

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: MANDATED CHANGE AND GENDERED ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GRADUATE PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY'S *AGENDA FOR CHANGE*

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Women are a token group at the United States Air Force Academy and by extension within the social networks of Academy graduates. Using Kanter's theory on the effects of proportions on group culture, I complete a qualitative content analysis of the public discourse surrounding the removal of the words "Bring Me Men..." from an Academy ramp in response to the 2003 sexual assault scandal.

The vast majority of male graduates and all of the female graduates publicly opposed the decision to remove the words. I observe three phenomena in the public discourse in line with Kanter's theorized process of boundary heightening: loyalty tests, exaggeration of the dominant's culture, and the use of formal in-group recognitions as reminders of difference between the dominants and the tokens. Both the dominants and the tokens failed to consider alleged sexual assault claims and whether these claims had connections to USAFA's organizational culture.

MANDATED CHANGE AND GENDERED ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GRADUATE PERCEPTIONS OF THE
U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY'S *AGENDA FOR CHANGE*

By

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a study of organizational change and resistance to change in a gendered organization characterized by a militarized, masculine culture. The paper's theoretical framework is Kanter's theory on the effects of proportions on group culture, with an emphasis on how skewed groups respond to tokens and the effects of these responses on token socialization into the broader group. This theory argues that numerical dominance of one group by another, such as within a skewed population where the ratio of the majority to the minority is approximately eighty-five to fifteen or greater, shapes group dynamics, and by extension the larger group culture, in predictable, visible ways (Kanter 1977b:208). I will examine processes described within this theory by analyzing token response to organizational change implemented in response to an ascribed characteristic of the token. I analyze the "perceptual phenomena" associated with tokenism and gender status and consider how tokens respond to these forms through gender strategies such as attempted social invisibility, demonstrated group loyalty, and acceptance of the dominant group's culture (Kanter 1977a; Kimmel 2000). Additionally, I analyze whether the effects of proportions on group culture extend beyond the organization's physical boundaries and into its social networks.

The setting for this research is the United States Air Force Academy¹ which is a federal military service academy charged with producing commissioned military officers and granting them bachelor's degrees. In 2003, the United States Air Force Academy came under the national spotlight due to its mishandling of approximately 142 alleged sexual assaults that occurred over a ten year time span (Fowler et al. 2003). After the Air

¹ For the remainder of this proposal, the United States Air Force Academy will be referred to as USAFA or the Academy.

Force Inspector General published an interim report detailing factors that may have contributed to an environment of abuse, then-Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) Dr. James G. Roche and Air Force Chief of Staff (CSAF) General John P. Jumper ordered USAFA leaders to implement immediately a series of organizational changes listed within the *Agenda for Change* (Fowler et al. 2003; HQ USAF 2003; see Appendix A for complete *Agenda for Change* document).

The *Agenda* included over 100 objectives, ranging from a reorganization of senior officer leadership roles to new sexual assault reporting procedures to gender segregation within billeting (dormitories). However, despite the large number of required alterations, the dismantling of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp² on the Academy grounds became a unifying target for alumni response due to its significant position on the Air Force Academy’s landscape and the handling and timing of its dismantling, which I address in the literature review (see Appendix C for picture of ramp). This study catalogues and analyzes the discourse from USAFA graduates regarding the removal of the words “Bring Me Men...” from the ramp and examines what the discourse surrounding this change reveals about USAFA’s culture, particularly its gender climate.

My research is not solely concerned about how graduates state their case either for or against the change, but stratifies responses by gender to analyze whether there is a difference in overall themes and rationales. This is an important consideration for the Air Force Academy because, in terms of gender representation, it has a skewed composition (Kanter 1977a). Since they were first admitted to USAFA in 1976, women have generally comprised around 15 percent of the cadet population; thus they may be

² The phrase “Bring Me Men...” is the introductory line from a poem entitled “The Coming American” by Samuel Walter Foss. The poem was written in 1894, a time when the term “man” was considered an acceptable generic referent for all human beings (Baron 1987). See Appendix B for the complete poem.

considered a “token” population both within USAFA and within its alumni network (HQ USAF 2003). As will be discussed in the literature review, there are consequences associated with being a token that may influence the discourse used by female graduates. Thus, I not only analyze graduate response to the change, but also focus on the themes articulated by female graduates and compare these to the responses provided by male graduates. The overarching research questions are: Are female USAFA graduates as likely, more likely, or less likely than their male peers to express publicly opposition to the changes implemented as a result of the sexual assault scandal? Do the women graduates present their opinions regarding the removal of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp using rationales similar to the men’s or are their rationales different?

Although my research focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, an additional level of interest is organizational change and resistance to change regarding institutionalized myths. These myths are described as rules that become so imbued with meaning that they become iconic symbols (Meyer and Rowan 1977). In the case of the Air Force Academy, the culture of the organization reflects the institutionalized myth of the making of men as dictated by the military’s combat, masculine-warrior cultural paradigm (Dunivin 1994). Specifically, the research may demonstrate how the presence of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp may have contributed to an atmosphere of hegemonic masculinity within USAFA. This is relevant because the *Agenda for Change* was initiated in response to the 2003 sexual assault scandal, a public relations crisis that highlighted the lack of institutional support for victimized women. The research highlights what parts of an organization’s culture contribute to gender and sexual

harassment and which parts of the culture members are willing to accept, regardless of their sex.

In addition to framing USAFA's culture and gender climate, my research on graduate response to the removal of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp explores the "perceptual phenomena" associated with tokenism and gender and contrasts these potential by-products with the broader socialization experienced by all cadets. Discourse against the change from both men and women may frame opposition to the removal of the "Bring Me Men...ramp" as more than just symbolic attachment, but as a significant change that could negatively affect the core of the institution. In contrast, discourse from the men may highlight how the phrase "Bring Me Men..." spoke to their professional development whereas the women may frame the ramp's stanza as exclusionary.

Based on the differing claims that may result, and the potential for gender stratification within these claims, this research highlights both whether tradition should be changed to accommodate a growing pool of diverse members and the perceived impact of this change by both the majority group and the minority group. Overall, by cataloging and analyzing graduate response to the dismantling of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, I analyze whether tokenism exists within the organizational culture of USAFA and whether external pressures for organizational change affect tokenism processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

U.S. Air Force Academy's Mission and Structure

The Air Force Academy's overall purpose is to prepare cadets, through military, academic, physical, and moral training, to serve as career officers in the United States Air Force (HQ USAF 2003). The Academy has aspects of a total institution where cadets "lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman 1961:xiii). Cadets, particularly during their first year of enrollment, are cut off from civilian society and must follow strict procedures regarding every aspect of cadet life, from personal physical appearance to the layout of their living space to eating. As cadets progress through the Academy, their identity as cadets eventually supersedes any pre-existing social or familial roles; this personal transformation is designed to occur abruptly and quickly (Dornbusch 1955).

During Basic Cadet Training (BCT), which is the severe summer socialization period that begins the cadet's first year, cadets are not allowed off base and are not allowed to contact their families until the formal "Parents' Weekend" which marks the end of BCT approximately 2.5 months later (Stiehm 1981). It is during BCT when cadets, as part of their intense socialization, memorize the contents of a USAFA produced book, known as *Contrails*, which includes everything from Air Force leadership, to USAFA history and tradition. This book also contains (although it has since been removed from the book) the poem upon the which phrase "Bring Me Men..." is drawn (USAFA 1996; USAFA 2007b).

Cadets earn increased privileges, such as the use of cellular phones, and liberty, which includes designated weekends when they may leave Academy grounds, as they

acquire greater tenure with the Cadet Wing. Although USAFA has a different mission, and as a consequence, a different environment from most colleges and universities, each cadet completes a rigorous, engineering-focused curriculum. All cadets, even those who major in the humanities, graduate with a Bachelor's of Science degree.

Each entering class has approximately 1,200 "Cadets Fourth-Class" (i.e., freshmen); these cadets come from all 50 states, the United States territories, as well as international exchange cadets, and must demonstrate academic and athletic excellence and strong leadership abilities prior to admission. Within the incoming class of 2012, for example, 80 percent of cadets were lettered high school athletes, 80 percent graduated in the top 25 percent of their high school class, and a large proportion had participated in leadership positions such as class president or Eagle Scout while in high school (USAFA 2008). Due to attrition, the Academy has a total enrollment of approximately 4,000 cadets (HQ USAF 2003). Women's representation fluctuates yearly, but has stayed between 10 and 18 percent for each class. See Appendix D for a complete breakdown of the percent of women in each USAFA class beginning with the first class of women, the graduating class of 1980. When the sexual assault scandal broke, women comprised 15 percent of the cadet population, even though they had been part of the Cadet Wing for 27 years (HQ USAF 2003).

Founded in 1954 in Colorado Springs, USAFA is the youngest of the service academies,³ yet this distinction does not prevent it from framing itself as a unique institution with a storied past. Following its establishment as a separate service from the Army in 1947, the Air Force also established its own service academy. The new leaders

³ The United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point was established in 1802. The United States Naval Academy (USNA) in Annapolis was established in 1845. The United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) was established in 1876 (USAFA 1998).

of the Air Force as well as those brought in to shape the Academy were predominantly West Point graduates who incorporated many traditions from the United States Military Academy (USMA) into the new Air Force institution (Stiehm 1981). The Honor Code,⁴ for example, is a revered tradition that USAFA borrowed, in both verbiage and enforcement, from West Point. Additionally, the Academy, although responsible for producing commissioned Air Force officers generally, channels a disproportionate amount of its graduates into rated specialties,⁵ which are considered the premier combat specialties within the Air Force.⁶ Thus, the Academy has a unique organizational perspective that includes a reverence for the free spirit of a pilot combined with the traditional might of the combat-experienced army infantry officer (USAFA 1998).

West Point traditions are found not only in USAFA's outlook, but also in its organizational structure, most of which USAFA replicated from its Army counterpart, and which is quite conducive to implementing formal change, although less effective with changing informal norms and organizational culture (Stiehm 1981). The Air Force Academy is a Direct Reporting Unit, which means that due to its specialized mission, its chain of command reports directly to the four-star General serving as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF). There are no intermediaries between the three-star Superintendent, who is the most senior officer at USAFA, and the CSAF. Five senior officers report directly to the Superintendent. They are the Commandant of Cadets (Brigadier General), the Dean of Faculty (Brigadier General), the Director of Athletics

⁴ The Honor Code is, "I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate among us those who do." All cadets take an oath during their first year to uphold this code among themselves and their peers (Contrails 2007).

⁵ Rated jobs include: pilot, navigator, and air battle manager (USAFA 1998).

⁶ Within the Air Force, rated officers, particularly pilots, hold a disproportionate number of senior officer positions. The overrepresentation of Academy graduates within the rated specialties combined with the overrepresentation of rated officers within leadership positions further enhances the Academy's influence on the entire service (Worden 2002).

(Brigadier General-equivalent civilian), the 10th Air Base Wing Commander (Colonel), and the Preparatory School Commander (Colonel). Long-term planning, command direction, and daily operations stem from these core positions, which oversee every facet of Academy life.⁷ The officers in these positions are responsible for fulfilling the Academy's mission of training cadets toward becoming officers of character (USAFA 2007b). They are also responsible for cadet safety and may be removed from their positions, as happened after the 2003 sexual assault scandal, if they do not satisfactorily fulfill the demands of their position (Fowler et al. 2003).

The Academy's structure mirrors the hierarchy of the operational Air Force; as a result, its personnel are organized within the traditional Air Force structure of squadrons and groups. Each cadet, regardless of class year, is part of a cadet squadron, of which there are 40. These squadrons are led by a commissioned officer, known as the Air Officer Commanding and a senior noncommissioned officer, known as the Military Training Leader. Each squadron falls under one of four groups within its chain of command. These four groups comprise the Cadet Wing (USAFA 2007).

In addition to its operational organization, there is also a class-specific status system for the cadets, known as the Fourth-Class System, which carries its own rank structure within the Cadet Wing. Upon arrival, Cadets Fourth-Class are led, counseled, and reprimanded by cadets from the other three classes; there is considerable social distance between the Cadets Fourth-Class and the rest of the Cadet Wing. The upper-class cadets lead the Cadets Fourth-Class through BCT, continue to supervise them

⁷ There are many other high-ranking officers at the Academy. Many faculty personnel are Colonels, and all academic department heads are Colonels who retire at the rank of Brigadier General. There are also five group commanders, all holding the rank of Colonel, who report to the Commandant of Cadets. However, I focus on those officers and civilian who report directly to the Superintendent since they are the core decision makers on cadet affairs.

through the academic year, and test them through the enduring spring rite of “Recognition” upon which, if completed successfully, the Fourth-Class cadets become recognized members of the Cadet Wing.

