



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive
DSpace Repository

Faculty and Researchers

Faculty and Researchers Collection

2001

Women in Combat Units: It's Still a Bad Idea

Simons, Anna

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

PARAMETERS, US Army War College Quarterly - Summer 2001

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/36403>

Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun



Calhoun is a project of the Dudley Knox Library at NPS, furthering the precepts and goals of open government and government transparency. All information contained herein has been approved for release by the NPS Public Affairs Officer.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

Women in Combat Units: It's Still a Bad Idea

ANNA SIMONS

© 2001 Anna Simons

From *Parameters*, Summer 2001, pp. 89-100.

Among the easiest predictions to make in this first year of the new century is that various interest groups will continue to lobby to open all US combat units to women. At least five seemingly logical arguments can be anticipated:

- New post-Cold War missions require finesse, not brawn.
- Twenty-first-century technologies are gender-neutral.
- An equal opportunity to serve is every American citizen's right.
- Cohesion does not require that soldiers bond socially, only that they accomplish their tasks effectively.
- Our European allies are opening their combat units to women, therefore so should we.[1]

Each of these arguments flies in the face of common sense, however, and together they beg the central question, which is how would the integration of women improve a combat unit's survivability and the defense of the United States.

For instance, if war in the future will be push-button and relatively effortless, then why have combat units at all? Why not just disband them altogether or, at the very least, phase them out? Likewise, if our soldiers' primary duty will be to keep peace and thus avoid war, then why not train them in nothing but non-lethal techniques?

Tellingly, not even those who envision a radically altered high-tech battlescape advocate the dissolution of combat units. None among them has called for an end to teaching hand-to-hand combat, movement-to-contact, or night patrolling skills. None is really arguing that we won't need some sort of close-in as well as sustained combat capability. Rather, the push now is to integrate capable women into such units. Why?

There are at least two sets of answers. The first has to do with knocking down the walls of one of the last all-male preserves. For those opposed on principle to men's exclusivity, as well as their presumed dominance, the only important war to be waged is the gender war, and what could be a more appropriate target than the combat exclusion laws? Those who argue this point of view are relatively easy to dismiss, since they are uninterested in engaging in discussions about the role of the military.

Impossible to ignore, on the other hand, are those who are passionate about the military either because they serve or feel every American should have the opportunity to do so. From their perspective, fairness dictates that American women be granted the same opportunities to fulfill their citizenship duties--and in the same ways--as American men.

But if this is their position, why shouldn't everyone have to fulfill these duties? Why aren't they advocating

national service or universal conscription? If either were in place their logic would be unassailable and not just persuasive. If all Americans were required to serve, women could legally demand equivalent opportunities, and it is hard to imagine their being denied. However, with the force structured as it is, everyone doesn't have to volunteer, all volunteers don't have to be accepted, and women know from the outset they will not be allowed into certain units.

On closer examination, it seems that the struggle is less about rights and responsibilities than it is about rewards. Women in uniform, and female officers especially, are understandably concerned about promotion and advancement. Nor are equity and justice unreasonable goals or career demands. In fact, they are eminently reasonable. But the push being made to enable women to serve with men in combat units belies the stated desire, which is for women to attain the same opportunities as men. If the aim was truly parity and opportunity, women could accomplish both equally well in their own single-gender combat units. Yet, the notion of developing such units is never broached in this country, which is itself suggestive. The real intent must therefore be to earn women the chance to compete directly against men for a shot at positions of higher command. Otherwise, why not lobby for all-female units? Being able to live up to one's citizenship duties by "sharing" in combat doesn't require having to fight from the same foxholes--if it did, no one would use the term "The Greatest Generation" to pay homage to veterans from Omaha Beach and Guadalcanal, as well as to the nurses who treated their wounds or the women who worked back home in steel mills and airplane factories.

The issue of whether women in combat roles might actually improve combat effectiveness is another topic on which proponents of women in combat remain conspicuously silent. That they avoid this only further clarifies what they really seek: namely, a rise in status which they believe is automatic for those choosing to serve in the combat arms. This isn't what anyone says, of course, though if proponents did they might actually have a point. Historically there has always been some degree of bias accorded men who serve in combat units, and those who have seen combat especially. But to redress this (if it should be redressed, which is a big "if"), would require rethinking the nature of status throughout the armed forces--including among men, not just between men and women. Anything less would hardly be fair. Perhaps this explains why those who would overturn the status quo vis-à-vis women don't pursue status equity further.

