

June 1996

# BASIC TRAINING

## Services Are Using a Variety of Approaches to Gender Integration







United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and  
International Affairs Division

B-271797

June 10, 1996

The Honorable Robert K. Dornan  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Personnel  
Committee on National Security  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to your request, we have reviewed enlisted basic training to determine the (1) extent to which the services are conducting gender-integrated basic training; (2) changes that were made to accommodate this training and the cost of the changes; (3) pass/fail rates (or other measures of performance) for gender-integrated basic training compared with those for segregated training; and (4) training regimen, results, and issues related to the current gender-integrated basic training compared with the Army's previous experiences with gender-integrated basic training.

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## Background

Women have traditionally played a role in the military services. In recent years, many more career fields have opened to women, and their assignment opportunities have considerably expanded. In the past, all of the services had different programs for basic training for men and women and conducted the training for the two groups separately. More recently, however, the services have adjusted their philosophy of basic training for women and now have programs more closely aligned with those of the men. During fiscal year 1995, the services trained 179,068 recruits—18 percent of whom were women. Women comprised 18 percent of the 75,616 basic training graduates in the Army, 20 percent of the 40,813 graduates in the Navy, 24 percent of the 30,515 graduates in the Air Force, and 5 percent of the 32,124 graduates in the Marine Corps.

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## Results in Brief

The military services are employing several different approaches to the integration of men and women during basic training. These approaches range from using the same program of instruction for men and women and integrating some training units to using somewhat different programs of instruction and providing separate training. The costs associated with gender integration have been low. In fact, the Army is the only service that has incurred expenses to accommodate gender-integrated basic training, spending approximately \$67,000 to modify barracks. No staffing or

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curriculum changes have been made to accommodate integrated basic training.

Although data to compare the performance of trainees in gender-integrated units with those in single-gender units is not available in all of the services, studies of the impact have been done for the Navy and the Army. A 1992 study conducted for the Navy reported no impact on objective performance measures and improvement in teamwork measures for both men and women trained in gender-integrated units.<sup>1</sup> A recently completed study of gender integration in the Army reported that the performance of women improved in gender-integrated training units while the performance of men was not degraded.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Army implemented gender-integrated basic training to some extent in the late 1970s to the early 1980s, the Army has no records from that period to compare with its current program.

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## Degree of Trainee Gender Integration Varies

The services use different approaches to integrating men and women in their basic training programs. The result is a varying degree of integration and interaction between men and women during their initial military training, depending on the branch of service. In the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, women and men follow the same program of instruction, with differences in medical examinations, hygiene classes, and physical fitness test standards. The degree of integration within training units in these services, however, does vary. In the Marine Corps, although large portions of the program of instruction are the same for men and women, some are different, and men and women are trained separately. Table 1 compares some aspects of the services' basic training programs.

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<sup>1</sup>Jerry C. Scarpate and Mary Anne O'Neill, "Evaluation of Gender Integration at Recruit Training Command." Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, July 1992.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Zita M. Simutis and Dr. Jacqueline A. Mottern, "Basic Combat Training in a Gender-Integrated Environment." Briefing for Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) by the Army Research Institute, January 25, 1996.

**Table 1: Selected Aspects of the Services' Basic Training Programs**

Figures in percent

Service	Program of instruction for men and women	Integrated at operating level of training	Trained in integrated operating units, fiscal year 1995	
			Women	Men
Army	Same <sup>a</sup>	Yes	100	49
Navy	Same <sup>a</sup>	Yes	100	25
Air Force	Same <sup>a</sup>	No	0	0
Marine Corps	Different	No	0	0

<sup>a</sup>The only differences were in medical examinations, hygiene classes, and physical fitness test standards.

The Army and the Navy basic recruit training programs are nearly identical for men and women, and in gender-integrated units, trainees are mixed at the operating level. The only differences are that male and female trainees are berthed separately, have different medical examinations and hygiene classes, and must meet different physical fitness test standards. In fiscal year 1995, the Army trained all of its women and 49 percent of its men in gender-integrated units composed of 20 to 50 percent women. Many of the men trained in all-male units were in combat arms specialties that are closed to women. In the same year, the Navy trained all of its women and 25 percent of its men in gender-integrated units composed of about 50 percent of each gender. In forming training units, the Navy considers it important not to have only a few of either gender in a group because those trainees might feel isolated or intimidated. Therefore, because the number of men that can be trained in integrated units is limited by the number of women available to train with them, some units must be all male.

