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The Effects of Assimilation, Title IX, and Gender Equity on the Virginia Military Institute

William V. Schaller

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**THE EFFECTS OF ASSIMILATION, TITLE IX, AND GENDER EQUITY ON THE
VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE**

BY

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Master of Arts in Corporate & Public Communications
Seton Hall University**

2005

ABSTRACT

In 1996, The Virginia Military Institute was ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court to change its all-male admissions policy and admit women after a series of court battles lasting over seven years. Despite multiple approaches to maintaining its traditions, arguments made on behalf of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment served as the deciding factor in the Supreme Court's final decision.

Literature and experts on the subject describe the assimilation of VMI not as an event, but as an ongoing process to which all of the effects have not yet been felt. Despite heavily increasing recruitment efforts, the female population was less than 5 percent as late as the 2001-2002 academic year.

The purpose of this study is to take a look back at the decision to assimilate women and determine its effects on the school, both positive and negative, from the planning stages to present day. VMI employees, both past and present, will be interviewed to provide first-hand knowledge on the following topics:

- 1) The History of Assimilation, Female Enrollment, and Attrition
- 2) The Current State of Assimilation at VMI
- 3) The Effects of Assimilation on VMI Athletics

Also to be discussed are the arguments of both sides presented during the series of court battles ending in the Supreme Court that put a halt to VMI's all-male admissions policy. A history will be included chronicling the origin of Title IX of the Fourteenth Amendment and Gender Equity, and how each has affected both the NCAA and more specifically, VMI.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In 1996, The Virginia Military Institute (VMI) was ordered by the Supreme Court to change its all-male admissions policy and admit women after a series of court battles lasting over seven years. Despite multiple approaches to maintaining its traditions, arguments made on behalf of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment served as the deciding factor in the Supreme Court's final decision (Brodie, 2001).

Literature and experts on the subject describe the assimilation of VMI not as an event, but as an ongoing process to which all of the effects have not yet been felt (Brodie, 2001). Despite heavily increasing recruitment efforts, the female population was less than 5 percent as late as the 2001-2002 academic year ("Gender Equity Facts," 2003).

A range of stakeholders offers a wide spectrum of reactions to VMI's take on co-education. Some say the corps of cadets has not yet been fully assimilated since the female population is less than half of many of the military service academies. Others say the arrival of women has had a positive effect on the school's national recognition, and has arguably made the school more marketable to both male and female high school students who may not have even considered a single-sex university of higher education (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 15, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to take a look back at the decision to assimilate women and determine its effects on the school, both positive and negative, from the planning stages to present day. VMI employees, both past and present, will be interviewed to provide first-hand knowledge on the following topics:

- 1) The History of Assimilation, Female Enrollment, and Attrition
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Also to be discussed are the arguments of both sides presented during the series of court battles ending in the Supreme Court that put a halt to VMI's all-male admissions policy. A history will be included chronicling the origin of Title IX of the Fourteenth Amendment and Gender Equity, and how each has affected both the NCAA and more specifically, VMI.

History and Background of VMI

The ranks of alumni of The Virginia Military Institute are filled with famous war generals, Rhodes Scholars, Members of Congress, successful business executives, and professional athletes. But this is not necessarily unique to VMI, being that nearly every institution of higher education has produced accomplished alumni in some field or profession.

Why then, did a high school-aged young woman spur an intervention into the Institute's all-male policy by the U.S. Supreme Court? What was so appealing to her about the school? Was it the school's reputation for the development of character and

physical and mental discipline? Or was it the school's "adversative method" of instruction, known as the infamous "Rat Line" ("United States, Petitioner," 1996)? Regardless, every high school student who applies has his or her own reasons for choosing VMI's Spartan lifestyle over a "civilian" school during what are typically a young person's carefree college-years.

In 1839, the Institute was founded above an active armory in rural Lexington, Virginia. Currently, the school is home to some 1,300 cadets all housed in a single structure known as the "VMI Barracks." Students wear uniforms at all times and participate in mandatory activities such as Reserve Officer Training Course (ROTC), intramural sports, and physical training and testing. Unlike the federal academies, VMI has an optional commissioning policy into the armed services. Approximately thirty-five to forty percent of each graduating class pursues a commission as a second lieutenant in either the Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force ("About VMI," 2004).

The only change in the original mission statement of the school during the transition to its current version was the addition of "and women" following the reference to "honorable men." The post-assimilation mission statement of the Virginia Military Institute is as follows:

“It is the mission of the Virginia Military Institute to produce educated and honorable men and women, prepared for the varied work of civil life, imbued with love of learning, confident in the functions and attitudes of leadership, possessing a high sense of public service, advocates of the American democracy and free enterprise system, and ready as citizen soldiers to defend their country in time of national peril.” - Col. J.T.L. Preston

VMI’s most famed tradition is perhaps the adversarial approach to instilling discipline in its freshmen class through a cadet-instructor or “cadre” system known as the “Rat Line.” Many outsiders view this tradition as a cruel, abrasive, and unnecessary system that singles out less physically and mentally capable cadets from their more able peers. Rather, the Rat Line acts like a tool used to systematically bond these young individuals together into a cohesive group, forcing them to rely on one another for a source of strength and support when their own bodies give out (Brodie, 2001).

Beginning in the end of August and ending in the spring of their freshmen year, new cadets are referred to as “rats” by all upper-classmen. As rats, freshmen must do push-ups and other strenuous exercises as penalties for any number of infractions, all while being yelled at by their cadre members. This method of unrelentingly stressful instruction is structured after the basic training regiment of young Marines at Paris Island.

The Rat Line could very well be the reason why VMI has the highest endowment per alumni of any school in the nation, which is especially significant considering its small size. In addition to the Rat Line, VMI is very proud of its honor code, which demands that a cadet “does not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do.” Similarly, a

hierarchical class system governs the Corps of Cadets inside of barracks through the enforcement of a series of penalties given and policed by their own. VMI's "dyke system" is the pairing of a senior with a freshman to form a mutually beneficial mentoring relationship between the two individuals, which oftentimes lasts far beyond graduation (Brodie, 2001).

Problem Statement

The student body of The Virginia Military Institute is over 90 percent male. Title IX of The Fourteenth Amendment to The U.S. Constitution states that federally funded schools must equally support men's and women's athletic opportunities in education. Although there are three prongs in which a school can pass the Title IX test, the "safest" approach is to pass the test by simply mirroring the athletic opportunities based on the male to female ratio of the student body. This would require VMI to spend less than one tenth of its athletics budget on all female athletic programs (Bonnette, 1996).

With such a small budget for recruiting, facilities, scholarships, etc., what kind of results or quality of team, can the VMI Athletic Department expect from the female programs? However, VMI does not simply aim for the minimal requirement of the Title IX test. Instead, the school seems to continuously expand its women's athletic opportunities to a ratio exceeding the female population of the school by increasing both the number of teams and spending on female athletics.

Critics of Title IX have voiced a concern that women's programs are being added at the expense of men's programs nationwide (Hannon, 2003). Although arguments can be made that suggest women's athletic opportunities often draw funding away from

men's programs, a study conducted by the United States General Accounting Office in March 2001 concluded that schools deciding to eliminate certain sports for gender equity reasons do so because of its administration, and not due to forced compliance to Title IX law (Brand, 2003).

Research Question

What have been the effects of assimilation on the Virginia Military Institute, specifically in terms of enrollment, attrition, its current state, and athletics?

Subsidiary Questions

1. What was VMI's approach to co-education in the early years of assimilation?
2. How did VMI recruit its first females?
3. How did VMI recruit its first female athletes?
4. What methods are currently in place to recruit females and how does it differ from male recruitment methods?
5. How have trends in female enrollment compared to trends in male enrollment?
6. How have trends in female attrition compared to trends in male attrition?
7. What are the similarities and differences between female athlete and non-athlete recruiting methods?
8. What have been the effects of female athletics at VMI?
9. How do trends in female athlete enrollment and attrition compare to trends of female non-athletes?

Objectives

The objective of this study is to understand the full effects of assimilation on VMI, starting from its early planning stages and ranging all the way to present day. The second half of the paper will hinge upon information and statistics obtained through phone interviews with VMI employees, both past and present, who were able to provide some type of first-hand insight into the schools predictions, motives, and goals behind assimilation. By analyzing statistics such as male and female enrollment, attrition, and athletics, the author hopes to uncover trends that represent an accurate portrayal of the history of gender relations at VMI.

Definition of Terms

- Appropriate: Have there been a reasonable amount of positives? Do the positives outweigh the negatives?
- Assimilation: The term used to describe the process of females enrolling at VMI.
- Cadre: Cadet instructors charged with disciplining and training the freshmen or “rats.”
- Effective: Has VMI met the requirements of assimilation set by the Supreme Court?
 - o In the eyes of the VMI’s administration, have they done a “good job” with the assimilation process?
 - o Was the school successful in assimilating women?
- Effects: How the assimilation of women has acted as a factor in altering school policies, programs, regulations, administration, and trends such as enrollment, attrition, and athletics.