By now it should be clear. If those opposed to the combat exclusion laws were to push any of their arguments to its logical conclusion, they would lose gender as a pressure point. Worse, they would be forced to acknowledge they don't have answers to the most pressing questions their cause raises. For instance, on the topic of inequity: anyone who has ever held a job, sat in a classroom, or grown up with siblings knows that morale and performance suffer in the face of favoritism. Just the perception of unfairness is often enough to poison the atmosphere. This is worst when it unfolds right in front of you. In the combat arms this would happen at the team, squad, and platoon level. But do lift-the-ban proponents think about fairness in good-of-the-group terms? Do they base their arguments on what is best for these combat units?

Those who want to see women serve in combat units neither explain the price they believe combat units pay for women's current absence, nor tell us what a squad would gain by having females present. The most obvious question they leave hanging is one to which every adult should already intuitively know the answer: What *would* women contribute to a rifle platoon or a SEAL team? The short answer is: distraction, dissension, and distrust. The longer answer has to do with cohesion, bonding, and the vulnerability of men.

Not surprisingly, this is not quite how the subject area experts who oppose the idea of women in combat usually state their case. If only they were more forthcoming, the debate might already be closed.

Something else which attenuates the debate, meanwhile, is the fact that men and women successfully work together under stress, in tight quarters, or for long periods of time in the corporate world, on construction sites, in operating rooms, and in risky and demanding jobs throughout the military. To those unfamiliar with it, combat may represent just a more intense version of these other occupations. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Combat is not a workplace. None of the routine separations the rest of us can count on--whether between day and night, safety and danger, duty and off-duty, or colleagues and bunkmates--pertains. No other environment is so unforgivingly relentless. Thus, though some might believe arguments offered to keep women out of combat units apply more broadly, they would be wrong. Frontline and behind-the-line units differ in kind, not by degree, from other units. Unfortunately, this distinction, which should not only inform but drive the debate, is often either implied by opponents or ignored by advocates, and is seldom addressed head-on.

Reconsidering Differences

When men who are or have been in combat units explain why women shouldn't be interjected into their midst, they invariably take one of three initial tacks.[2] They cite what women allegedly lack--speed, strength, and stamina; what they can have--babies, menstrual periods, and breast milk; or what they presumably need--more showers, different facilities, and privacy.

Even recent ROTC cadets who have been raised to view women as peers worry about women being too weak to heft heavy weapons, let alone carry one of them should he be wounded. If pushed, however, they readily admit that each has seen at least one woman who could conceivably outperform male peers physically. Bring up female Olympians and the argument over women's inherent physical inabilities falls apart. Of course, the broader point--that *most* women wouldn't make it "over the high bar"--still sticks, which then becomes an automatic segue to resentments and fears surrounding reduced standards and the consequences of gender-norming. All of these objections about physical capabilities would be rendered moot, however, if only women were held to the exact same physical standards as men and the standards were made as stringent as they had ever been.

The problems raised by women's reproductive capabilities are somewhat harder to resolve--not because women don't know how to avoid pregnancy or manage menstrual pain, but because the military's method of dealing with women who are pregnant or debilitated sends a series of signals it can't control. For instance, in hard-charging combat units, soldiers and marines will often suffer chronic pain and forgo a visit to the doctor in order to avoid being put on profile. Women can't hide their pregnancy in the same way; they can't "suck it up." Instead, pregnancy requires that they be removed from duty and then granted maternity leave.

Also, pregnancy can hardly be considered a random or accidental event that might happen overnight or in training to any soldier. No comparable "disability" renders men non-deployable. Consequently, it becomes virtually impossible to convince men that a woman's gender won't excuse her from duty at some point. Worse, because this potential can be realized at any time, all women have to be considered potentially non-deployable for some length of time. The problem this poses is that it flies in the face of why members of a unit intensively train together at all, which is so they grow familiar with one another while perfecting tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Presumptions about women absenting themselves have similarly haunted the corporate world. Nor does it help that many women extend their maternity leave and then willingly surrender high-status positions (or resign their commissions) after giving birth in order to spend more time at home. Worse than just disrupting the work flow, this bespeaks an ease at shifting allegiances which men may mistakenly read into women who

have no intention of becoming mothers. Unfortunately, and when weighed in the balance, individual intent is only just that, whereas the potential for bearing children (contraception or no) is incontrovertible biological fact. Nothing on the Y chromosome affects men the same way.

