Academy Archives and Special Collections in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Part of my work during this fellowship included conducting oral history interviews with men and women who were present during the integration period at USAFA. Many of my interviews are with some of the first women graduates at USAFA.

too. I wanted to be a cadet too... My dad and three brothers were very supportive and as a minority, I had developed coping skills for [difficult] situations. I would often use humor and make a joke to ease the sting... I was an A type... determined to prove them wrong athletically, academically and militarily.¹⁴¹

This statement revealed that crystallized in Colvin's memory was the Air Force Academy's carefully crafted image of her brother as a perfect cadet. Despite the Air Force Academy's all-male enrollment in the early 1970s, Colvin did not automatically identify a cadet as masculine. On the contrary, this statement reflected how Colvin recognized her own abilities, her potential, and her desire to become a cadet as well. Additionally, Colvin also discussed the strategies she employed to "cope" with the stresses of cadet life. As a racial minority and a gender minority, Colvin was doubly visible as different from other cadets. To cope with negative attention, hazing and other difficult situations, Colvin stated that she drew upon the support of her family and she relied on humor and a determined attitude to outperform the existing male expectations of female cadets in the areas of academics, sports and military leadership. During her time as a cadet, Colvin also stated that women operated on a "spectrum of femininity;" most women felt pressure to "conform and be like the guys," and this included their physical appearance.¹⁴² Colvin stated that female cadets tried to appear "androgynous by not looking too pretty" or feminine while in uniform.¹⁴³ Cadet uniforms were a particular source of frustration for female cadets as clothing drew attention to the differences between the male and female body. Colvin noted that on prescribed days, the Air Force Academy required women to wear their skirt instead of their trousers as part of their

¹⁴¹ Interview with Colonel Gale Colvin, Vice Commandant of Culture and Climate, United States Air Force Academy, interviewed by Amelia Underwood, June 20, 2012, 1.

¹⁴² Colvin, 2.

¹⁴³ Colvin, 2.

cadet uniform. Apparently concerned that female cadets would adopt male cadet behaviors and characteristics, Academy officials found it necessary to require women to dress in a feminine manner. According to Colvin, most female cadets avoided wearing their skirts whenever possible because it made them stand out from their male counterparts; additionally, “Skirt Tuesday” became fodder for male cadets who ridiculed female cadets for their distinctive appearance.

During the initial years of integration at the Air Force Academy, female cadets were the subject of intense media scrutiny. Female cadet appearance and performance were common topics of discussion in newspaper coverage of this period. In a 2003 interview, Colonel Susan Helms, Class of 1980, spoke about her career as a pilot and reminisced about her days as a cadet at the Air Force Academy and stated that “We got attention. We did not like it because we did not want to bring attention to ourselves at the time. We just wanted to fit in and do the job and not keep being reminded that we were different.”¹⁴⁴ Helms reiterated the fact that female cadets simply wanted to do their job and blend in with their male counterparts and they disliked the public and media attention which scrutinized the female cadets’ appearance and performance.

In order to counter this feeling of being different, one survival strategy for female cadets included trying to blend in with their male counterparts and appear more masculine; this strategy frequently proved unsuccessful. Paradoxically, male cadets frequently mocked female cadets who attempted to express their femininity. In the

¹⁴⁴ Colonel Susan J. Helms, a 1980 graduate of the Air Force Academy, became an astronaut in 1991. Her twelve-year NASA career included 211 days in space, with 163 days aboard the International Space Station. Source: Dr. Aaron R. Byerley, Associate Dean for Curriculum and Strategy, “Women at the Academy? Women in the Military? My Own Personal View,” Presentation given at the United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, on June 19, 2012.

January 1978 issue of the cadet produced humor magazine, *The DODO*, the artist of the cartoon entitled, “Cadet Sturdley,” depicted an irritated male Academy instructor screaming, “Miss Sturdley!!” at a female cadet who applying make-up during class (Figure 20).