The purpose of the Fourth-Class System is to allow the upperclassmen to practice leadership and management skills. It also teaches Cadets Fourth-Class, who must operate in a continuously stressful environment, the value of self-reliance, teamwork, and followership. The system, however, also creates important power inequities among the cadets, who have few avenues for recourse, and may contribute to an environment of abuse (Fowler et al. 2003; Stiehm 1981). As a result of this potential for hazing, Academy leaders, as dictated by the *Agenda for Change*, changed slightly the Fourth-Class System. Currently, only First Class (i.e., senior) or Second Class (i.e., junior) cadets will interact with Cadets Fourth-Class; Cadets Third-Class (i.e., sophomores) may only interact with them in academic settings. This change limits contact between those cadets with fresh memories of BCT and the fourth-class experience, some of whom may be intent on replicating the “toughness” of their past year, and the new cadets.

Although USAFA adopted many of West Point’s traditions, most notably the Honor Code and the Fourth-Class System, there are parts to the Academy’s heritage, many of which are memorialized on the Academy grounds, specific to USAFA and its aviation mission. Static displays of historic aircraft (plus one Minuteman III missile) are placed throughout USAFA, reminding cadets of the aviation tradition they join and continue. The Medal of Honor Wall and the War Memorial are solemn reminders of Air Force members, many of whom were USAFA graduates, who lost their lives while serving in combat. Perhaps the most well-known location on the Academy grounds is the

Cadet Chapel, a popular tourist location known for its modernist architecture. The chapel overlooks the cadet area, which includes the Air Gardens and the Eagle and Fledging Statue which reads, “Man’s flight through life is sustained by the power of his knowledge” (USAFA 2007: 35).

Similar to the poem behind the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, the statue uses the term “man” as a generic referent to both men and women. The statue’s wording has not changed since its donation to the Academy in 1958. Finally, there is the landmark that is the focus of this study, the “Bring Me Men...” ramp. The words were installed over the ramp in 1963 at the direction of Brigadier General Strong, then Commandant of USAFA, who found the poem inspirational. Thirteen years before the integration of women, it became a part of USAFA tradition as all cadets, beginning with the incoming class of 1963, began their Academy experience in-processing at the ramp’s base (Zubeck 2003b). The first line of the poem which reads, “Bring me men to match my mountains” seemed particularly appropriate against the Rocky Mountains framing the USAFA landscape. The words “Bring Me Men...” were not part of the culture or memories of USAFA’s first few classes of cadets, but after its establishment the ramp became a prominent part of USAFA and its organizational identity.

Integration of Women into USAFA

The Air Force Academy, following in the footsteps of USMA, USNA, and the USCGA, was founded as an all-male institution, as was the American military generally. Although women have participated in every American conflict beginning with the War of Independence, they did not have an accepted strategic role within the military, and were

only targeted for military service during times of extreme national need. After World War II, Congress passed the Women's Armed Service Integration Act, which allowed women to serve in peacetime military forces, albeit with severe limitations on their occupational and proportional presence (Manning 2005). Subsequently, the 1973 post-Vietnam transition from conscription to an All-Volunteer Force led to increased recruiting goals for women as the services attempted to meet manpower requirements.

Despite the increase in professional opportunities for military women, they were forbidden from serving in the military's premier combat specialties. Women were not allowed to serve in ground combat positions, nor, in contrast with current policy, were they permitted to fly combat aviation missions or serve aboard combatant ships, thus further discrediting their presence within institutions, such as USAFA, charged with producing combat leaders (Manning 2005). The decision to integrate the service academies came, not due to the desire or need to place women in combat-oriented jobs, but as an equal education issue: the academies had great academics paid for with taxpayer money (Stiehm 1981). Due to the decision to focus on opportunity rather than perceived mission or need, the order to integrate the Air Force Academy, as well as the other service academies, became the most controversial event in USAFA history (USAFA 2005).

The formal story regarding female cadets at USAFA begins on October 7, 1975. On this day, President Ford signed legislation mandating that the service academies admit qualified women beginning immediately with the incoming class of 1976 (Stiehm 1981). Although gender integration had already occurred within the other commissioning

sources,⁸ the majority of senior military leaders did not support gender integration in the service academies (Stiehm 1981). The academies were viewed as sacrosanct institutions, entrusted with molding future combat leaders. The presence of women would not only potentially change the final service academy product, but risked lowering the overall standards, particularly the physical requirements, of the men (Stiehm 1981). Based on these assumptions, those in charge of implementing gender integration in the service academies were predominantly opposed to the civilian-decreed mandate (Stiehm 1981).

Despite opposing the mandate, military leaders⁹ took their orders and planned for change. Although organizations, such as the service academies, continuously make decisions regarding structures and protocols, changes regarding gender integration put leaders in highly visible, and vulnerable, positions (Stiehm 1981). Leaders in all the service academies were under congressional and public scrutiny, not to mention the inside pressures generated from graduates, including those holding flag rank. USAFA was unique in that no graduates held flag rank at that time, thus limiting command influence from above (Stiehm 1981).

At USAFA, the planning for gender integration, which fell under the Commandant of Cadets, issued the following unofficial guidelines: “changes must not be detrimental to academy tradition...must be standardized...must be minimal...and should promote positive attitudes toward women cadets” (Stiehm 1981:179). There was discussion about the future of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp; however, USAFA leaders decided that “men” was a universal reference to humankind and that changing the

⁸ The other commissioning sources include Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and Officer Training School.

⁹ For this paper, references to Academy leadership include the following personnel: the Superintendent of the Academy, the Commandant of Cadets, the Vice Commandant, the 34th Training Wing Commander, and the Dean of Faculty (HQ USAF 2003). These are the core decision-makers.

landmark (a 13-year-old tradition) would be seen as “catering to women” (Stiehm 1981:179). Thus, the institutional response focused on the implementation of controlled, calibrated changes that, at least on the outside, suggested institutional support for women cadets while also carefully maintaining the gendered traditions and norms of the past.

The initial planning within USAFA focused on structural changes, not only because these were essential for accommodating women cadets, but because they also provided conspicuous demonstration of institutional concession. There was little coordination among the service academies on their plans for integrating women. As a consequence, USAFA, for example, was the only service academy to insist upon separate billeting for female cadets (Stiehm 1981). Rather than assign the women randomly throughout the Cadet Wing as the Academy did with the men, the women were segregated to 20 of the 40 squadrons and restricted from living side by side with their male squadron mates (DeFleur, Gillman, and Marshak 1978; Stiehm 1981). Academy rationale for breaking up squadrons by sex was to “provide as much privacy as possible” to female cadets, although the women cadets privately opposed both the move and the rationale (Stiehm 1981:103). Additionally, leaders believed that segregated billeting would prevent embarrassing incidents such as cadet sexual relations (Stiehm 1981). What they did not realize is how segregated billeting would feed into the impression that the women experienced an easier track of cadet life. Upper class cadets, all of whom were male, were forbidden from entering the women’s area, thus excluding the women from the dormitory training that is central to Fourth-Class year (Stiehm 1981). By implementing a structural barrier between male and female cadets, the Academy

furthered cultural beliefs and attitudes that undermined the credibility and experience of the women.¹⁰

Faced with the integration of women, Academy officials labored over extensive plans detailing the structural changes, of which segregated billeting is only an example, needed to accommodate female cadets. Structural changes certainly were important; however, they did little to address the underlying beliefs and attitudes that shaped the previously all-male Cadet Wing's reaction to the inclusion of women. Incoming cadet women and men, as at the other academies, differed from the beginning regarding their attitudes toward proper gender roles, and specifically, the proper roles of women within the military (DeFleur 1980). The cadet men, particularly when compared to their civilian university peers, were less supportive of changing women's roles and the opening of previously male-only occupations to them. In contrast, the incoming cadet women were very supportive of changing roles for women and supported expanded roles for women in society and the military (DeFleur and Warner 1987).

Likewise, the cadet men knew how to place women within socially-acceptable social and/or familial roles, but they did not have a cultural or structural framework for placing women officers, much less their female cadet peers, within military roles (DeFleur et al. 1978). This difficulty in aligning beliefs and attitudes with institutional practice may be reduced through inter-group contact. Allport's "contact hypothesis" argues that increased contact between previously separated groups may lead to decreased prejudices if certain conditions are met (1954). These conditions include: objects of the prejudice must have at least an equal status and must not be in competition with those

¹⁰ Within six months of its implementation, the Academy no longer restricted women to certain squadrons, but placed them randomly within all 40 squadrons. However, the Academy did not change the segregated billeting arrangements (DeFleur et al. 1978).

holding the prejudice, the contact must be intimate enough so that the prejudiced groups get to know the objects of their prejudice sufficiently, there must be high level support for the integration of the object into the prejudiced group, the objects of prejudice must not act in ways that conform with stereotypes, and the objects of prejudice must have sufficient numbers in the prejudiced groups so as to not be discounted as exceptions to their group. In line with the conditions behind this theory, cadets with more traditional attitudes toward gender roles limited their interaction with the women and did not interact with the objects of their prejudice sufficiently enough to change their opinion. DeFleur and Gillman characterize this as a strong “behavior-attitude consistency” (1978: 185). Thus, through both structurally-imposed segregation as well as self-selection, there was little contact between male and female cadets. Prejudices and stereotypes decreased as the class of 1980 approached graduation; however, there remained a consistent belief, particularly among the upper class cadets, that having women within their ranks violated the “cultural norms of maleness and eliteness” to which the Academy experience was traditionally oriented (DeFleur 1980; DeFleur and Gillman 1978:187).

During this time period, the Academy was under constant scrutiny from multiple sources including Air Force and Department of Defense leadership as well as the media (Gawlinski 2007). Faced with an unprecedented change, Academy leadership implemented multiple modifications to the Academy’s structure. These changes provided tangible proof of institutional readiness, but did little to change, and may have even facilitated, an underlying environment of gender harassment. For example, by segregating the male and female cadets the Academy facilitated an unintended consequence: the spread of rumors that the women had a much easier training regimen

and, as a result, were not as capable as their male peers. Interviews with women from the first integrated class reveal that they faced severe discrimination from cadets who did not want them there. Often, male cadets took it upon themselves to target individual women's mistakes to demonstrate that the Academy was wrong in its decision to integrate (Gawlinski 2007). As a result, as argued by Kanter's theory on tokenism, the women felt that they continually had to prove that they could handle the demands. Interestingly, although the Academy dedicated substantial manpower and planning efforts to the integration of women, its efforts focused on structural changes and provided little, if any, guidance about ways of handling informal interactions and norms. As a result, the Academy continued to train future officers within an environment simmering with gender harassment. As discussed in the next section, this discriminatory atmosphere came to the forefront with the sexual assault scandals of 2003.

2003 Sexual Assault Scandal and the Agenda for Change

Although women entered the Academy more than 30 years ago and have since demonstrated their abilities both as cadets and as commissioned officers, they remain a token group within the Academy and the Air Force and their position is still challenged by cultural norms. Problems involving the organizational culture and its impact on female cadets rose to the surface in January 2003 when then-Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. James G. Roche, received an e-mail directed toward female cadets and written under a pseudonym stating that there was a sexual assault problem at the school that was intentionally overlooked by USAFA leaders (HQ USAF 2003).¹¹ This revelatory

¹¹ The email was also sent to General John P. Jumper (CSAF), Senator Wayne Allard (CO), Senator Ben Campbell (CO), and two media representatives.

message started a chain of events which led to multiple investigations of USAFA's cadet climate and culture. In addition to revealing a lack of command involvement with sexual assault cases, these investigations also revealed significant underreporting due to cadet concerns regarding Honor Code violations¹² and organizational socialization that stressed the importance of group loyalty over institutional core values (HQ USAF 2003). The Academy's organizational culture, in particular, was cited as, "contributing to an environment that tolerates sexual misconduct" and its climate as marred with ongoing sexual harassment (Fowler et al. 2003:2; HQ USAF 2003).

As a federally-funded military institution, the Air Force Academy is subject to greater scrutiny than most civilian institutions and, when problems arise, must report to both military and civilian audiences. While all higher education institutions are plagued with issues of sexual assault, the sexual assault cases at the Academy garnered disproportionate attention due to three key components. First, since the Air Force Academy is a premier training ground for future officers of honor and integrity, military leaders and federal policy makers could not condone such predatory behavior. Second, the Air Force Academy's leaders did not respond in an aggressive or timely manner to past charges of assault. Third, the leaders ignored symptoms, such as the creation of an underground sexual assault survivor support group, which hinted at a training environment conducive to both sexual and gender harassment and sexual abuse (Fowler et al. 2003).