Nature thus makes for at least one unbridgeable chasm between the sexes that no amount of legislation can overcome. In contrast, one might think differences which everyone would agree are more cultural than natural would be easier to manage. For instance, American women may have been raised to dislike dirt, but this doesn't mean they need to bathe any more often than men. Therefore, it should be easy to mandate no extra showers, no extra water, no extra time, and no separate facilities.

But does that mean no separation? By rights, if all soldiers are to be treated alike, combat soldiers could easily argue that women deserve no more privacy from them than they have from one another. Since squad members sleep next to each other, why not bathe together, as each gender already does (separately) in open shower areas? If the theorizing done by those who want to see women in the 505th Infantry Regiment, Special Forces, or the Ranger battalions is correct, gender need have no effect on individuals' interactions. With proper training people can be taught to think beyond gender, which is only a cultural construct anyway. Following this skein of logic it shouldn't matter that soldiers in the field tend to sleep clothed whereas they shower naked. Nudity per se shouldn't cause men and women who have been told to regard one another as fellow-soldiers and fellow-soldiers only to bat an eye, let alone raise an eyebrow--or to wink.

Without doubt were the military to run a *Starship Troopers*-like experiment along these lines, those bent on erasing gender differences would be proved correct. In a communal shower, men and women wouldn't see gender. Instead, they'd be looking at one another's parts.

Even if the current academic distinction holds--that gender refers to what people make of sexual differences, while sexual differences are biologically based but do not determine behavior--the military faces a perpetual problem. Does it treat men and women as though they do or don't register one another's sex? Even with BDUs as camouflage, sexual dimorphism is impossible to hide. In close quarters, faces, voices, hairstyles, sizes, and shapes are all giveaways and continual reminders.[3] Of course, this doesn't mean these differences have to matter. But it does mean that they can. And with nature abhorring a vacuum, if they can, they likely, eventually, will. How else explain rules forbidding dating and fraternization; if the potential didn't exist, why bother?

It is almost as if there is widespread tacit agreement on all sides that men and women can't quite be trusted together. Accepting this as a given, some who oppose women in combat argue that it is not just sex that's bound to rear its ugly head, there's also jealousy to contend with, which will in turn disrupt cohesion. Most adults can offer ample anecdotal evidence of liaisons occurring in mixed-sex groups--and critics like pointing to integrated Navy ships in particular. But beyond the anecdotes, the degree to which illicit affairs actually disrupt operations on ships or in the workplace is less than clear. Morale is certainly affected, but operations continue--which suggests that long-standing assumptions about the links between morale (or cohesion) and effectiveness be reconsidered, or a better case be made that combat units really are different from any other kind of organization, in or out of the military.

Rethinking Cohesion

Academics who study or write about the military often distinguish among morale (how an individual feels), cohesion (feelings that bind individuals to the immediate, or primary, group), and esprit de corps (feelings that bind individuals to the larger unit--e.g., a company or battalion).[4] In the not-so-distant past it was said

cohesion possibly resulted from "proximity of group members over time; social similarities or commonalities; success at joint tasks; and concerned, competent, honest leaders." [5] However, academics recently have begun splitting such definitions and differentiating between two types of cohesion: social and task. [6] One aim in doing this is to underline the fact that everyone need not like one another or be alike in order to attain a common goal. A corollary aim is to point out that the degree of attention traditionally paid to peer bonding is overblown.

Perhaps this is so in the worlds of sports, politics, and business. But despite the usual analogies which are made, nothing in the civilian world replicates the hazards of combat, or its demands. Members of police and fire departments may come close in terms of the risks they run on duty. But "on duty" means they work in shifts. War doesn't occur in shifts. Neither does military training. Law enforcement personnel, even when partners, have the luxury of being able to escape one another for predictable, guaranteed periods of time. They may work excessive hours. But their families know where they are; they even see them on a regular basis. On field training exercises, combat soldiers will be out of touch (never mind sight) from loved ones for days. Deployed, they leave home for months. Worse, they're stuck with only each other for company.