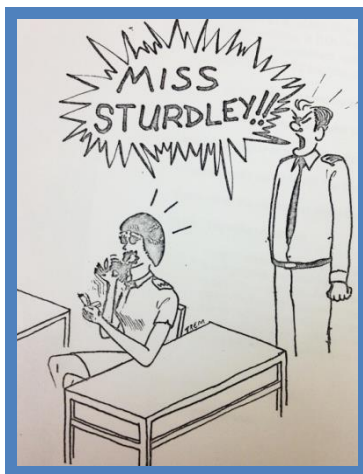


Figure 20: “Cadet Sturdley” from *The DODO*, January 1978¹⁴⁵

The female cadet was wearing a skirt as part of her uniform; additionally, she had a compact and was applying lipstick and freshening up her make-up. This cartoon’s sarcastic tone revealed the artist’s underlying frustration at female cadet attempts to appear feminine in uniform. The female cadet appeared casually unaware of her transgression as she applied her make-up just like a “normal” woman; however, the artist reprimanded the female cadet thus indicating that he condemned the wearing of make-up as “normal cadet” behavior. In the “Cadet Sturdley” cartoon, the male artist suggested that women behave in order to play up their feminine beauty; however, this message clearly conflicted with the evidence from female cadet interviews mentioned previously. In these interviews, female cadets did not want to emphasize their femininity and they

¹⁴⁵ “Cadet Sturdley,” *The DODO* (January 1978):2.

disliked policies such as “Skirt Tuesday” that drew attention to this physical difference. Male cadets frequently expressed concerns over the feminization of the cadet wing; this cartoon vividly depicted these stereotypical concerns by showing how female cadets (like most women) are overly concerned about beauty.

Many issues of *The DODO* magazine produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s contain cartoons that depicted female cadets as weak and unattractive, or as sexual objects who had to rely upon their feminine wiles to succeed at the Academy. The August 1976 Issue of *DODO* featured a cartoon entitled “Georgia” (Figure 21).

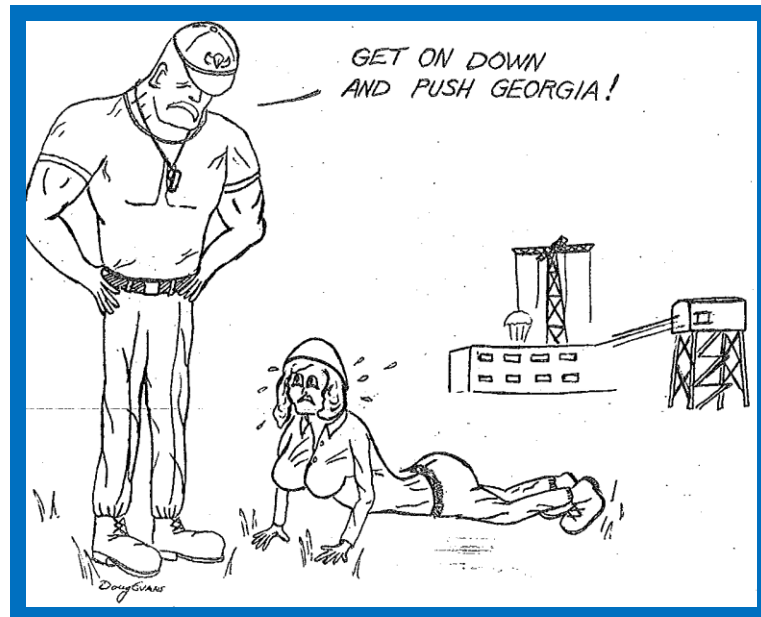


Figure 21: “Georgia” from *The DODO*, August 1976¹⁴⁶

The cartoonist is describing a scene from Cadet Basic Training which occurs during the first six weeks after cadets arrive at the Academy. The female cadet depicted in this cartoon was struggling to complete a push-up exercise. She was drawn with very large breasts and a fearful expression on her face; the large, muscular and intimidating Academy instructor (who was a

¹⁴⁶“Georgia,” *The DODO* (August 1976): 5.

senior cadet) was looking down at Georgia and yelling at her to “get on down and push!”¹⁴⁷ This cartoon, while intended as off-color cadet humor, clearly shows how male cadets viewed women as weak, sexualized objects; moreover, this cartoon also suggests that anatomically, men were stronger, powerful and more suited to military service than women who had to contend with large breasts and anatomically inferior physiques.