¹² Although USAFA had an amnesty policy in place, many cadets were reluctant to report sexual assaults because most occurred while the offender and victim engaged in underage drinking. Cadets feared severe punishment for the drinking, perhaps even expulsion, and did not think their leaders, nor their cadet peers, would consider all the circumstances surrounding the alleged crime (Fowler et al. 2003).

Faced with political, military, and public demands for a response, USAFA officials once again found themselves in highly visible, and vulnerable, positions. Pressure came through official channels, such as the Department of Defense and Congress, charging multiple commissions with investigating the Air Force Academy's cadet environment as well as its handling of past sexual assault cases. Additionally, USAFA's leaders felt substantial pressure from its graduates, who were embarrassed at such a public relations disaster. With an investigative report from the General Counsel of the Air Force and one from the Congressionally-appointed Fowler Commission on the horizon, the SECAF and CSAF preempted calls for institutional change by issuing the *Agenda for Change* in the spring of 2003, prior to the release of the reports (USAFA 2003).

Air Force leaders acted swiftly without further input from the cadets and with little input from the representing alumni group, the Association of Graduates (AOG). The removal of "Bring Me Men..." from the ramp happened within two days after the unveiling of the *Agenda for Change*. The removal coincided with spring break so the cadets were not present when the letters were removed, nor did they know about the decision prior to their departure. The AOG claimed that many of its members supported the removal of "Bring Me Men...", although it is unclear if the AOG polled its membership on these changes (Zubeck 2003a). USAFA, with assistance from the AOG, immediately requested suggestions for new inspirational phrases. The top contenders included: "Bring Me Warriors," "We Expect Great Things," and the Air Force Core Values of "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in all We Do" (Zubeck 2003b). Academy officials finally decided on using the Core Values and unveiled the

new wording at the annual four-star conference (known as CORONA) in October 2004 in a ceremony led by the CSAF (Wehry 2004). Graduate response to the dismantling of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp and its replacement with the Air Force core values is the focus of my study.

Relevant Debates and Theories

The previous section places the research question in historical context. This section will place the research within a theoretical context by discussing relevant debates and issues. As stated before, my research focuses on organizational change, but with two additional qualifiers: change as it is connected to organizational tokens, and tokenism that is specifically related to gender. Even though Kanter’s theory of proportions provides the theoretical foundation, this research touches on several levels of analysis; thus it is important to connect organizational structure with gender, culture, and environmental contexts.

To understand the underlying environment within the Air Force Academy, my paper will approach USAFA as a “gendered institution” (Acker 1992). This theoretical framework “means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images, ideologies, and distributions of power within various sectors of social life” (Acker 1992:567). This critical perspective suggests that the structures that guide Academy life as well as the normative processes of interaction that shape its institutional life are categorized along gender lines. Sex segregation within billeting, for example, is one way gender becomes a “remarkable organizational device” within total institutions such as USAFA (Goffman 1961; Goffman 1977:315). Until 1976, the service academies were developed by men

and were for men only; thus, the underlying symbols, attitudes, and traditions of these institutions became defined by their celebrated absence of women (Acker 1992; Stiehm 1981). As a consequence, the organizational logic of the military service academies may appear gender-neutral, but is actually determined by the images, needs, and strengths of the male body (Acker 1992; Goffman 1977).

Women's presence in the service academies changes gender norms, creating different social constructions and influencing the formal and informal rules regarding gender interactions (Mills and Mills 2000). Despite this evolving logic, women must negotiate the gendered paradigm, or broad assumptions, which provide the framework both in USAFA and in the broader military community. Dunivin characterizes the foundation of military culture as consisting of a "combat, masculine-warrior paradigm" which penetrates military culture with a "cult of masculinity" (1994). She argues that the military, and by extension the military service academies, embrace the masculine paradigm, even though it contradicts the increasingly-diverse model of military culture. Dunivin states that social change will come from external forces, some of which the military will accept, but that the military will go to great lengths to protect its underlying paradigm (Dunivin 1994). Stiehm, in her work on the early gender integration process at the Air Force Academy, sums up this perspective with, "how can one distinguish between male culture and military culture, and how can one make female culture legitimate in a military setting?" (1981:65-66). My research on organizational change and resistance to change within a gendered organization repositions Stiehm's question to consider how dominant culture shapes tokens' responses to organizational change.

As a closed organization built upon a “combat, masculine-warrior paradigm,” USAFA has multiple factors that lead to the end result of producing commissioned Air Force officers (Scott 1975). The structure within the organization is shaped by internal processes and participants as well as by external factors, which include military and civilian leadership. It could be argued that the formal organizational structures of the Air Force Academy exist due to rational needs.

However, there are also examples, as demonstrated by the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, of structures reflecting institutionalized myths, such as the making of men (Arkin and Dobrofsky 1978). Symbols provide a physical linkage between organizational life and cognitive, sensual meaning (Rafaeli and Worline 2000). Within a military service academy, symbols guide action by cueing internalized norms of behavior and shaping organizational communication (Dornbusch 1955). They also provide visible frameworks for integrating the different meaning systems generated among organizational members (Dornbusch 1955; Rafaeli and Worline 2000). Since symbols provide organizational cohesion, their meaning within an institutionalized population, such as the military service academy, may have relevance for all members, regardless of social characteristics. As a consequence, members may react to the removal of a symbol not as members of a token social group who see things differently from the majority, but in agreement with the majority because they genuinely identify with the meanings codified within the symbol.

Because a military service academy has aspects of a total institution, symbols not only provide organizational cohesion, but they also contribute to the molding of appropriate professional outlooks within the cadet population (Arkin and Dobrofsky

1978; Dornbusch 1955). Solidarity develops, both within and between classes, due to the encompassing nature of institutional life which fuses cadets together both through their realization of shared common interests and common futures as military officers (Dornbusch 1955; Goffman 1961). Informal norms as well as their accompanying symbols and myths feed assumptions of naturalness and appropriateness, leading to “reproductive institutionalism” (Stryker 2000). This cognitive unity is (re)produced through the common socialization experienced in military training (Dornbusch 1955).

However, institutionalized myths and socialization alone do not explain why changes to the structure were suitable responses to the sexual assault scandal. In addition to structural considerations, this paper will build upon Acker’s development of gender as a “patterning of difference and domination” among biologically-sexed bodies (1992:565). Gender is not a static categorization, but continuous action in an ongoing production, what West and Zimmerman describe as “doing gender” (1987). Within this theoretical framework, gender emerges as a social construction. By pulling these two theoretical concepts together, we see that not only does the Academy operate as a “gendered institution,” but its personnel, both as a consequence and as catalysts, operate as gendered beings.

However, despite the theoretical approach to gender as a production, sex is not an achieved characteristic, but an ascribed one. Ascriptively-defined groups, such as men and women, are assigned group-based characteristics that cannot be changed and which often trump individual merit (Segal and Kestnbaum 2002). Although there are multiple masculinities, male cadets must present an institutionally-prescribed “maleness” to gain acceptance within the Academy (DeFleur 1980). Further, when “closed ranks”

institutions, such as the military academies, allow individuals of previously-excluded groups to join them, the qualities ascribed to that group shape individual opportunities and interaction (Segal and Kestnbaum 2002). This literature contributes to my project by approaching gender as an ascribed characteristic and revealing the ways gender may determine or shape group responses.

Of equal importance to this research is the impact of proportions, or in this case sex ratios, on interaction. In her theory on tokenism, Kanter argues that proportions of different categories of people within an organization shape interaction (1977a and 1977b). Kanter describes “skewed” groups as consisting of numerical dominants and numerical rarities, or tokens (1977a:966). Due to their limited numbers within the organization, tokens encounter increased visibility, exaggerated stereotyping, and heightened boundaries between them and the dominant group (1977a). They may counter these processes with certain strategies.

In particular, I observe three social phenomena in the public discourse in line with Kanter’s theorized process of boundary heightening. The first is loyalty tests, which involve the tokens uniting with the dominants against others who challenge the majority group, particularly those who share the tokens’ ascribed characteristic. By reassuring the dominants that they will not collude against them, the tokens gain further acceptance into the group (Kanter 1977a: 979). The second is an exaggeration of the dominant’s culture by focusing on norms and understandings exclusive to the group, particularly those that distinguish the dominant group from the tokens. This focus on the dominant’s culture often leads to increased group solidarity (Kanter 1977a: 975). The third is the use of formal in-group recognitions as reminders of difference between the dominants and the

tokens. This phenomenon involves explicit recognition by the dominants, such as the use of apologies on the appropriateness of actions or comments, that the token is an outsider whose presence disrupts the normal flow of events (Kanter 1977a: 977).

Yoder critiques Kanter for presenting a gender-neutral framework and adds that tokenism effects do not carry over to all combinations of dominants and tokens. Yoder argues that other causal processes, such as gender status, job prestige, and occupational gender-inappropriateness, must be considered within tokenism processes (Yoder 1994). Additionally, she argues that researchers need to account for the impact of organizational gender discrimination (Yoder 1994). This paper uses Kanter's theory as its foundation, but accepts Yoder's consideration of gender status, as demonstrated by Dunivin's focus on the underlying "masculine, combat-warrior paradigm" within military culture.

Academy women must not only negotiate a skewed environment, but they must also contend with perceptions among some male peers that they enjoy a privileged organizational position that comes at the men's expense. As the Academy was originally founded as an all-male institution, many of its traditions, norms, symbols, and overall measures of success are cast within a masculine framework. However, the presence of women challenges this framework, leading to what Miller characterizes as an environment of "covert gender harassment" (1997:32). Despite their numerical superiority, male cadets may perceive men as powerless to preventing women's inclusion and success within the Academy's environment. Due to military-wide prohibitions against overt gender discrimination, male cadets may revert to covert strategies such as

constant scrutiny, gossip/rumors, indirect threats, and even sexual assault¹³ to express their outrage at those who violate their conceptions of gender norms (Miller 1994).

When paired with Kanter's theory of tokenism, this perspective suggests that covert gender harassment may extend into the public discourse as well and that women, as tokens, may counter this harassment with different negotiation tactics. This theoretical framework has particular relevance to a near total institution such as the Air Force Academy where women may take on different roles or "gender strategies," depending on how they choose to negotiate their highlighted position within the organization and within public discourse (Kimmel 2000). These strategies include: framing gender as unimportant in attempts to stress uniformity, deliberate overcompensation, demonstrated group loyalty, strategic displays of femininity, and acceptance of stereotyped roles (Kanter 1977a; Kimmell 2000:505-506). The demands of "doing gender" within a public, institutional space demonstrate that proportions and gender status play prominent roles among dominated groups, such as women, who must navigate distorted perceptions that shape their social and institutional interactions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Building on past research on tokens within traditionally-male institutions, my research analyzes responses to organizational change through a gender lens. Specifically, the overall research question is: Are female Academy graduates as likely, more likely, or less likely than their male peers to express publicly opposition to the changes implemented as a result of the sexual assault scandal? If the women oppose these

¹³ Brownmiller describes sexual assault and rape specifically, as a "conscious process of intimidation." Rape is about forcing one's will onto another body; it is about power (Brownmiller 1975).

changes, then this may provide evidence in support of Kanter's theory of tokenism since tokens use many strategies, including assimilation, as a way of negotiating gendered processes. If the women support these changes, then this may provide evidence against Kanter's theory of tokenism since the women may be demonstrating independence beyond what their token position would suggest.

This overall research question contains several sub-topics. First, do the female and male graduates use similar rationales and terms to support their public position? For example, tradition may be a common reason for publicly opposing the change, regardless of sex. In contrast, the men and women may use different terms to defend their position and may claim to have different memories of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, but may still have consensus on whether they oppose or support the change. Additionally, the discourse used to justify opposition to change may frame both the organization and processes of USAFA as gender-neutral. For example, respondents, regardless of gender, may frame the Academy as not favoring men over women, but rather as an institution that solely privileges individual achievement. As a result, the women may frame their arguments by stating that they did not experience any sexual or gender harassment while enrolled at the Academy. The men may make similar claims regarding the women's experiences by stating that they did not have sexist attitudes and did not engage in sexist behaviors while at the Academy.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed in the literature review, I approach gender as a social construction and the Air Force Academy as a "gendered institution." By analyzing the public

discourse used by male and female graduates, this study aims to discern how graduates use knowledge particular to their gendered identities to support their position. In particular, it is important to note whether respondents cloak their language as gender-neutral when their knowledge is actually reflective of a masculine or masculine-like experience (Harding 1987).

