



# The University of Kansas

**Executive Summary Project Diane: University of Kansas Research Team<sup>i</sup>**  
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## Report Summary

### **Purpose:**

Our research explores the potential barriers and benefits of integrating females into 18-series MOSs in Army Special Forces, positions closed to females. Our results are intended to inform the potential integration process, specifically concerning potential barriers and benefits as they relate to unit and task cohesion.

### **Methods:**

We pursued a two-prong research design including focus groups and surveys. Following three pilot focus groups with SOF personnel at the University of Kansas and Ft. Leavenworth, KS, we made refinements to the focus group protocol. We identified themes from focus groups at Ft. Bragg, Ft. Campbell and Ft. Carson to inform the development of two survey instruments.

From October 2013 to February 2014 we conducted a total of 24 focus groups, comprising a sample size of 198 participants in the following locations: 5<sup>th</sup> Group at Ft. Campbell, KY; Female CST/CA/MISO/SOF Enablers at Ft. Bragg, NC; 10<sup>th</sup> Group at Ft. Carson, CO; and 1<sup>st</sup> Group at Ft. Lewis, WA. Additionally, three formal interviews and three informal interviews were conducted during this time frame.

The first survey was designed for Active Duty and National Guard Special Forces (SF) males. The second survey was designed for CA and MISO females, and female enablers currently assigned to USASOC units. The surveys were administered on-line; each respondent took approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Three reminder emails were sent to potential participants. Both surveys were administered February 10-March 3, 2014, yielding a sample size of 1,613 active duty SF males, 88 National Guard SF males (27.8 % response rate), and 215 active females (27.6 % response rate) as of March 4, 2014. (See Appendix A for more detailed information about research design, settings, and methods.)

### **Results: Male Focus Groups**

The focus groups revealed consistent themes across groups and locations. Twenty-three themes emerged from the focus groups. We clustered the themes in two broad categories concerning the potential negative impact gender integration would pose on task cohesion and unit cohesion. The majority of male participants were able to “envision” a role for female operators that would benefit SF but these were limited to enabler roles or a gender segregated SF unit. A minority of participants expressed support for gender integration into SF units *if* females passed the same standards as males. However, male participants were overwhelmingly negatively predisposed to gender integration and their concerns were primarily related to issues premised on gender/cultural stereotypes, misinformation, and a more general insider/outsider culture.

### Task Cohesion

1. Logistics Down Range (i.e., safety of females, health issues, hygiene and living arrangements)
2. Working with Indigenous Populations (i.e., indigenous leaders' acceptance of females, and their willingness to listen to females)
3. Male SF Personnel Response to Females (i.e., men will interact differently with female ODA members, prioritize injured females, and fraternization/sexual tension created by presence of females)
4. Physicality (i.e., females' inability to perform physical tasks, deterioration of female physicality over time)

### Unit Cohesion

1. Home Life (i.e., females pose a threat to fidelity, non-physical intimacy, pressure from significant other)
2. Outsider Culture (i.e., females may disrupt the insider/outsider culture)
3. Logistics (i.e., female family planning, pregnancy, limited opportunity for team deployment resulting from integrated teams)
4. Team Room Culture (i.e., forced to change environment and restrict bonding time)
5. Misinformation (i.e., confusion about policy requirements regarding health, hygiene, and sexual harassment)
6. Communication (i.e., what is the benefit to integration)

### **Results: Female Focus Groups**

The focus groups with female SOF personnel generated consistent themes across groups. Sixteen themes emerged from the focus groups, which we clustered in two broad categories: general cohesion and personal costs. Females' opinions overlapped with SF males in certain areas such as maintaining physical standards and concern about interpersonal conflict. However, in most areas females' opinions about integration departed from males. Overall, females were not as negative about gender integration and focused their concerns on it being done "correctly."

### General Cohesion

1. Logistics Down Range (i.e., hygiene and privacy concerns are more problematic for males than females)
2. Working with Indigenous Population (i.e., perceptions of gender by indigenous population, adaption to particular situation)
3. Team Dynamics (i.e., interpersonal conflicts, men interacting differently with female ODA members, "protective" response to females, and fraternization/sexual tension created by presence of females, conflict from spouses of SF men)
4. Physicality (i.e., standards of assessment, entry into SF, maintaining standards)
5. Social Isolation (i.e., exclusion from group down range, persistent need to "prove" self to males, forced to develop binary leadership style)
6. Professionalism (i.e., professionalism will ultimately override barriers to integration)

### Personal Costs

1. Social Reputation (i.e., avoid spending too much time with one male, sexual harassment)
2. Family Concerns (i.e., family planning, being pushed out of unit if they have children, or spouses with same deployment time)
3. Career Development (i.e., need formal and informal networks based on path to success rather than matching mentor/mentee based on sex)

### **Survey Results:**

The results of the survey are consistent with the focus group results; the opinions expressed by male and female focus group participants are systematically supported by the survey findings. The survey results did not illuminate new issues, but provided evidence indicating many soldiers in Special Operations share the beliefs apparent in the focus groups.

### **Current Resolvable and Unresolvable Issues:**

The barriers to integration expressed by SF professionals range from simple to complex issues. The majority of perceived barriers can be addressed prior to and throughout integration with education and targeted training that dispels gender stereotypes that are held by both males and females. Inconsistent communication between leadership and SF professionals was frequently identified as another barrier, which can easily be resolved through increased transparency in communications about integration, SF standards, and SF training.

However, other issues cannot be addressed ahead of time and will need to be handled as they emerge. One of the more complex issues to emerge is the ability of females to effectively work with indigenous populations in male dominated societies. Although the results of the female focus groups and survey results indicate that females have successfully worked with indigenous populations in specific micro-populations in male dominated societies, sex may be a demographic factor that poses some difficulties in a similar way that adjustments need to be made for race. These limitations surface in the field and as evidenced by the focus groups, they are not necessarily predictable ahead of time (i.e., race may be salient in one town but not in another town in the same country).

Female safety in the field is another potentially complex issue. Realistic concerns were raised about females' safety in executing particular tasks such as training indigenous populations in remote locations. These types of safety concerns are not readily addressed ahead of time because of the task-specific and location-specific nature of missions; these limitations are often identified during deployment. A different form of data collection and treatment will be necessary for navigating this more complex issue.

The impact of having integrated teams on SF spouses/significant others is another potential issue that is not necessarily "treatable" ahead of time because the impact is difficult to predict. However, the focus groups clearly indicated that family life was often strained due to several factors such as multiple and extended deployments; intimacy/emotional bonding with their ODA when not deployed; infidelity while deployed. The presence of females on an ODA was seen as one more additional source of strain.

Institutional reputation was also identified as an issue that is not currently resolvable because it is a long-term, continual process of organizational identity. SF professionals were fearful that integration would lead to a diminished reputation for Special Forces that signaled a decline in selection standards. However, focus group results demonstrated that institutional reputation is a continual source of concern for SF professionals (i.e., perceived decline in standards since their selection). The integration of females was identified as a factor that would exacerbate this perception.

Finally, a change in 'team room culture' is a concern that cannot be addressed before integration. The focus group results indicate that team room culture (unit cohesion) develops through a process of shared experiences down range, similar common social and recreational interests, and professional respect, among many other factors. Likewise, these were also named as factors that cause conflict and lack of cohesion. The formation of cohesion is an organic process that cannot be scripted ahead of time, regardless of the presence of females on an ODA.

## Detailed Report of Focus Group and Survey Results

### **Introduction**

The findings are organized around the dominant focus group themes that emerged during the study. In this discussion, we integrate quoted comments from the focus groups that represent common points of discussion among participants originating from multiple groups. These quotes are meant to be illustrative examples; we provide additional examples and selections from the focus groups in Appendix B. We also integrate relevant survey results, when applicable, to the sections; Appendix C contains a detailed breakdown of the survey responses.

### **Findings: Male Focus Groups**

*Table 1: Themes from Male Special Forces Focus Groups*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Task Cohesion</b>	<b>Unit Cohesion</b>
<b>Logistics</b>	X	X
<b>Interactions with Indigenous Populations</b>	X	
<b>Home Life Concerns</b>	X	X
<b>Gendered Cultural Assumptions/Stereotypes</b>	X	X
<b>Physicality</b>	X	
<b>Communication</b>		X
<b>Culture of Team Room/ODA</b>		X
<b>Misinformation</b>	X	X
<b>Rejection of Enablers/Outsiders</b>		X

#### *Logistics*

Current SF operators identified a number of issues that fell under the general theme of logistics. These included:

- Concern whether females can safely travel in some parts of the world
- Issues regarding the female reproductive system and general medical concerns
- Concerns regarding female hygiene and accommodations

There was a general concerns regarding females' safety in certain areas of the world. Some soldiers questioned whether females would be able to operate in remote areas for training and interaction with indigenous forces. For example, if an ODA is tasked with training indigenous forces, would it be possible to have a female work remotely training indigenous forces without having security provided by the male soldiers she is deployed with? Males were concerned that females would limit the team's ability to complete its task because leaving females without male

protection in certain areas of the world would be unsafe. Indeed, the survey results indicate that of those opposing females in SF, almost 10 percent suggest that the presence of females will hinder the fighting effectiveness of male soldiers as their main reason for opposing and 35 percent indicate that females will disrupt unit cohesion, which may or may not be a result of safety issues.

Male soldiers were also concerned with their ability to staff ODAs because of health and medical issues particular to females. There was concern over females' in/ability to control their reproductive choices, that females may use pregnancy to get out of deployment, or that pregnancy in the units may prevent some ODAs from deploying. For example, "The army's not going to give me another person because someone got pregnant. Another respondent explained, "Let's say we get to a point where a quarter ratio of our company is females and a quarter of that quarter becomes pregnant all in the same time window or within months of each other. That's going to be pretty challenging to try and fill critical MOSs." Additionally there was a concern that a woman's menstrual cycle may prevent her from completing her duties. There were a number of comments that spoke to this theme in varying degrees:

"We can't plan missions around a [menstrual] cycle."

"I don't want to come across as a sexist, but there's a period during the month when a woman is not as pleasant to be around."

"You're going to train X, Y, and Z today but yet, oh I'm sorry I can't do it because my stomach hurts or I'm going through my menstruation. Somebody else is going to have to pick up my slack now."

There was also concern that given the different health issues of females, some believed there may be an undue burden on medics within the ODA,

"...so now it's a whole nother gamut of medical stuff I've got to provide or bring as a medic when I'm already cutting back on lifesaving equipment, things that are going to save your life if you lose a limb or get shot or things like that. I'm already having to limit the amount of that that I take into combat based on just how much you can carry [of] required equipment. And now I've got to add to that additional stuff to take care of women-specific problems like a yeast infection or things like that, that are going to come from not being able to shower and cleanse herself properly for a long period of time."

One of the major logistical concerns brought up by men within the study focused on accommodations and hygiene (as we note later in the report, this was not a shared concern for the females in the study). There was confusion regarding specific Army policy as it relates to facilities and hygiene for females. Some of the male participants were under the impression that females must have completely separate, private facilities, and must be able to shower more regularly than their male counterparts. Men also expressed a general distaste for sharing facilities with females:

“Dude I don't want to watch a chick take a dump.”

“I've had women where we had to share a bathroom. And there's been a couple incidents where like—one woman didn't give a shit. She just walked around naked.”

“Would your wife like you showering with another woman every day?”

Interestingly, the surveys revealed that females were more likely to be willing to use unisex bathroom facilities than were males—61 percent of females but only 36 percent of males said they would be willing to use unisex bathrooms all of the time.

However, the concerns listed under this theme mostly focused on task cohesion, though men noted that issues could influence unit cohesion as well. For example, one man commented, “I look at it from the security standpoint and the effects that it [integration] will have on the team, not just emotionally but physically and it could possibly [be a] catastrophic in a mission.”