The 1989 report from the Integration of Women Committee Taskforce commented on the masculine culture of the Air Force Academy stating that:

Despite women’s increased participation, the Academy remains primarily a male-dominant organization, characterized by 87 % male cadets. Consequently, the Academy reflects a masculine culture with accompanying masculine norms, values and lifestyles. For example, historically, soldiering has been viewed as a masculine role; the profession of war, defense and combat is seen by society as man’s work. Thus a deeply entrenched “cult of masculinity” pervades the military. At the Academy, this culture is highlighted by the prestigious role of the aerial combatant (i.e., the fighter pilot). For example, the warrior role is promoted by frequent fighter aircraft flyovers during noon meal formations, Basic Cadet Training, and at football games. Additionally, the four static displays on the Terrazzo are fighter aircraft.¹⁴⁸

These findings were not surprising as five years earlier, the IOWC taskforce’s 1984 Climate Survey reported that “males were more negative than females concerning women’s actual or potential performance in military roles.”¹⁴⁹ In the December 1976 issue of *The DODO*, a cartoon depicted how male cadets negatively viewed the physical capabilities of female cadets. The cartoon entitled “Attack!” depicted a scene from Cadet Basic Training where the new cadets fought each other with pugo sticks¹⁵⁰ (Figure 22).

¹⁴⁷ “Georgia,” *The DODO* (August 1976): 5.

¹⁴⁸ Superintendent’s Survey Team, “Report on the Integration of Women into the Cadet Wing: Recommendations,” (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, July 1984):1; and Integration of Women Committee, “Integration of Women at the U.S. Air Force Academy: Preliminary Findings,” (Colorado Springs, Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, March 1989):3.

¹⁴⁸ Superintendent’s Survey Team, 3.

Integration of Women Committee, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Integration of women Committee, 8.

¹⁵⁰ “Attack!” *The DODO* (December 1976):4.



Figure 22: “Attack!” from *The DODO*, December 1976¹⁵¹

In this cartoon, the female cadet dropped her pogo stick and unbuttoned her shirt to expose her breasts to her opponent, a stunned male cadet. The Academy instructor (a senior cadet) responded by ordering the male cadet to “Attack! They’re [women?] going to show no mercy in combat!”¹⁵² Not only were women sexualized in this cartoon, they were shown to use sex as a weapon. Furthermore, this cartoon suggested that men should view women as the enemy in the military environment of the Air Force Academy; this image confirmed women as sexual objects and as targets of sexual conquest.

The 1989 IOWC report specifically identified the informal cadet newspaper, *The Dodo*, as a source of “literature [which] demonstrates sexist attitudes towards women, especially with its obvious sexual innuendos;” moreover, the report issued a scathing remark against the Academy leadership stating that “what is appalling is that an Academy senior officer reviews and approves each issue before publication.”¹⁵³ These cartoons from issues of *The Dodo* reflected the existence of sexist and condescending attitudes within the organizational culture at the Air Force

¹⁵¹“Attack!” *The DODO* (December 1976):4..

¹⁵² “Attack!” *The DODO* (December 1976):4.

¹⁵³ Integration of Women Committee, 9.

Academy; moreover, as suggested by the IOWC's reports from 1984 and 1989, these sexist attitudes remained in place after the initial integration period of 1976 to 1984. In the highly competitive environment of the Academy, body image is of paramount importance and any deviation from acceptable weight standards is greeted with open disdain from fellow cadets. According to Air Force Academy policies, cadets had to adhere to prescribed weight standards; overweight cadets had to participate in mandatory weight loss programs including modified diets and remedial exercise. Additionally, cadets who were unable to conform to the Academy's weight standards were often ridiculed by fellow cadets and were also subject to dismissal. Male cadets were highly critical of the physical appearance of female cadets and they openly refer to female cadets as having the Colorado Hip Disease. In *The DODO* magazine, females were frequently characterized as overweight, unattractive and masculine in appearance.