The methodology, which builds on gender theory, has a critical feminist perspective. Incorporating a stated feminist lens means that I approach this research by focusing on “problematics from the perspective of women’s experiences” (Harding 1987:7). This is not to claim that I include multiple standpoints, particularly since the method and data do not reveal other social categories such as race and class. Thus, this feminist perspective does not speak for all women; rather, it is only intended to present a generic female perspective. The research design also incorporates a critical perspective, which means I am interested in revealing underlying power relations, particularly those that may control or shape discourse since language is a powerful force for reinforcing as well as subverting organizational culture.

My overall research objective is to analyze the public discourse surrounding the dismantling of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp in order to gauge the effects of mandated change, organizational culture, and tokenism within a militarized, masculine institution. Based on this goal, I completed a qualitative content analysis of an Air Force Academy website called USAFA Today (www.usafatoday.com). The site’s mission is “to provide news and opinion about the United States Air Force Academy” and to act as “a forum for the free exchange of ideas among USAFA Grads” (USAFA Today 2008). The site presents itself as a platform for a serious discussion and lists acceptable topics of

discussion. These include: USAFA policy, current events affecting USAFA, Air Force Academy leaders, the Honor Code, cadet life, and any other debatable topic that affects USAFA or graduate life (USAFA Today 2008).

The public can access this website and view the editorials posted by USAFA graduates. However, the site allows only Air Force Academy graduates to post comments in response to discussion topics. The website works alongside the official alumni group of the Air Force Academy, the Association of Graduates (AOG), to verify graduate identity through Academy-issued graduate numbers. Moderators, who are also USAFA graduates, manage the daily postings. They have the option of editing and deleting topics, but they do so only if the posts are off-topic or include abusive material. There are prohibitions against slanderous, obscene, or copyrighted material. The site repeatedly stresses the importance of respectful exchanges and encourages respondents not to “pull rank” with each other.

The website consists of several different discussion threads. An initial topic is posted and then participants are invited to post their opinions in response to the original topic and to on-topic postings from other graduates. For this paper, I initially searched all discussion threads that mentioned the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, leading me to 16 discussion threads. I then narrowed the list to all discussions that included the *Agenda for Change* and the “Bring Me Men...” ramp as central topics. The topics that I removed focused on the AOG’s perceived acquiescence to Air Force leaders on the *Agenda for Change*. These discussions focused almost exclusively on the organizational protocol and bylaws of the AOG, with the “Bring Me Men...” ramp as an example of an issue that should have been voted on by the AOG membership. I also removed two

threads that focused on sexual assault and rape because these discussions did not cite the changes implemented at USAFA as a result of the sexual assault scandal. Rather, these were short discussion threads (neither had more than 15 posts) that focused on media coverage of the Academy during this time and on sexual assault in the military generally.

There were also two discussion threads focused on gender issues more broadly (appropriately titled “Gender Issues at the Academy” and “Let’s Separate the Issues Please”) that I initially considered as possible data sources. However, these threads only discussed the “Bring Me Men...” ramp within the first two postings, before moving to other issues, such as the physical fitness test. Although the *Agenda for Change* and the “Bring Me Men...” ramp are initially addressed, these issues are sidebars to other concerns that dominate the online conversation; they are not the focus or main motivation for the discussions. For that reason, I do not include these discussion threads within my analysis. By removing all extraneous discussions, the increased specificity in topics left me with the following discussion threads (Table 1):

TABLE 1: DISCUSSION TOPICS WITH NUMBER OF VIEWS AND POSTS

DISCUSSION TOPIC*	TIME PERIOD	# OF VIEWS	# OF POSTS
Loss of the Bring Me Men Ramp	March 9, 2005 through August 22, 2005	4163	121
Bring Me Core Values Ramp	September 23, 2004 through November 20, 2004	2126	72
Poll: Should the Bring Me Men Have Been Taken Down?	March 1, 2004 through March 12, 2004	1852	46 (135 votes)
TOTAL NUMBER OF POSTS:			239

* NOTE: The titles of the discussion topics are pulled directly from the website and use the original language.

I code these discussion topics using the USAFA Today coding scheme, which I discuss below (see Appendix D for full coding scheme).

Based on knowledge gained from previous qualitative content analyses on issues of military women (see Iskra 2007; Segal and Hansen 1992), I use a complex coding unit involving thematic analyses and not just counts of word occurrence (Crano and Brewer 2002). To begin the analysis, I use line-by-line open coding of each post to identify and label all suggested themes and issues (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Then, I record the topics and themes that are most prevalent, revise my coding scheme, and return to the sample with focused coding, based on identified concepts that were revealed during the open coding phase.

There are three parts to the coding scheme. The first section focuses on descriptive characteristics that locate the speaker within the dialogue and specifically cite the data source. I also record any personal characteristics cited in the post (e.g., self-identified conservative) as well as any cited military experience. The second section covers whether the writer agrees or disagrees with the dismantling of “Bring Me Men...” from the ramp. The third section records specific views and rationales advocated by the speaker. These themes include tradition, gender relations and integration, the Air Force Academy’s mission, sexual assault reporting and deterrence, cadet cohesiveness, faith in USAFA leaders, and public opinion. I selected two of these themes (gender relations and integration, sexual assault reporting and deterrence) based on information gleaned from the literature review, particularly the investigative studies of USAFA and its sexual assault history. The other themes emerged from my line-by-line open coding of each post. In addition to coding the discussion posts, I also provide space to record quotes that

provide particularly rich data. I will use these quotes in my analysis and discussion section.

Although the USAFA Today website is open to all USAFA graduates, there is respondent bias regarding who actually views and corresponds to the website. The website has a counter for each discussion topic so it is possible to know how many times a topic has been viewed. Based on this information, I know that the number of postings to a topic is much less than the number of times the topic has been viewed. This difference partly stems from the closing of topics for discussion. Once moderators close a topic, the discussion threads are placed in a website archive. Although members can no longer post to the discussion, they can still open and read the file, thus increasing the number of viewings of a discussion topic. Despite this partial explanation for the difference between posters and readers, those individuals who post a comment may be fundamentally different from those who do not (e.g., posters may be more loyal to the institution). Due to this bias, the results do not represent the opinions of all graduates. Rather, the study measures the public views of those graduates who choose to express themselves on this website. This study is not designed to be explanatory, but exploratory and descriptive, and therefore, focuses on providing insight, and not causality, into issues involving culture, gender, and organizational change.

There are both positive and negative consequences to relying on online discussion boards for data. Online forums require that a respondent has internet access, has knowledge of the website, and has the time and motivation to read, and if desired, respond to discussion forums. With the exception of getting clearance to post responses, the groups that form on this website are formed naturally; the respondents choose to

participate on the website and in specific discussion threads. I, the researcher, have nothing to do with the composition of the discussion groups and am unable to moderate the threads. The group discussions that follow an original post provide a space for a range of different opinions, and, if necessary, for these opinions to shift based on the information shared (Cassell and Symon 2004). The respondents use each other to construct meaning out of shared experience.

However, there are also drawbacks to relying on this type of data. Although these discussions have many similarities with a focus group research design, I have no control of the information the respondents wish to discuss. Topics may begin with a discussion of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, but change to other subjects that have little overt bearing on the original topic. Certain respondents may dominate the online discussion with multiple posts which as an outside researcher, I cannot moderate. Finally, there is the potential that the group culture, such as a group with a skewed gender composition, may interfere with true individual expression, discouraging many “tokens” from expressing their views publicly. As a consequence, respondents may write something for a public forum that is not a true representation of their individual opinion.

In addition to having their alumni status verified prior to contributing to the website, respondents also must include their name, graduation year, and cadet squadron for each post they contribute. Since all postings require a name, I know if one person has multiple posts. Rather than count each post as a separate entry, I consolidate all posts with the same author into one data point so that each individual is counted only once.

I did not complete a large scale cross-validation of my data so the replicability and reliability of my data may be questioned (Crano and Brewer 2002). I did have

assistance from another sociology Ph.D. student specializing in military sociology and gender, work, and family who applied my coding scheme to two randomly selected discussion posts. Her results on respondent opinions on the dismantling of “Bring Me Men...” ramp and on the themes used to support these opinions matched mine exactly, providing additional assurance that my results captured the main themes.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

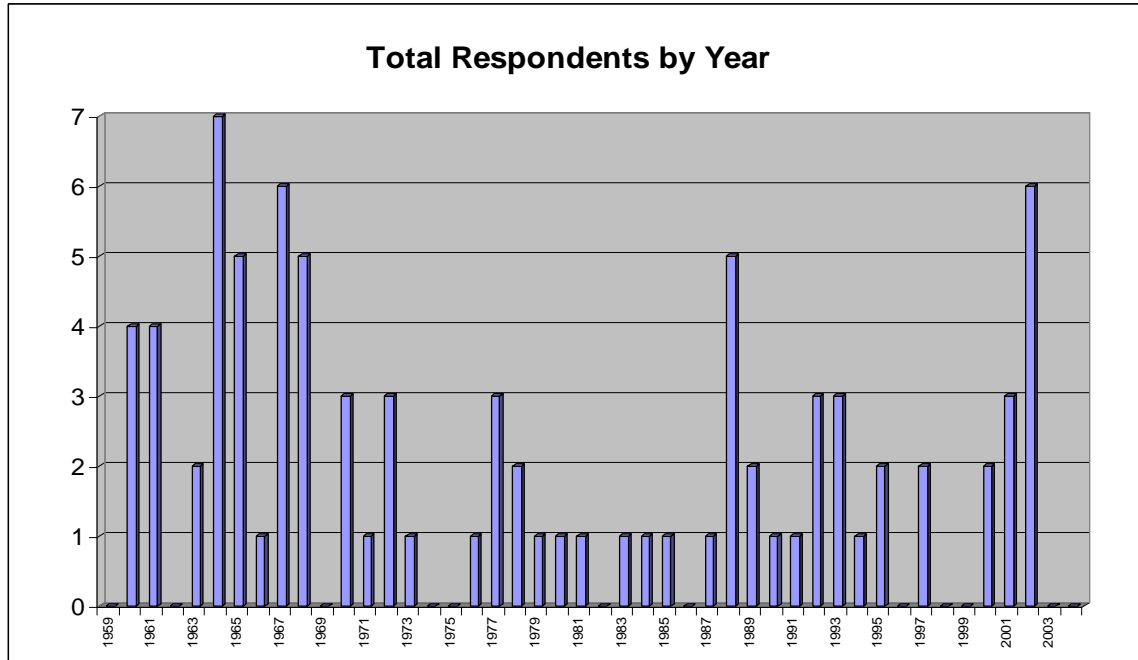
Respondent Characteristics

Not only am I interested in overall discursive themes, but I also include contextual components of analysis. Thus, I categorized each post based on who wrote the piece, his/her cadet squadron, and his/her year of graduation. In addition to differences in opinion between the men and women, I also analyzed the impact of graduating class year, with an emphasis on landmark events in USAFA’s history: the 1976 integration of women and the 2003 sexual assault scandal and the subsequent *Agenda for Change* (Crano and Brewer 2002). Context, like content, is an important part of the analysis because individuals may have different opinions based on where they are or have been situated within the military service academy environment (Hammersley and Atkinson 2006).

Because many respondents posted more than once, I consolidated all posts from the same respondent into one data point, leaving me with 84 respondents with 239 total posts (n=84). The demographics of the respondents do not match precisely the distribution of Academy graduates. However, the respondents span the Academy’s years of operation. While there were class years that were not represented within the

discussion posts, there is not a four-year time span that is not covered by at least one respondent. This is sufficient for a small-scale exploratory study.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY GRADUATING CLASS YEAR



One important omission is the absence of any respondents from the class of 2003. Several of the discussion boards closed in early 2004 so it makes sense not to have respondents from the class of 2004 and later since these class members had not graduated, and were not eligible to join this site (although they were able to view the discussions). However, it was possible for graduates from the class of 2003 to have contributed to these discussions, although none did. I cannot explain this absence of representation, although it could be due to an oversaturation of the topic. The cadets from the graduating class of 2003 had a different experience from the respondents on USAFA Today regarding the *Agenda for Change*. They experienced the national spotlight directly as reporters and political and military leaders visited USAFA during their senior year. They also were directly impacted by multiple investigations that

required their participation with surveys and focus groups and they experienced first-hand the implementation of the *Agenda for Change*. Due to their unique experience with the sexual assault scandal at USAFA, they may have avoided future involvement with the issue and opted out of discussions, such as the ones analyzed here, that focused on it.