- Gender Discrimination: Unfair and unequal treatment that is based solely on whether a person is male or female (Bonnette, 1996).
- Intermediate Level of Scrutiny: The scrutiny level applied by courts that is easier for the government to meet than the strict scrutiny test, but more difficult than the “rational relationship” test. This level of scrutiny is typically applied in cases involving gender discrimination issues, and must prove that there is a clear and logical reason for separations on the basis of gender. In other words, there must be a functional relationship between the government’s act and its purpose (Menacker, 1996).
- Rational Relationship Test: The rational relationship test merely requires the government to show that there is a logical or rational relationship between the government’s action (i.e. law) and the law’s purpose. (Menacker, 1996).
- Separate But Equal: The idea that each race (or gender) should have its own housing, schools, churches, jobs, public transportation, and so on; racially segregated (Menacker, 1996).
- Strict Level of Scrutiny: An extended and detailed analysis by courts investigating claims of discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, alien status, or a fundamental right such as freedom of speech or religion. In this case, the government’s actions, or the law(s) in question, are very closely tested to determine a compelling interest for treating people differently on one of these bases. It must also show that this governmental action is the least restrictive means to achieving its purpose and is narrowly tailored to advance this compelling interest (Menacker, 1996).

Limitations

Data taken from statistics on attrition of both males and females will be classified by date only, and will not take into account circumstances that may or may not be beyond the control of the cadets themselves. For example, aside from dissatisfaction with the school and/or Rat Line, a person might be forced into resignation due to financial reasons, grades, honor offenses, personal circumstances, health concerns, disciplinary infractions (suspensions/expulsions), etc.

Although it would seem data taken from other military schools such as the federal academies, The Citadel, Norwich University, The New Mexico Military Institute, Virginia Tech and Texas A&M Corps of Cadets would demonstrate an interesting contrast, the reader must keep in mind several other factors when references or comparisons are made.

For example, the federal academies (The United States Military Academy, The United States Naval Academy, and The United States Air Force Academy) have international renown, mandatory commissioning, and therefore no tuition. Another example is that The New Mexico Military Institute is a two-year junior college. Also, cadets at both Virginia Tech and Texas A&M become “civilian” students when they remove themselves from the Corps of Cadets, whereas as VMI cadets must transfer to a completely different school (Brodie, 2001). Norwich University voluntarily assimilated women in 1974, and The Citadel is comprised of over 5,000 cadets, which would make it much easier to field NCAA teams for both men and women.

According to experts, the desire of women to attend a military college is less frequent to the desire found in men, thus the number of applicants and matriculates will perpetually remain significantly different (“United States, Petitioner,” 1996).

It was predicted, and held to be true for the second year, that both the number and quality of applications would soar for membership to VMI’s first coed class, and the quality of female student would be high. After that, the “novelty” would have worn off, and the number and quality of female applicants/matriculates would gradually decrease (Brodie, 2001).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Road To The U.S. Supreme Court

In March of 1989, a complaint was filed by an anonymous female high school student against The Virginia Military Institute for denying her request of application materials. This prompted an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice into VMI's "all-male" admissions policy, and called into question whether or not it was in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Brodie, 2001). The Fourteenth Amendment states that any educational institution receiving federal financial assistance shall not be allowed to discriminate on the basis of sex. This investigation began what would become a series of court battles lasting a total of seven years ("United States, Petitioner," 1996).

The first court battle was held in Roanoke, Virginia, to decide whether or not VMI's all-male admissions policy violated the Fourteenth Amendment, and if so, how could it be ameliorated. The major issues that were debated were a) did the benefits of an all-male educational institution outweigh the negatives, and b) was an all-male student body absolutely necessary to achieving VMI's mission statement (Brodie, 2001).

The Honorable Judge Jackson Kiser ruled in favor of VMI, stating that the school's admissions policy was not in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, and the value of the education would be lost in a co-ed environment. This decision, however, would soon be overruled in the second court battle held in a Richmond, Virginia, Court of Appeals. The rationale behind the second decision was that evidence presented during

the initial case supporting the benefits of an all-male school was not sufficient and VMI was, in fact, held in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. At the conclusion of the second trial, VMI was forced into one of three options to satisfy the Fourteenth Amendment (Brodie, 2001). These three options were:

1. To change its policy to allow females and continue to receive federal financial assistance.
2. To convert from a public to a private institution and become financially self-supported.
3. Or, to create an all-female equivalent institution to accommodate the desires of women wishing to attend VMI.

VMI chose the third option, which was to create a sister school to accommodate the interests of all females accepting the challenge of the “VMI experience.” On the campus of nearby Mary Baldwin College, a privately funded liberal arts program was established known as The Virginia Women’s Institute for Leadership (VWIL). The all-female student body resided in college dorms and lived in a less stressful, more cooperative system designed to “reinforce self-esteem.” VWIL admitted students with lower test scores than its all-male counterpart, teachers were paid significantly less, less faculty held PhDs, and endowments totaled only about one seventh of that of VMI (“United States, Petitioner,” 1996).

In a follow-up inspection conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, VWIL was found to be lacking in several areas, and in their opinion did not appease the

“separate but equal” requirement. This led to a third appearance in court between The U.S. Government and The Commonwealth questioning whether or not VWIL could suffice as a worthy female substitute. The third ruling went in favor of the Commonwealth deeming VWIL, in fact, “separate but equal” (Brodie, 2001).

Following the third trial which ruled in favor of VMI, an appeal was filed claiming that VWIL was definitely not “separate but equal,” based on criteria such as quality of faculty, facilities, funding, and end product. Again, the fourth ruling favored VMI and the Commonwealth and deemed VWIL a suitable educational experience to rival that of VMI (Brodie, 2001).

The fifth round was a third appeal of the decision declaring VWIL “separate but equal,” with both sides pleading their cases before The United States Supreme Court for what would be the final battle. This time, VWIL was examined much more closely and was found to be an inapt substitute to VMI in too many respects. Furthermore, VMI was cited as being in violation of the equal protection clause of The Fourteenth Amendment by discriminating against females, and previously accepted justification for the all-male policy was found to be unacceptable. Sufficient reasons for keeping the school entirely male, as well as reasons why women meeting the admissions criteria cannot attend were never agreed upon. Combined with the fact that the school could not afford to become privately funded, VMI (and The Citadel) had no choice but to open its doors to women for the first time in over a century and a half of tradition (Brodie, 2001).

Interestingly enough, The Commonwealth of Virginia has historically maintained single-sex education policies in relation to post-secondary schools. For example, the publicly funded University of Virginia first opened its doors to women as late as 1972.

VMI did, however, stand behind their argument that over a century and half of tradition and service would be forever lost if the Supreme Court ruling were to stand and VMI was ordered to admit women (Menacker, 1996).

Rationale Behind the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision to Assimilate VMI

The Supreme Court had two clearly defined arguments to justify its decision. As delivered by The Honorable Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the rationale behind the Supreme Court's decision to assimilate VMI is as follows:

- 1) VMI's reputation made it an appealing place for young people (both male and female) to attend, and since it received state funding it must be required to accommodate that desire (i.e. The Equal Protection Clause of The Fourteenth Amendment).

- 2) There is nothing specific in VMI's mission statement, curriculum, or training regiment that makes it impossible for women to complete four years of undergraduate education at the school (despite minor changes such as restrooms, locker rooms, policy modification, etc.). Furthermore, women have already been assimilated into all three of the federal service academies, and have been proven to be able to withstand the physical and mental rigors of the systems ("United States, Petitioner," 1996).

In her own words, Justice Ruther Bader Ginsburg states

“Neither the goal of producing citizen soldiers nor VMI’s implementing methodology is inherently unsuitable to women. And the school’s impressive record producing leaders has made admission desirable to some women. Nevertheless, Virginia has elected to preserve exclusively for men the advantages and opportunities a VMI education affords.” (“United States, Petitioner,” 1996)

Justice Antonin Scalia, delivering the dissent, had several points to counter the rationale of the majority. Justice Scalia believed that interpretation of The Bill of Rights, in this instance, was being manipulated to apply to VMI’s policies. VMI’s tradition was implemented after The Bill of Rights, and if it was to be held in violation, shouldn’t it have been nullified immediately? Justice Scalia also held that The Supreme Court’s request requiring VMI to present “exceedingly persuasive justification” for endorsing its all-male admissions policy is too broad and had no set “passing” requirement, but would appear to be a law created with no applicable jurisdiction. Finally, the dissent agreed with former previous decisions that VWIL was an appropriate substitute to the educational experience of VMI, and elaborated by stating that “separate but equal” does not necessarily have to be an exact substitute (“United States...Dissent,” 1996).

The Evolution of Female Enrollment

Following the decision of the Supreme Court, VMI changed its former stance of all-male to a co-educational experience that would continue to adhere to the original mission of The Institute as closely as possible. On August 18, 1997, 30 females entered the gates of VMI, as did 415 males, to begin a new era of learning and training as the Class of 2001 (Brodie, 2001). During the first week of matriculation known as “Hell Week,” 5 females and 42 males would leave bringing the attrition rate to 10.2 percent (10.9 percent the previous year), which does not differ significantly from the attrition rate of previous years. Historically, between 5 and 10 percent of students leave in the first week, and 15 percent leave by the end of the first semester on average over the past eleven years (“Klingerstown woman,” 1997).