### *Interactions with Indigenous Populations*

The focus groups and surveys consistently presented the notion that the presence of females would change interactions with indigenous populations. These could be both positive and negative:

- Females could help get information from females and children
- Females may undermine the authority of their male ODA counterparts
- Gender is a bigger issue to overcome than race when working with indigenous populations

Most of these themes were presented as both positive and negative. SF professionals believed that in some contexts females would have a difficult time interacting with indigenous populations while in other contexts females might actually have an easier time accomplishing goals. For example, a female soldier in Afghanistan might be able to obtain more information from indigenous females in an interrogation, but that same soldier in Afghanistan might have indigenous males refuse to speak to her directly. SF soldiers also suggested that indigenous populations might refuse to work with an SF ODA if there was a female treated equally on the team or if male SF soldiers were seen to be taking orders from a female.

“If I go into an environment where that is [working with indigenous forces] my core function and that culture has no respect for women, I've cut my feet out from under me before I've even begun the mission.”

“I can't go to a tribal leader and say, sir I know what your perceptions are but they're just here to help. They're not—but if I tell him she's a member of my detachment, she is Special Forces, she is a Green Beret, she is equal to me, I may lose respect immediately.”

When comparing this to racial tensions Black or Latino soldiers may face down range, members of the focus group regularly responded that gender is similar, but different. We often heard responses similar to the one presented here, “A lot of times it's a building of trust with him, and that person has to develop his own rapport with the local nationals. But as a leader you minimize the impact of that individual. And race certainly plays a part but I think gender is even greater with a lot of the countries that we've been to in the Middle East.”

Other SF soldiers spoke more explicitly about the benefits of having female soldiers down range:

“On certain missions where I needed to engage either a female populous, children, certain things like that—as an enabler they're great and only on those certain niche, but I didn't need a constant presence of a female because I didn't have a mission set where I needed to have that constant engagement with that—with either the female population or children.”

“A crucial enabler? Absolutely. And there were certain missions that I went on that female enablers were probably the decisive part of my operation because they can get information that I could not. Would I want them living with me on a firebase in a village of tribal Afghans that I'm training to be a village defense force that have no respect for females? Absolutely not.”

The survey results support the perspective that gender influences male and female interactions with indigenous populations—males report that their gender has a positive impact on interactions with indigenous males, but less positive on interactions with females. Females, on the other hand, report less positive interactions with indigenous males than females and children, but the interactions with males were not so clearly negative as male soldiers had believed in the focus groups. Indeed, only 9 percent of females reported somewhat or mostly negative interactions with local males.

Although male SF operators can certainly imagine contexts in which female soldiers could detract from task cohesion they can also imagine, and document, situations where the race of a soldier or the personality of a soldier made it difficult for a SF team to interact with an indigenous population. The need for interactions with indigenous populations may determine when and where female SF operators might be deployed, but it is not an absolute barrier to SF integration.

### *Gendered Cultural Assumptions*

Many of the cultural assumptions raised in the SF focus groups revolved around male and female stereotypes about emotions and sexual relations. These stereotypes focused around three main themes:

- Females are more emotional or less rational than males



- Males will instinctually want to protect females
- The hyper-sexuality of male SF soldiers would make integration problematic

Male SF participants suggested that one way or another the “more emotional” nature of females has caused problems for their units in the past and would cause a multitude of problems if integration occurred. A number of participants pointed to past experiences working with females, noting for example, “I’ve never not worked around a female where emotions and hormones have not been involved or take some type of a toll on the work every time.” Participants suggested a fundamental difference exists between how males and females process information or react emotionally.

“But there's chicks that—I mean, they're more physically fit than us but they don't have that mindset.”

“I specifically remember three—one being the class crying, wrong place, wrong time, and like—I mean if emotions is a common issues with females—I think we can all agree it's slightly different than males. And that's unprofessional. That's a distraction. I don't know if you can afford that.”

“One of my concerns is that in these split second scenarios where you have to make a decision, you have to make it quick, and you have to act on it where they're trying to—they're indecisive and they're trying to process multiple things, connecting to it emotionally, and then freezing. I think that there's a huge potential for that. This is just talking strictly about how men and women think and process information.”

Although male participants typically discussed females’ emotions as problematic, they did acknowledge that *they may* be swayed by their own emotions to react protectively towards females in their units.

“I'm going to protect her at all costs like you would do with your own daughter and that starts going through the train of thought instead of the twelve guys that are hitting that objective.”

“I mean not to be chauvinistic but I think there's like an evolutionary digression when you get into a situation where females almost look for protection from a man. I don't mean to sound caveman or anything like that.”

Male soldiers also discussed the heterosexual tensions males and females may face working together, specifically noting that SF operators have a reputation of being hypersexual, and that may interfere with integration. They discussed the difficulty females may have resisting or controlling their own desire for their ODAs. Males also suggested that female soldiers may use their sexuality to manipulate male soldiers that are part of their ODA, or that competitive tension may arise between two or more male operators on an ODA vying for the attention of a female colleague.

Overall male operators presented a number of stereotypes of both males and females based on traditional norms and assumptions about emotions and sexuality. It was clear that few males had meaningful or prolonged experiences working with female professional equals and often referenced sexual or romantic partners or children when illustrating their examples.

### *Home Life Concerns*

Male SF operators consistently discussed concerns about home life and family issues with the potential integration of females onto their ODAs. Themes that fell into this general category include:

- Potential strain on marriages or home-life
- Concern for the emotional bonds between female and male operators
- Concern around how spouses would react to frequent deployments with female operators

There was concern regarding jealousy, and the general strain having mixed sex teams may have on a marriage. One operator noted, “The art of war strikes really, really hard because it's very demanding of our wives to have us be gone so much and be put in harm's way. That's a fact of the matter. You put this into the equation where then now she's going to be worried about what you're doing on your on-duty hours because females get jealous about stuff like that.”

Some operators noted that the stress of potential jealousy and worry was not unidirectional, noting that they would have concerns about husbands being a part of their wives' networks while they were deployed, “Now you have eleven guys and one female who are back in the rear and you have eleven wives and one husband who are back in the rear. It's a two-way street too. A lot of guys like [he] said might not have the most secure relationship. Some guys would be concerned now if you threw another male who's interacting like that, like the wives who interact, getting together, whatever. That's another concern that the guys on the team have when they're down and working that wouldn't normally exist as well outside.”

There was also a specific concern not just about infidelity between male and female soldiers while deployed or working closely together, but for the close non-sexual emotional bonds that SF operators have with each other. Participants discussed the strain that arises in their marriages resulting from the emotional intimacy forged among their team. While this already can create additional strain in a marriage, males emphasized that wives and girlfriends might not be able to understand or handle similar non-sexual emotional bonds with female colleagues.

SF soldiers generally noted the high divorce rates within their ranks, and the impact high stress, multiple deployment careers have on their families. The integration of female SF soldiers would be another potential area of stress for them to navigate with their families.

## *Physicality*

SF soldiers consistently brought up physical standards during the focus groups. However, their arguments were more nuanced than a general feeling that females were unable to meet the standards as they are currently assessed during assessment and selection or the Q-Course. Within this theme they discussed the following:

- The physical differences between males and females
- Acknowledgement that some females may be up to the physical standards, but it still may not be worth it to integrate them into the force
- Fear that if females are passing the physical standards, it means that the physical standards have been lowered to allow them to pass
- Fear that the current physical standards in assessment and selection and the Q-Course are too low for the rigors of the job

There was concern that females and males have biological differences that would make it difficult for females to serve as SF operators. In particular male soldiers were concerned about females carrying the weight of rucksacks and the strain on female bodies over time. “But to carry the kind of loads that we were carrying, I think in some of the operations early on in Iraq in particular where it was—we were up in the north humping through the mountains up there, carrying the kind of equipment we were, I think there's very, very few females who would be able to carry that kind of load.”

While some men acknowledged that some females could pass the physical standards, they discussed the cost outweighing the potential benefits of integration. “I mean, there's a lot of women that can meet those same standards and wouldn't have to compromise that. But to what end? I mean, we're creating—we're creating equality not for the betterment of the unit. We're creating it for the betterment of an individual. And that's not what the military, the army's about.”

The largest, and most consistent, concern males presented was a fear that if females were passing the physical standards, it would be evidence that the standards had been lowered to meet quotas, or an clear indication that “politics” forced female integration to occur. Many of the male soldiers did not trust that physical standards would remain the same. Some soldiers also presented a fear that they would know that the standards would change, and they would have to adjust their behavior, “If I had a woman on my detachment that I didn't feel confident in physically—I'm saying if they lowered the standards—I might have selectively put people on missions based on other factors that might not be the most efficient.”

The discussion of physicality was more complex than a general fear that females cannot handle the rigors of SF operations. There was little organizational trust that the Army would keep physical standards as high as they currently are, and fear that the lower physical standards would mean not only females integrating into SF, but an increase in unqualified males as well.

### *Misinformation*

Male participants discussed significant misinformation as well as contradictory information based on rumor, perceived Army policy, or problematic Sexual Harassment Assault Rape Prevention (SHARP) training. These themes included:

- Lack of, or contradictory, information regarding females in the military
- Fear of interacting with females based on SHARP training

In particular, there is a lack of information about what females need (medically) and what the Army requires for females deployed on active duty.

“You put a man into that situation he can go without showering, he can go without any type of maintenance, for lack of better terms, for weeks on end. We did it. I didn't take a shower for a month.”

“But the point is there's certain things a woman's body does that has to be attended to every so often. If not, it could have detrimental effects on her.”

“It's—yeast infections and other things happen. Yeah there's a reason that women need to shower and take care of hygiene on a regular basis.”

Male participants pointed to Army policy, generally, and their “knowledge” of females’ medical needs to justify different expectations and requirements for females.

Male participants also discussed a general fear of interacting with females because of the training they received with regard to sexual harassment and assault. There is a fear that they could be reported for a joke or comment and have their entire career ruined. Multiple male participants said that it was safer to avoid females all together given what the Army is going through with regard to sexual harassment and assault. There was also a general fear that females could use the threat of reporting a male to manipulate the system, get her way, or make her life easier. There was a general consensus that once reported, men were guilty until proven innocent and there could be detrimental impacts on a career regardless of outcome from a report. SF males exhibited a true fear of interacting with females, and belief that females cannot take a joke or may report a male colleague for any misstep in speech.

### *Communication*

Current SF Operators discussed a number of themes related to communication. Males discussed their current lack of understanding of the purpose of gender integration, while others focused on a fear of future changes within the organization. These include:

- No clear understanding of the reasons gender integration may take place
- Lack of trust in SF leadership – even if they say standards won't change, they will

There was a general discussion that integration was largely a “political” issue that soldiers did not agree with. There was a lack of communication to the SF operators regarding how they might benefit from having females on their ODAs. Some viewed the potential integration of females as an intrusion by political overseers, or at least something that has not been thoroughly explained by their superiors. For example, one SF operator noted,

“In a male politically driven environment we do have civilian masters and that's what we're all afraid of. And I realize having that separate female capability doesn't have to be mutually exclusive. It doesn't have to exist to the exclusion of the females in the 18 Series. But I just think you have such a limited talent pool of females that were able to get into the 18 Series that you would almost do better to exclude fewer of these volunteers who are probably great soldiers and put most of them if not all of them into this other capability.”

In addition to a general discussion of lack of transparent communication and reasoning behind integration, many of the males did not trust communication from the organization regarding standards. There was a fear that if females were allowed to enter Special Forces that standards in the Assessment and Selection and Q-Course would be lowered to make the Army “look good.” For example, one participant noted that even if he was told that standards did not change he would not believe that females made it through,

“If there's a high attrition rate—let's say the first five females come through and all five of them pass. In my mind, either they're all shit hot which probably [is] not likely or we lowered the standard to benefit their success.”

There is also a general fear that even if they are told the standard will not be lowered, after a lack of success the Army may lower standards. For example,

“I think the big fear is that females will not meet the same standards and we will have to change the standard.”

Generally, there was a lack of trust from most of the males we spoke with regarding how the Army will communicate with them.