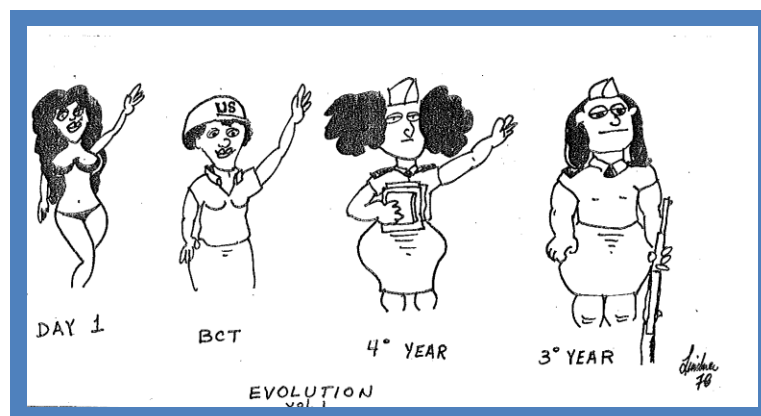


Figure 23: "Colorado Hip Disease" from *The DODO*, January 1978¹⁵⁴

The January 1978 issue of *The DODO* magazine included a cartoon entitled "Colorado Hip Disease"¹⁵⁵ (Figure 23). This cartoon portrayed the evolution of female cadets from

¹⁵⁴ "Colorado Hip Disease," *The DODO* (January 1978):3.

¹⁵⁵ "Colorado Hip Disease," *The DODO* (January 1978):3.

day 1 through their third year at the Academy. On Day 1, the woman arrived at the Air Force Academy to begin her career as a cadet; she was depicted as beautiful and she was wearing a sexy bikini. The next image showed the woman as a cadet during her first summer of Cadet Basic Training. The woman had short hair, she was in uniform, and she was considerably less attractive. In the third picture, the woman was in her freshman year at the Air Force Academy. Her hair had grown out considerably and was shown in an unattractive style that was not within regulations for hair standards. Furthermore, the woman had exaggerated hips, a stern expression, and smaller lips. In the final picture, the woman was in her sophomore year and she had completed the transformation from a civilian woman to a military cadet. The woman was in a military uniform with a rifle; her hips were large and her breasts were smaller; her expression was hardened and she had thin straight lips and straight, dull hair. The author of this cartoon utilized sarcastic humor to voice the prevailing male cadet attitude that most female cadets were unfeminine, overweight and unattractive. It is notable how dramatically this cartoon reverses Colonel Colvin's explanation in her oral history interview that she wanted to be a cadet because she had seen the Air Force Academy make her brother into an ideal version of himself. This cartoon argues that, for women, the Air Force Academy does the opposite because it will make women unattractive.

The 1984 Report from the IOWC referenced the cadet weight problem stating that:

A number of our cadets, particularly women, have weight problems which lead to derogatory comments and jokes (Colorado Hip Disease or CHD). Overweight women invite sexual harassment, unnecessarily stereotype all women cadets, while also presenting a very unprofessional image. Therefore, we must initiate a

hard-hitting, dynamic program to guarantee that cadets (men and women) DO NOT exceed weight standards (emphasis included).¹⁵⁶

While addressing the overall cadet weight problem at the Air Force Academy, this statement focused on female cadets and presumed that a female cadet's body image alone invited and possibly deserved derogatory comments and sexual harassment; ignored was the possibility that the masculine culture of the Air Force Academy categorized women as the problem that needed to be fixed rather than the discriminatory culture of the institution itself.

These cartoons from *The DODO* during the integration period illustrate how male cadets battled to reconcile their existing feminine images of women as beauty queens and sex objects with new masculine images of women as soldiers and warriors; furthermore, female cadets were caught negotiating between two competing images of prescribed femininity. Female cadets employed a variety of survival strategies to gain acceptance from their male peers; one of the most common of these strategies was to become "one of the guys." By mirroring the behaviors, language and customs of their male counterparts, women hoped to gain access into the close-knit friendships of men at the Academy. However, gender difference created a paradox created for female cadets. In order to become a buddy, female cadets chose to suppress their more feminine identities, producing an internal tension as women had to perform a balancing act with their identities. While many women were accepted as "one of the guys," occasionally they still experienced exclusion and disrespect.