The composition of the VMI Corps of cadets is roughly 1,300 students from 45 states and 13 countries. In terms of race and gender, the student body is 7 percent African-American, 4 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 percent Native American, and 6 percent female (about 64 of 1,300 students are female.) Physical fitness and aptitude is an integral part of the VMI experience, and passing grades on physical fitness aptitude tests has remained relatively constant with the admission of women, staying between 85 and 89 percent over the past five years. In terms of athletic programs offered by the school, women compete at the Division I level in 6 sports, while men compete in 13 different sports (“VMI Athletic History,” 2004).

Admission to the school has increased for females by 12 percent in 2000, and the school hopes to boost female students to 10 percent of the student body over the next five years. Unfortunately, despite direct mail of women’s and girl’s state programs, and other

general recruiting tactics, the interest of females in VMI remains relatively low. The applicant pool for the 2002-2003 academic school year resulted in 1,435 applicants (the second highest number in VMI history) with a 61 percent acceptance rate. 433 matriculates resulted, 24 of which being women (“Virginia... Quick Facts,” 2004). The admissions department remains concerned that despite increased female recruitment, the yield of female cadets is slightly lower than the previous two years relative to the total number of applicants.

History of Title IX and The Fourteenth Amendment, and the Relation to VMI

In order to establish citizenship of former slaves following the Civil War, The Fourteenth Amendment was proposed and ratified to prevent against states denying equal rights to any person. The equal protection clause states “...nor shall any state... deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Menacker, 1996).

Enforcement and clarification of this law was first brought to national attention in 1896 in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In this instance, federal courts deemed segregating railroads by race was acceptable as long as facilities were “separate but equal.” A similar case arose in 1954 when this same justification for segregation was applied to students in public schools in the monumental case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. This time, courts ruled that although separate, the two schools systems were clearly not equal (Menacker, 1996).

The Equal Protection Clause of The Fourteenth Amendment became a highly debated topic because, unlike the issue of race, in some cases “separate but equal” is necessary when dealing with gender differences. Therefore, The Equal Opportunities

Clause was redirected on ensuring educational expenditures and federal funding were equally divided between men's and women's opportunities and facilities rather than disproportionately skewed among the two genders (Menacker, 1996).

In 1972, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments of the Civil Rights Act of 1972 aimed at equalizing educational differences on the basis of gender. Following its implementation later that year, Title IX was responsible for remarkable advances in female participation in scholastic athletic competition at all levels. As early as 1978, over two million high-school aged females participated in various sports, as opposed to only 300,000 at the time of its inception. On the collegiate level, female participation in athletics increased from 32,000 participants in 1971 to more than 64,000 in 1977. By 1980, however, the rapid rise in participation began to level off when Title IX protections weakened (Brand, 2003).

Title IX States:

“No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, or denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.”

(Hannon, 2003)

In 1979, a three-prong test for Title IX compliance was issued to detail the requirements of all schools wishing to gain membership in the NCAA. The criteria is as follows:

- A school has a history of providing athletic opportunities for the underrepresented gender, typically women;
 - A school meets the athletic needs and interests of its students;
 - A school has an athletic program that balances spending and the number of players in a way that mirrors the male and female population at the school.
- For instance, if a school is 70% female, about 70% of athletic resources and team slots should go to women (Hannon, 2003).

Controversy arose over details of Title IX and if it even applied to VMI's all-male policy in the case *U.S. v. Commonwealth of Virginia* (1996). In this instance, it was unclear if VMI's policy was in outright violation of The Fourteenth Amendment, or if it was excused from the law altogether because if it were to be labeled "unjust," it should have been deemed so upon its conception. Critics argued that not only did the school receive federal funding, but nothing in the school's curriculum posed an un-surmountable obstacle to women. Although the school presented many solid arguments, the central issue concerned the school's infamous "adversative system" for training incoming cadets. The school supported their arguments with scientific studies pointing out the benefits to single-sex education, and claimed their training system would have to be changed, thus losing its educational value, if women were admitted ("United States, Petitioner," 1996).

The Fourteenth Amendment was applied once again to the school when the supposedly comparable facilities for women were examined to determine if they were, in fact, separate but equal. Finally, after several appeals and more evidence was brought

forward, VMI was finally ordered to admit women and change its longstanding tradition (Brodie, 2001).

Gender Equity and The Gender Equity Task Force

The issue of Gender Equity was created following a report which was published in 1991 examining the expenditures of schools belonging to the NCAA on men's and women's athletic programs. In response to the report, the executive director of the NCAA issued the "Gender Equity Task Force," whose responsibility it would be to define gender equity ("Equity in Athletics").

The mission of the Gender Equity Task Force is as follows:

"An athletics program can be considered gender equitable when the participants in both the men's and women's sports programs would accept as fair and equitable the overall program of the other gender. No individual should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, institutionally or nationally, in intercollegiate athletics"

- NCAA Gender-Equity Task Force (Bonnette, 1996)

Some initiatives issued by the task force were to collect the same statistics and information as the initial report published in 1991, but at five-year intervals. This requirement was passed into law in 1994 in The United States Congress as the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) requiring all schools wishing to achieve or sustain membership in the NCAA to meet one of three specific requirements ("Equity in

Athletics”). These three requirements, although similar to the guidelines set by Title IX, are meant to ensure that athletic opportunities at schools are “equal” based on the following criteria:

- Accommodations of Interests and Abilities (sports offerings)
- Athletic Financial Assistance (scholarships)
- Other Program Areas, specifically:
 - o Equipment and supplies
 - o Scheduling of games and practice time
 - o Travel and per diem allowances
 - o Tutoring
 - o Coaching
 - o Locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities
 - o Medical and training facilities
 - o Housing and dining facilities and services
 - o Publicity
 - o Support services
 - o Recruitment of student-athletes

The underlying purpose of the report, which is published every five-years, is to identify trends that have emerged and decide whether or not these trends further or prevent gender equity. The task force is also charged with making recommendations to

schools not meeting the criteria, as well as monitoring the progress of the change initiatives (Bonnette, 1996).

How Title IX and Gender Equity Has Effected the NCAA

In addition to the Gender Equity Task Force, other government organizations have been charged with monitoring emerging trends as they relate to Title IX and Gender Equity as well. Although tremendously successful in increasing the number of female athletic opportunities, Title IX has historically been a frequently debated issue due to the various stakeholders involved. On several occasions, allegations have been made accusing the law of furthering female athletic opportunities at the expense of men's programs. Although there are numerous reports and experts vouching for both sides, it remains unclear as to where exactly the source of added athletic opportunities are coming from, as well as the general cause for any decreasing athletic opportunities (Brands, 2003).

In March of 2001, The U.S. General Accounting Office organized a follow-up study of participation in athletics for both the NCAA and NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics), identifying recent trends (Brands, 2003). The major findings are as follows:

- Athletics participation for both men and women has increased since 1981.
- The number of women participating in intercollegiate athletics at four-year colleges and universities increased substantially, while the number of men participating has also increased, though more modestly.
- The total number of teams has increased for both men and women.

- Several women's sports and men's sports experienced net decreases in the number of teams - notably, gymnastics for women, wrestling for men.
- Since 1992, 963 schools added teams and 307 discontinued teams. Most were able to add teams - usually women's teams - without discontinuing any men's teams.
- Surprisingly, the level of student interest was the factor schools cited most often as greatly or very greatly influencing their most recent decision to add or discontinue both men's and women's teams.
- Other reasons cited for discontinuing teams included the need to reallocate the athletics budget to other sports and gender-equity concerns.

Despite these promising statistics, doubts as to the effectiveness in pursuing equal opportunities for both men and women remain. Still, the NCAA defends its position as a stern supporter of Title IX law, and their position is summarized as followed:

“That, of course, is what Title IX is. It is civil rights law, designed to assure the under-represented gender that it has as much right to participation opportunities in educationally based athletics as does the over-represented gender... The conclusions are clear. The decisions to discontinue specific sports are made at the institutional level for a variety of reasons. If the decision is made to eliminate sports for gender-equity reasons, it is because institutions have chosen this path, not because Title IX dictates such action. Rather, Title IX has been used as an excuse to close these programs; it is not the reason.”

- Myles Brand, NCAA President (Brands, 2003)

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Breakdown of the Interview Process

Group I: The History of Assimilation, Female Enrollment and Attrition

The first category of interviews will consist of VMI employees directly involved with the planning, implementation, and monitoring efforts surrounding assimilation. The purpose for obtaining this information is to learn firsthand the problems, successes, and issues (both expected and unexpected) that arose from start to finish. These perspectives will be particularly useful and insightful because they come from individuals who can apply the part they played during the process to the final outcome.

Specific points of interest for this group include the following:

- What was VMI's approach to co-education in the early years of assimilation?
- How did VMI recruit its first females?
- How did VMI recruit its first female athletes?

Group II: The Current State of Assimilation at VMI

The second category of interviews will consist of current employees of the Institute that have some form of involvement with the young men and women that make up the Corps of Cadets. Whether it be recruiting, admissions, faculty, or administration. The insight, experience, and observations of these individuals are meant to act as indicators of the current state of assimilation at VMI.

Specific points of interest for this group include the following:

- What methods are currently in place to recruit females and how does it differ from male recruitment methods?
- How have trends in female enrollment compared to trends in male enrollment?
- How have trends in female attrition compared to trends in male attrition?