### *Culture of Team Room/ODA*

The culture of an ODA, and an ODA Team Room, is unique to each ODA. However, the culture is typically exemplified by a strong emotional bonding among members of the team, such that members of the team believe that they can behave and speak to each other in ways that would be unacceptable to outsiders. The strength of this culture for each team is in reality the extent of unit cohesion for the team. We identified a few items of note related to this theme:

- Unit Cohesion is partly created by an nonrestrictive team culture

- Female presence may threaten cohesion by limiting behavior within the team

Based on the focus groups and our observations of interactions between SF soldiers, especially those focus groups composed of members of a single ODA, we suggest that the culture of the ODA is best exemplified by an ODA Team Room. Each ODA has a Team Room at the Fort where it is headquartered and the ODAs establish a Team Room when deployed if the facilities are available. When not deployed, the Team Room is where the ODA stores all of its materials, conducts training, plans missions and spends most of its time. In the Team Room members suggest that ‘anything goes’ and outsiders are not generally welcome. The ODA essentially constructs its own Team Room and, in reality, constructs the culture of the ODA in the Team Room. Indeed, much of a unit’s cohesion is constructed in the Team Room.

In the Team Room, rank is largely irrelevant if a team member needs “personality adjustment” from other members and any type of slang, profanity, sexual references, racial or ethnic epithet, and the like are fair game and not to leave the room. Through the exchange of insults and socially unacceptable language the team strengthens its bonds and builds cohesion. Not all members of the team participate in in these exchanges, but they must accept them or risk being pushed away from the group; as noted by one SF male “there is a circle of sameness” that members must stay within or risk being pushed from the team.

Much of this Team Room behavior and banter is based on a fairly narrowly male-defined masculinity that is potentially threatened by a female on the team that is not willing to participate in the behavior to the same degree. Having a female present also takes the “safeness” of the Team Room away for males seeking to define masculinity in particular ways. Indeed, some of the banter and behavior of the Team Room would likely be defined as sexual harassment based on current policy.

But the threat to Team Room culture by the presence of females is simply assumed by SF males, and by no means certain. Based on our observations SF males had limited experience in trying to build cohesion with females in the same manner they build cohesion within a team, and therefore appear to unrealistically underestimate the potential for doing so.

### *Rejection of Outsiders (Enablers)*

Because SF is an elite force with a storied history, SF soldiers tend to draw a clear line between themselves and those who are not part of SF. This theme has two main components:

- SF teams tend to reject outsiders, male or female, and/or believe that most of them are not very good at their jobs
- SF soldiers would prefer to have females contribute in enabling positions or as separate, wholly female SF teams.

In the focus groups and survey results we observed that SF soldiers consistently report that most non-SF soldiers they have worked with down range do not mesh well with the SF team and/or do

not adequately contribute to the mission. This was true for females and males, and irrespective of the enabling function (e.g. MISO, CA, or combat support enablers). SF operators were not uniquely opposed to working with females, but instead had negative views of most outsiders they worked with regardless of sex.

In the infrequent situations that SF respondents recalled where female soldiers performed at an appropriate level, the discussion of female SF operators tended to drift towards a notion that females would either continue to operate as ODA enablers that were not part of the ODA or females would operate on a separate all-female ODA. A few quotes illustrate these points (*italics added*):

“My fear, where I think somebody that could be a potential degrading of the force is that if you do have these women that are doing this and then they're just, okay you're going to go to this team that's still the wrong answer. Don't make them do our standards. *Scale it to something that's equally as tough for the women through their own pipeline, and again make them very specialized and unique.*”

“If I have an amazing *talent pool in the army of women that I want to use for certain things* do I also want to limit that talent pool by who can also pass Green Beret standards?”

“Bottom line, okay even if I have the most physically fit female that can outperform or perform as well as any of my male soldiers and I have the most professional detachments out there so there's no impropriety or anything like that and everybody—there's no disruption to the ODA, the cohesiveness, or the—and we're still able to accomplish the mission. *What do I gain by having the female on the detachment versus having a female within the unit itself that I can specifically—mission requirement?*”

“So if I feel that I can only accomplish my task by having pack mules then I'll do everything I can to implement pack mules physically into my detachment and its equipment. If there's a specific mission that requires a female, because of her gender, then I will go out and seek gaining that female on certain missions where I needed to engage either a female populous, children, certain things like that. *As an enabler they're great and only on those certain niche.* But I didn't need a constant presence of a female because I didn't have a mission set where I needed to have that constant engagement with that—with either the female population or children.”

## Findings: Female Focus Groups

Table 2: Special Operations Female Focus Group Findings

Themes	General Cohesion	Personal Costs
Logistics Down Range	X	
Indigenous Populations	X	
Team Dynamics	X	
Physicality	X	
Social Isolation	X	
Professionalism	X	
Social Reputation		X
Family Concerns		X
Career Development		X

### Female Focus Group Results

#### *Logistics Downrange*

In stark contrast to males, females did not view hygiene issues as major impediments to their ability to perform down range. However, similar to males, females expressed confusion about the policies that regulate hygiene. We identified a few items of note related to this theme:

- Females address biological facts of womanhood, specifically menstruation, as a routine aspect of womanhood rather than an obstacle to their ability to perform their jobs
- Females pointed to the policies regulating hygiene as a barrier because they exacerbate males' perceptions that females receive special treatment

Among the female focus groups, the majority of participants expressed frustration and confusion regarding the policies governing hygiene. Illustrating the point, one female commented,

“The issue is the army has created all these regulations. I mean there's a set time that females can be in the field because—especially for menstruating, that we need to have access to being clean.”

Females identified hygiene policies as a barrier to their acceptance among their male peers because the policies have been interpreted to mean that females receive “special privileges” that are not afforded their male counterparts.

Another female noted that the interpretation of the policy is the underlying problem, rather than the policy itself.

“And when you read the regulation what it actually says—because I've done this—the regulation says you have to provide them the opportunity to perform hygiene. It does not



specify shower versus baby wipes. And it says in a private area. And it doesn't specify what private area consists of.”

The interpretation of hygiene policies was frequently met with humor among females who regard menstruation as a routine part of female existence that does not warrant special accommodations, nor does it impede their ability to successfully perform their job responsibilities. For example, one respondent talked about her team leader’s approach to hygiene.

“And that was actually a very big question that I had from team leaders, what do you need? I was like, uh nothing, I can handle myself. I've done this since I was sixteen—it's kind of part of my normal life, it happens.”

The hygiene policies (whether stated or interpreted) that require special accommodations for females exasperates underlying preconceived beliefs that females are biologically less equipped to perform certain jobs, use hygiene to shirk their job responsibilities, and are responsible for the adoption of costly and inefficient facilities. However, the results of the focus groups indicate that females do not believe these hygiene accommodations are necessary. Moreover, the majority of females were supportive of using gender neutral bathing facilities, which would eliminate several additional logistic challenges they experience (such as added time constraints) by having to use separate facilities that are often impractically located.

### *Indigenous Populations*

A common concern expressed by male SF professionals was females’ perceived inability to work with indigenous populations in male-dominated societies. This particular concern cannot be fully assessed because females have not served on ODAs. However, females have been deployed to male dominated nations and have experience working in these environments. Rather than being uniformly excluded, the majority of females reported positive experiences working in male-dominated societies where they were able to successfully execute their tasks. The results of the focus groups and survey illuminated four particularly salient findings that indicate the relationship between military professionals and indigenous populations is more nuanced:

- Females are often perceived as a “third gender” in male dominated societies
- Females have successfully worked with indigenous populations
- Sex is often a contentious factor for females working with American male military personnel compared to indigenous populations
- Females frequently bring a different perspective to working with indigenous populations

Regardless of location, personal identity—and the identity ascribed to a person by others—factors largely into the social organization of a society. Sex is a significant aspect of identity that is universally used to categorize people and define their role in society. In male dominated societies, sex is the primary factor that is used to assign power and rights to an individual. Consequently, based on their experiences working with indigenous populations in patriarchal societies, many male SF professionals were skeptical of female military members’ ability to

operate in these nations.

However, the focus groups and survey responses indicated that sex was not a significant factor when it came to indigenous peoples' perception of American females. Females reported that indigenous populations viewed their identity as an American soldier as the most salient aspect of their identity. Females discussed being treated as a "third gender" in male dominated societies. In other words, locals do not view American females as equivalent to indigenous females, which creates an opportunity for female military professionals to operate in patriarchal societies.

Locals often view American females as a special category that falls along a continuum ranging from indigenous male to indigenous female. Both American male and female military personnel are situated along this continuum and viewed as "outsiders" based on their identity as Americans and military professionals. These two aspects of identity are often the most salient to indigenous populations followed by other identifying traits, namely sex, race and ethnicity. These quotes are representative of the experiences reported by female focus group members working in patriarchal societies:

"I expected when I was working with the Bahraini military that they would not want to work with me or [solely] work with male counterparts and ask them questions. I found none of that. I actually was really surprised that they seemed able to compartmentalize like, okay this is an American military female. She's not one of our females. And they interacted with me and were very professional."

"In Afghanistan they had an expectation for their local women but they kind of—they knew we were different. And they just kind of put us in a different category of—they know we're not going to do things the way they do it."

"It was amazing to me. You go in thinking it's so conservative and that they're not going to like me. But I think my interactions with the Afghans were a lot more positive than any other relationships or interactions that I had with the American men that I worked with. They were just so much more accepting of me."

"Interacting with locals is great. They are so fascinated by either the fact that my physical stature is very tall for a woman... Little kids are more receptive to you too, especially. But I've never had a negative experience with a local. I've had guys treat you a lot differently. I've also had people treat you as an equal. It just is really depending. They don't quite consider us the same as their females. We're just some other category of the unknown."

"I was like, wow okay this is going to be a huge challenge because they don't view women the same. But then at the same time you wear this uniform and then it actually makes you significantly different... I've learned on my own also is they do look at you like a different gender. It is truly not like a female that they understand. So when they talk to you it's approaching a completely different species. So I had the benefit of being able to talk on not necessarily the same playing field but a different playing field... So I

was able to actually engage in conversations with Afghan men.”

“If we wear a headscarf they're like, oh that's nice. They're trying to be sensitive to our culture. And so they appreciate it, but they don't have the same expectations for us as they do for their women. They know we don't play by the same rules and so...if we have our own rules it's okay.”

Somebody at one point described us as like a third gender. And I actually feel like that was kind of accurate. We're not an Afghan woman, we're not an Afghan man. We're American woman. It's like you're kind of in the middle...Once they figure out that you're not an American man, because you kind of look like one when you've got [equipment/uniform] on, then they're usually fairly willing to talk to you, depending on the security situation there. The local people are actually pretty accepting, much more surprising than I thought.”

Females overwhelmingly discussed positive experiences working in patriarchal societies and male-dominated communities. In contrast, females frequently discussed that their sex was far more salient to their interactions with American male colleagues, which is exemplified in the following five quotes:

“Depending on what elements we're attached to, it's hit or miss. But sometimes in our own command, it's harder to work with our own team sometimes than even working with outside elements or—the easiest probably is working with people in other nations.”

“I'm not an officer first. I'm a woman first. And I've accepted that. And I have to be able to work with that and see that the men, especially American men, see me as a woman first no matter what. No matter what I do. No matter what I accomplish. I've never been so aware of my gender as I have been in this [profession].”

“We're always referred to as the female something. It's never, hey the medic or the CA NCO or the team leader. It's the female.”

“If you take the more—a role that's more subservient or working at a lower level I think that men are receptive to it. But as soon as you take on a position that is on equal footing with a male and you have that competition it's not received very well. You're labeled as a bitch.”

“[Y]ou're aggressive no matter what you do to try to smooth it over. So it's a really interesting dynamic and that's not going to go away. I think it works out fine as long as you work within the parameters of knowing I can't send an email worded this way because I'm a woman and it'll threaten them.”

Alongside females' negative experiences working with male colleagues, many positive experiences were discussed as well. Many examples of success were born from the different

perspectives female professionals added to the mission that resulted in successful experiences for their male colleagues. The following quotes explain how the presence of females on a mission added a different dimension that was beneficial:

“I think one of the threads for success is leveraging your gender as a tool to gain access or to get ALP to do what you want them to do. And if people treat you differently because of it, it's about viewing that as new options for how you can operate within a given space. Once the teams understand that too, then they can really begin to understand how to utilize you more.”

“They could talk to us [being a non-Afghan female]. It was safe, it was allowed. So that was great. And the interesting part was there were a couple who would threaten us. They would say, I'm going to kill you. But you could trace that back to where they were hearing it from and that helped to vet out our white/gray list for the team so that they were able to go engage and figure out where our targets were in that village or where people could be coopted who weren't supportive of the team, the mission, the government and all that.”