Combat units form singular entities in more ways than can be cataloged, both literally and figuratively. In Special Forces, for instance, teams routinely practice going into isolation, though anyone who has spent time in an SF company knows teams happily stick to their team rooms; there are no common areas. But even figuratively, combat units exhibit intense clannishness, as Ranger reactions to everyone donning the black beret recently revealed. What does this result from--task cohesion or social cohesion? In units composed of self-selected volunteers, who can definitively say?

If one looks closely at what's being written about military cohesion, two things jump out. Social scientists measure cohesion either by observing groups as they perform various tasks or by asking group members to rate their own sense of their unit's performance and the strength of their attachments to it. [7] No one asks soldiers to map their attachments to one another. Nor does anyone examine group dynamics over time. As a consequence, the way cohesion works, what makes it work--who belongs, who doesn't, and why--can't be either measured or described. Yet chemistry matters, more perhaps than anything else. [8]

Consider the following list of what a medical task force is said to need in order to stay cohesive: leadership, meaningful work, the means to cope with boredom, and confidence that family members will be taken care of at home. [9] Say the unit happened to be all-male. Would the introduction of women create problems in any of these spheres? Clearly not.

Now consider this same set of criteria for a Special Forces or SEAL team. Just training for combat adds new pressures. Operational intimacy is one. Few sets of Americans experience the enforced togetherness that combat soldiers do. Prisoners might come close. But even overcrowded jails don't impel men to coordinate their every waking moment, as is required in a hide site or foxhole.

Under such conditions there is only one real keeper of order: intimacy can't be a prelude to sex. And it won't be--as long as heterosexual men are kept separated from women. At present, teammates always know where they stand with one another, which is on the nonsexual side of intimacy. As heterosexuals this is not the side of the line they want to stay on with women. Or, to paraphrase what one former Special Forces soldier has been telling me for years, "Men don't sit across from teammates and think about sleeping with them."

Ultimately, this is the basic, undeniable, unresolvable problem: heterosexual men like women in ways they don't like other men. What they feel for women is not what they feel for men. How they think about women

is not how they think about men. And what they see when they look at a woman is not another man.

As one officer and gentleman explained to me several years ago: "If a woman comes into my office, I do a physical assessment. Even if it's just ten seconds, I go through a sexual scenario with that woman. Can I ignore it? I try to. In this culture, there are penalties for acting that out. But it's natural. There's nothing wrong with it. We have to be real about it." [10]

Indeed. His remarks have since been seconded by numerous other men of all ranks who, on their own, would never admit they mentally disrobe women. Nor from watching them would women be any the wiser, though men don't have to--and decidedly don't--hide from each other the extent to which they fantasize about women. Instead, they embellish, edit, discuss, and then compare notes.

In fact, a graphic fascination with women may be the only thing all heterosexual men share, which is one reason females are talked about the way they sometimes are. If everyone in a group fished, fishing might serve a similar purpose, since anyone telling a fish story is expected to exaggerate, brag, and lie. But talking one-sidedly about sex works better still because it allows men who already know everything there is to know about one another's physical capabilities to engage in one-upsmanship without anyone present being able to prove them wrong. Given that some amount of posturing is critical to bonding--to prove who belongs, who doesn't, and why [11]--the trick for combat units is to have something over which soldiers can compete without this jeopardizing unit integrity. Ergo the inexhaustible usefulness of real and imagined relationships with women.

Make those women real, though, and what had been benign posturing turns into serious competition. Worse, the fact that women pay special attention right back only further strains relations among even the closest friends.

Without meaning to, women automatically alter the chemistry in all-male groups. As soon as the first soldier acts protective, defensive, flirtatious, or resentful, he initiates a dynamic which causes others to do the same, to do the opposite, or to do something else all in the name of setting themselves apart. This is completely antithetical to what units need, which is for individuals to work together and not at cross-purposes. Nor is the rivalry just over who's paying how much attention to whom. It is also about whether special attention should be paid at all. Even for those who are convinced that females shouldn't be treated any differently from males, there's a problem. To ensure that women aren't receiving any extra attention *requires* paying special attention.