Group III: The Effects of Assimilation on VMI Athletics

The third and final category of interviews will consist of individuals involved with VMI athletics, particularly with women's teams and programs. The purpose behind this segment is to find out the effects of assimilation on athletics at the school, which is often indicative of the school's national recognition and public perception.

Specific points of interest for this group include the following:

- What are the similarities and differences between female athlete and non-athlete recruiting methods?
- What have been the effects of female athletics at VMI?
- How do trends in female athlete enrollment and attrition compare to trends of female non-athletes?

Ultimately, the focus of the interviews will be to find out from a firsthand, up-to-the-minute, internal perception of the assimilation process from its conception to its

current state. Ideally, data will be obtained that is not available in books or online, adding further depth and distinctiveness to the study.

CHAPTER IV

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

GROUP I:

The History of Assimilation, Female Enrollment, and Attrition

What was VMI's approach to co-education in the early years of assimilation?

The majority opinion of Justice Ginsburg of the U.S Supreme Court stated that VMI must eventually be able to reach at least ten percent female enrollment (roughly 40 females). Although many VMI employees and those associated with the school viewed ten percent female enrollment as “highly unlikely,” when compared to the service academies ten percent is a very modest figure. However, the Admissions Office knew that ten percent would necessitate a huge campaign to generate a large enough female applicant pool if it was to compare to the male applicant pool (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

However, once the Supreme Court ordered VMI to assimilate women, the administration made every effort to accommodate women as well as possible without compromising the VMI way of life (R. Thompson, personal communication, February 24, 2005). The effect that this had on the first female applicant pool was positive, because females seeking the “VMI experience” did not want to have a “modified” or “water-down” version of the original (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 15, 2005).

Ironically, many changes were made to the Rat Line and the traditional VMI way of life, but not on account of women. Changes made to the Rat Line were aimed at lowering VMI's high first semester attrition rate, which usually averaged between 10 – 15 percent of each freshman class. These changes to the VMI experience were brought

about by a new Commandant of Cadets (similar to a Dean of Students), Colonel Eric Hutchins (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

Changes to the Rat Line included things such as less time spent together between rats and their cadre instructors, a shorter span of time dubbed the “Rat Line,” and more emphasis on academics and less on military training, to name a few. The Commandant also cracked down heavily on illegal Rat Line activity (i.e. hazing) as well as the illegal consumption of alcohol on Post.

As far as targeting a number of females for the first co-ed class, VMI followed a different pattern than the service academies had been forced into during their own assimilation processes. Rather than create enrollment opportunities for women at the expense of men’s opportunities, VMI hoped to recruit an especially large incoming freshmen class. The ideal “rat mass” would consist of approximately 30 women and 420 men, rather than the usual 400 to 420 males (Brodie, 2001).

In a comparison to the federal academies, the percentage of women in the first coed class seems to fall in line with the percentages of women during the first years of co-education. What distinguishes VMI in this case is that the number of female matriculates did not come at the expense of male slots, partially due to the fact that the academies are funded by the government, while VMI is funded in part by the Commonwealth of Virginia as well as student tuition.

Institution	Gender	Number	Percent Female
VMI	Men	415	
	Women	30	6.7%
Army	Men	1400	
	Women	119	7.8%
Navy	Men	1214	
	Women	81	6.3%
Air Force	Men	1441	
	Women	156	9.8%

(Brodie, 2001)

How did VMI recruit its first females?

Recruitment methods of females for the first co-ed class at VMI consisted almost exclusively of direct mail to lists provided by several college research centers. In the fall of 1996 VMI's Admissions Office sent out 35,082 application packets to high-school students provided by the College Board, the National Research Center for College and University Admissions, and the American College Testing Service. The Admissions Office also gave the Department of Defense information packets to mail to 3,700 young women who were applying for ROTC scholarships nationwide, and sent a trial mailing to the 1,400 women believed to comprise the entire female membership of the Civil Air Patrol. (Brodie, 2001)

The rationale behind this monumental "shot gun" approach to recruiting VMI's first females was due primarily to the fact that the school had no previous data with

which to predict the number or percent of responses they would receive. This one-time approach was largely pre-cautionary, and meant to ensure that the school had done everything possible as soon as possible to reach the 10 percent mark set by the U.S. Supreme Court (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

In comparison, the mailing of admissions packets to females would drop from over 35,000 for the class of 2001 to 9,000 for the class of 2002. The explanation behind this massive drop was for the following reasons: The word had to get out that VMI was no longer single-sex, and had to generate recognition amongst female high-school students as a viable option for attending college. Also, it was hoped for that the first year of co-education would generate a large amount of positive media coverage, which would create favorable publicity and public relations at little to no cost to the school (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

Another method to create a small population of female upper-classman was a scholarship program with the New Mexico Military Institute and the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. These transfer students would enroll at VMI as upperclassman, much to the disapproval of VMI's existing upper-class. This method was meant to act as a system of support for female freshmen by providing "big sister" figures in an effort to decrease potential female attrition. It was also a precautionary measure taken by the administration to show that they had done everything possible to create and nourish a female population at the school in its infancy stages of assimilation.

Unfortunately, this program was dropped after only two years, since VMI had its own upper-class female cadets, and the school had seemingly fallen into a state of complacency once the first year of assimilation had been completed. Much like many

corporations, major change initiatives had been dropped rather than maintained once the leadership feels the worst part of the “storm” has passed. In this case, however, the school took a gamble by dropping the program and fared well, being that the absence of female transfer students had a very small effect (if any) on the female freshmen attrition (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

How did VMI recruit its first female athletes?

Recruitment of female athletes primarily came in the form of men’s coaches recruiting female track & field and cross-country athletes for VMI’s fledgling squads. Without a winning record, national recognition, or even a team to use as a recruiting tool, the only effective method to entice females was a full athletic scholarship. In terms of the distribution of athletic funding for scholarship purposes, women’s opportunities were equal to that of men’s on account of Title IX. However, due to the drastically different male to female ratio, the distribution is more frequent amongst VMI’s male athlete population, but in terms of percentages favors female athletes. (C. Hoffman, personal communication, March 15, 2005). A breakdown of the percentages of cadets on athletic scholarships for the spring of 2005 is as follows:

Spring 2004	Cadets Participating on NCAA teams	Cadet Receiving Sport-related Financial Assistance	Percentages
Males	333	140	42%
Females	30	18	60%
Totals	363	158	43.5%

(C. Wade, personal communication, March 29, 2005)

According to Title IX law VMI would eventually need to field 7 women's teams to meet NCAA requirements and remain in Division I (M. Bissell, personal communication, March 30, 2005).

“If one estimated that it might take an average of ten women to fill a team (fourteen are required for indoor/outdoor track, eleven for a women's swimming/diving team, five for cross-country), with some women doubling on two teams, VMI would eventually need to attract somewhere from sixty to seventy female athletes. Since VMI did not ever expect to have much more than 130 women in its Corps, the Institute would always need about fifty percent of its women to compete in varsity sports, if it wanted its men's teams to remain in Division I.”
(Brodie, 2001)

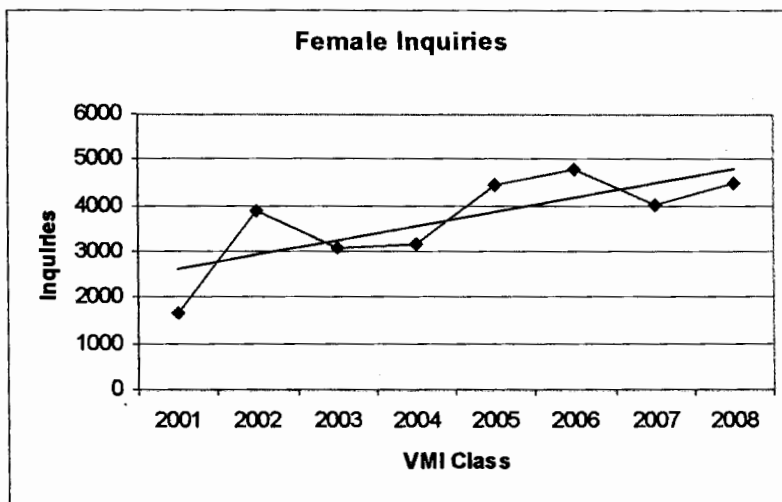
For its first two co-ed years, VMI operated under a two-year renewable waiver of NCAA and Southern Conference specifications, which required the school to demonstrate that it was making progress toward building more athletic opportunities for women at the school (S. MacInnis, personal communication, March 15, 2001).

GROUP II:

The Current State of Assimilation at VMI

What methods are currently in place to recruit females and how does it differ from male recruitment methods?

The newest and most effective tool for the recruitment of females at VMI was the creation of an assistant position within the Admissions Office specifically for the purpose of recruiting women to the school. This position (currently held by a female graduate of VMI's class of 2002) acts as a point of contact for female inquiries, which have reached over 4,500 for the class of 2008. Another responsibility of this position is to cater to the female audience at coed open houses, and to fully inform and prepare females seeking the "VMI Experience" as to what exactly they are getting themselves into. By answering questions and providing information, this position acts as a sort of screening process that filters the less serious candidates from those who are strongly considering VMI as a college choice. (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 31, 2005).