Over half of the total respondents graduated from USAFA during the 1960s and 1970s. Women were not admitted into the service academies until 1976 so the first graduating class with women was in 1980. There are women respondents from the 1980s and later within the sample; however, there is a dearth of women respondents from the 1990s. Women respondents constitute 14 percent of the total sample, which makes them

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF WOMEN RESPONDENTS BY GRADUATING CLASS YEAR

GRADUATING CLASS YEAR	# OF WOMEN RESPONDENTS
1980	1
1988	1
1989	2
1992	2
2000	1
2001	2
2002	3
TOTAL:	12

a token group with the online discussions, and their representation comparable to women's proportional presence both within the Cadet Wing and within the AOG (Table 2). However, the women provide approximately 50 percent of graduate opinion for all respondents who graduated in 1980 and beyond. Thus, although women have an equitable representation when considered against all respondents, they are overrepresented among the respondents who graduated in those classes that included

women. The men's opinions are skewed toward those who graduated without women in their class, with 49 of the male respondents coming from the class of 1979 (last class to graduate without women) or earlier. These respondents from the all-male classes constitute 58 percent of all respondents, and 68 percent of all male respondents.

In addition to graduating class year and gender, I also analyzed the respondents by cadet squadron, of which there are 40. There were no noticeable trends in this variable. No squadron was overrepresented and there were several that were not represented. Each squadron may have its own culture, and as a consequence, there may be different cultural trends, particularly regarding gender relations, in different squadrons. However, with such limited data on this variable, I cannot delve further into individual squadron norms. Rather, I continue to focus on the broader organizational culture of USAFA.

Finally, I recorded any self-described personal characteristics included by the respondents to analyze whether there are any characteristics that may be related to their views. I assume that all graduates served in the active duty military for at least a brief period of time. The service requirement for all graduates of a federal military service academy is 5 years of active service, although it is possible for Academy graduates to separate early for medical reasons or for service-wide Reductions-in-Force. Most respondents did not provide further details about their military experience. I had one self-identified Judge Advocate General (i.e., military lawyer), one medical professional (exact field unknown), one respondent who crossed over into Army infantry, and two pilots (one male and one female). Otherwise, I do not know the occupations or career progressions of the respondents.

Although most respondents did not explicitly link their military experience with their position, a substantial percentage did wrap their opinions within a personal identification with conservative viewpoints. Specifically, 42 out of 84 respondents (or 49%) self-identified with a conservative stance, either politically and culturally. These personal descriptions came in many different forms. Some respondents directly aligned themselves with conservative Christian values; others framed themselves as personal defenders of liberty, and used small government principles to support their claims. Others did not directly identify with a conservative viewpoint, but portrayed social liberals as outsiders having a disproportionate negative influence on the military, particularly USAFA. The preponderance of conservative self-identification among the respondents is not surprising considering that more military officers generally identify with conservatism and the Republican party than with liberalism (Holsti 2001).

Opinion on Removal of “Bring Me Men...”

In all the discussion threads, the majority of respondents opposed the decision to remove the “Bring Me Men...” from the Academy ramp. Seven (8%) respondents supported the change, 65 (77%) opposed the change, and 13 (15%) did not comment on the issue (Table 3). The majority of “no comment” responses came from discussion thread #2, “Bring Me Core Values Ramp.” This thread occurred several months after the “Bring Me Men...” words had already been removed from the ramp. The topic of discussion for this thread also focused on suitable replacements for the ramp; thus, many of the posts did not address the ramp’s past, but focused on future decisions regarding its content.

TABLE 3: OPINION ON DECISION TO DISMANTLE BMMR

DECISION TO DISMANTLE BMMR				
	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	NO COMMENT	TOTAL
Loss of the BMMR	3	28	1	32
Bring Me Core Values Ramp	2	18	9	29
Poll on BMMR	2	18	3	23
TOTAL	7	64	13	84

I stratified the responses by gender to see if there is a difference of opinion between male and female graduates (Table 4). The majority of men and all of the women opposed the change. Seven men (10%) supported the change, 52 men (72%) opposed the change, and 13 men (18%) had no comment on the change.

TABLE 4: OPINION ON DECISION TO DISMANTLE BMMR, BY GENDER

DECISION TO DISMANTLE BMMR							
	SUPPORT		OPPOSE		NO COMMENT		TOTAL
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	
Loss of the BMMR	3	0	23	5	1	0	32
Bring Me Core Values Ramp	2	0	15	3	9	0	29
Poll on BMMR	2	0	14	4	3	0	23
TOTAL	7	0	52	12	13	0	84

Of the seven men who supported the change, four graduated from USAFA during the mid-1960s, around the time when the words “Bring Me Men...” were placed over the ramp. These men did not express any attachment to the phrase. One stated, “I was there when they put it up, and it seemed trite even then.” Another said, “Because it didn’t have any real connection with me, I don’t mourn the BMM loss. If it had been there before me maybe I would.” The other three respondents supporting the change were from the 1990s

and the 1970s. They expressed attachment to the words, but understood the decision by Air Force leaders to remove them.

Whereas many of the men who supported the decision stated that they did not have a strong attachment to the words, those men and women against the change framed the removal as a serious affront to the graduate community. One 1970 male graduate stated, “I do think that the taking down of the BMM sign was the **most open** insult to the graduate community.” A 1966 graduate stated, “I will NEVER be satisfied with the Air Force Academy until that sign is returned to its rightful place.” Many expressed disbelief that a cadet would find the words problematic and were offended that Air Force leaders did not ask for their feedback. If the graduates had been asked, it was stated, “I feel you’re going to find very few grads that were offended by this.” The women, in particular, emphasized that they were not a part of the decision-making process and that the decision was made against their will. As one 2001 women graduate expressed, “No one in the graduate community was ever asked, least of all the female graduate community.”

If the female graduates had opinions on the broader policy mandating the “Bring Me Men...” removal, they did not express it. None of the female graduates acknowledged the *Agenda for Change* in their discussions. Only two out of 72 male respondents expressed an opinion about the *Agenda for Change*, and both opposed the policy. One used the term “precipitous,” the other used the term “politically-correct” to describe the decision to enforce the *Agenda for Change*.

Likewise, there was a similarity in opinion from the respondents regarding the dismantling of the words “Bring Me Men...” and the placement of the Air Force core

values on the ramp. Only the discussion thread of “Bring Me Core Values Ramp” specifically addressed the ramp’s transition. The earlier discussions did not include this issue because the ramp’s new identity was still under consideration. In this later discussion, those who supported the removal of the words also supported the addition of the core values (Table 5). These respondents found the placement of the core values as, “inspiring and demand[ing] deeper thought about the right things” and relevant as cadets are, “crossing over from civilian life into the Air Force.” All of those who opposed the removal of “Bring Me Men...” opposed the addition of the core values to the ramp area.

**TABLE 5: OPINION ON BMMR BY OPINION ON CORE VALUES RAMP
DECISION TO DISMANTLE BMMR**

CORE VALUES RAMP	SUPPORT		OPPOSE		NO COMMENT		TOTAL
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	
SUPPORT	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
OPPOSE	0	0	11	1	5	1	18
NO COMMENT	0	0	5	1	1	0	7
TOTAL	1	0	16	2	9	1	29

Arguments against the core values ramp certainly included protests against the need to change; many respondents were reluctant to accept the decision and to move on to other areas of discussion. Additionally, many of those against the core values ramp expressed animosity towards USAFA leaders and the AOG for not soliciting suggestions from the graduate community. Several of these respondents framed the decision to add

the Air Force core values, rather than a saying unique to USAFA, as proof that USAFA was slipping toward mediocrity. One respondent, for example, framed the decision to use the core values as, “if it’s good enough for ROTC, it’s good enough for USAFA.” This statement demonstrates a common viewpoint against the core values: that they are “corporate speak” sayings that are “uninspiring and unimaginative” and, most importantly, they are not unique to USAFA.

The “Bring Me Men...” Ramp and Tradition

Although a few respondents simply stated their opinion regarding the dismantling of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp without further substantiation, most respondents provided supporting arguments in defense of their opinion (see Tables 6 and 7 for a complete breakdown of themes by gender), with tradition, lack of faith in organizational leaders, and institutional bowing to public opinion being the most common.

TABLE 6: THEMES TO SUPPORT OPINION BY GENDER

	Positive Effect		Negative Effect		No Effect		No Comment	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Tradition	4 (6%)	0	42 (58%)	9 (75%)	3 (4%)	0	23 (32%)	3 (25%)
Faith in Org. Leaders	1 (1%)	0	36 (50%)	5 (42%)	0	9 (75%)	35 (49%)	7 (58%)
Gender Relations & Integration	3 (4%)	0	7 (10%)	3 (25%)	10 (14%)	2 (17%)	52 (72%)	7 (58%)
Public Opinion	16 (22%)	3 (25%)	0	0	0	0	56 (78%)	9 (75%)
USAFA Mission	2 (3%)	0	7 (10%)	2 (17%)	1 (1%)	0	62 (86%)	10 (83%)
Sexual Assault Deterrence	1 (1%)	0	0	0	9 (12%)	0	62 (86%)	12 (100%)
Cadet Cohesiveness	1 (1%)	0	0	0	0	0	71 (99%)	12 (100%)
TOTAL	28	3	92	19	23	11	368	60

The most cited discursive theme, for both the men and women respondents, is how the removal of the words “Bring Me Men...” impacts tradition. Only four male respondents thought that the removal would have a positive influence on tradition; in contrast, 42 men specifically stated that the ramp’s removal would have a negative influence on tradition. The women shared this concern, with none of them stating that the ramp’s removal would have a positive impact and nine stating that it would have a negative impact.

Tradition at USAFA stems from several factors: its institutional youthfulness, its connection to aviation, and its past status, particularly during the first two decades of its existence, as an all-male institution. Whereas significantly older institutions, such as the United States Military Academy at West Point, may block changes to tradition on the grounds of time and history,¹⁴ respondents from relatively new institutions, such as USAFA, may frame organizational changes as ruinous attempts that prevent the creation of any tradition. Several of the male and female respondents were sensitive to USAFA’s newcomer status; these respondents considered themselves to be the protectors of organic traditions. For example, three male respondents from the class of 1964, 1988, and 1977, respectively, state:

Sadly, USAF never got the message. Hence, zero tradition, and only reactions to the latest societal concerns and whims of the powers that be, etc.

...the AF has 50 years of progress unhampered by tradition.

I thought the move to take BMM down was a silly and facile response to what was allegedly a serious problem. It seemed to be a simply cosmetic fix, and one more way the AF leadership

¹⁴ In 2008, the superintendent of USMA changed the words of the school’s alma mater and its companion piece from “men” and “sons” to gender-neutral lyrics. Both songs have been a part of USMA tradition for over a century.

denigrates tradition and makes it impossible to establish anything for more than a few years.

The respondents who discussed USAFA's need for tradition did not differ on this viewpoint by gender or graduating class year, but shared the common perspective that outside forces continuously prevented the maintenance of meaningful traditions.

Despite the similarity in views regarding the need to preserve meaningful symbols at USAFA, the statements about the initial call to preserve tradition often preceded a separate line of reasoning among the respondents. This divergence in the rationale used to connect the "Bring Me Men..." ramp to tradition may stem from differing perceptions of the respondent's role, based on his or her gender, in the creation, or alteration, of USAFA tradition. The men who oppose the dismantling of the ramp often claimed membership in the "long blue line," a term used to symbolize the unbroken chain of USAFA graduates. Rather than challenge the status quo, their presence, as numerical dominants, reinforces the gendered organizational culture that evolved at USAFA, beginning with the Academy's creation in 1954 as an all-male institution.