As in the Navy and the Army, the Air Force's male and female trainees follow the same program of instruction, with differences in the medical examinations, hygiene classes, and physical fitness test standards. However, the operating level of recruit training, the flight, is single gender. Although each flight is paired with a "brother" or "sister" flight and the pairs often train side by side, flight integrity is maintained during training. Thus, male and female flights may be at the marksmanship range or in an auditorium together, but they do not mix. The exception to this is the physical conditioning program, where men and women are intermingled.

The Marine Corps does not conduct gender-integrated basic training. Men and women are trained separately, although large portions of the program

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of instruction are the same. Only the men are trained in combat hitting skills and pugil sticks. Men also receive a 24-day course of Marine combat training after their basic training, whereas women receive an additional week of basic training that incorporates an abbreviated course of Marine combat training. Marine Corps officials told us they planned to examine the Marine combat training program for men and women and expected to report their findings to the Commandant in June 1996.

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## Cost of Gender Integration Has Been Low

After examining facilities and staffing costs for basic training and changes to the curriculum in each of the services, we concluded that the cost of gender integration has been low. At Fort Jackson, South Carolina, the Army spent approximately \$67,000 to modify its oldest barracks to house gender-integrated basic training units. The modifications included installing partitions between the male and female berthing areas and creating separate bathrooms for men and women by dividing each common use bathroom into two and adding shower heads and latrines. The newer barracks needed no modifications.

The Navy spent over \$2 million to modify facilities to accommodate women at its basic training location at Great Lakes, Illinois, including changes to barracks, medical facilities, and training buildings. However, the Navy made these modifications in response to base realignment and closure decisions to consolidate all recruit training at one location. The changes were not due to the decision to integrate training.

Although the ratio of trainees to drill instructors varies considerably among the services, it is consistent between integrated and segregated training units in the same service. The number of trainees for each drill instructor averages 39 for the Air Force, 28 for the Navy, 19 for the Army, and 17 for the Marine Corps.

Although each service regularly reviews and modifies its basic training program of instruction, none of the services has made changes because of gender integration.

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## Limited Data Indicates Gender Integration Does Not Erode Performance

Data with which to compare the effectiveness of integrated training and segregated training was limited due to curriculum changes, a limited history of integration, and few records documenting trainees' performance. The data that is available, however, indicates that

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gender-integrated basic training programs do not negatively affect the performance of trainees.

The Marine Corps does not conduct integrated training and therefore has no comparative data. The Air Force provided some performance data for its trainees by gender but was unable to provide data that could be used to compare the performance of training units. Thus, comparisons of same gender pairs of flights with opposite gender pairs could not be made.

In a 1992 study conducted for the Navy, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute found that gender-integrated training had no impact on the results of performance tests but improved teamwork. Since that time, the Navy has made significant changes in its basic training program of instruction, placing greater emphasis on physical training. The Navy was unable to provide data to compare the performance of trainees in integrated units with those in segregated units using this new program of instruction.

In 1996, the Army Research Institute (ARI) concluded that the performance of women improved in gender-integrated training units while the performance of men was not degraded. This conclusion was based on a 3-year study that dealt with measures of performance such as physical fitness, marksmanship, and individual proficiency test results.

Additionally, the Army provided some performance data for fiscal years 1993-95 for about 80 percent of the trainees from an all-male training location that we compared with ARI's results from the gender-integrated companies. Officials at the all-male location told us that they did not have information on the other 20 percent of their trainees for that year. They said, however, that they believed the 80 percent was representative of the whole. The information they provided indicates that the pass rates for male trainees in the gender-integrated companies exceeded the pass rates for trainees at the all-male location in those categories of physical performance for which data was available—the Army physical fitness test and the basic rifle marksmanship test (see table 2).

**Table 2: Pass Rates for Men in All-Male and Integrated Army Training Units (fiscal years 1993-95)**

Figures in percents

Fiscal year	Army physical fitness test		Basic rifle marksmanship qualification	
	All-male location	Integrated units	All-male location	Integrated units
1993	97	98	97	98
1994	89	99	97	98
1995	88	99	96	98

## Data to Compare Current and Previous Army Gender-Integrated Programs Does Not Exist

Although the Army conducted gender-integrated basic training in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Army has no records of those programs or their results to compare with those on its current program and results. However, we did find reports of a 1976 Army test of the same basic training program of instruction for men and women.<sup>3</sup>

Before September 1976, women entering the Army received different training from that of their male counterparts. From September to November 1976, the Army tested a common program of instruction for men and women. Although men and women received the same training for the test period, it was conducted in single-gender units. According to a report on the results of this test, the program of instruction used was similar to that previously used for basic training for men and was very different from the one previously used for women. The study found that women met the standards in every area except the physical fitness standards (men's standards were used for both men and women) and that those standards could be modified for the women without changing the content of the training or reducing the value of the training received. Problems observed during the test were as follows:

- The uniforms the women were issued for the training were inadequate, and women were issued men's boots that often did not fit their feet. Also, the field jackets, although made for women, were not as warm and did not fit as well as those issued to the men.
- Male instructors were inadequately prepared to train women. They tended to be overprotective and assumed women would not meet the standards.