Female Inquiries

2001	1688
2002	3891
2003	3101
2004	3185
2005	4462
2006	4797
2007	4026
2008	4498

This position was created in response to the steadily decreasing number of female matriculants, which had started out with thirty for the class of 2001, thirty-three for the class of 2002, and then twenty-eight and twenty-four for the class of 2003 and 2004, respectively. Although it was predicted by people involved with VMI that the number of women admitted to the school would drop after the initial “media rush” was over, it was believed that with effort and careful planning the female population could be increased (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

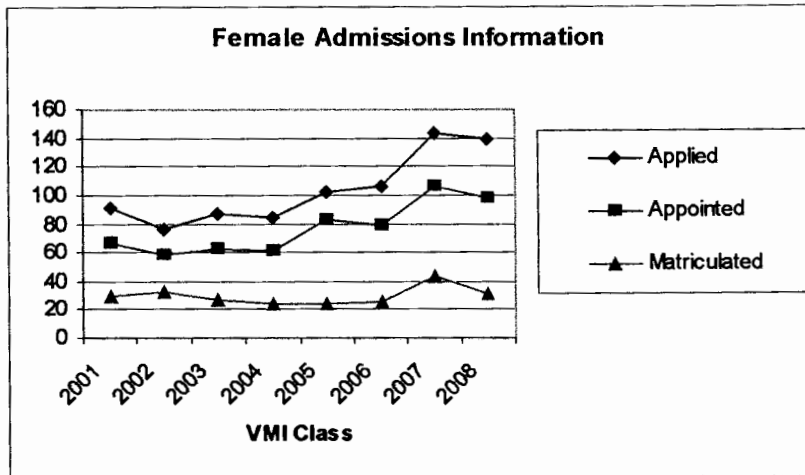
A problem that the Admissions Office has in the recruitment of women is that although many females inquire about the school, not many females are willing to commit themselves to four harsh years of a military-grounded education (Brodie, 2001).

In relation to male recruitment efforts, a disproportionate amount of resources of the Admissions Office is devoted to females because it “Takes three times as much effort to recruit a female to VMI than it does a male.” (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 31, 2005).

How have trends in female enrollment compared to those found in male enrollment?

VMI’s approach to co-education was that it would add female opportunities not at the expense of male opportunities. However, this would cause a problem a few years down the road because as the female population increased, a compromise had to be reached to decrease the number of male opportunities. The underlying trend, however, was that the female population is increasing at only a slightly faster rate than the rate at which the male population is decreasing (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).

Female Admissions Information



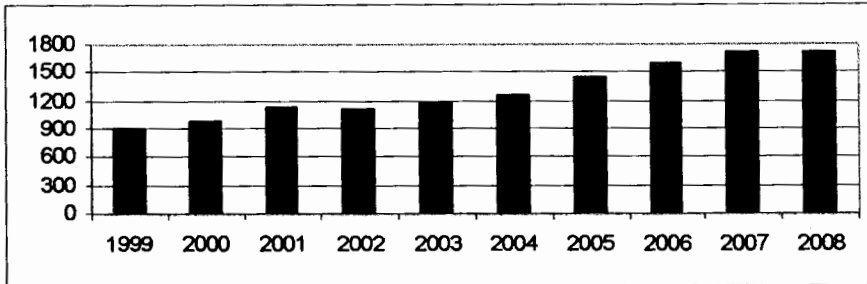
Admissions Information	Applied	Appointed	Matriculated
2001	91	67	30
2002	76	59	33
2003	87	63	28
2004	85	61	24
2005	103	83	24
2006	106	80	26
2007	144	106	44
2008	140	98	32

A seemingly obvious trend in enrollment at the school is that as the applicant pool steadily grows every year, the school is forced to become more selective. In being more selective, one of the primary indicators of this trend is the average standardized testing scores, which is steadily increasing for each incoming class (S. MacInnis, personal communication, March 31, 2005).

As stated by a member of VMI's Admissions Office:

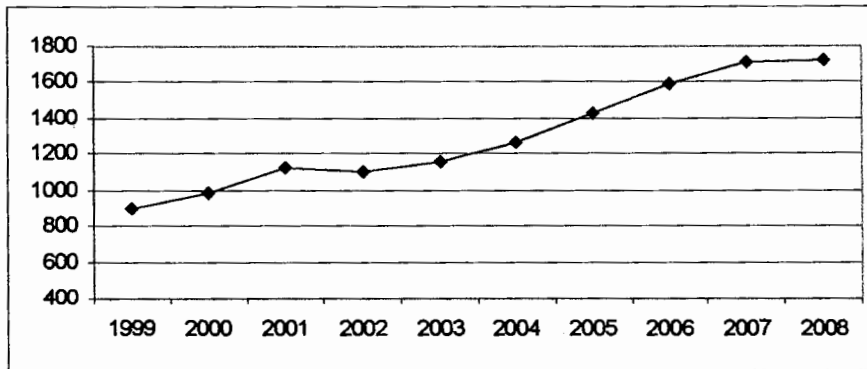
"Each year our class profile continues to reach new heights and I definitely attribute that to having women at VMI. Back in 1996, 1997, 1998 VMI was constantly exposed in the media, and maybe a co-ed VMI is more marketable to high school males who may not have considered going to such a small all-male military school. The increased number of applicants every year forces us (the Admissions Office) to be more selective, hence an improved class profile. However, VMI has nothing to brag about when it averages 30 women per year for 8 years, and that's before they quit." (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 31, 2005)

Applications Received

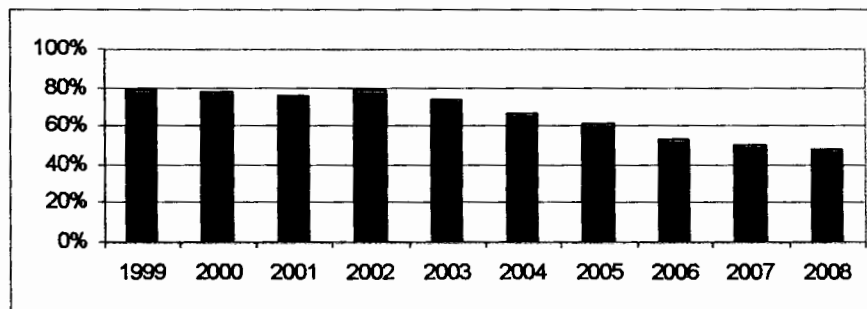


Applications Rec'd

1996	961
1997	904
1998	910
1999	902
2000	988
2001	1132
2002	1103
2003	1162
2004	1265
2005	1436
2006	1593
2007	1711
2008	1719

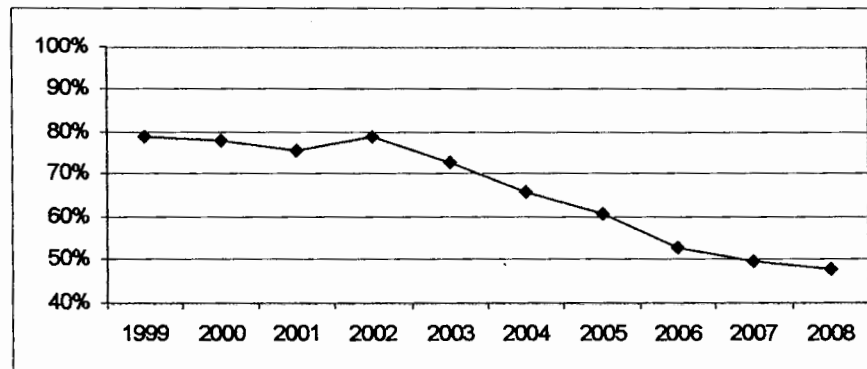


Acceptance Rates

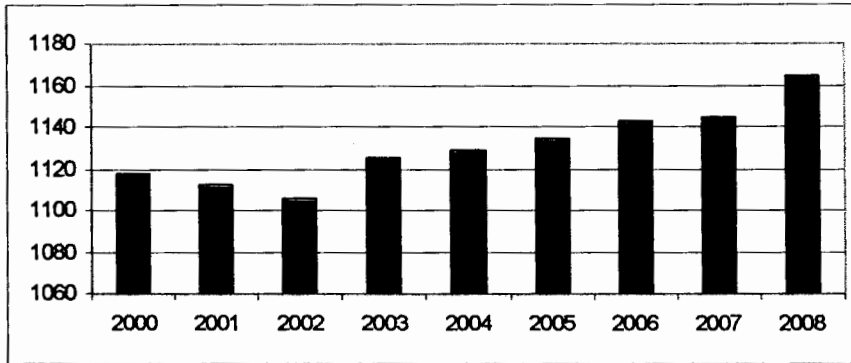


Accept Rates

1996	78%
1997	76%
1998	79%
1999	79%
2000	78%
2001	76%
2002	79%
2003	73%
2004	66%
2005	61%
2006	53%
2007	50%
2008	48%