Many of the men, and almost all of the women, acknowledge that until 1976, USAFA was a single sex school; it was, and remains, a gendered institution defined by its militarized, masculine culture. The mandate to integrate occurred against the backdrop of opposition from major organizational players, including cadets, alumni, and Academy leaders, forced to comply with government legislation that they thought would damage USAFA's ability to produce combat leaders. Thirty-plus years later, the implementation of the *Agenda for Change*, and specifically the dismantling of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, reignited discussion on how women's presence, as tokens, compromises the institution by changing "sacred" tradition central to the in-group's understanding of

USAFA's eliteness, even if these changes lead to increased recognition of the Cadet Wing's diversity (Kanter 1977a). One male 1964 graduate stated, "Bring Me Men was installed when that WAS the Cadet body and it referred to the Wing as a whole; not the gender (or even the existence) of individuals but the melded whole." This graduate acknowledges the formation of USAFA as a gendered institution, but also refuses to acknowledge the need to change symbols, such as the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, to more neutral representations. Likewise, a male 1967 graduate expressed concern regarding how the changes implemented for women affected the USAFA mission. Specifically, he said:

The deeper issue that you bring up is not the fact that women at the Academies have done any deeper harm to said institutions (they have indeed changed it for the better); rather, it is removal of traditions based on PC terms tends to limit the academy's ability to impart those traits and qualities imperative for Air Force officers now and into the future.

As demonstrated by the quote, a common theme throughout the discussion threads was that tradition was being discarded for "political-correctness." One male 1977 graduate stated, "I am not a proponent of revising history for political correctness." By focusing on tradition created during USAFA's time as an all-male academy, there is a refusal among most of the respondents to de-gender the institution; the present remains shaped by the past, not the by the current demographic composition of the Cadet Wing.

The charge of political correctness also generated intense concern among the women respondents, particularly since they did not want to be perceived as the ones weakening USAFA tradition. As stated in Kanter's theorized process of boundary heightening, the dominants stress their group solidarity by reaffirming their shared understanding of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp. The women, as tokens, perceive the

importance of this understanding to the group's identity and actively work to prevent any revision to it.

Like the male graduates, the women claim membership in USAFA's social network; however, they did not present themselves as traditional USAFA members as the men did, but as recent arrivals committed to preventing organizational change implemented on their account. All expressed awareness that their presence, as token women, drew attention to traditions that may be perceived, particularly by outsiders not socialized within the organization, as discriminatory. Yet, they also claimed an in-group understanding of the importance of certain symbols to the male graduates; they willingly exaggerated the importance of the dominant's gendered culture. All of the women respondents adamantly voiced opposition to any changes implemented for their benefit, a strategy that demonstrates their willingness to endorse organizational symbols claimed by the dominant group, even if these symbols had only been at the Academy for 13 years prior to the admission of women. The women respondents did not perceive traditional, gendered spaces, such as the "Bring Me Men..." ramp as exclusionary, but as a part of USAFA history. For example, a female 1992 graduate stated:

As a female grad, I never saw the 'men' as mankind. I saw it as part of the Academy's history. It should have never been taken down. We cannot deny our history and should never try to hide it or cover it up. The Academy WAS once an all male institution. The poem WAS speaking of men. There's nothing wrong with that, it's a fact. We as a society and an AF have progressed beyond that. Just because we've progressed doesn't mean we should forget or deny a period in our history.

Another female graduate, from the class of 2002, stressed that change implemented due to the perceived needs of USAFA's female population has the potential to create more problems than it solves by bringing increased attention to the differences separating the

tokens from the dominant group (Kanter 1977a). She states, “Those who know me will note I am one of the least un-PC people to ever talk this Earth...which is why I hate it when they change things. I am under the belief that if it wasn’t touched between 1976-1980, leave it because it’ll cause more crap than what it’s worth.” This respondent is willing to overlook the gendered nature of many USAFA symbols to avoid increased negativity toward women from the dominant group. These women are not interested in challenging the male traditions of USAFA, even if the removal of sites, such as the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, leads to the creation of symbols that recognize, rather than dismiss, their gendered bodies.

Those female respondents who cited tradition in their arguments against the dismantling of “Bring Me Men...” all used a similar rationale: the Academy was once an all-male institution and as a logical consequence, many of its traditions focus on men. Some of the male respondents also acknowledged the unique position of the women graduates, both now and in 1976. For example, one male 1978 graduate addressed the removal of the “Bring Me Men...” with:

This discussion was dealt with in detail back in 1976 when women were first admitted. It was hotly debated and determined, rightfully so, to keep the sign because of what it stood for. ... Furthermore, it was my impression that the women entering the Academy and a majority of female graduates did not want the sign taken down. They do not look at the sign in that way. They also do not want the blame for the tearing down of tradition.

The women, as conceded by some of the men, did not want to challenge the historical foundations upon which many traditional sites were built, nor did they want to disrupt the current status quo that extended through the “long blue line.” Rather, even with their newcomer status, they wanted to be perceived as trustworthy partners within the

community, committed to working alongside the dominant group in preserving USAFA in its original, masculine state.

Concerns about the need to remove tradition for the sake of inclusiveness not only focused on the removal of “Bring Me Men...,” but extended to other significant sites and sayings within USAFA. Several male respondents saw the removal of “Bring Me Men...” as foreshadowing the removal or revision of other traditions to accommodate the presence of women within the Cadet Wing, that is, the de-gendering of the institution. Many respondents feared a domino effect, tipped off with the removal of “Bring Me Men...” and ending with an Academy defined by unauthentic tradition that no longer represented the Academy’s roots as an all-male institution. For example, a male respondent from the class of 1988 feared that the Eagle and Fledging Statue would be the next targeted item because it did not incorporate gender neutral language. He said, “The knowledge bird in front of Mitchell Hall will be next, Why, that very first word of ‘MAN’s’ flight...” is enough to upset some flaming liberal very soon.” Respondents also feared that the urge to revise all gender-specific pronouns would lead to a revision of “sacred” texts, both within USAFA and in the Air Force. A male 2002 graduate presented his opposition with:

The logic that suggests that the perceived climate problems on the hill would be lessened by the removal of these words would also call for the removal of ‘men’ from the Air Force Song, the Air Force Hymn, and several great traditional quotes...

This need to revise traditional language would not only affect the key texts of USAFA, but lead to the dismantling of other fundamental sites within the Academy grounds. A male 1997 respondent reminded his discussion thread, “Don’t forget the

Minuteman III in front of the fieldhouse,¹⁵ it is quite phallic looking.” Several respondents took the need for inclusiveness to an extreme, citing the removal of fundamental aspects of the Academy that were not divisive, but could face erasure due to their distinction as being important to USAFA’s institutional identity. As one male 1964 graduate stated, “Next on the lack of tradition chopping block is the Honor Code. But what the hell! It’s just an old, out-of-date tradition...” whereas other respondents, such as this male 1979 graduate, extended this need for change further with, “I guess I would ask what’s next – take the planes off the terrazzo because they offend us non-fighter pilot types? Do we close the chapel because there are those who don’t believe in God?”

The male respondents who expressed concern about the precedent started by the removal of “Bring Me Men...” did not specifically blame the integration of women for these changes; rather, they placed blame with outsiders eager to remove tradition for the sake of politically-correct solutions. However, the underlying message to their comments suggests concern with any change that tampers with USAFA’s history, most notably with revisions that change traditions formed during the Academy’s initial period as an all-male institution; they do not want the Academy to change at all. The male respondents want to preserve the continuity of tradition found within the “long blue line.” They understand their institutional role as numerical and cultural dominants, and seek to reproduce it by preventing change that would reduce the priority of their organizational membership. The women, in contrast, seem to recognize their acceptance into the graduate network of USAFA, yet they also make a point of stating that their presence does not require any accommodation. They claim their role within USAFA’s heritage, but understand that

¹⁵ The Minuteman III was removed from Academy grounds in 2008. Corrosion on the inside of the missile made it a safety hazard (Hoffman 2008).

many Academy traditions were formed, not as reflections of the current diversity found within the Cadet Wing, but as products of a militarized, masculine culture, of which the women, as tokens, remain relative newcomers.

Solidarity against USAFA “Outsiders”

After tradition, the second most common theme for both the men and women respondents was their faith – or lack of it - in organizational leaders. Only one male respondent cited the decision to change the “Bring Me Men...” as an action that increased his faith in Air Force and USAFA leaders. Conversely, 36 men cited that this decision decreased their faith in organizational leaders. Similarly, none of the women respondents framed the decision as having a positive effect on their opinion of organizational leaders, whereas five of the women cited the decision as having a negative effect.

The common socialization shared by the respondents found expression in their shared perceptions, regardless of gender, of the negative impact of outsiders. Unlike their civilian and even non-Academy graduate military peers, the respondents claim that USAFA is their institution and, due to its unique status, should be protected from the judgmental eyes of the outside public. The Academy graduates consider themselves to be insiders with a common loyalty and understanding of USAFA that no outsider can claim. This perspective allows them to frame their role not only as USAFA graduates, but as USAFA protectors. This view is further reinforced by the perception that Academy graduates are an elite group, shaped by an intense, self-sacrificing military experience

unparalleled by other commissioning sources or by civilian institutions of higher education (Stiehm 1981).

A frequent theme for respondents who oppose the dismantling of the ramp is the belief that Academy leaders capitulated to outside pressure. The public, whom many respondents perceive as having too large an influence on their institution, was able to reshape the Academy landscape with their ill-informed assumptions. Here is how one 2002 female graduate expressed her sentiments toward the ramp:

What was special to me about the Bring Me Men Ramp was that I felt like the poem was ours. It didn't belong to the general public. ... What I felt after reading the poem was something that I felt, that fellow cadets felt, but not something that your average joe felt. The feeling was already there, but it had a focus, a home with that poem.

This inability to withstand public interference led to the erasure of a site that, although it held no meaning to outsiders, held tremendous meaning for many USAFA graduates.

The respondents argue that the general public not only has the ability to change USAFA, but that this desire for change is a surreptitious path toward the public's imposition of liberal, politically-correct values. As outsiders, the general public is further colored as overly-concerned with creating diversity and inclusiveness at the service academies, even if the forced recognition of these values leads to the detriment of cohesion and military effectiveness. The public is willing to "sacrifice on the altar of political correctness" meaningful symbols, such as the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, due to misperceptions of the message's overall spirit as well as the importance of this message to many cadets and graduates. Likewise, public supporters of dismantling the "Bring Me Men..." ramp may view many USAFA cadets and graduates as failing to see the

connotations of the stanza's message and the contribution this message makes to excluding women.

Further, the Academy is no longer protected from the softening influence of outsiders, but is being forced to change in accordance with the increasingly divergent worldview of the larger society. Regarding the ramp's dismantling, one male 1996 graduate stated, "Its removal was an act of surrender to the political correctness that dominates today's culture" and a female 1988 graduate wrote, "Maybe the ramp should read, 'Bring Me Bleeding Heart Liberals of All Races, Genders, and Sexual Persuasions Who Promise Never To Say Anything That Might Be Taken Out of Context And/Or Offend Anyone In Any Way, Shape or Form At The Cost of Ever Standing for Anything.'" This situation is further exacerbated, as stated by some of the respondents, by USAFA's status as a federal institution dependent upon taxpayer dollars for funding. The general public's financial stake in the Academy, as well as civilian control over the military generally, gives civilians oversight capability with which many graduates are not comfortable, particularly if the graduates themselves are not consulted prior to major decisions. There is a lack of recognition by many of these respondents of the symbolic importance of civilian oversight over the Academy and a resistance to viewing USAFA as belonging to the nation, rather than those who join its ranks. One female graduate from the class of 1992 stated:

The rest of the world can pound sand as far as I'm concerned when it comes to what they think BMM represents or means. Granted, we are a public institution. For that reason, the public should ask those of us who have an interest in its existence our opinion, and then trust us. I'm sure our opinion is much more "rational" than the "pundits" who have no clue on whether or not the beginning of a poem up on a wall contributed to a "culture of hostility."

The general public, in other words, does not understand USAFA's mission, and will damage it, if allowed to change the Academy without graduate input. Although USAFA is a public institution, many respondents claim that individuals not connected with USAFA, even if they are members of the military, lack the expertise necessary to make decisions about the Academy.

Continuing the focus on outside influence, the only theme that garnered a unanimous response from the respondents was public opinion. Specifically, 16 men and three women cited the ramp's removal as having a positive effect on public opinion because it appeased the public's desire for diversity and change. This rationale was often couched in language that presented the public as outsiders concerned only with political-correctness, even if it decreased military effectiveness. None of the respondents saw the ramp's removal as having a negative effect on public opinion.

Although many of the respondents singled out the general public as a negative influence on USAFA, 41 respondents also singled out organizational leaders, particularly the SECAF and the CSAF, as outsiders who do not understand USAFA and who, because of their decisions regarding the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, have lost the support of the graduate community. Due to the national attention brought upon USAFA during the 2003 investigations, the top civilian and military leaders of the Air Force acted quickly, implementing the *Agenda for Change* within months of the first indication of widespread sexual assault. The CSAF and SECAF may have gained credibility within the general public and within the Air Force broadly for their quick actions, but their response to the issue upset many of the respondents, particularly since it was perceived as political pandering.