“And how they interacted or perceived my partner and I was an indicator of what their belief system was, or what their internal beliefs were as opposed to maybe what they were projecting. And that was useful to the team.”

“Sometimes the Rangers would have disagreements with the Afghan men and you can kind of defuse that because you can liaise sort of between—I found that I was able to do that sometimes.”

“The villagers had said when we hear the helicopters they're coming to kill us, you're coming to kill us. Originally they had thought the helicopters meant—because they were told when Americans come they're coming to kill you and rape the women. When they see the American men coming, they get scared because they're afraid there's going to be violence. But when they see that the women are with them, they're not afraid because that means they want to talk. So whether true or not true, I learned that our presence with the team softened their appearance, and as a result we didn't have to be aggressive sometimes.”

“They [indigenous population] will kind of open up a little more to us. And so the guys took advantage of that to verify or just check on their information they were getting.”

“I was always pretty accepted by all three provinces that I went to. In Zabul it's very conservative. And what I loved about there is every time I talked to a woman she lit up—because in the village I worked out of they weren't allowed out of their homes. So if I found women, they were rushing out to clean their babies or something in the river [to talk to the female soldiers].”

“Different-just a whole different thing than with men- we're more personable. We [women] bring a whole-I think we bring a whole different aspect to the whole mission.”

### *Team Dynamics*

The focus group discussions highlighted the complex and nuanced development of team dynamics, which occurs regardless of working with exclusively female teams or gender integrated teams. Certain aspects of team dynamics are cultivated by leadership (or lack thereof), and respect born out of professional competency. Other aspects of team dynamics are driven by factors that cannot be dealt with ahead of time because they are based on individual personalities.

Team leadership has a significant role in either hindering or fostering positive team dynamics. Many females recounted experiences where the leadership was the determining factor in their acceptance. As one female explained, “the team leader treated us like adults. We weren't micromanaged like the first team. We both went on missions. The team was a lot more accepting of us because of how the leadership acted.”

Other focus group participants explained that their success was underscored by the influence of positive leadership.

“It was the team sergeant. The team sergeant trusted myself and my partner enough that we were able to make our own ConOps for CST patrols and lead the patrols basically with their ODA team members on the patrol and infantry there. And that set us up for the next team that came in. We were able to immediately say, hey this is what we're been doing with the last team. And since we had the buy-in from the previous team, the new team immediately said, okay go ahead and continue doing what you're doing. It was like, this is how they run, they are competent, they can lead patrols. So I had a decent experience with most of the teams that I worked with.”

“They [5<sup>th</sup> group team] were professionals, they were open minded. They changed my mind about SF.”

However, many positive experiences discussed by females initially started out with difficulty. These negative encounters resulted from their sex and in many instances it resulted from females' position as outsiders to ODAs.

“When my partner and I got to our site, the team sergeant said he didn't want us there for personal reasons. He was an older guy and he was kind of like, I think this program's crap and I don't want you guys here. We're in security phase, we don't need you.” However, these initial misgivings frequently gave way as females performed their jobs. “The lesson I got out of it was competency doesn't really know a gender. If you do your job the way you're supposed to, a man or a woman can't say, well you can't be here because of your gender.”

“I don't just say as a woman, as a CST, but all the enablers are outsiders in that organization... You're all kind of in the same boat with you being initially the red-headed stepchild. You are the really weird enabler because you're a girl. But then at the end of the day you're kind of an enabler and you're an outsider. And these guys they're brothers and they're family; there are times that you feel like you're part of the family and there are other times you remember you're like the adopted member of the family.”

“It started out where the team did not want us there and it changed afterwards. When we got to our site we knew that the team didn't want us. They had told us via email and through their higher commander that they didn't want us. It wasn't a female reason. It was, we don't have room for your mission set here. And they didn't perceive that they did. So that was an honest assessment on their part. Within the first three days we arrived at the site we were out on that airfield doing movement to contact drills just me and my partner. And everyone from the infantry squad was there, half the team was up there, and they were just watching us. So there's a pressure-packed situation where if you know you perform you have now gained their acceptance not as females but as team members. So it's a little different for each team how they choose to initiate you, and recognizing that as a woman and saying okay well we'll just cross this hurdle and then deal with the rest of it later.”

Conversely, negative experiences were also attributed to leadership. For example, one female worked with three different teams. Her experience with the second team was the least productive, which she attributed to the differences in leadership between the groups. “The second group I was with, they were a little rough and tumble. The leadership didn't really have control over them. They were more spontaneous on missions and they had what seemed like lucky successes but maybe not. Behind the scenes they were all a little haphazard and there was infighting among the guys. And I actually didn't get along as well with that team. But I think it was because the leadership just didn't have like control. They were like cats.”

Gender stereotypes held by colleagues were also a significant factor in the type of team dynamic that develops. These stereotypes can lead to feelings of protectiveness over females. For example, one female explained why the team leader did not want her working on the team. “He had never worked with females before... But more than anything he was like, I don't know what would happen if something happened to you guys because I have a 14-year-old who looks like you. It's hard for me, you know.”

Other stereotypes about behavioral norms held by both males and females can lead to negativity as exemplified in the following two quotes.

“When you're among females you're allowed to be anywhere from timid or super characteristically girly traits or whatever if you will, to more aggressive. But if you get too much on this side you're automatically labeled a bitch by males and females alike.”

“I have a very unique background where I went to a vocational school. So I've always

been the only female, whether it be gym class or I was a welder for four years. So that to me I was in my prime...But when I got into a situation where I was all males I discovered that there's a lot of men that weren't—or men that I operated with that weren't used to a personality of a strong woman, of a woman that could hang with the guys. But my best friend is a man. And I was in my comfort zone. But it's amazing sometimes that men that aren't used to that type of female, how it changes their personality—and that was something that I had to overcome, was realizing that these men that I worked with weren't ready to handle not only a female on their team, but even an aggressive or sometimes a capable female.”

Gender stereotypes also limited the contribution females were able to make to the mission, regardless of the expertise they possessed in additional areas such as mechanical or medical skills. Females explained that they continuously felt pressure to be hyper-competent to counter the preconceived belief that all females were incompetent. “[You’ve] got this huge pressure on your back because you're like, oh my gosh, if I don't do this perfect it's not just on me, it's on all of women kind.”

Group dynamic were frequently attributed to the particular personalities of both male and female professionals, which is demonstrated in the following quotes.

“The first unit I was with they were very straight-laced and very serious and stoic. And then when you get to know them they loosen up. You go play sports and you can joke with them...And then the third team I was with they were really laid back and a little doughy and happy and family oriented and pretty competent. And I liked them the best, in terms of integrating as an enabler.”

“I was with four different teams in three different regions so I got to see a variety within task force. Different battalions have different personalities. And it was interesting seeing how leadership is different...Seeing the different groups of guys within task force, seeing how their culture is a little bit different, that was interesting. And then as soon as you get used to one group of guys and you develop rapport with them, you have a really good working relationship with them... [the] next group of guys comes in three months later and you have to prove yourself all over again.”

“Some women approach situations that are male dominated differently and have better success or worse for that approach—and it's probably not something we can pin down to experiences in the army, but rather probably growing up and what environment you came from and what you enjoy doing, what your group of friends look like.”

“One of the first things that I did when I did meet the team was I said I don't give a crap if you walk around naked, hey that's on you. But I will judge you. I mean, if you're fat, I'm going to tell you, you shouldn't be walking around naked. That's just the way it is. I'm going to be honest...Don't do anything special for me. I'm just here doing my thing. Just be willing to be judged. That's it. And immediately they were like sweet, cool. And

they did—some of them walked around butt-assed naked. I did not give a shit.”

“I think it is different for every girl though. You can't just say this is the way you should act in a male environment. Everyone's going to be different with how they integrate.”

The focus groups also indicated that in-group jealousy, fraternization, and toxic team dynamics occur among female teams, males teams, and integrated teams. These factors negatively impact any team and need to be guarded against regardless of the sex composition of a team. Females overwhelmingly attributed many of these issues to a lack of maturity in younger military professionals, and a lack of training/professionalism. Although SF professionals are not immune to these issues, their extensive training, professionalism and higher level of maturity will likely dampen the impact of these factors if gender integration occurs.

### *Physicality*

Similar to male focus groups, physicality was commonly discussed among female focus groups. Females did not hold naïve views of the selection process, “There's not going to be many females that can reach that physical standard.” However, they also noted that, “there are just as many guys that can't meet that physical standard.”

Females expressed the importance of maintaining standards, avoiding quotas, and training “up” potential females who wanted to try out for selection. Implementing quotas was viewed as a guaranteed formula for short-term and long-term failure for integration. The following quotes represent this frequent discussion point.

“I think when this actually happens that's one of the most important things that the standards have to be the same. No matter if zero females get in from the first year because nobody can physically pass it. Well that's just—that's because these standards are set for a reason. It's why they're standards.”

“I think we all said this one earlier but it's the most important one and I'm going to say it again, maintain the same standards.”

“I think one of my biggest fears is implementing the program very quickly—and it's something we saw in the CST program for those of us who were in the very early phases. It was, get this many women. Just make it happen. And because of that the standards—it's not that the standards dropped, it's that they didn't exist. It was, this is the number and if we have to graduate more people we'll just graduate them.”

Current training practices were viewed as a disadvantage for females down range because they are not receiving similar levels of training as their male counterparts. Yet, females are often blamed for their lack of training even though the training options have not been available to them. Focus group respondents lamented the fact that females needed “better training” because “it mentally prepares the girls for the same thing, and [to] handle different tactical questions.”



Training was repeatedly touted as an important aspect of integration. “That pre-mission train-up is, I think, crucial to really the full integration. Just that train-up beforehand. They know you and that family whole mentality. I think that is key.”

Physicality is one issue where males and females had a shared belief in the importance of maintaining standards in selection process. If gender integration occurs in SF, the results of the focus groups underscore the importance of allowing this process to occur organically rather than relying on quotas. Formal and informal paths of recruitment were also identified as important aspects of integration. Females need be recruited to SF in the same way current SF professionals are recruited, and they need to receive opportunities for training to help close the gap between male and female preparation.

### *Social Isolation*

Social isolation is often an obstacle for females while deployed. Females explained that they faced unique risks if they attempted to integrate with their all male teams. Social isolation heightened their belief that they needed to constantly prove themselves, “You can only assume that you're constantly being judged.” Establishing their competency sometimes eased their isolation from their group, and at other times it did not mitigate social integration. The following quotes demonstrate the social isolation females experience as well as the trade-offs they make when trying to foster social interactions with their male colleagues.

“It [working with ODAs] is miserable. Because you're alone.”

“You kind of have to either—you have to segregate yourself completely or you have to integrate yourself and be very careful. When I say a fine line—I mean it's—it's almost nerve-wracking. You actually just want to be left alone because you can't just be friends like my counterpart, everybody is a male. I have no other females. So I'm just sitting here like, okay what do I do? If I go and run with this guy then I must be sleeping with him. Or I mean it's just—it's so nerve-wracking. So you spend a lot of time alone.”

“[Isolation or social engagement] Either way it comes at a cost.”

“Right. There's always a price to pay.”

“The isolation, I didn't experience that, but it came at a risk. And it did come at a risk of gossip and I had to be extremely cautious...And even then you'd have to be like, okay there's a rumor there. I have to make sure I don't feed into this. I've got to make sure that there's a whole squad in the room if I'm going to go hang out and play this or do that.”

Social isolation was closely related to reputational concerns for females. Although SF professionals also discussed reputational concerns, particularly the need to continually “prove themselves,” their competency fostered group inclusion. Additionally, unlike females, males do not face the same gendered reputational concerns about their character, which can limit females’

ability to operate successfully in their jobs because it undermines their authority.

### *Professionalism*

The focus group participants overwhelmingly identified professionalism as an important aspect of their current job success and in relation to integrating females into SF. As one respondent noted, “At the end of the day if you're a professional because you do your job well then you've done your mission and nobody can say anything otherwise nor can they take that from you.”