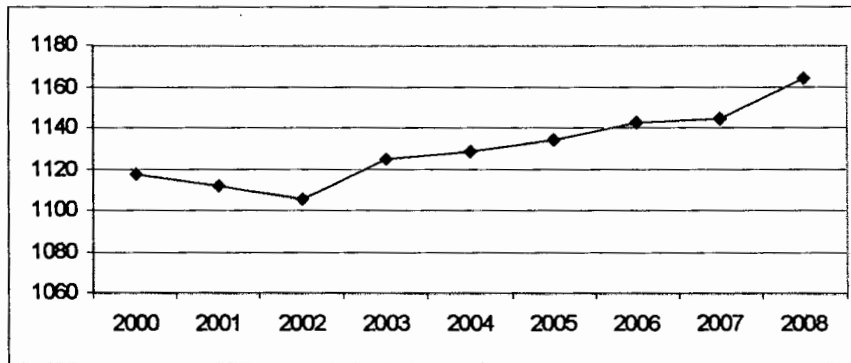


SAT Averages

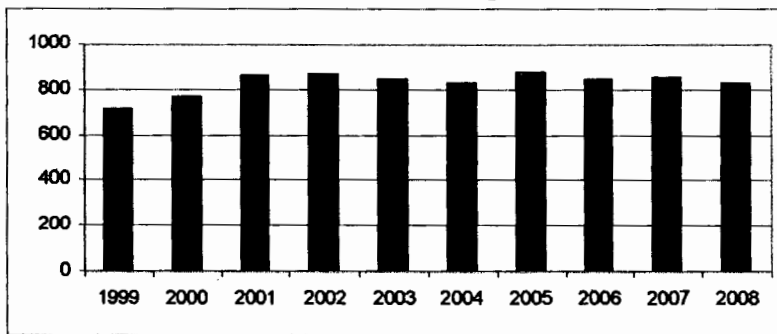


SAT AVG

2000	1118
2001	1112
2002	1106
2003	1125
2004	1129
2005	1134
2006	1143
2007	1145
2008	1164

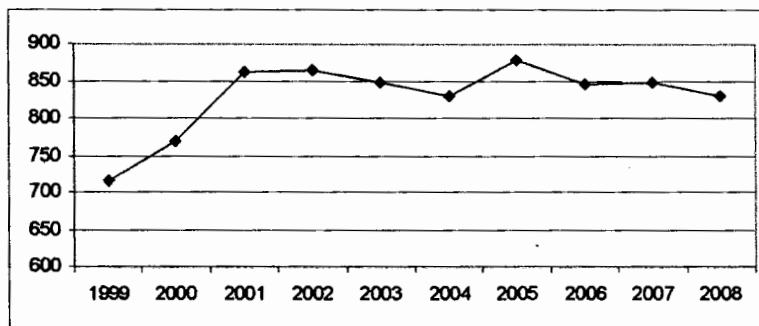


Appointments

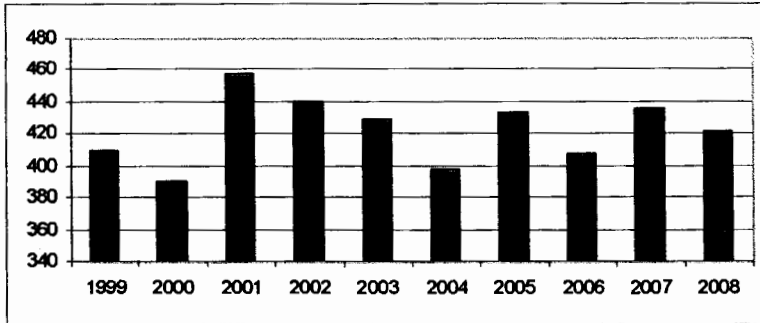


Appointments

1996	748
1997	683
1998	723
1999	717
2000	770
2001	863
2002	866
2003	848
2004	830
2005	878
2006	847
2007	849
2008	830

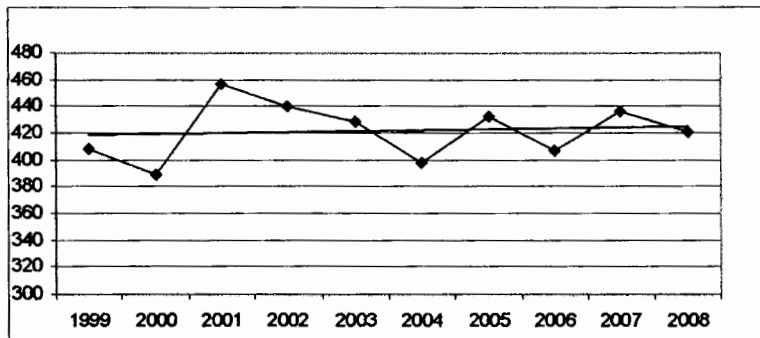


Class Size (1999-2008)

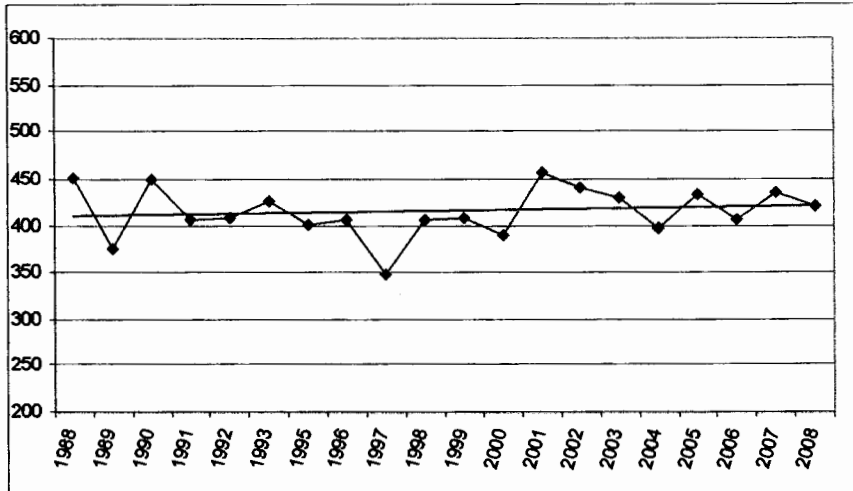


Class Size

1996	406
1997	349
1998	406
1999	409
2000	390
2001	457
2002	440
2003	429
2004	398
2005	433
2006	407
2007	436
2008	421



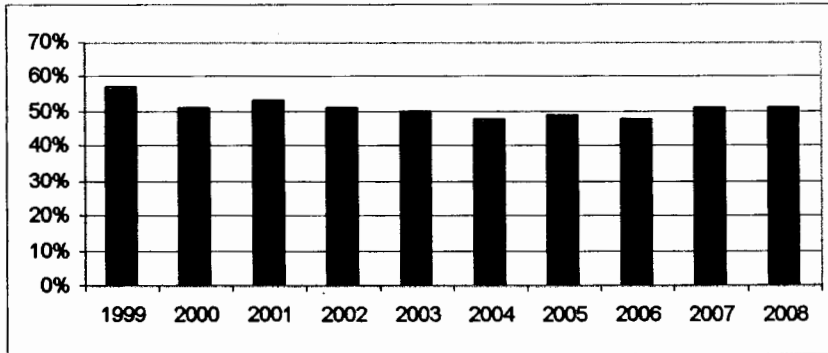
Class Size (1976-2008)



Class Size

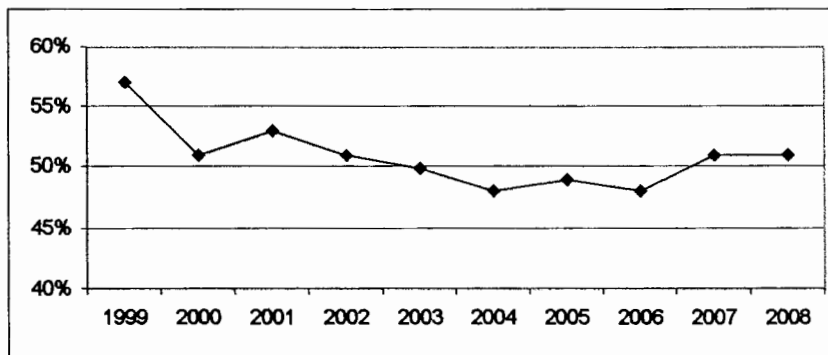
1976	347
1977	369
1978	362
1979	431
1980	407
1981	374
1982	402
1983	403
1984	408
1985	443
1986	387
1987	380
1988	452
1989	375
1990	449
1991	407
1992	409
1993	426
1995	401
1996	406
1997	349
1998	406
1999	409
2000	390
2001	457
2002	440
2003	429
2004	398
2005	433
2006	407
2007	436
2008	421

Yields

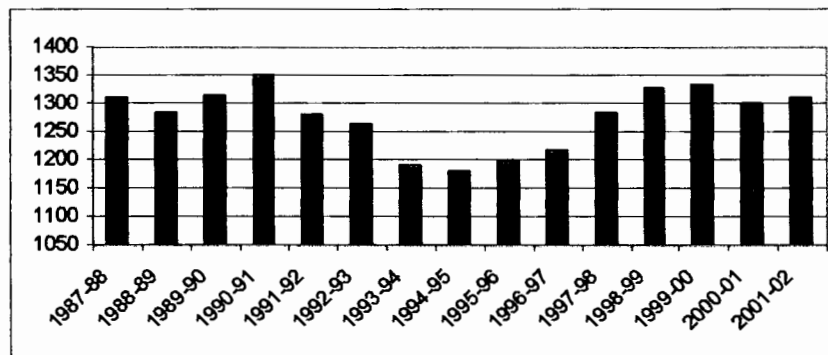


% Yields

1996	54%
1997	51%
1998	56%
1999	57%
2000	51%
2001	53%
2002	51%
2003	50%
2004	48%
2005	49%
2006	48%
2007	51%
2008	51%