To a greater and different degree than any other type of organization, small combat units are predicated on complementarity and unquestionable mutual trust. [12] To achieve this requires, first, an all-for-one, one-for-all ethos. Second, responsibilities, dangers, and rewards must be shared. Third, what there is to be shared must be literally shared. If, for instance, there is food to be had, everyone eats. The same goes for sex. If there is sex to be had, then anyone who wants it should be able to get it. If not, tension mounts.

Nowhere else does teamwork demand these same sorts of commitments, and the reasons why there can be no exclusive relationships should be obvious--to prevent envy, frustration, impatience, inequity, disgust. Without question, lust poses the most immediate threat. But love may actually be worse. Love rearranges loyalties. It binds one pair of individuals more closely to one another than to anyone else. The good-of-the-group shrinks to two. Just the intimation that two out of six or ten or twelve individuals have found, or are on the verge of finding, everything they need in one another subverts the *raison d'être* of a combat unit, which is to return to loved ones, to comfort, and to safety only after the mission is complete. With women present, the potential for love being fulfilled, as well as lust requited, lurks.

But present or absent, and despite graphic banter, women never mean only sex to soldiers. Rather, they represent a contradictory bundle of things, and when absent what they evoke includes home, family, the future, and everything that's worth fighting for--nonviolence especially.

Truth be told, men are more dependent on women than they often dare admit. Soldiers in combat seem especially dependent. We see this over and over again in written memoirs, and can hear it in veterans' accounts. It's revealed in the fact that mail matters, in the photos soldiers cherish, in the ways memories and dreams sustain them. This is perhaps best captured recently by Tom Hanks' character in *Saving Private Ryan*. Being able to picture his wife at home in her rose garden not only kept Captain Miller sane, but noble.

Combat soldiers' mental health may well depend on their having such a contrast to draw. On the one hand, there is the horrific world in which they're mired. On the other, there is the far more ideal world which places women above the fray. In combat nothing is clear-cut. No participant ever knows when he might be killed, maimed, spattered with gore, rescued, or relieved. All the more reason, then, to treat the *idea* of women--girlfriends, wives, mothers, sisters, daughters--as sacrosanct. Women as succor (and sanity) to return to provides something for soldiers to live for beyond honor, duty, and the filthy, smelly, foul-mouthed males beside them. With women right there, "women" as an ideal would never work.

This may be reason enough to keep females out of foxholes. But that is only if we are willing to pay veterans' experiences their due.

What don't we already know?

Curiously, experience seems to count for little in the women-in-combat debate. The fact that only combat soldiers and combat veterans know what comprises cohesion in combat units doesn't seem to rate. Nor does the fact that men already know how women's presence would affect them. For instance, one argument advanced for integrating women into combat units is that prior to desegregation white soldiers feared that integrating blacks into their units would destroy cohesion, just as men (black *and* white) now argue women will. But no matter how vigorously critics of the combat exclusion laws make this case, the analogy is wrong. Segregation kept the races apart prior to integration; soldiers of all colors are raised by women, grow up with women, attend school with women, woo women, marry women, and remain keenly interested in women. And though they may not always understand women (as so much of our popular culture contends), they know they are attracted to them. Attraction was hardly the reason whites who opposed integration fought to keep blacks out.

Nor is this the only selective editing being done. Scholars often refer to the fact that women have successfully fought alongside men in such disparate locales as Greece, the Soviet Union, Israel, Vietnam, and Eritrea, as if this evidence of women's presence on the battlefield is proof that they can be present with no ill effects. Surely, in a war of national survival, in a war fought on American soil, American women, too, might be pressed into service. But the goal should be that the US military remain strong enough for this not to have to occur. Nor is there any suggestion that if sufficient men had been available in any of these other countries, women would have been sent to the front at all. In fact, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), famous for their discipline and the prominent role of female soldiers today, deploy women only because they lack sufficient numbers of male recruits. In doing so, though, they've also had to sacrifice one of their most legendary fighters; in order to try to make the rule against liaisons stick, he and his lover--a female soldier--were publicly executed. It's hard to imagine our military being able to avail itself of the same technique.[13]

If much has been made of exceptional situations, much has likewise been made of individual females who

have found, or fought, their way into combat. American women inadvertently caught in firefights during our incursions in Panama and the Gulf have been regarded as pioneers and depicted as heroes.[14] Praise has been heaped on their coolheadedness and professionalism, which have been offered up as proof that women can handle themselves fine. But fine in what? In limited engagements? What should be the threshold for proof?