Respondents believed that SF was “very professional,” particularly when compared to other groups of the Army. Professionalism was viewed as a key factor to successful integration that would help reduce several problems including fraternization on teams. As one female explained:

“You're training together. You know each other's families. You have respect for the spouses of the people you work for. The spouses know you; they're comfortable with the relationship because it's professional. Very much a family type of dynamic, but still very professional and understand there's certain lines that no one will ever cross. And if there's ever any indication that someone's not willing to hold that standard while deployed or maybe is pushing it, something needs to change on that team.”

Although professionalism (of both males and females) was pointed out as a foundational factor for females' current success, it is not a panacea for eliminating gender discrimination, which is exemplified by this respondent's experience.

“I'm professional. I knew my job. I already had my plans, I had my CAPE Brief, I had everything. I had all my gear set up. I mean, you name it. And they treated me—with my first site they treated me horrible. I'm talking like lesser human being, knocking my dinner out from like—I'm sitting here eating it—knocking it off the table and telling me, clean that shit up bitch. That's how I was spoken to. Just appalling. And so I feel like, yeah okay your projection and your attitude has a lot to do with it, but it's not just our minds that we need to change about how we're worth something and we need to project ourselves professionally and confident. It's—there's two pieces to the puzzle here. And they still treated me like awful...My detachment sergeant asked me every day—are you doing okay today? Do you want me to pull you out of there? And being a female I'm like, absolutely not. Nope. I will not complain, I will take this, I'm going to complete the mission--I'm going to do what you told me to come here to do.”

### *Social Reputation*

Unlike their male peers, gender stereotypes pose a unique barrier for females that manifests through social reputation. Stereotypical views of females, particularly females in positions of authority, are limiting. These stereotypes are amplified by the limited professional interactions many males have with females, and the sexual harassment/assault training everyone receives.

In most military work environments, females are a minority and therefore stand out similar to racial minorities.

“You're going to be noticed and praised for things that you're like, oh yeah I passed the PT test. You stand out and you're different. I mean, somebody would notice it if you had a big, I don't know, port wine stain on and you're like seven feet tall or any other physical thing that makes you look different from the people who you are in a group with.”

However, physical markers of difference are not inherently problematic. But for females, the barrier comes from the stereotypes that are attributed to these differences among their male peers. Particularly in terms of leadership styles. Females discussed the dichotomous characterization of their leadership styles, and the preconceived views their male peers had about their integrity, which is illustrated in the following quotes.

“I'm coming to you as a leader and I'm trying to give you advice and mentor you. And I expect that from my male counterparts as well. But it's hard for them because they see what I don't see [being a female] even though I look in the mirror every day before I go to work.”

“Being the only female a lot of times it just sucks because you're either the bitch or you're a whore.”

“You're either standoffish or a slut.”

“It's either you're a bitch or you're a slut.”

“You're a bitch or a whore. Those are your options.”

These limited perceptions of females—either working on a male dominated team or in a position of leadership—is complicated by fears that surround the current understanding of sexual harassment and sexual assault policy. Females discussed their discomfort with the training, which portrays them as “victims” and creates an environment where avoiding gender interaction is a preferred strategy among males to avoid sexual harassment allegations. Consequently, focus group respondents discussed how interactions between males and females have become more segregated and uncomfortable among all. Females also discussed how the training does not assist females who are experiencing sexual harassment; rather, it creates a culture of fear and tension between males and females as exemplified by the following quotes.

“I think it's further complicated by the way we view sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military. Not that we should tolerate it, but the SHARP program is so shoved down everyone's throat that it is a joke.”

“Oh they're [males] scared as hell.”

“Oh yeah, terrified.”

“It's almost like a dog reaction and not looking you in the eye. It comes from—they have been preached to—and they will tell you this.”

“Those are the only classes they get are females making these complaints and stuff like that.”

“All they [male personnel] have to go on at this point is those horror stories and those experiences, and then oh by the way don't say anything wrong or do anything wrong otherwise you're going to get burned.”

However, females also discussed that interacting with males often countered their fear of being subjected to false allegations of harassment as they had positive work experiences with females. Describing the reaction of one of her male colleagues, one respondent explained, “He was like, oh wow you're a lot easier to work with than I thought. I thought I was going to end up having [my] career ended if I talked to you.” She went on to say, “What the heck...[But] If you just hear horror stories.”

Another female explained the reaction of her male peers after working with her for an extended period of time, “They're shocked—I mean they are. I was there ten months and I didn't file a single EO complaint. Oh my God.” One respondent followed up this statement, “Right, exactly. Because that's the norm to them. That's what they think females do.”

As the above quotes illustrate, one of the more effective ways to counter dichotomous characterizations of females and assuage fears of sexual harassment allegations, is through professional interactions. Females discussed many situations where their male counterparts altered their preconceived notions of females, which led to positive work experiences for both sexes. However, tasking females with improving the onerous changes that need to occur for improved male-female interactions is neither practical nor fair.

### *Family Concerns*

Females discussed having thought through family planning and family concerns in their current roles within the military, and saw parallels to potential issues females may face if integrated into Special Forces. Specifically, females already put significant thought into timing of child bearing for deployment, how the military may respond to females who choose to have children, and the potential strain rigorous deployment schedules may have on their home lives.

Many of the females we spoke with discussed family planning as a decision they must manage alongside their career,

“It's a social thing because if you're in your early twenties you want to establish a career as a female. And then by the time you're in your thirties you're pretty well set in your

career. But that's also the time where you're probably starting to think about having a family. So it's just a decision that you have to make.”

This was seen as something Special Forces could handle in similar ways they manage males who temporarily may not be able to deploy, “You deal with it the same way you deal with a man who has a nine-month profile. And do they have men who have nine-month profiles? Absolutely, because they break their knees, hips, joints, whatever. It is a medical profile that says that they can't do certain things. It doesn't say that they can't come to work, they can't work and do their jobs. It doesn't say that they can't even be physical for a good portion of their pregnancies. I mean, not that everybody can do this, but I ran my entire pregnancy with my first child.”

Females discussed how their decision to have a child affected the way they thought about their role on their team,

“Being 8-1/2 months pregnant I'm kind of living it right now. In the beginning I did—I felt almost like I was letting my team down—because they—they're actually deployed. But I'm working as rear detachment, and I feel like I'm learning a lot more behind the curtain that is going to help me as I continue on in my career. So yeah, I feel bad I can't deploy, but that's not to say that that position was not filled by anybody else on that team. If it wasn't me staying back it would have been somebody else.”

Throughout the discussion females pointed to the significant time they invested in their careers. Many noted that they chose to go into Special Operations and take on additional training and rigorous work. Respondents did not want to throw away their years of training and preparation by poorly handled family planning or mistimed child bearing.

The females acknowledged the stereotypes and rumors that may come from the larger Army regarding females “using pregnancy” to avoid their work responsibilities and deployment. Females contended that although anecdotal examples may exist, these would not be the caliber of females that would pursue Special Forces. Yet, their male peers draw from these anecdotal examples to make judgments about all potential female SF applicants, “The population you're [SF] recruiting is different from the experience they [male SF professionals] had working with the big Army, but they're only basing the fears they have from the general population of the military.” Moreover, females noted that male SF professionals resist stereotypes coming out of the “big Army” regarding other males. In other words, SF professionals realize that individuals who want to pursue SF are already different compared to the majority of recruits in the larger Army. However, SF professionals are not willing to apply these same ideas to the unique pool of females who would be interested in Special Forces.

Females had thoughtful discussions about family planning and family concerns, but ultimately argued that it is a leadership issue. Command staff can opt to handle family planning and undeployable females the same way they handle undeployable males. Moreover, females pointed out the important role recruitment would have in identifying the right females to fill Special Forces. They noted that maturity and altruism are key traits and that many females already

possess these qualities, “The women that you see here that have been talking about their experiences, they have approached it not from a selfish perspective but of, oh no I’m not going to get this deployment.”

### *Career Development*

The females we spoke with were mostly already well advanced into their current MOSs and careers. They discussed career development within the military, generally, as well as Special Forces in particular. They acknowledged there are cultural and structural barriers to female advancement in the military currently. However, females we spoke with, felt as though they have individually carved out good paths for themselves in the military, but having the opportunity to try for Special Forces would open doors for females generally.

Females acknowledged that cultural expectations of the military might disadvantage them as they move up the ranks.

“If you choose to not have a family and then you get into those higher ranks you’re expected to have a family, like this magical family that you made while you were climbing that ladder. You’re not going to be in that position and not have a family because then you don’t understand everybody that works for you. But you can’t stop to have a family if you’re going to make it up that high. It’s totally Catch-22.”

Opening Special Forces to female integration would not completely change cultural dynamics of gender in the military, however, many of the females we spoke with saw the possibility of integration of females into Special Forces as a structural and cultural change that may help advance females.

When asked if this specific group of females would be interested in applying for Special Forces most responded that they would not be interested, and neither would the majority of females in the Army which is similar to the majority of males in the Army. However, many noted that if it were a possibility earlier in their career they definitely would have applied for it, but given how far advanced they are in their current MOSs, they would not sacrifice that to apply now. One female noted, “I’m very happy with my MOS I’m in now. But if you’re talking about additional schooling options, especially ones that open doors and career checks that people look when they meet you and they’re doing this to see what you’ve got on your uniform, oh yeah absolutely I’d like to go to Ranger school, but I only want to pass it if I’m really passing it.”

There was concern from females that if Special Forces was integrated they did not want standards lowered to allow females access. Instead, many of the females discussed the importance of keeping standards rigorous and allowing females to compete. Females currently discussed significant structural and cultural barriers to female success in the military that would not be completely removed by opening Special Forces to female integration; however, many agreed it would be a positive step.

## Conclusion

Focus groups with males and females revealed a number of specific themes regarding task and unit cohesion. These themes were reinforced with a systematic survey of active duty and National Guard Special Forces males and females in Special Operations. Although we observed overlap in the topics discussed by males and females, there were significant inconsistencies in the concerns raised by each group.

Throughout the focus groups and surveys, structural and cultural concerns to female integration surfaced. However, the vast majority of potential barriers to female integration, within the purview of this research, were grounded in gender stereotypes and misinformation. Although a few issues cannot be adequately analyzed due to an absence of existing data, the majority of barriers discussed by all focus groups lacked a truly compelling reason that females could not be integrated into Special Forces.

### *Current Issues Command Can Address*

Regardless of whether integration of females into Special Forces moves forward, there are issues that command should address which would enhance the integration of females into the military generally and combat units specifically.

- *Revise SHARP training.* Both females and males consistently pointed to SHARP as a source of tension within the military. As it is currently described, SHARP addresses both sexual harassment and sexual assault, conflating the causes and impacts of these two issues. Females discussed SHARP as problematic because it instills fear in their male colleagues. Males are hesitant to interact with females, view mixed sex units as a disruption to unit cohesion, males avoid potential career mentoring of females, and the training reinforces rather than dispels stereotypes. Males echoed these same concerns and discussed their fear of being the recipient of unfounded allegations because it would significantly derail their careers. SF males also noted that they have had few truly meaningful interactions with females during their professional lives, which has magnified many of their concerns and beliefs about the potential dangers of working with females.
- *Communication.* Both males and females identified misinformation regarding policies and the role of females within the military. The shortage of clear communication about why female integration may take place, and how it may benefit Special Forces should be rectified. Throughout the forces there is a need for clear and consistent information from command staff to frontline forces.
- *Leadership.* Both females and males discussed a need for leadership around issues of potential female integration into Special Forces. They focused specifically on how decisions should be made, and how implementation of decisions should take place. Enforcing strong norms of professionalism was also identified as a key factor—among SF males and females—that led to positive work environments. Conversely, the absence

of professionalism was identified as an important cause of “toxic” teams down range. There was a call for leadership to review and potentially revise policies regarding deployed females specifically with regard to facilities, logistics, and hygiene requirements. Leadership is also needed to consider how females may interact with indigenous populations, specifically which areas they may not be able to operate in effectively and how teams may prepare for potential female leadership in most areas of operation.

### *Complex Issues Leadership Will Have to Address if They Arise*

The potential integration of females into Special Forces is a complex process with a multitude of issues to address. There were also a few issues females and males in our study discussed that leadership may not be able to address preemptively, but will have to be aware of if integration moves forward.