¹⁵⁶ Report on the Integration of Women Into the Cadet Wing, 29.

Academy leaders, male cadets, and the media continually voiced concerns that rigors of field training environment would cause female cadets to lose their femininity. In 1976, Lt. Colonel Gene Galluscio, associate professor of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the Air Force Academy, conducted surveys of over 600 male and female cadets at the one-month and three-month point in their training. In discussing his findings, Colonel Galluscio stated that “the men’s reaction is interesting, since they said that women should undergo the same training as they do.. It appears that men experienced a conflict between their traditional conception of women’s appearance and the things women did during Cadet Basic Training.”¹⁵⁷ Colonel Gallusico also remarked about the women’s responses stating that, “the women fully understand that they were playing traditionally recognized male roles during the summer, but this did not affect their self-concept as women... in other words, women knew they did not display the traditional appearance of women- they had no makeup, wore fatigue uniforms and quite often were dirty and perspiring... and then, they were carrying rifles and learning combat techniques”¹⁵⁸ (Figure 24).

¹⁵⁷ “Men, Women Cadets Want Same Training,” *Falcon News*, , HQ USAFA CMA Development & Alumni Programs Division, CO: USAF Academy, November 25, 1976, 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Falcon News*, 2.



Figure 23: Cadet Beverly Polska during Basic Cadet Training, Air Force Academy, July 1976.¹⁵⁹

Colonel Gallusico also stated the survey question that reflected the most disagreement between male and female cadets concerned whether women were capable of doing everything men did during Basic Cadet Training; the women said yes they were and the men said no.”¹⁶⁰ Based on these comments, female cadets challenged the male conceptions of what it means to be masculine and feminine. In the minds of some male cadets, women who wore fatigues, fired rifles, and did not mind getting dirty, were a stark contrast from the traditional image of women. In her 1980 exit interview, Cadet Thornhill also remarked on the impact of her outward appearance during Cadet Basic Training stating that:

The only problem that came up was with my acceptance of myself. During BCT... I can still remember writing letters home and saying, “Hey Mom, I got issued my J.C. Penny’s men’s tee shirt today. Wow, I’m really proud. This is one more step toward becoming the all-American male.” When I got my combat boots, my M-1, it was all, “Wow, this is really great.” What that was, basically, was a reaction on my part that nobody was telling me that what I was doing was

¹⁵⁹ Lorma Gutierrez, “SIDC’s IMA Familiar with ‘Bring Me Men’ Story,” January 1, 2007, Air Force Space Command, (accessed April 28, 2013) <http://www.afspc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123076737>.

¹⁶⁰ *Falcon News*, 2.

all right... You forget about the real world..." Hey man, I'm the all-male American." It was my problem. And I overcame that by the time the fourth class year started.¹⁶¹

Thornhill actively negotiated her perception of herself as the "all American male" and then re-negotiated her identity as more feminine once the academic year began. Female cadet Bonnie Jo Schaefer similarly noted that, "I've found the upperclassmen don't want you to be feminine outright. But just do something unladylike and they are indignant and tell you to act like a lady. Sometimes you wonder what they want of us."¹⁶² As evident in the words of Cadet Schaefer, female cadets faced a paradox created by gender difference. Women at the Academy were not allowed to be feminine outright, nor were they allowed unladylike behavior. Female cadets were caught in the middle of an identity crisis. They were not allowed to be one of the guys yet they were not accepted on equal terms as a woman.

During the initial phases of the integration process, the Air Force Academy received an inordinate amount of press coverage; one popular question that surfaced in a number of articles was whether female cadets would experience a loss of femininity. In a 1976 newspaper article in the *Colorado Springs Sun*, the reporter interviewed Mrs. Eleanor Foote, a representative of the Defense Advisory Committee of Women in the Services (DACOWITZ), whose timely visit occurred nearly three months the arrival of women at the Air Force Academy. The purpose of Foote's visit was to gauge the success of the integration process and she met with many of the newly admitted female cadets while at the Air Force Academy. Foote stated that the women cadets "are in favor of

¹⁶¹ Thornhill, p. 1-9, 1-10.