Perhaps it shouldn't be combat at all. Unless we are willing to bet that all future wars will be counted only in hours, combat units will face long periods of boredom in addition to intense bursts of activity. Getting along during lulls may be as important as cohering during combat. It may, in fact, be essential to the group's subsequent ability to operate as an effective, cohesive group. Downtime is frequently treated as playtime. Surely that's necessary, but as Freud pointed out almost a century ago, Thanatos and Eros are hard to keep apart. It's far easier when sources of temptation just aren't around.

Meanwhile, though combat is often talked about as the ultimate test of a unit, enforced togetherness will stress bonds too. Confined in close quarters, kept on edge, never quite knowing what will happen next . . . why add the potential for mistrust to so much uncertainty? In some regards, training, which is what our Army spends most of its time doing, may be even more trying. Not only do periods of intense activity puncture long, monotonous routines, but no one's survival is at stake. Thus, affection has plenty of time to build, as do suspicions.

Talk to any soldier who has spent time in a hide site, in a snow cave, or on lonely, boring guard duty. Does he really think it would be possible to lie there, shaking and shivering, waiting in the dark, with a female soldier right beside him, and not have that make some sort of difference? Even if no emotional connection is made, will everyone else realize that? Potential alone is corrosive. Conjecture breeds doubt, doubt suspicion, suspicion mistrust.

And mistrust is infectious. It might even be endemic. What men can't say too loudly is that, when it comes down to it, they know they can't always trust themselves. In the end, this unspoken truth is reason enough to keep combat units from being mixed, and it renders worries over women's weaknesses (whatever they might be) largely irrelevant. It's the vulnerability of men which proves the real stumbling block. Not only are men weak when it comes to women, they're partial too. This isn't just elemental; it's immutable.

Ironically--and unfortunately, given the gravity of this debate--men who are direct, blunt, and even brutal with each other can't be so forthcoming with women about the various kinds of attraction females *qua* females hold.[15] That's not how the minuet between the sexes works. But unless men are more frank, unless they make clear to women what's so obvious to them, those who advocate integrating women into their units will be able to continue to assume that with just a bit more time and pressure, with just a few more enlightened males having attained positions of power, and once better legal briefs are filed, women will have to be accepted in SEAL platoons, on SF teams, and throughout the combat arms. If only the advocates understood such units better. Then they might recognize their decisive error--that acceptance is not belonging. Tolerance is not what impels a combat unit to do the impossible. To risk everything together requires unwavering mutual trust.

What might convince lift-the-ban proponents to reexamine their premises? Disinclined as they are to listen to combat veterans and combat soldiers in this country, who are the only experts we have, perhaps they will turn to experts abroad, particularly as the Germans and British abolish their own combat exclusion laws. Perhaps the European experience will shed light on how effective integrated combat units can be. Actually, the fact that it is our allies doing this affords us an unprecedented advantage. We will be able to objectively study the

consequences of mixing men and women in combat units. Let mixed units prove themselves to be as capable as single-gender units on the front lines or behind the lines in a long, drawn-out war. And then--but only then--we might consider following suit.