- *Family and Home Life Concerns.* Most of the males discussed concerns their wives would have if females were integrated into their ODA. Females did not share this concern, noting that they already deal with concerns from the wives of their current male colleagues. They note that spousal concerns have not materialized into as significant of a problem as their colleagues initially thought it would be. However, among the Special Forces community, many unique factors create additional strain on family life. Gender integration could potentially pose another source of strain among the preexisting ones, and is an additional factor that leadership should be address throughout the integration process.
- *Integration into Team Room Dynamics.* Males expressed considerable concern that the integration of females into Special Forces would disrupt team room dynamics and in turn, the cohesion of their teams. The integration of females will likely change the culture of team rooms, but this may not necessarily result in diluting unit cohesion. As many SF males indicated, cohesion is often born out of “shared misery.” These experiences contribute to a “thick” cohesion and shared experiences are not gender specific but unit specific. However, leadership should be ready to address cultural shifts that result from female integration, and note that cultural shifts around team rooms may not necessarily be negative.



## **Appendix A: Settings and Methods**

### **Focus Groups**

We conducted 24 focus groups from October 2013 through February 2014; the groups had a total of 198 participants in the groups and the groups were conducted in the following locations: 5th Group at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky; Female Special Operations Enablers at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina; 10th Group at Ft. Carson, Colorado; and 1st Group at Ft. Lewis, Washington. Focus group sizes ranged from four to ten members. Additionally, three formal interviews and three informal interviews were conducted with administrative officers during this time frame. Additional unrecorded conversations occurred between members of the research team and soldiers in Special Operations throughout the visits to the Forts and these conversations informally influenced our analysis.

Most of the focus groups were divided by rank with enlisted soldiers, warrant officers, and commissioned officers in separate focus groups at each Fort. For example, E-4, E-5, and E-6s formed their own focus group. However, we also conducted focus groups with full ODAs (Operational Detachment Alpha) and interviews with senior officers. The focus groups conducted with female soldiers from Special Operations were mixed with enlisted soldiers and commissioned officers because of the limited number of females available for the focus groups.

The focus groups were managed by research team members in same sex and mixed sex formats with sex of the facilitator and note taker changing across groups to protect against a systematic bias from consistently having a facilitator of one sex and against having a facilitator and note taker of the same sex for each group. For each group there was at least one researcher serving as the facilitator and one researcher serving as a note taker. All of the focus groups were recorded on at least one digital device and transcribed by a professional transcriber for analysis. The transcriptions form the basis for our analysis and identification of themes.

### **Individual Level Surveys**

Based on our analysis of the focus groups we identified major themes relating to integration. We used the themes to develop questions for survey questionnaires to be administered to males and females. The first survey was designed for Active Duty and National Guard SF males; the approximate universe of Special Forces males is 6,109. The second survey was designed for CA and MISO females, and female enablers currently assigned to U.S. Army Special Operations Command (approximately 779). The surveys were administered on-line; each respondent was contacted by email through the U.S. Special Operations Command survey system along with a letter from command General Cleveland. Each respondent took approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Three reminders were sent to potential participants. Both surveys were administered February 10-March 3, 2014, yielding a sample size of 1,613 active duty males, 88 National Guard males (27.8 % response rate), and 215 active females (27.6 % response rate) as of March 4, 2014.

## Appendix B: Focus Group Excerpt – Examples of Themes

### Logistics:

“I look at it from the security standpoint and the effects that it [integration] will have on the team, not just emotionally but physically and it could possibly catastrophic in a mission.”

“So that's a good question just for someone to feel out on how many missions are actually gained by having a female present and how many missions are at risk now by having a female present when you're going in the organic versus can we just attach a person and how they're trained.”

“The army's not going to give me another person because someone got pregnant. For example, let's say we get to a point where a quarter ratio of our company is females and a quarter of that 3 quarter becomes pregnant all in the same time window or within months of each other. That's going to be pretty challenging to try and fill critical MOSs.”

“We can't plan missions around a [menstrual] cycle. “

“I don't want to come across as a sexist, but there's a period during the month when a woman is not as pleasant to be around.”

“You're going to train X, Y, and Z today but yet, oh I'm sorry I can't do it because my stomach hurts or I'm going through my menstruation. Somebody else is going to have to pick up my slack now.”

“...so now it's a whole nother gamut of medical stuff I've got to provide or bring as a medic when I'm already—I'm already cutting back on lifesaving equipment, things that are going to save your life if you lose a limb or get shot or things like that. I'm already having to limit the amount of that that I take into combat based on just how much you can carry [of] required equipment. And now I've got to add to that additional stuff to take care of women-specific problems like a yeast infection or things like that, that are going to come from not being able to shower and cleanse herself properly for a long period of time.”

“We had a woman on a six-month deployment. And we were out in the middle of nowhere in Africa. And we didn't have a shower.... We had to go to a—because of the privacy issue—and also we were—it was Muslim country. She had to go to a special facility in town to go shower, female.”

“It's—yeast infections and other things happen. Yeah there's a reason that women need To shower and take care of hygiene on a regular basis.”

“Dude I don't want to watch a chick take a dump.”

“I've had women where we had to share a bathroom. And there's been a couple incidents where like—one woman didn't give a shit. She just walked around naked.”

“Would your wife like you showering with another woman every day?”

“We had females that were with us when I was in—first time in Iraq. It was month-and-a-half [before] we took a shower. They just dealt with it different. I mean, I think it's possible. Well I mean, look at it this way too—I mean, depending on the physical makeup of that certain female. I don't know how many of us guys might have had our female counterparts in the past been like, oh it's my time I'm cramping and it's a whole week that they're pretty much immobile or whatnot—because I don't know if they're nursing the sympathy out of us or it's really hurting them that bad that they can't really move that much.”

### **Interactions with Indigenous Populations:**

“And I think it's a lot more problematic working with people from a Muslim culture—not that they don't have restraints or like in terms of like in their culture that they—but it's just—I'd say in almost any other part of the world you have a greater ability to integrate.”

“If I go into an environment where that is my core function and that culture has no respect for women, I've cut my feet out from under me before I've even begun the mission.”

I can't go to a tribal leader and say, sir I know what your perceptions are but they're just here to help. They're not—but if I tell him she's a member of my detachment, she is Special Forces, she is a Green Beret, she is equal to me, I may lose respect immediately.”

“I got no problem sending a woman into an Iraqi office or an Afghan.”

“You can't go to Afghanistan and you have a female 18 Bravo. Your Afghanis aren't going to give her the same respect that they would give [a man] “

“Even in Africa we had the same thing with that CA team, that they would go out, or we would go out with them while they're trying to do their CA projects. They would talk to the women and our team leadership would talk to the men.”

“A lot of times it's a building of trust with him, and that person has to develop his own rapport with the local nationals. But as a leader you minimize the impact of that individual. And race certainly plays a part but I think gender is even greater with a lot of the countries that we've been to in the Middle East.”

“On certain missions where I needed to engage either a female populous, children, certain things like that—as an enabler they're great and only on those certain niche, but I didn't need a constant presence of a female because I didn't have a mission set where I needed to have that constant engagement with that—with either the female population or children.”

“A crucial enabler? Absolutely. And there were certain missions that I went on that female enablers were probably the decisive part of my operation because they can get information that I could not. Would I want them living with me on a firebase in a village of tribal Afghans that I'm training to be a village defense force that have no respect for women? Absolutely not.”

### **Home Life Concerns:**

“The art of war strikes really, really hard because it's very demanding of our wives to have us be gone so much and be put in harm's way. That's a fact of the matter. You put this into the equation where then now she's going to be worried about what you're doing on your on-duty hours because women get jealous about stuff like that.”

“I've even heard from guys on my team their wives are saying, I don't want women working with you for ways that you will operate, where you live at, how close-knit you are.”

“Has anybody thought about talking and getting the opinions of the spouses? Because one of the things is—I'm on my third marriage, okay.”

“But if you already have a shaky relationship between a husband and wife and now you take a female and you stick a female on that team that are constantly deploying, now you've just created an issue between that spouse and that soldier. Even though the soldier might absolutely not be doing anything wrong whatsoever. But it's in her mind, because they already have issues back home. And it might not be cheating. It could be financial issues, it could be other things.”

“Our divorce rate's high enough as it is, and then you put that [female ODA members] into the mix and it's going to be very, very volatile.”

“And like we said, that husband that's back in that network of wives he's not doing anything wrong, but he's thinking in his mind that his wife's overseas now with eleven SF operators. He's like, what do I got to worry about now?”

“Now you have eleven guys and one female who are back in the rear and you have eleven wives and one husband who are back in the rear. It's a two-way street too. A lot of guys

like [he] said might not have the most secure relationship, that some guys would be concerned now if you threw another male who's interacting like that, like the wives who interact, getting together, whatever. That's another concern that the guys on the team have when they're down and working that wouldn't normally exist as well outside.”

### **Gendered Cultural Assumptions:**

“We had one female pilot. However, not only did her emotions and her reactions change but she affected the group as a whole because when she got detained in a certain way there was a group of men that now became vulnerable to protect her or to try to do what they could.”

“It's the cattiness, it's the clique forming on a team when you have a dude and chick. It's the sexuality of it. It makes a very unpleasant work environment.”

“I've never not worked around a female where emotions and hormones have not been involved or take some type of a toll on the work every time.”

“I specifically remember three—one being the class crying, wrong place, wrong time, and like—I mean if emotions is a common issues with females—I think we can all agree it's slightly different than males—then that's an issue too that reminds me. And that's unprofessional. That's a distraction. I don't know if you can afford that.”

“Men are arguably....I guess we're less emotional than women.”

“Then again—it depends on the woman wholeheartedly what she's going to do, just like a person, but it seems like in my opinion you can't push a female as hard because they get more emotional about it, and then they take it more personally.”

“One of my concerns is that in these split second scenarios where you have to make a decision, you have to make it quick, and you have to act on it where they're trying to—they're indecisive and they're trying to process multiple things, connecting to it emotionally, and then freezing. I think that there's a huge potential for that. This is just talking strictly about how men and women think and process information.”

“But there's chicks that—I mean, they're more physically fit than us but they don't have that mindset.”

“I'm going to protect her at all costs like you would do with your own daughter and that starts going through the train of thought instead of the twelve guys that are hitting that objective.”

“I mean not to be chauvinistic but I think there's like an evolutionary digression when

you get into a situation where females almost look for protection from a man. I don't mean to sound caveman or anything like that.”

**Physicality:**

“I mean, there's a lot of women that can meet those same standards and wouldn't have to compromise that. But to what end? I mean, we're creating—we're creating equality not for the betterment of the unit. We're creating it for the betterment of an individual. And that's not what the military, the army's about.”

“When you watch their performance on things like the Tough Mudders they cannot carry the weight, they're—they just—they're in great shape. Their—they can't carry the weight. They don't have the physical upper body strength. There is no way with our current standards that you're going to get enough people to pass.”

“If I had a woman on my detachment that I didn't feel confident in physically—and I'm not saying—I'm saying if they lowered the standards to—I might have selectively put people on missions based on other factors that might not be the most efficient.”

“I think women have their niches and I think they have certain abilities that they provide tremendous assets, but I don't think that one of those would be to do the same kind of job that we do. I just don't think psychologically, emotionally, and physically that they are made to endure that hardship”

“It has nothing to do with like the female—yeah there's plenty of males that can't do it in PSYOPs and Civil Affairs and all that. And part of the reason that they're there is they couldn't physically do what we do.”

“But to carry the kind of loads that we were carrying I think in some of the operations early on in Iraq in particular where it was—we were up in the north humping through the mountains up there, carrying the kind of equipment we were, I think there's very, very few women who would be able to carry that kind of load.”

“Women are built differently. Meaning, men are physiologically designed where we can carry weight better, build muscle better. Women—are there women out there that could physically meet the standards? Yeah there are but not the majority for sure.”

“Which could potentially be okay but is that cost worth the benefit? And I think that we would all agree that the cost of changing all of those things to get the benefit that they would bring in terms of actually filling the six MOS of having a female 18 Charlie on your team but you have to make all of those sacrifices, it's not worth it.”

“What's the difference between the professional organization like Special Forces versus the NFL, Major League Baseball? Do they have the opportunity as a female to go play

football in the NFL and kick the winning field goal? Do they have that opportunity as a female? So why should Special Forces?”