¹⁶² *U.S. News & World Report*, 31.

being treated the same, but are a little concerned about somehow losing their femininity... and that the men cadets do not look on them as women. They feel they have lost something.”¹⁶³ While she stated that she did not know how wide spread this feeling was, Foote stated that fear of a loss of femininity “was expressed in different ways by several cadets she talked with.”¹⁶⁴ In a subsequent article in the *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, Air Force Academy Air Training Office (ATO) Lieutenant Terry Walter who served as a role model for the new female cadets during their first years at the Academy emphatically challenged Foote’s assertions. Lt. Walter stated that

The girls were really incensed by Mrs. Foote’s statements to the press. I think from talking to a lot of fourth class women that Mrs. Foote misinterpreted their definition of femininity....They understand that they are fourth class women and what that involves. They know they will have to go through the doors last. I don’t think Mrs. Foote’s statement is exactly what they meant and I’ve talked to most of them. They want to be cadets, not men cadets or women cadets. This doesn’t mean a lack of femininity. Just because guys have always drilled, this doesn’t make drilling a masculine activity. Femininity is a concern to them... it is for every woman in a male domain. But they have so many other things to worry about. The training they are undergoing is not designed to make them into men but to make them into officers. To be a good officer you don’t have to be a man.¹⁶⁵

As an official representative of the Air Force Academy staff and a spokesperson for female cadets, Lt. Walter addressed her comments to members of the press and society at large who feared that women who chose to become cadets would lose their femininity. Lt. Walter’s statement conveyed a larger message that one’s gender was not a factor in

¹⁶³ Gene Birkhead, “Women Cadets Fear Femininity Loss,” *Colorado Springs Sun*, September 30, 1976, 14.

¹⁶⁴ Birkhead, 14.

¹⁶⁵ Molly R. Parrish, “Women Cadets are Feminine: Officer,” *Colorado Springs Gazette and Telegraph*, November 1, 1976, A1.

becoming a good officer; on the contrary, according to Lt. Walter, both men and women were fully capable of serving as cadets and officers in the military.

Female cadets also had to balance the aggressiveness of their leadership style in order to avoid male cadet scrutiny. If a female cadet appeared to be too direct or too bossy, male cadets would categorize her as a bitch. In her interview, Cadet Thornhill also commented on the narrow scope of acceptable leadership styles for women stating that:

It's very hard to come into an institution where you know the guys like to throw around their masculinity, as it if were going out of style. That's a given. For a woman to come in here and try to tell a guy how to run something, unless she's really got her stuff together, they can walk all over her. They can start calling her "bitch" and "that's all that lady does all the time, bitches at us."¹⁶⁶

Male cadets found it an affront to their masculinity to take orders from women. In a July 2012 interview, Dr. Hughes commented on the masculine culture of the Air Force Academy during the integration period stating that: "the majority of the male cadets were highly conservative and were highly conventional. They play by the rules in a system built for them. They were relatively blind as to how the system was unfair to other groups who didn't fit into their worldview."¹⁶⁷ Considering the mindset of these male cadets, taking orders from women represented a transgression of normal gender roles in society where men were in charge and women were subservient.

As part of the integration plan, Academy leadership decided that women would be housed separately from the rest of the male cadets. This decision was made to "minimize the impact on male cadet living space...and enhance the male cadet acceptance of the

¹⁶⁶ Thornhill, 1-15.