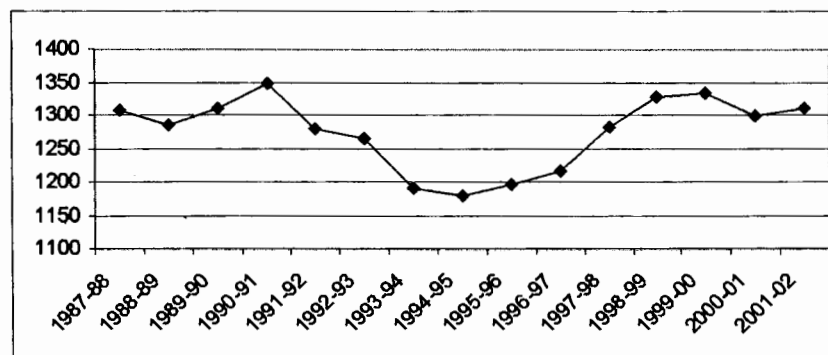


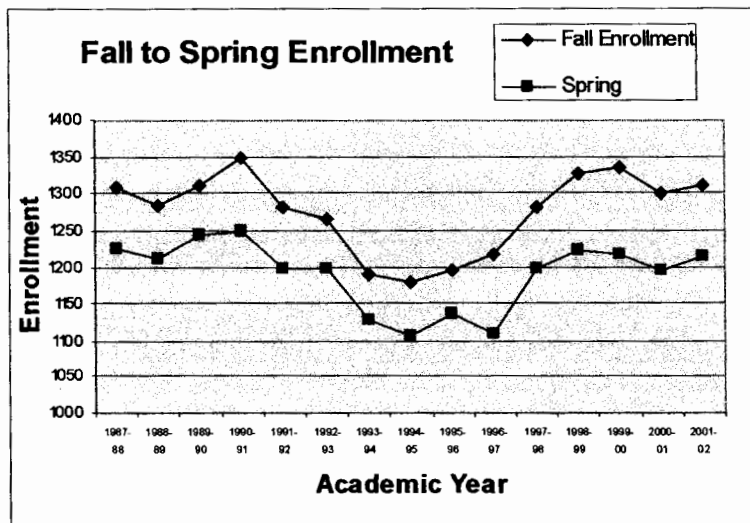
Fall Enrollment



Fall Enrollment

1987-88	1310	1225
1988-89	1285	1211
1989-90	1312	1243
1990-91	1350	1250
1991-92	1281	1200
1992-93	1265	1200
1993-94	1191	1130
1994-95	1179	1107
1995-96	1196	1138
1996-97	1218	1111
1997-98	1282	1200
1998-99	1328	1223
1999-00	1335	1217
2000-01	1300	1195
2001-02	1311	1215





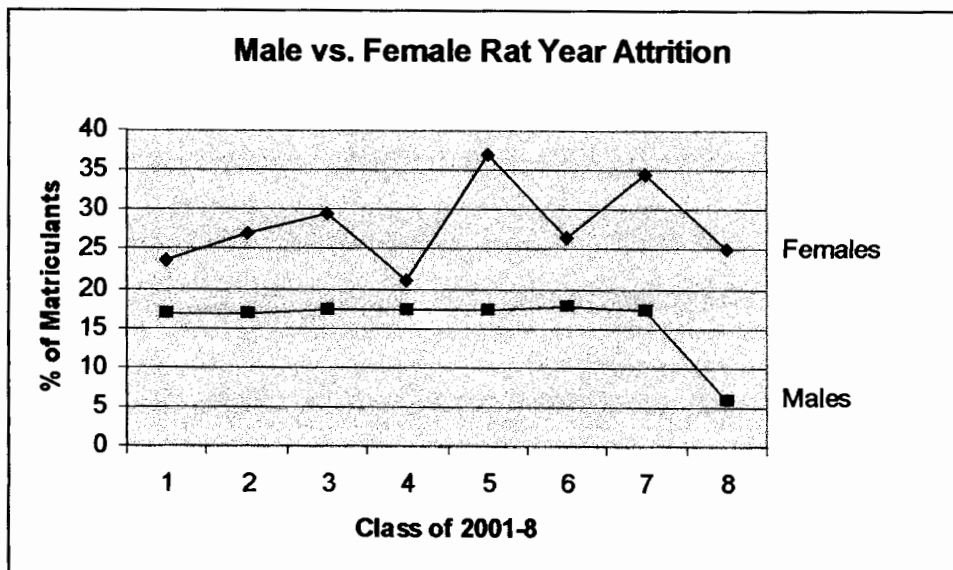
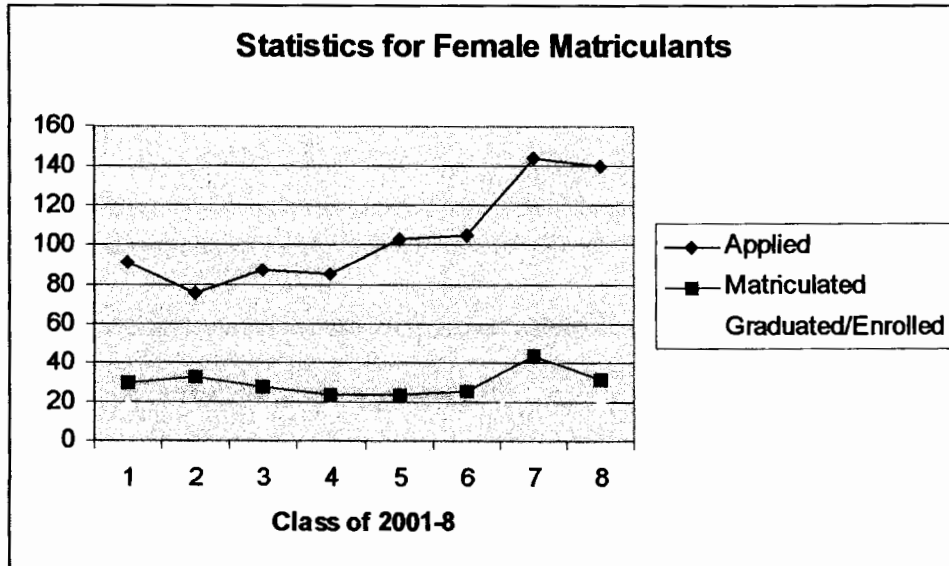
Spring Enrollment	Enrollment
1987-88	1225
1988-89	1211
1989-90	1243
1990-91	1250
1991-92	1200
1992-93	1200
1993-94	1130
1994-95	1107
1995-96	1138
1996-97	1111
1997-98	1200
1998-99	1223
1999-00	1217
2000-01	1195
2001-02	1215

How have trends in female attrition compared to those found in male attrition?

On average, approximately 34 percent of matriculants do not graduate. Typically, the attrition rate for freshman resembles twenty-two percent, dropping to twelve percent for the combined period of the sophomore through senior year. Average attrition for females is 26 percent, while the average attrition for males over the same period of time is 16 percent. Attrition of the second coed class at VMI (class of 2002) was discouraging after only 9 remained from the original 30 women that had matriculated just two years earlier.

Male freshman year attrition fluctuates less frequently than female freshman attrition primarily because it represents an average of a much larger number. Since the female population is much smaller, the average tends to be more volatile than that of males. The sharp drop in attrition for both males and females in 2008 are the results of the changes made by the new Commandant of Cadets to the Rat Line, which were aimed

at lowering the attrition rate because of its affects on the school's image (L. Brodie, personal communication, March 11, 2005).



GROUP III:

The Effects of Assimilation on VMI Athletics

What are the similarities and difference between female athlete and non-athlete recruitment methods?

The recruitment of athletes, both male and female is conducted entirely by the coaching staff of that particular team. For example, the head women's soccer coach travels to national tournaments as well as both in- and out-of-state club tournaments and showcases to target certain individuals she is looking to recruit. (J. Davis, personal communication, March 15, 2005)

The recruitment of female non-athletes is conducted completely separate from athletic recruitment, and relies heavily on mailing lists generated by female inquiries for information about the school. In the fall of 2004, a position was created in the Admissions Office for the sole purpose of recruiting females. This new position responds to inquiries made by females and acts as a contact for both women at coed Open Houses and those high school students who have arranged interviews at the school. (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 15, 2005)

In terms of similarities, both the Athletic Department and Admissions Office use grades as the first and most important determinant in the decision to look further into a certain candidate. Once the candidate has a proven "passing" academic record, other factors are taken into account such as the player's abilities (for an athletic program) or extracurricular activities (for the Admissions Office).

What have been the effects of female athletics at VMI?