This negative feeling was further increased by the fact that neither leader was an Academy graduate,¹⁶ and thus, not as invested in preserving the Academy's reputation as the graduates. For example, a male respondent from the class of 1986 writes, "My ring and diploma mean less everyday thanks to those higher ups who have made the place just another college, except you get bossed around a lot." By degendering traditional symbols, the decision by outsiders to remove the "Bring Me Men..." ramp threatens the masculine organizational culture upon which USAFA was founded at the expense of a key inspirational symbol. A female 2002 respondent stated, "I want it to be brought back not because it says Bring Me Men, but more as a standup against the assclown politicians who want to destroy something merely because they do not understand it." Thus, the perception of outsiders stems not only toward the general public, but also toward the most senior Air Force leaders who, because of their mandated accountability to the public as well as their perceived lack of connection with the Academy, do not understand the significance of the words "Bring Me Men..." nor the impact of the decision to remove them.

Socialization and the Alignment of Opinion

As demonstrated by the results, there is no discernible difference among the male and female respondents regarding their opposition to the changes implemented as a result of the sexual assault scandal; the vast majority of men (90 percent) and all of the women oppose the dismantling of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp. It appears as though the men and women present their opinions using similar rationales. For example, the majority of

¹⁶ The CSAF, Dr. James G. Roche, was a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology and a retired veteran of the U.S. Navy. General John P. Jumper graduated from the Virginia Military Institute.

respondents in both groups stated that the change would have a negative effect on USAFA tradition. Further, a substantial number of respondents in both groups stated that the change had a negative impact on their faith in organizational leaders. They also stated that the change would favorably influence public opinion, an appeasement which many respondents did not support.

On the surface, the similarity of opinion between the male and female respondents makes sense due to the common socialization experienced by all cadets. As discussed, the Academy has aspects of a total institution, particularly during the severe socialization period of BCT. Cut off from civilian society and undergoing a life-changing experience, cadets are forced to form a new identity and to adopt new attitudes and norms that align with their new role as USAFA cadets and future Air Force officers. The encompassing nature of institutional life leads to a shared formal and informal culture that is passed down the Cadet Wing through the Fourth-Class system. Even as token minorities within the Academy, women cadets are socialized into the major components of this common organizational culture, which they most likely experience through the leadership of male upperclassmen. Cadets, irrespective of gender, must accommodate the broader culture if they are going to survive and thrive within USAFA; for women, this may be particularly important as they attempt to negotiate their status within a militarized, masculine culture.

Although each cadet must independently negotiate his/her USAFA experience, common institutional experiences may lead to common attitudes, leading to an alignment of opinions on certain issues. This tendency may be even more prominent on issues unique to USAFA, such as the “Bring Me Men...” ramp. Cadets and USAFA graduates may feel even greater pressure to align their opinions when the institution that has

reshaped their identity experiences national scrutiny. One 1992 female graduate, for example, describes her connection to the “Bring Me Men...” ramp as follows:

...it was ours, male and female graduates alike. Any woman who walked under those words, at some point in their four years here, thought about that poem and those words. We probably thought about it more than the male graduate community. And like every woman who has posted on this topic, we used rational thought, not blind acceptance to accept the poem as part of OUR Academy tradition.

Thus, the shared opinion and rationales offered by the respondents may reflect shared meaning of an organizational symbol with which the majority of USAFA graduates, including the women, genuinely identify. However, these common viewpoints may also result from tokenism processes and may be linked to strategies the USAFA women, as tokens, use to negotiate these processes.

Tokenism and Gender Strategies

As demonstrated by the prominent conversational theme of tradition, women are accepted at the Academy as long as their presence does not require cultural or structural changes. However, the women must be willing to accommodate the prevailing culture, which is based on the images, needs, and strengths of the male body. The female graduates of USAFA, as expressed in Kanter’s theory of tokenism, are numerical rarities participating within a skewed group dominated by men; women have never comprised more than 18 percent of the student body. The skewed gender composition within the Cadet Wing, and by extension the graduate community, shapes group dynamics and the larger group culture in important ways. Kanter’s theory on the effects of proportions on group culture argues convincingly that certain processes, such as performance pressures,

boundary heightening, and role entrapment, occur during in-person interactions between dominants and tokens in skewed groups (1977a).

This interconnectedness between group composition and culture is highlighted further when organizational change is implemented in response to an ascribed characteristic of the token. Women may take on different roles or “gender strategies” as they negotiate their highlighted position in the organization and the public discourse. Online interactions provide greater, although still limited, protections against some of the tokenism processes encountered in face-to-face interaction. However, boundary heightening, which is the “polarization or exaggeration of the token’s attributes in contrast to those of the dominants,” is still an observable process within the online discussions (Kanter 1977a: 975). In particular, I observe three social phenomena in the online discussions in line with Kanter’s theorized process of boundary heightening with loyalty tests being the most prominent, followed by an exaggeration of the dominant’s culture and the use of formal in-group recognitions as reminders of difference between the dominants and the tokens. There was also a failure, from both the dominants and the tokens, to seriously consider the claims of alleged sexual assault and whether these claims had any connection to USAFA’s organizational culture.

Mandated change at USAFA came in response to the 2003 sexual assault scandal, which highlighted problems at the institutional level with the Academy’s ability to prevent, investigate, and prosecute sexual assault. All of the reported victims within the 10 year time span under investigation were women; thus, the national scrutiny focused on the Academy’s ability to integrate female cadets into a Cadet Wing characterized by the numerical dominance of men. Sexual assault is a significantly underreported crime so

although 142 sexual assaults were reported to investigative authorities there is the potential that more criminal sexual acts occurred during the time period under investigation (Brownmiller 1975; Fowler et al. 2003).

Although the *Agenda for Change* was implemented in response to a sexual assault scandal, the majority of respondents did not address sexual assault reporting or prevention in their posts. One man cited the change as having a positive effect on sexual assault deterrence. In contrast, nine men stated that it would have no effect. These nine men stated that the “Bring Me Men...” ramp had nothing to do with the previous sexual assaults; therefore, its removal would have no effect on future sexual assault incidents. For example, a male respondent from the class of 1968 stated, “My personal take on the removal of BMM [“Bring Me Men...”] is that it was done for the wrong reason. I have a difficult time with the argument that it ‘caused’ the sexual problems at the Academy.”

Despite the possibility of each female respondent experiencing sexual assault personally, or of hearing about another female cadet’s experience, none of the female respondents within this sample acknowledged an occurrence of sexual assault or connected the underlying masculine environment of USAFA to past sexual assaults. One female graduate from the class of 2002 mockingly asked, “What? You didn’t realize a large granite wall caused sexual assault...yeah I must have missed that one, too...I always took it in the same ‘mankind’ sense...”

This lack of discussion of the issue behind the *Agenda for Change* and the removal of “Bring Me Men...” ramp could be because the female respondents truly had no experience with sexual assault, whether personally or through women they knew. These women may be different from other female graduates; they may align themselves

more with men, and less with other women, and may not be privy to personal revelations on this issue.

The women respondents were not alone in their silence, since none of the male respondents mentioned personal knowledge of a sexual assault occurrence either. Rather, both the men and women respondents viewed sexual assault, not as a potential byproduct of the masculine culture, but solely as an individual act characterized by poor judgment. They knew it happened, but believed that sexual assault stemmed from personal irresponsibility. Despite their self-presentation as well-informed graduates, they had no experience with the issue that was changing their Academy. Likewise, those cadets who did experience sexual assault while at the Academy, or knew of its occurrence, may have avoided the public discourse surrounding the topic as a way to maintain their social invisibility. Sensitive issues, such as sexual assault, are not addressed explicitly in Kanter's theory. However, I argue that denial or unawareness of such an important issue is one way both tokens and dominants reassert the dominant culture. By dismissing predatory behaviors as individual failings, the insiders do not have to reconsider their own culture; rather, they only have to exclude those who defile or challenge it through individual criminal acts.

Although none of the respondents expressed personal knowledge of sexual assault at USAFA, many of the women acknowledge that they encountered resistance while there. These women expressed a complex relationship with the Academy. They were proud of their accomplishments, yet they also realized the privilege of becoming a USAFA graduate meant that they encountered increased visibility, exaggerated stereotyping, and heightened boundaries between themselves and certain male cadets.

One women respondent from the class of 1988 expressed conflicting emotions toward the Academy. She was a fierce protector of the Academy and the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, yet she also shared a memory of another female cadet being harassed with the poem. She stated:

I remember a well-endowed girl in my squadron was always being asked to quote “Bring Me Men to match my mountains...” They’d stop her at that point and everyone would crack up. She never did get it. Of course, I’m sure that if anyone did that today, they’d be sued. The AF got so much less fun after Tailhook. I’d never condone any REAL harassment, but the good-natured banter between the sexes was always kind of fun.

Although this respondent states that she enjoyed the give-and-take discussions between the cadets, she later expressed that bad memories were resurfacing related to mean-spirited comments and experiences from her own cadet days. Her willingness to accept these jokes, such as the one she describes above, may have allowed her to pass the loyalty test with her male peers, a role which she continues as an ardent supporter of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, but these experiences also had a negative impact on her memories of the Academy.

Another respondent, who also discussed discriminatory comments, did not seem to internalize the negativity, but did state that there were male cadets who believed that women did not belong at USAFA, and that some of these individuals used the “Bring Me Men...” saying against her. She states, “Yet were there geekies out there who used such slogans to tell me that the place was meant to be all male? Yup. But those geeks were what needed to be changed, not a wall.” Despite encounters with misogynist peers, this respondent does not express broader experiences with a discriminatory environment or culture; rather, she views these men as outliers within an otherwise cohesive Cadet Wing.

She also demonstrates her value as a cadet by emphasizing her superb physical fitness, and later, her skill as an Air Force pilot.

As certain male cadets heightened the boundaries between themselves and their female peers by exaggerating their role as men, the women did not report any similar behavior of wanting to align with other women to the exclusion of the men. Rather than counter misogynist behavior with feminist appeals, the women made a point of distancing themselves from any egalitarian, women-centric stereotypes. They wanted fair treatment at the Academy, but they did not want this treatment to come by way of liberal, or as one respondent characterized it “feminazi,” activism. The women did not want to be perceived as organizational interlopers, but as loyal group members. They participated in what Kanter describes as loyalty tests. These tests, which are part of the process of boundary heightening, involve the tokens uniting with the dominants against others who challenge the majority group, particularly those who share the tokens’ ascribed characteristic. They may do this by participating in statements that adversely characterize members who share their ascribed characteristic, which in this case are feminist activists, and by claiming to be exceptions to their group (Kanter 1977a).

As gatekeepers of the Academy, ten of the twelve women respondents distanced themselves from liberal ideology, characterizing calls for gender equality as the work of outsiders who did not understand USAFA. These women did not want to be aligned with these “other girls” and did not want their presence at USAFA to be misinterpreted as an attempt to change the Academy toward feminist aims of gender equality. Military women generally tend to support gender equality, although they often do not self-identify with feminism. For example, incoming cadet women at USAFA, as demonstrated by DeFleur

and Warner's study, support untraditional gender roles for women, and are very supportive of women's expanding occupational outlook (1987). However, these women do not frame their outlook using terms like feminism; rather, they position their viewpoint with the broader, perhaps less controversial, term of gender egalitarianism. In general, military women shy away from the term "feminist" because of the very negative attitudes in the military toward them (Segal 2006). None of the 12 women in my study self-identified as a social liberal, a feminist, or a supporter of equal opportunity programs, although all but two stated that they believed in equal recognition for equal work and that military women should not face gender discrimination.

The women also reproached the few men, who as "disaffected dominants," supported the removal of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp in order to create a more inclusive environment (Kanter 1977b:222). For example, a woman from the class of 1988 asked a fellow male respondent to stop thinking that women were negatively affected by the site.

She said:

Hello? I'm assuming that you're of the male gender, so you can stop "imagining" the impact of the BMMR on women. I AM a woman who walked (or rather, marched) up that ramp with my head held high, and I'm sure plenty of other women who did the same will back me up.

The women did not want to be treated differently from their male peers, nor did they support any opinions or actions that presented even an appearance of different treatment, even if these calls came from men. Rather, they wanted recognition as capable cadets and graduates who progressed on achievement alone, like their male peers. The women wanted fair recognition for their efforts, yet they also wanted limited visibility regarding their perceived needs. They also expressed understanding that they needed to tread

carefully as relative newcomers to the Academy. It is important to note that although some men felt the freedom to dissent publicly, that none of the women, whether due to true belief, socialization, or pressure to fit into the organization, were willing to express opinions counter to those forwarded by the majority of respondents.