¹⁶⁷ Dr. Hughes, 2.

woman cadets' program."¹⁶⁸ In a 2002 interview, Major General Stanley Beck stated that the Academy leadership commented on the billeting decision stating:

[We] took a conservative approach in our planning. The idea of having the women all in one area in the dormitory was just strictly based on the idea that we could provide better supervision and better awareness of the situation with women cadets in their quarters... rather than dispersed among the entire cadet dormitory area...it worked the first year...it was always the intent in the long range to have female cadets integrated into the cadet wing just like the male cadets and assigned to every squadron.¹⁶⁹

The physical segregation of the female cadet living quarters served as the women's largest complaint of the integration process. Male cadets perceived that female cadets received preferential treatment and protection from the rigors of being a fourth-class cadet in this institution. Cadet Thornhill explained that:

I think honestly, I would have preferred that [living with the male cadets]... I really believe that there would have been an initial adjustment. There's no doubt about that. But when you are coming into an institution that is very traditional, it has very set patterns for doing things, the worst thing you can do is what they did with us. They isolated the women to a certain extent... shut them up in the "palace" or the "penthouse" or whatever the mess was called. When you isolate them like that, then guys don't know what you're doing up there, you don't know what they're doing down there..." You guys don't have it as tough as we do up in the penthouse or whatever.¹⁷⁰

After receiving considerable negative feedback from both the male and female cadets, Academy leadership made the decision to integrate the female cadets into the male dormitories after the first semester. That integration, however, negated the more persistent emotional segregation that women subsequently faced.

¹⁶⁸ *Women's Integration Research Project*, Issue #20, Aug. 28, 1975, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Major General Stanley C. Beck, USAF, Ret., interviewed by Colonel James C. Gaston, USAF, Ret., September 4, 2002, USAFA Oral History Project, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, 4.

¹⁷⁰ Thornhill, 1-5.

Although women physically integrated into the Air Force Academy, they remained virtual “outsiders” within their community of male cadets and this exclusion was a direct result of gender-based discrimination. Female cadets faced a paradox created by gender difference; female cadets continually reframed the perceived masculine and feminine components of their identities in order to gain acceptance from male cadets. Female cadets attempted to validate their intellectual, physical and emotional parity with male cadets; additionally, female cadets employed a multiplicity of survival strategies to gain acceptance. These strategies included molding and changing their perceived feminine identity to reflect being one of the guys, being sexually promiscuous; and being strong and intolerant of discriminatory practices. Male cadets interpreted these renegotiated identities and likewise, categorized female cadets as sisters, sluts, or bitches. Throughout this transitional period of integration, a cadet’s gender emerged as the most important qualifier for inclusion and as a result, female cadets remained on the “outside.”

Conclusion:

The Air Force Academy eventually replaced the “Bring Me Men” Ramp in 2003, seventeen years after the arrival of the first female cadets, when news of the Air Force Academy sexual assault scandal shocked the country. As a result of their 2003 investigation, the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force released a report stating, “Twelve percent of the women who graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2003 were victims of rape or attempted rape while at the Academy and seventy percent alleged they had been the victims of sexual harassment.”¹⁷¹ As part of their actions towards creating a more accepting environment for women, the Air Force Academy’s replaced the ramp’s contentious words “Bring Me Men” with the Air Force Academy’s Core Values, “Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do”¹⁷² (Figure 24).



Figure 24: The New Air Force Core Values Ramp¹⁷³

According to published Air Force Academy manuals from the 1950s and 1960s, a cadet was an “officer and gentleman.”¹⁷⁴ The Air Force Academy’s use of gendered

¹⁷¹ Report to the Secretary of the Air Force, *Air Force Inspector General Summary Report Concerning the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases at the United States Air Force Academy* (Sept. 14, 2004): 3, <http://www.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-060726-033.pdf> (accessed December 13, 2012).

¹⁷² USAFA Folklore Wiki, “Bring Me Men Ramp,” (accessed April 12, 2012), http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Bring_Me_Men_Ramp.