### **Communication:**

“I think the big fear is that women will not meet the same standards and we will have to change the standard.”

“We just can't lower the standard. It's the only thing we can't do. I think if a woman comes to SF if we lower the standard for her, her initial acceptance will be horrible.”

“I don't believe of lowering—there can't be a lowering of the standard, bottom line.”

“If they maintain the standard then that would give the guys less of a complaint because, hey she did the same stuff I did so she's vetted to a degree.”

“In a male politically driven environment we do have civilian masters and that's what we're all afraid of. And I think—and I realize having that separate female capability doesn't have to be mutually exclusive. It doesn't have to exist to the exclusion of the females in the 18 Series. But I just think you have such a limited talent pool of females that were able to get into the 18 Series that you would almost do better to exclude fewer of these volunteers who are probably great soldiers and put most of them if not all of them into this other capability.”

“So long as we don't remove those measures I honestly don't think—there'll be very few women who will make it through.”

“If there's a high attrition rate—let's say the first five females come through and all five of them pass. In my mind, either they're all shit hot which probably not likely or we lowered the standard to benefit their success.”

“The Army has rules and regulations and standards. And when they were willing to follow standards I didn't have issues. If you treat them like soldiers with rank structure—there's an E6, there's an E5, there's a lieutenant or a civilian base equivalent and you remind your own special operators who refuse to see them that way—if you can remind them that their job is still to be an E6 as a special operator then I have an E6 leading an E5 and he treats them like one and feels responsible for their day-to-day well-being, next thing you know I don't have to worry about shower issues.”

### **Culture of Team Room/ODA:**

“...wallpapering someone's locker with tampons. It's pranks like that, that now automatically become a sexual harassment legal issue.”

“So you just got to reset everybody's clock—hey everybody we've got a chick coming to the team room. No dicks and ass jokes. Let's keep things to a minimum. Look around the team room and make sure there's nothing on the wall that's inappropriate, and just keep it professional.”

“We're a bunch of Green Berets. You're going to put a bunch of Green Berets in a room we're going to start clicking right then and there. And that just builds. That relationship builds and builds and builds.”

“Part of the tightness of the team of an ODA is our ability to be totally unprofessional with each other.”

“We hang out outside of work. We have barbeques. It's not just a work thing. We all—at least on my team we were all pretty good friends.”

“...But she kept running her mouth. And one day I believe she said something like, you were operating the radio like you were sucking dick. And my response was, oh sorry did I bring back your college days?”

“Is she going to feel comfortable with our 18 Delta [medic] male sticking like they do to us—I'll be straight up blunt—hey man I've got a rash in between my legs. I need—drop trouser, go to it.”

“Even as small as somebody digging a slit trench in the wrong place and now you're taking a dump two feet from the guy giving which I've done, it continues to build the bonds here.”

### **Misinformation:**

“It's—yeast infections and other things happen. Yeah there's a reason that women need to shower and take care of hygiene on a regular basis.”

“You put a man into that situation he can go without showering, he can go without any type of maintenance, for lack of better terms, for weeks on end. We did it. I didn't take a shower for a month.”

“But the point is there's certain things a woman's body does that has to be attended to every so often. If not it could have detrimental effects on her.”

[female] “And when you read the regulation what it actually says—because I've done this [laughs], the regulation says you have to provide them the opportunity to perform hygiene. It does not specify shower versus baby wipes. And it says in a private area. And it doesn't specify what private area consists of.”



[female] “The issue is the army has created all these regulations over—I mean there's a set time that women—the army has said that women can be in the field because—especially for menstruating, that we need to have access to being clean. And that was actually a very big question that I had from team leaders, what do you need? I was like, uh nothing, I can handle myself. I've done this since I was sixteen, (unintelligible). This is—it's kind of part of my normal life, it happens. But that was a big thing like, are you—I think when I went to my Delta and I said, hey can you—here's my med pack that you go out with your kit in case you ever get injured. And two were in there and he goes, oh there's your medicine. I said, excuse me? And he's like, um you know like vagina stuff. I was like, oh I'm sorry. I didn't know this was an issue for you.”

[female] “I think it's further complicated by the way we view sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military. Not that we should tolerate it, but the SHARP program is so shoved down everyone's throat that it is a joke.”

### **Rejection of Enablers/Outsiders:**

“My fear, where I think somebody that could be a potential degrading of the force is that if you do have these women that are doing this and then they're just, okay you're going to go to this team that's still the wrong answer. Don't make them do our standards. *Scale it to something that's equally as tough for the women through their own pipeline, and again make them very specialized and unique.*”

“If I have an amazing *talent pool in the army of women that I want to use for certain things* do I also want to limit that talent pool by who can also pass Green Beret standards?”

“And that's why I think the FETs were so successful in Afghanistan and we could tap into the female engagement teams. And when we did missions where we needed female engagement, children engagement, whatever it was we could call them in, they'd work with us, very professional. *We'd go do the job, they'd go back, and there was no problems.*”

“Bottom line, okay even if I have the most physically fit female that can outperform or perform as well as any of my male soldiers and I have the most professional detachments out there so there's no impropriety or anything like that and everybody—there's no disruption to the ODA, the cohesiveness, or the—and we're still able to accomplish the mission. *What do I gain by having the female on the detachment versus having a female within the unit itself that I can specifically—mission requirement?*”

“So if I feel that I can only accomplish my task by having pack mules then I'll do everything I can to implement pack mules physically into my detachment and its equipment. If—just like he's saying if there's a specific mission that requires a female,

because of her gender, then I will go out and seek gaining that female on certain missions where I needed to engage either a female populous, children, certain things like that—as *an enabler they're great and only on those certain niche*, but I didn't need a constant presence of a female because I didn't have a mission set where I needed to have that constant engagement with that—with either the female population or children.”

“A crucial enabler? Absolutely. And there were certain missions that I went on that female enablers were probably the decisive part of my operation because they can get information that I could not. Would I want them living with me on a firebase in a village of tribal Afghans that I'm training to be a village defense force that have no respect for women? Absolutely not.”

“The investment and the capital I have in just one person is so much more important than any other unit. And if I lose that capability, I'm losing an arm, losing a leg. And I think a female can like I said before meet all those standards, be on a detachment, wear a green beret, and do what we do. But when we look at the core aspect of what we do as Special Forces, of what an ODA was designed to do, I think we're intentionally placing a limiting factor.”

“We're looking for special skills and assets. Women have things that we don't have that *I think we should be exploiting rather than just trying to lump them in with the men.*”

**Appendix C: Summary of a Sampling of Survey Questions and Responses, Special Forces Males and Special Operations Females, 2014**

(Note: Some questions allow for more than one response and some Percent are rounded so totals may not add to 100%; in addition, a lack of response to a question is not recorded for each question listed so the number of responses to each question do not always equal the total number of respondents that answered at least a portion of the survey)

F/ M 01	I am an active duty (fe)male soldier and voluntarily choose to participate in this survey.	<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
		Yes	100%	214	99%
	No	0%	0	1%	11
		N=214		N=1701	

F/ M 02	Please indicate which reason was most important in your decision for joining the military.	<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
		Serve my country	50%	104	69%
Gain education benefits	12%	25	3%	44	
Learn skills for civilian jobs	0%	1	1%	15	
Jobs were hard to find	5%	11	1%	18	
Travel and see more of the world	10%	20	5%	76	
In response to the terrorist attacks on 9/11	2%	5	10%	164	
Family tradition	6%	12	4%	71	
Other	14%	29	8%	131	
		N=207		N=1648	

F/ M0 3	Overall, has your military experience helped or hurt in your effort to get ahead in life?	<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
		Helped a lot	69%	142	71%
Helped a little	20%	41	19%	309	
Made no difference	5%	11	6%	94	
Hurt a little	3%	7	2%	40	
Hurt a lot	1%	2	0%	8	
Don't know	2%	4	2%	35	
		N=207		N=1648	

F/ M0 4	How long have you served in the U. S. Armed Forces	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	0-3 years	8%	17	1%	15
	3-6 years	18%	38	6%	95
	6-9 years	26%	54	15%	251
	9-12 years	18%	38	21%	353
	12-15 years	13%	27	14%	226
	15-20 years	11%	23	19%	319
	20-25 years	4%	8	15%	239
	25+ years	1%	2	9%	150
			N=207		N=1648

F/ M0 5	What is your current Grade/Rank?	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	E2 - PVT	1%	2	0%	0
	E3 - PFC	2%	4	0%	0
	E4 - SPC	9%	19	0%	0
	E5 - SGT	13%	27	4%	62
	E6 - SSG	16%	33	14%	228
	E7 - SFC	12%	24	34%	560
	E8 - MSG	3%	7	15%	246
	E9 - SGM	0%	0	5%	89
	W1 - WO1	0%	0	1%	24
	W2 - CW2	0%	0	3%	51
	W3 - CW3	1%	3	2%	36
	W4 - CW4	0%	0	2%	31
	W5 - CW5	0%	0	1%	13
	O1 - 2LT	1%	3	0%	1
	O2 - 1LT	0%	1	0%	0
	O3 - CPT	23%	47	10%	170
	O4 - MAJ	13%	27	5%	87
	O5 - LTC	3%	6	2%	37
	O6 - COL	1%	3	1%	13
			N=206		N=1648

F07/M08	Have any of your family members served in the Military? Check all that apply.	Female	Male
		Number	Number
	Mother	16	62
	Father	83	826
	A grandparent	111	1084
	A sister or brother	57	496
	An uncle or aunt	108	818
	A spouse or domestic partner	98	166
	Others?	28	158

F08/M10	During your military service, how many times have you been deployed away from your permanent duty station?	Female	Female	Male	Male
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	0 deployments	14%	29	2%	26
	1 deployment	25%	52	4%	67
	2 deployments	29%	60	9%	144
	3 deployments	16%	34	12%	190
	4 deployments	7%	14	11%	187
	5 deployments	5%	11	11%	178
	6 deployments	1%	3	9%	144
	7 deployments	1%	2	7%	107
	8 deployments	0%	1	5%	89
	9 deployments	0%	1	3%	44
	10 deployments	0%	0	3%	52
	11-15 deployments	0%	0	7%	111
	16-20 deployments	0%	0	4%	65
	20+ deployments	0%	0	14%	227
	Don't know	0%	0	1%	13
		N=207		N=1644	

F09 /M1 1	Overall, what impact did your deployment / deployments have on the following situations...	<i>Positive impact</i>	<i>Negative impact</i>	<i>No impact</i>	<i>Mixed Impact</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
	Your financial situation	151 (85%)	36 (20%)	119 (67%)	113 (64%)	9 (5%)	2 (1%)
	Your health	15 (8%)	87 (49%)	28 (16%)	35 (20%)	63 (36%)	28 (16%)
	Your chances for promotion and advancement within the military	0 (0%)	33 (19%)	5 (3%)	4 (2%)	63 (36%)	24 (14%)
	Your relationship with your spouse/significant other	11 (6%)	21 (12%)	23 (13%)	23 (13%)	24 (14%)	13 (7%)
	Your relationship with your children	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	18 (10%)	110 (62%)
	Female N=177						

F09 /M 11	Overall, what impact did your deployment / deployments have on the following situations...	<b>Positive impact</b>	<b>Negative impact</b>	<b>No impact</b>	<b>Mixed Impact</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
	Your financial situation	<b>1031</b> (67%)	<b>164</b> (11%)	<b>948</b> (62%)	<b>956</b> (63%)	<b>53</b> (3%)	<b>26</b> (2%)
	Your health	<b>342</b> (22%)	<b>722</b> (47%)	<b>271</b> (18%)	<b>304</b> (20%)	<b>687</b> (45%)	<b>479</b> (31%)
	Your chances for promotion and advancement within the military	<b>24</b> (2%)	<b>448</b> (29%)	<b>34</b> (2%)	<b>33</b> (2%)	<b>615</b> (40%)	<b>484</b> (32%)
	Your relationship with your spouse/significant other	<b>125</b> (8%)	<b>186</b> (12%)	<b>254</b> (17%)	<b>214</b> (14%)	<b>110</b> (7%)	<b>106</b> (7%)
	Your relationship with your children	<b>6</b> (0%)	<b>8</b> (1%)	<b>21</b> (1%)	<b>21</b> (1%)	<b>63</b> (4%)	<b>433</b> (28%)
	Male N=1528						