Female athletics has had a positive effect on the school in terms of generating national recognition. VMI's public perception has now expanded to include six women's sports, which not only puts the school in the public eye more often, but creates a more positive image of the school and is often viewed as a "step into the future." In other words, the "outdated" all-male admissions policy has been replaced with a more open-minded approach to education which has spread into the realm of collegiate athletics. (S. MacInnis, personal communication, March 31, 2005).

However, Female athletics has also had a negative effect on the school which divides coed teams such as track & field. Because there are so few females at the school, over 50 percent of the females must compete in athletics in order for the men's programs to remain in Division I due to Title IX requirements. Because of this, many females who may not have the experience or ability to compete at the varsity level at another institution can compete on the varsity level at VMI because there is no one else on the team who is qualified (Brodie, 2001).

The problem remains, however, that the athletic programs for females as well as the female population in general is growing very slowly despite increasing recruitment efforts. Women's athletic opportunities, however, are growing at an exponential rate to the number of females, with a high percentage of females than males competing in one or two sports. The athletic department holds that they cannot start more teams without more women, while the admissions office holds that it would be easier to attract more women with a stronger female athletic program. (Brodie, 2001).

**How do trends in female athlete enrollment and attrition compare
to trends of female non-athletes?**

VMI's most rapidly growing female sport, in terms of both size and popularity, is women's soccer. With the hiring of a new coach in 2002, ten female players also enrolled the same year to start the fledgling women's soccer program. The team competed at the club level (as opposed to the NCAA level) for two years, competing only in scrimmages and other club teams. In the fall of 2003 the soccer team had attracted enough women to become competitive enough for NCAA level play against other colleges. Although the existing size of the team is still only ten women, it plans to expand to twenty-four in the near future. (J. Davis, personal communication, March 13, 2005).

Although the soccer team's record did not fair very well during the first few seasons of play, this endeavor was viewed as a step towards increasing the size and capabilities of women's athletic programs at VMI. In terms of attrition of female athletes, women's soccer boasts a zero percent attrition due to the Rat Line, and only 10 percent (2 females) attrition after the freshman year of the team's first recruited class (J. Davis, personal communication, March 13, 2005). This small percentage is even more distinctive considering the 16 percent attrition for females in general from freshman to sophomore year.

Currently VMI competes in 15 sports in total at the Division I level, these sports include baseball, basketball, men's and women's cross-country, football, lacrosse, men's and women's rifle, men's and women's soccer, swimming, men's and women's outdoor track, and wrestling. With an enrollment of less than 1,300 students, VMI has the third smallest enrollment among NCAA Division I institutions. Approximately one-third of the

Corps of Cadets participates on one of VMI's many intercollegiate teams making it one of the most active athletic programs among its student body. Of the VMI athletes who complete their eligibility, 92 percent receive their VMI diplomas ("VMI Athletic History," 2004).

Women's cross-country was the first athletic program for females, with an estimated two to four female athletes receiving financial assistance in the form of athletic scholarships (J. Tugman, personal communication, April 4, 2005). VMI has made unsuccessful attempts to start a women's rugby club, as well as female swimming and diving teams (Brodie, 2001).

CHAPTER V

Summary & Conclusion

In the words of Laura Brodie, a member of the Executive Committee for the Assimilation of VMI:

“When asked to summarize their impressions, several cadets stated that things were better now with coeducation than they had ever been in the past; the challenge, they added, was to keep moving forward. VMI was confident that it had laid a strong foundation; the future would tell what sort of house would be built upon that bedrock.”

Although the first few years of co-education have been kind to the school's public image and perception, a severe risk lies in taking comfort in this and settling into a feeling of self complacency. Looking at the number of female matriculants, it is obvious that the numbers have leveled off, and in recent years decreased. It would be plausible to assume that this phenomena is due to the fact that although existing recruitment methods are effective, not many new initiatives have come about, the effects of which can be devastating particularly to VMI's female athletic programs.

VMI's Athletic Department believes that it simply cannot start new teams and programs without a larger female population, and points the finger at the Admissions Office. The Admissions Office counters that it is difficult to recruit females without numerous and reputable female athletic programs. Unlike its female counterpart, men's

athletic programs have recognition amongst high school students, which has the potential to be an important factor when sending out college applications.

Methods of recruiting females to the school include athletic scholarships, mass mailings, and even a position within the admissions department specifically for the purpose of recruiting females. Even though the female population remains at less than ten percent of the student body, this seemingly low number is actually high when considering the low desire of females to attend a military college.

Previous programs such as annual scholarships to students from the New Mexico Military Institute and Texas A&M Corps of Cadets have been dropped now that VMI has its own “home grown” upper classmen to act as support for female freshmen. An increase in both the number of athletic teams as well as a higher percentage of females participating on these athletic teams is also a highly potent factor in lowering female attrition. The feeling of belonging to a team and sharing a beneficial bond with people in the same situation as one’s self seems to strengthen the resolve of females, and can be seen in the difference in female athlete versus non-athlete attrition.

The VMI Admissions Office and the Athletic Department should consolidate their resources and efforts and work together in achieving a common goal; that being more females at VMI. By working together rather than completely separate, these two entities have the potential to achieve greater results than in working separate from one another. Statistics show a huge number of female inquiries and a decent number of applications, but a small number of females who actually enroll. The gap between inquiries and enrollment is something that can be made smaller by one of two things: increasing the

quality of mailings and spreading the message that VMI should be a desirable place for females to attend college.

Some question whether the changes that VMI underwent to accommodate women was worth it since the population is still so small despite numerous recruitment efforts and methods. However, the line separating changes to accommodate women and changes to lower the overall attrition rate are often blurred, and perhaps changes directed at lowering the attrition rate are often blamed on the arrival of women. Although the attrition rate of females is significantly higher than males, it does not necessarily reflect the large effort and numerous initiatives the school has in place to recruit females.

The female presence and “effects” have been limited at best since the population is less than 10%, even at twice that amount it would still be too small to create a large enough impact on the school or athletics.” An assumption was made that women are probably more accepted because they are less of a minority at the Coast Guard Academy, where the female population is over 30% female. At VMI, 30-40% of recruited female non-athlete cadets actually enroll (J. Tugman, personal communication, March 31, 2005)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since females at VMI have always been and always will be a minority population at the school, their chances of completing the four years might be improved if their relationships amongst each other are strengthened. One suggestion to do so would be to continue to create more athletic opportunities for females at the school for two reasons: One goal would be to increase the number of women at the school and reduce the perceived gap in their minority status, and the second goal would be to create a more cooperative atmosphere amongst females that comes with being a part of a team. Another benefit of being a member of a team is that it increases both self-esteem and cohesiveness amongst each other, which can prove useful when considering the high annual attrition rates for both females and males during the freshmen year at VMI.

Although there exists a population of male cadets at the school that still harbor negative emotions regarding the presence of women at VMI, as long as females have the support system of one another on which to rely they can hope to thrive and flourish despite a potentially harsh environment. It is because of this reason that females must not look to strength in numbers, but strength amongst the numbers they have.

Although the school already has in place several initiatives directed towards increasing the female athlete as well as non-athlete populations at the school, they work independently of one another. Perhaps if the two separate entities were to unite themselves based on their similar goals, they could pool their resources and funding to achieve greater results than if they were to remain separate (i.e. the sum of the parts would be greater than the whole).

This would entail coaches of female teams recruiting athletes as well as female non-athletes, which works to their benefit because each female cadet becomes a potential “walk-on.” Also, by having the Admissions Office recruit athletes as well as non-athletes, they take incremental steps towards achieving the goal of ten percent females as stated in the ruling of the Supreme Court, and will also help VMI’s men’s teams remain in Division I.

Admissions Officers and coaches alike could reach an even larger female audience if they were to hold “females only” open houses, in which all resources could be specifically tailored to reach their target audience, and ideally produce a higher yield of applicants from those attending a co-ed open house.

Another suggestion would be for some combination of female athletes, non-athletes, admissions officers, and female coaches to hold conferences or informational sessions at college fairs or high schools that have historically produced large numbers of applicants. This would help to gain and re-enforce recognition of VMI as a viable option for high school students considering colleges.

A prediction for the future will be that the existing initiatives at the school designed to recruit both female athletes as well as non-athletes will slowly increase the female population at the school. The exponential growth of athletic opportunities will create an even larger percentage of females involved in a sport, which has already surpassed that of males. With the growth and experience of athletic teams comes stronger programs. With stronger programs comes a better team record which can prove to be a powerful instrument in both creating national recognition and as a recruitment tool for both athletes and non-athletes.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THREE VMI TARGET GROUPS (As seen in Chapter 3)

Group I: The History of Assimilation, Female Enrollment and Attrition

- What was VMI's approach to co-education in the early years of assimilation?
- How did VMI recruit its first females?
- How did VMI recruit its first female athletes?

Group II: The Current State of Assimilation at VMI

- What methods are currently in place to recruit females and how does it differ from male recruitment methods?
- How have trends in female enrollment compared to trends in male enrollment?
- How have trends in female attrition compared to trends in male attrition?

Group III: The Effects of Assimilation on VMI Athletics

- What are the similarities and differences between female athlete and non-athlete recruiting methods?
- What have been the effects of female athletics at VMI?

- How do trends in female athlete enrollment and attrition compare to trends of female non-athletes?