¹⁷³ USAFA Folklore Wiki, “Bring Me Men Ramp,” (accessed April 12, 2012), http://69.199.231.171/wiki/index.php/Bring_Me_Men_Ramp.

rhetoric to describe military professionals as warriors and gentleman elucidates this institution's presumption that only men could "embody the martial spirit" and be "heroic fighters."¹⁷⁵ To accept women into this honored legacy at the Air Force Academy would require a radically different understanding of what it meant to be a cadet— and indeed, what it meant to be a man or a woman because, by definition, a cadet was a gentleman, not a lady. Within the framework of traditionally masculine and feminine roles at the Air Force Academy, women represented the gentile, fairer sex who were in need of protection; furthermore, this hegemonic institution conceived that women lacked the physical and emotional capabilities necessary for the rigorous military lifestyle. The integration of women into the Air Force Academy appeared to men to be counterintuitive to this institution's purpose of transforming young men into cadets, officers, and gentlemen; moreover, the inclusion of women at the Air Force Academy ultimately required the institution to redefine its rhetoric and training practices as reflected by the removal of the "Bring Me Men" Ramp. The gender neutral replacement ramp prominently displays the new Air Force Academy's Core Values which stress integrity, service before self and excellence as a standard of behavior. The ramp's change indicated an intentional shift from militant manhood rhetoric to a refocusing on personal standards of honor and integrity; furthermore, this shift, in the wake of the 2003 sexual assault scandal, reflects the Academy leadership's efforts to reshape the sexist and

¹⁷⁴ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 157.

¹⁷⁵ *Cadet, Officer, Gentleman: Decorum Manual* (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1969.): 1-6.

discriminatory components of Air Force Academy culture and thereby eliminate the very visible symbol of this culture, the sexual abuse of female cadets.

From their earliest days as pilots in the Women's Air Corps during World War II, to the first classes of women at the Air Force Academy in the mid 1970s, the study of women's roles in the Air Force remains a dynamic yet understudied area of scholarship. An examination of the rapidly changing roles for American women serving in the military at large has become a popular topic for gender, social and cultural historians. In her monograph, *Creating G. I Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps during World War II*, historian Leisa Meyer stated that this scholarship lacks a "full discussion or analysis of the gender, race, class and sexual ideologies framing women's military service."¹⁷⁶ Meyer also raised the concern that many feminist scholars have struggled to reconcile the mutual construction of women as both "feminine" and "martial," thus reinforcing existing gender norms of militant masculinity and passive femininity.¹⁷⁷ To further complicate the issue of female agency within the military, Meyer charged that feminist scholarship frequently characterized service women as victims within the highly masculine and discriminatory institution of the American military.¹⁷⁸

These first classes of female cadets at the Air Force Academy encountered a number of obstacles including: intense scrutiny of their physical, academic and military

¹⁷⁶Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating G. I Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 191.

¹⁷⁷ Meyer, 4, 25.

¹⁷⁸ Meyer credits the work of women's military historian Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora Press, 1988), for raising the point of how service women interpret the frustrating jargon that women have historically and continue to be victims in this institution. As a former Army officer, I completely concur with this sentiment. Meyer, 4.

performance from the press, their fellow cadets, Academy officials, doctors and society at large; isolated living quarters from the male cadets; a token minority status; and an overemphasis on their physical appearance, weight, attractiveness and their potential loss of femininity. By recovering the voices of women's experiences at the Air Force Academy, this present work seeks to challenge this categorization of women as victims; far from passive subjects, the first classes of women at the Air Force Academy demonstrated remarkable tenacity, perseverance, adaptability and grace under pressure as they actively created a space for themselves within this rigid masculine environment.

The integration of women into the Air Force Academy and the military at large is an on-going process up to the present day. By incorporating both male and female perspectives, this present work attempted to explore the active and complex process of personal and collective identification within the highly structured institution of the military. Further study of the integration process from its beginning stages up to the present time through the lens of gender, race, class, and sexuality will yield a better understanding of how men and women experience mandated integration of the military; furthermore, I believe that such analysis will underscore how hegemonic masculine attitudes are a root cause of discrimination, inequality and sexual assault against women in the military today. From a contemporary perspective, this scholarship is necessary and poignant considering the Department of Defense's 2013 decision to allow women in the United States military to serve in combat positions. In response to decades of feminist activism, this landmark decision represents the removal of one more obstacle preventing women from claiming the full rights and responsibilities as American citizens;

furthermore, as women are fully integrated into the United States military in the near future, it is imperative that military leaders recognize the successes and avoid the mistakes from previous efforts at gender integration of the armed services.

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