NOTES

1. Two recent books on the topic of lifting the ban are Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), in favor; and Brian Mitchell, *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster* (Washington: Regnery, 1998), opposed. Academics are increasingly weighing in. For instance, see Martin van Creveld, "Less than We Can Be: Men, Women and the Modern Military," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 23 (December 2000), 1-20; Azar Gat, "Female Participation in War: Bio-Cultural Interactions," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 23 (December 2000), 21-31; Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, "Women and the Military," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 23 (December 2000), 32-50; Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Technology, 'Friction,' and Women in Combat," 1998, internet, <http://www.claremont.org/publications/owens2.cfm>, accessed January 2001. An even larger body of literature addresses the role women have played in war (e.g. David E. Jones, *Women Warriors: A History* [Washington: Brassey's, 1997]), as well as the roles of women in modern and post-modern militaries (e.g. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000]). This is but a small sampling of the literature.
2. In addition to informal discussion on this topic with former and current students at the Naval Postgraduate School, UCLA, and at forums where I have made presentations on the issue of women in combat, formal interviews were conducted in person and by phone with active duty and retired military personnel (in 1997) on the specific issue of integrating women into Special Operations Forces. Fieldwork was conducted among Special Forces soldiers at Ft. Bragg, N.C., 1991-92.
3. Clearly there have been historical instances of women having gone to considerable lengths to hide their identity in order to fight or serve aboard ships alongside men; however, this is clearly not a practice the military itself could promote.
4. See Frederick J. Manning, "Morale, Cohesion and Esprit de Corps," in *Handbook of Military Psychology*, ed. Reuven Gal and A. David Mangelsdorff (Chichester, Eng.: John Wiley & Sons, 1991). For an excellent overview of cohesion research--including pitfalls and challenges in attempting to define, let alone measure, cohesion--see Guy L. Siebold, "The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion," *Military Psychology*, 11 (No. 1, 1999), 5-26.
5. See Paul T. Bartone and Amy B. Adler (citing Siebold, 1987), "Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force," *Military Psychology*, 11 (No. 1, 1999), 87.
6. See Laura L. Miller and John Allen Williams, "Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness?" in *Soldiers and Civilians: The U.S. Military, American Society, and National Security*, ed. P. Feaver and R. Kohn (Cambridge, Mass.: BCSIA-MIT Press, forthcoming); and, for a particularly acute example, Elizabeth Kier, "Homosexuals in the U.S. Military: Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness," *International Security*, 24 (Summer 1999), 186-94.
7. For instance, see John H. Johns, *Cohesion in the US Military* (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1984); A. David Mangelsdorff, "Special Issue: Military Cohesion," *Military Psychology*, 11 (No. 1, 1999);

Leora Rosen, Paul D. Bliese, Kathleen M. Wright, and Robert K. Gifford, "Gender Composition and Group Cohesion in U.S. Army Units: A Comparison across Five Studies," *Armed Forces & Society*, 25 (Spring 1999), 365-86; Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects Upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1997).

8. Interestingly, in an anthropological examination of his own reserve battalion in Israel, Eyal Ben-Ari examines the significance of *gibush*, or "crystallization," which Israelis regard as essential to creating cohesion. "The crucial variable is seen to be the creation of a proper social atmosphere (*avira*) to motivate the men. . . . It is social activities outside of the army (like parties, outings, or picnics) or within the army (like celebrations or the ubiquitous coffee drinking sessions) that help generate the proper atmosphere." Eyal Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit* (New York: Bergahn Books, 1998), p. 99.

9. These are the criteria highlighted in Bartone and Adler, pp. 85-107.

10. The former SF soldier is my husband, the officer and gentleman a SEAL commander who volunteered this only after I repeated my husband's comment, with my husband present.

11. On bonding, and male bonding in particular, see Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: Random House, 1969) and Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, *The Imperial Animal* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1997), pp. 85-117.

12. Or, as Major Ralph E. McDonald succinctly sums it up, "Cohesion requires trusting each other and anticipating each other's needs." Ralph E. McDonald, "Cohesion: The Key To Special Operations Teamwork," Research Report No. AU-ARI-94-2 (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air Univ. Press, October 1994), p. 41.

13. Former LTTE member, personal communication, April 2000.

14. This, for instance, is the approach taken by Linda Bird Francke in *Ground Zero*.

15. For instance, not even Mackubin Thomas Owens, who argues strongly "that all the social engineering in the world cannot change the fact that men treat women differently than they treat other men" ("Technology, 'Friction,' and Women in Combat," p. 6) addresses what it is men see when they look at women. Instead, he leaves it up to his audience to make the obvious connections between the presence of women and eros. I would only point out that the connections that are made/imagined/fantasized about may not be as obvious in all the same ways to both sexes, which is why (I believe) the debate continues.

Dr. Anna Simons is an associate professor in the Special Operations Academic Group at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. She also has been an associate professor of anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is a previous contributor to *Parameters* and is the author of, most recently, *The Company They Keep: Life Inside the U.S. Army Special Forces*, as well as *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone*.

Reviewed 7 May 2001. Please send comments or corrections to usarmy.carlisle.awc.mbx.parameters@mail.mil