We could not determine what actions were taken as a result of the study. However, some Army training locations did continue to conduct

<sup>3</sup>Performance data is reported in Basic Initial Entry Training Test Report, Department of the Army, December 30, 1976. Attitudinal data is reported in Basic Initial Entry Training Test Attitude Survey, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, September 1978.

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gender-integrated basic training programs until the early 1980s, when the Army ended such programs. The Army could provide no documentation of these early efforts at gender integration, their results, or the reasons the efforts were stopped. The Army officials with whom we spoke had various opinions as to the results of the earlier efforts and the reasons the Army discontinued them. Some said the results were not good, which led the Army to stop the training. Others said the results were good and that the training was stopped because of a lack of support within the Army.

In 1993, the Army again began integrating basic training and has avoided many of the problems identified in the 1976 study. For example, different physical fitness standards are used for men and women, all trainees' clothing appears to be more suitable for the weather, women are issued boots suitable for them, and athletic shoes are used by all trainees for physical training. As noted previously, the 1996 ARI study of the current gender-integrated program indicates that the training is effective. However, the training of instructors is still an issue, as ARI reports that many drill sergeants believe that their training course does not adequately prepare them to conduct gender-integrated basic training. Army officials told us the Army was currently modifying its training course for drill sergeants to incorporate lessons learned from the ARI study. The officials said they expected the modified course to better prepare the drill sergeants to conduct gender-integrated basic training.

Although they were unable to specifically cite problems in the earlier gender-integrated basic training program, Army officials told us that many factors had positively affected the training environment since then, including improvements in training equipment and facilities, advances in sports medicine, the use of athletic shoes for physical training, and increased roles for women in the military and society in general.

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## Recommendation

To evaluate the effectiveness of each service's approach to the integration of recruit training, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the services to retain and analyze comparative performance data for men and women in single-gender and gender-integrated training units.

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## Agency Comments

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with the findings and recommendation. DOD stated it would instruct each of the services to retain and analyze comparative performance data for men and women in single-gender and gender-integrated training units over a 1-year time

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period to be completed by fiscal year 1998. DOD's comments appear in appendix I.

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## Scope and Methodology

During our review of enlisted basic training in the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force, we examined reports on gender-integrated basic training and discussed progress and problems in this area with Office of the Secretary of Defense and service officials at the policy and program levels. In addition, we visited basic training locations of each of the services. To determine the extent of gender-integrated training, we examined the type and duration of instruction provided male and female trainees, performance requirements for trainees, and the organizational level at which trainees are integrated.

To determine the cost of gender-integrated training, we interviewed service officials and reviewed service information to determine the changes made to facilities and staffing as a result of integration and the costs of those changes.

To determine the relative performance of trainees in integrated and segregated units, we compared available performance measures provided by the services for these two groups. This comparison was limited due to curriculum changes, a limited history of integration, and the limited number of records documenting trainees' performance.

To determine how the Army's current gender-integrated basic training program compares with its past experience with gender integration, we requested documentation on current and past programs and their results. We also contacted officials who were involved with the Army's earlier experience with gender integration to obtain any data they might have kept from that period.

We conducted our review from August 1995 to April 1996 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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We are sending copies of this report to other interested congressional committees and Members of Congress; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. We will also make copies available to other interested parties on request.

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Please contact me at (202) 512-5140 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix II.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Gebicke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark E. Gebicke  
Director, Military Operations  
and Capabilities Issues

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## Abbreviations

ARI	Army Research Institute
DOD	Department of Defense

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# Comments From the Department of Defense



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

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14 MAY 1996



Mr. Mark E. Gebicke  
Director, Military Operations  
and Capabilities Issues  
National Security and International  
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U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Gebicke:

This is the Department of Defense (DOD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report "BASIC TRAINING: Services Using a Variety of Approaches to Gender Integration", dated April 19, 1996 (GAO Code 703115/ OSD Case 1130). The DOD concurs with the draft report and the recommendation. The DOD will instruct each of the Services to retain and analyze comparative performance data for men and women in single gender and gender integrated training units over a one year time period to be completed by fiscal year (FY) 1998.

Technical comments have been provided directly to the GAO staff for incorporation into the report. The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,

Edwin Dorn



# Major Contributors to This Report

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