F11/ M12	When deployed, did you feel accepted by the male soldiers you worked with?	<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
	Mostly professionally accepted by the male soldiers	71%	125	98%	1496
	Somewhat professionally accepted by the male soldiers	28%	50	2%	28
	Not at all professionally accepted by the male soldiers	1%	2	0%	4
			N=177		N=1528

F12/ M13	When deployed, did you feel bonded with the male soldiers you worked with?	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	Mostly emotionally connected to the male soldiers	67%	118	93%	1424
	Somewhat emotionally connected to the male soldiers	29%	52	7%	100
	Not at all emotionally connected to the male soldiers	4%	7	0%	4
			N=177		N=1528

F13/ M09	Have you ever served in combat or a war zone?	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	No	6%	11	5%	75
	Yes	94%	166	95%	1569
			N=177		N=1644

F16/ M15	Have you ever worked directly with indigenous populations in a foreign country?	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	No	31%	54	1%	17
	Yes	69%	122	99%	1511
			N=176		N=1528

F1 7/ M 16	(Females) Overall, to what extent did your gender assist you in dealing with...	Mostly Positive Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Mixed Impact	Somewhat Negative Impact	Mostly Negative Impact	Don't know
	Local adult females?	77 (65%)	16 (13%)	12 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (12%)
	Local adult males?	33 (28%)	27 (23%)	45 (38%)	7 (6%)	4 (3%)	3 (3%)
	Local youth?	64 (54%)	21 (18%)	14 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20 (17%)
	Local children?	68 (57%)	16 (13%)	11 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	24 (20%)
	<b>Female N=119</b>						

F1 7/ M 16	<b>(Males)</b> Overall, to what extent did your gender assist you in dealing with...	Mostly Positive Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Mixed Impact	Somewhat Negative Impact	Mostly Negative Impact	Don't know
	Local adult females?	165 (11%)	191 (13%)	599 (40%)	177 (12%)	140 (9%)	209 (14%)
	Local adult males?	1153 (78%)	198 (13%)	104 (7%)	2 (0%)	6 (0%)	18 (1%)
	Local youth?	927 (63%)	311 (21%)	169 (11%)	4 (0%)	1 (0%)	69 (5%)
	Local children?	878 (59%)	330 (22%)	179 (12%)	6 (0%)	0 (0%)	88 (6%)
	<b>Male N=1481</b>						

F23/ M20	In your current position, how often do you feel that you have to "prove yourself" to others?	<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
	Not at all	11%	23	12%	185
	Some of the time	37%	74	21%	318
	Most of the time	25%	50	21%	314
	All of the time	27%	55	46%	705
			N=202		N=1522

F25/M2 7	When thinking about integrating females into Special Forces, how important is it that the physical standards for females be the same as for males?	<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
	Not at all important	7%	14	1%	8
	Somewhat important	31%	61	4%	60
	Very important	62%	120	95%	1403
			N=195		N=1471



F26/ M22	In your current stateside unit, do you feel...	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	Mostly professionally accepted by the male soldiers	68%	133	97%	1424
	Somewhat professionally accepted by the male soldiers	31%	61	3%	46
	Not at all professionally accepted by the male soldiers	1%	1	0%	1
			N=195		N=1471

F27/ M23	In your current stateside unit, do you feel...	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	Mostly emotionally connected to the male soldiers	63%	122	89%	1303
	Somewhat emotionally connected to the male soldiers	33%	64	11%	158
	Not at all emotionally connected to the male soldiers	5%	9	1%	10
			N=195		N=1471

F28/ M24	How comfortable are you working with females in your current position?	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	Not at all comfortable	55%	108	29%	423
	Somewhat comfortable	29%	57	32%	466
	Mostly comfortable	13%	25	21%	310
	Totally comfortable	3%	5	18%	272
			N=195		N=1471

F29/ M25	If you were taking a new job and had your choice of a boss, would you prefer to work for...	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	A female boss	2%	4	0%	4
	A male boss	34%	66	74%	1092
	No preference	64%	125	25%	375
			N=195		N=1471

F30/ M26	Would you have tried to join Special Forces earlier in your career if females had been allowed to enter training?	Female	Female	Male	Male
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	No	45%	87	80%	1181
	Yes	55%	108	20%	290
			N=195	N=1471	

F31/ M29	<b>(Females)</b> Compared to male soldiers, to what extent do you believe you have equivalent...	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Mostly</i>	<i>Completely</i>
		Promotion opportunities?	12 (6%)	40 (21%)	61 (31%)
Advancement opportunities?	16 (8%)	53 (27%)	61 (31%)	65 (33%)	
field and training opportunities?	21 (11%)	68 (35%)	66 (34%)	40 (21%)	
Assignment opportunities?	31 (16%)	67 (34%)	72 (37%)	25 (13%)	
<b>Female N=195</b>					
F31/ M29	<b>(Males)</b> Compared to female soldiers, to what extent do you believe you have equivalent...	Not at all	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
		Promotion opportunities?	184 (13%)	291 (20%)	394 (27%)
Advancement opportunities?	175 (12%)	313 (21%)	384 (26%)	599 (41%)	
field and training opportunities?	194 (13%)	319 (22%)	379 (26%)	579 (39%)	
Assignment opportunities?	214 (15%)	338 (23%)	378 (26%)	541 (37%)	
<b>Male N=1471</b>					

F32/ M30	If females are given the opportunity to serve in Special Forces units, I would...	Female	Female	Male	Male
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	Be unlikely to leave the military	86%	167	38%	558
	Be somewhat unlikely to leave the military	9%	18	19%	280
	Be likely to leave the military	4%	8	25%	373
	Definitely leave the military	1%	2	18%	257
			N=195	N=1468	

F33 /M3 1	Many different things can affect Army unit cohesiveness. <b>(Females)</b> Please indicate how you feel the following actions / events might effect unit cohesiveness.	<i>Greatly hurt unit cohesiveness</i>	<i>Somewhat hurt unit cohesiveness</i>	<i>No effect on unit cohesiveness.</i>
	The tensions created when females enter a new workplace	28 (14%)	101 (52%)	66 (34%)
	The Army becoming less male-dominated	18 (9%)	54 (28%)	123 (63%)
	The Army getting too involved in non-military affairs	38 (19%)	72 (37%)	85 (44%)
	A ban on language and behavior that encourage comradery among soldiers	47 (24%)	88 (45%)	60 (31%)
	A system for promotions and advancement in the Army that does not work well	113 (58%)	57 (29%)	25 (13%)
	Non-military people getting too involved in Army affairs	99 (51%)	73 (37%)	23 (12%)
	Sexual harassment in the Army	146 (75%)	38 (19%)	11 (6%)
	<b>Female N=195</b>			
F33 /M3 1	<b>SF Males</b>	<i>Greatly hurt unit cohesiveness</i>	<i>Somewhat hurt unit cohesiveness</i>	<i>Has no effect on unit cohesiveness.</i>
	The tensions created when females enter a new workplace	924 (63%)	481 (33%)	66 (4%)
	The Army becoming less male-dominated	479 (33%)	511 (35%)	481 (33%)
	The Army getting too involved in non-military affairs	747 (51%)	408 (28%)	316 (21%)
	A ban on language and behavior that encourage comradery among soldiers	880 (60%)	420 (29%)	171 (12%)
	A system for promotions and advancement in the Army that does not work well	953 (65%)	356 (24%)	162 (11%)
	Non-military people getting too involved in Army affairs	1152 (78%)	260 (18%)	59 (4%)
	Sexual harassment in the Army	1196 (81%)	213 (14%)	62 (4%)
	<b>Male N=1471</b>			

F34/M3 2	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Even if females can serve in Special Forces units, those units should remain basically masculine, dominated by male values and characteristics.”	Female		Male	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	Agree Strongly	21%	40	61%	893
	Agree Somewhat	35%	69	25%	364
	Disagree Somewhat	26%	50	8%	120
	Disagree Strongly	18%	36	6%	94
		N=195		N=1471	

F35/M3 4	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Females should be allowed to serve in all combat jobs in Special Operations.”	Female		Male	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	Agree Strongly	31%	61	4%	58
	Agree Somewhat	38%	75	12%	183
	Disagree Somewhat	19%	37	20%	294
	Disagree Strongly	11%	22	64%	936
		N=195		N=1471	

F36/ M35	If you <b>oppose</b> females serving in any combat jobs in Special Forces, which of the following factors is <b>the single most important factor</b> in shaping your opinion?	Female		Male	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	The presence of females will disrupt small unit cohesion	8%	15	35%	521
	Females could be taken prisoner and abused	2%	4	0%	5
	Most females are not physically qualified	14%	27	19%	274
	Females are not as readily deployable as males because of pregnancy	1%	2	1%	19
	There is little privacy for males and females in combat specialties like Special Forces	0%	0	6%	90
	Males will not fight as effectively with females present in combat units	5%	9	6%	91
	The deaths of female soldiers will demoralize male soldiers and the American public	2%	4	3%	39
	Other	11%	21	20%	294
	I do not oppose females serving in combat roles	58%	113	9%	138
		N=195		N=1471	

F37/ M36	If you <b>support</b> females serving in any combat jobs in Special Forces, which of the following factors is <b>the single most important factor</b> in shaping your opinion?				
		<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
	To exclude females is discrimination/morally wrong	3%	6	1%	17
	The most capable soldiers should be assigned to combat jobs in Special Operations, and some females are more capable than some males	45%	88	11%	164
	Technology/modern warfare have made physical abilities less relevant for combat jobs in Special Operations	2%	3	0%	7
	Females should have the same obligation to serve and risk their lives as males do	4%	7	2%	26
	Having females in combat units will improve morale and motivate males to outperform them	1%	1	0%	2
	Female performance in recent military operations has proven them to be an asset	21%	41	5%	72
	The American public will not consider females as first class citizens until they serve in combat jobs in Special Operations under the same circumstances as males do	0%	0	0%	1
	Excluding military females from combat jobs in Special Operations hurts their promotion opportunities and prevents them from filling top leadership positions	1%	2		
	Other	8%	15	11%	163
	I oppose opening combat roles to females	16%	32	69%	1019
			N=195		N=1471

F38 /M3 7	How do you think the Army has done in training soldiers about sexual harassment? Mark all that apply.				
		<b>Female Percent</b>	<b>Female Number</b>	<b>Male Percent</b>	<b>Male Number</b>
	It has done what it should	63%	137	50%	860
	The training has been confusing	17%	37	9%	161
	It has not done enough	12%	27	4%	74
	The training has made me afraid to interact with females in the Army	7%	16	36%	620
			N=217		N=1715

F39/M38	How often would you be willing to use unisex shower / bathroom facilities (e.g. use facilitated by flip signs or scheduled times for designated use depending upon who is using the facility)?	Female		Male	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	Not at all	10%	19	33%	483
	Some of the time	12%	24	18%	268
	Most of the time	17%	34	13%	188
	All of the time	61%	118	36%	532
			N=195		N=1471

F40/M39	How would you characterize the costs associated with the effort to expand opportunities for females in the Army?	Female		Male	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	trivial or non-existent	20%	39	8%	115
	Modest but worth it for the benefits the effort generates	32%	63	7%	97
	Sizable but worth it for the benefits the effort generates	24%	47	8%	114
	Sizable and probably not worth it for the benefits the effort generates	16%	32	36%	536
	Excessive and certainly not worth it	7%	14	41%	609
			N=195		N=1471

F41/M40	Overall, are males and females held to the same standard in the Army?	Female		Male	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number
	No, easier for males	11%	21	1%	18
	No, easier for females	55%	107	93%	1367
	Yes	34%	67	6%	86
			N=195		N=1471

F45/ M44	Which of the following describes your race? You can select as many as apply.	Female Percent	Female Number	Male Percent	Male Number
	Black or African-American	15%	31	7%	99
	White	64%	131	80%	1116
	Asian or Asian-American	11%	22	3%	46
	Or some other race	5%	10	3%	46
	Don't know	6%	12	6%	90
	Refused to answer	0%	0	0%	3
			N=206	N=1400	

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