The possibility that women graduates may be characterized as liberal others seeking to change the Academy created male-female interactions built upon demonstrations of group loyalty by the tokens and recognition of these loyalty tests by the dominants. As demonstrated in the discussion on tradition, the women shared a basic understanding of preserving USAFA symbols, yet they also demonstrated different perceptions regarding their role within USAFA's heritage. They did not enter USAFA as presumed members of the "long blue line;" rather, they gained membership once they demonstrated their willingness to accept the status quo. Their opinion on the removal of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp became one way for the female graduates to align themselves with their male peers and against the non-Academy other. For example, this 1989 female graduate, who argues that women should guard against the negative impact of their presence, opened a discussion thread with the following post:

The demise of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp is a tremendous blow to USAFA and its female alumni especially. As a female graduate of the class of 1989, I have always struggled with the intrusion of women into an all male school.... I never took my experience for granted. I never took my role as a female cadet lightly....I was always worried that the presence of women was subverting the true mission of the Academy and that we were "messing everything up." ... This is a huge step backwards for the progress of integrating women into the Academy. The demise of "Bring Me Men..." ramp is almost too big of a price to pay. It makes me feel sad, disappointed, and almost "dirty."... I never had any ill will toward the word "Men." The Academy was founded as an all male institution. That is fact. It is part of the tradition and history of the school. To try and erase that is to be untrue to ourselves. If the use of the word "Men"

causes women to take pause, that is appropriate. As a woman, you are entering into an almost all male institution. It is not a co-ed university.

This respondent recognizes that USAFA was once an all-male school, and forwards the suggestion that women must recognize their almost visitor-like status. In this case, the loyalty test, which requires the tokens to collude with the dominants, becomes preventing, or protesting against, mandated change imposed by outsiders.

The loyalty test regarding the “Bring Me Men...” ramp not only requires the women to vocalize opinions in line with the men, but also requires the men to recognize these opinions and clear the women for entry into their social network. If the tokens pass the loyalty test, they are permitted further access into the dominant group. The women must demonstrate that they will not use the inside information they have regarding the organizational culture to make the dominants look bad; their cooperation becomes essential in maintaining an impenetrable, united façade (Kanter 1977b: 228). If they are not given access to the dominant group, the tokens, as a minimum consequence, may experience increased isolation from their peers, and by extension, from the dominant organizational culture. These formal recognitions of in-group membership also serve as reminders of the status difference between the male dominants and the female tokens.

Since all of the women respondents in this sample opposed the change, they were offering opinions in line with the majority of the men. Many of the male respondents, in response, singled out the women’s posts as proof that sexual assault did not occur at USAFA and that the decision to remove the “Bring Me Men...” ramp ran against the viewpoints of all Academy graduates, particularly the women. The men also used the discussion threads as a space to formally recognize the women as equal peers. For example, in response to the previously referenced posting from the 1989 female graduate,

a male graduate from the class of 1961 stated, “That was a beautiful posting and made me reflect that perhaps the early classes lost ‘something’ by not having people like you in their class.” Other male respondents, from the classes of 1971, 1968, 1972, and 1967, respectively, had similar reactions to the women’s posting with statements such as:

It certainly would not have been as good a read if a guy had written something similar.

We are siblings (I would have said ‘brothers’, but ... well, you know... *g*), you and I, because of a shared experience that occurred some 20 years apart in time. Tradition is a very real part of the bond that joins us.

I’m so proud to share a place with you in that long blue line.

I applaud your membership in that long blue line!!

These expressions of camaraderie focus on the bonds transmitted from class to class, beginning with the first graduating class of 1958 and now extended to the women graduates, who were not allowed to join the original blue line, but have since secured membership by uniting with their male peers against a common cause.

Several of the men took this loyalty test further by asking the women to share their opinions with the general public and with military and political leaders as official representatives of the Academy. One 1960 male graduate wanted the women to work together to bring the words, “Bring Me Men...” back to the Academy and prompted them to pay for this endeavor. He stated, “Wouldn’t it be great press, an ironic turn around, if the female grads established a fund for putting the letters up?” Many of the men also viewed the female respondents as representing all Academy women and, by extension, as proof that all Academy women opposed the change. For example, one male 1990 graduate wrote, “You have heard from numerous women in this thread alone that the

words of the BMMR for most are not taken out of context, that they understand ‘men’ is a generic on our race. Why is it so difficult to understand that removing it is a disservice to the institution?”

The women, as suggested by Kanter, are deliberately placed into the public realm as spokesmen. By publicly declaring opposition to the “Bring Me Men...” ramp’s removal, these women, as tokens, become valuable spokesmen for the masculine traditions underlying USAFA’s organizational culture. They become, simultaneously, both exceptional women, who are different from those who want to change the Academy, and representative women, selected to speak on behalf of their gender (Kanter 1977b: 239). They also become crucial links in the effectiveness of mandated formal change within the organization, and by extension its culture, as their actions and words have the potential of either preserving the status quo or subverting it.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the discourse surrounding the removal of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp may seem like an inconsequential approach to the broader questions of mandated change and resistance to change in a gendered organization. Yet, an analysis of such a specific issue, particularly one that is connected to a numerically skewed population that begins within a contained environment, demonstrates how important even seemingly trivial symbols become to individual meaning-making, the broader group culture, and doing gender. The words “Bring Me Men...” were placed initially on the Academy grounds as a way to unify the Cadet Wing with an inspirational message, at a time when it was all male. The words became, depending on the perspective, either a sacred symbol

directly linked to the Air Force Academy's mission, or a representation of an underlying climate of gender and sexual harassment, as reported by investigations of the 2003 sexual assault scandal. The purpose of this research was to analyze the public discourse of Academy graduates, at a time when the Academy was under national scrutiny, to uncover whether tokenism processes, such as boundary heightening, extend into the social networks of this group, and what types of gender strategies the women respondents use to counter these effects.

The main research question focused on the overall reaction of Academy graduates to changes, such as the removal of the "Bring Me Men..." implemented by mandate for the purpose of creating a more inclusive, although less "traditional," cadet culture. Like the majority of male respondents, the women did not support these changes and used strategies, such as demonstrated group loyalty, to support their opinion, which is an outcome that supports Kanter's theory of tokenism. The women did not come out either more or less forcefully than their male peers against the change, although all of them opposed the change. However, they did accept the role as spokesmen, using their gender as a platform for additional authority on the issue.

Further, most of the men and all of the women used the same themes to defend their oppositional stance toward the ramp's removal, with tradition cited by both sides as the most important reason behind their opinion. Both sides framed the poem as a gender-neutral saying unique to the Academy and claim that any confusion regarding the poem's true meaning comes from outsiders only. Additionally, both the men and the women failed to acknowledge the reason why the *Agenda for Change* was implemented; sexual assault, as a cause for concern was either overlooked or attributed only to individual

factors. As a consequence, there was no consideration from either group of the impact the organizational culture had on the gender climate, particularly as articulated by a powerful symbol. Within their minds, the “Bring Me Men...” ramp stands as a testament to pride and tradition that should be returned to its rightful home.

Although this study focuses on a specific setting, time period, and population and is only an exploratory study, its conclusions demonstrate the resiliency of Kanter’s theory and provides the foundation for further questions that apply to the federal military service academies specifically, as well as other military organizations. At the time of the sexual assault scandal, women had been at the Academy for over 30 years, influencing the culture and being socialized into the culture, yet their presence has not significantly changed the culture. Traditions dating back to the Academy’s founding as an all-male institution, just 22 years before women’s admission and nine years before the “Bring Me Men...” ramp was placed there, continue to dominate the organizational culture. Rather than frame these traditions as exclusive, the women, as tokens, frame these traditional sites as not having any implications for them. They graduated from the Academy and demonstrated their ability to compete and work with the men, both as cadets and as military women. Yet, they have not demonstrated a willingness to reconsider publicly a culture that led to the sexual assault of at least 142 women. These questions also extend to military culture generally, as the Department of Defense has recently executed new sexual assault reporting procedures across all the service branches in light of research revealing underreporting within the military overall.

Although this study demonstrates the continued effects of proportions on group culture, there are several limitations to my research. Future studies on Academy women

and organizational change should include larger sample sizes, and should account for other areas of diversity, particularly race and ethnicity. Areas of further study should analyze the tipping point for military women, who tend to support expanded roles for women in the military, regarding issues of gender and sexual harassment within the organizational culture. When are the majority of token women willing to acknowledge and then challenge their oftentimes marginalized presence within an organization? Do the cadets currently enrolled at the Air Force Academy continue to pass on knowledge of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, although the words are no longer displayed? Are the female cadets blamed for this change or has their connection to the ramp’s removal been forgotten? The legacies of sites, such as the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, and of actions, such as demonstrated group loyalty by the tokens, may continue, and may be worthwhile sites of future analysis, and if necessary, future mandated change.

As discussed, not all of the respondents opposed the change. Some men, like this 1972 graduate, believed that the ramp’s removal was a welcome change. He stated:

But, times have changed. The Academy is no longer an all male institution. Now, when I see those words, I cringe with embarrassment. They are out of step with the times, and they are an acute, if not blatant message to any woman who enters the Academy – a message that says women are not really welcome here. ... I think we should be proud of our heritage. I think we should stand tall as we take down the “Bring Me Men” sign.”

Yet, despite his calls for his fellow graduates to respect the Academy’s changing landscape, his words met silence on the discussion boards. Certainly, traditional symbols, such as the “Bring Me Men...” ramp have the potential to maintain enormous organizational relevance, particularly among cohesive communities like the Academy’s network of graduates. Further research is also needed to find out why none of the women

dissented publicly. Perhaps their reasons were exactly as stated, or perhaps they did not feel like they had freedom, as suggested by their token position, to support publicly the dismantling of the words “Bring Me Men...” from the Academy’s landscape. In particular, a study that relies upon qualitative interviewing may uncover different opinions from the public ones revealed here, and may reveal more women willing to support and join the current group of “disaffected dominants.”

The ability for these sites to stay relevant within skewed groups also stems from the self-perpetuation of tokenism. Those in token situations, such as female graduates of the Academy, must negotiate a culture that continually communicates contradictory attitudes and behaviors; the tokens are welcome as exceptions, but remain representatives of their gender. The system can only change when the proportional presence of tokens increases to a point where they are no longer exceptions and the dominant paradigm no longer encourages a culture that frames tokens, which in this case is Academy women, as inconsistent with organizational norms. At that time, the “long blue line” will no longer incorporate women as relative newcomers, but as rightful successors no longer constrained by their gendered body.

Appendix A. United States Air Force Academy: *Agenda for Change*

Introduction

Mission and Values

The United States Air Force Academy exists to educate, train, and inspire so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to our core values of integrity, service, and excellence; professional growth throughout a career as an officer in the US Air Force, and; a lifetime of selfless service to the nation. Above all else, the Air Force Academy is a military organization designed to serve the Air Force and our nation. In pursuit of its goal to produce leaders of character, the Academy must establish and nurture policies that emphasize the character expected from commissioned Air Force officers.

To remain relevant to the larger Air Force, the Air Force Academy must focus on the deliberate development of Air Force officers, providing the required mentoring, guidance, and discipline to produce future leaders. The Academy will not be managed as a separate entity; rather, it must reflect the values and norms of the broader Air Force while maintaining the high academic standards of a world-class university.

The Cadet Wing, Group, and Squadron

The cadet squadron is the core military organization of the Academy. It provides the structure for daily life. Cadet Group and Wing organizations function to facilitate the leadership training activities of the cadet squadron.

It is every cadet's duty to uphold the highest standard of integrity, service, and excellence as they progress from Basic Cadet to Firstclassmen within their squadron. Every cadet must aspire to lead, both at the Academy and as a commissioned officer. Their potential to assume the responsibility of command will be measured by how they hold themselves and their subordinates accountable to the Academy's standard of discipline.

Every officer and NCO assigned to the Academy will make it their duty to develop and mentor cadets into model officers. The focal point for this effort is the squadron Air Officer Commanding (AOC) and Military Training Leader (MTL). The AOC and MTL will lead, develop and mentor the cadets in their charge with a deep personal commitment that models the command relationship between the squadron commander and first sergeant. The universal guiding principle for all cadets, officers, and NCOs will be honor, integrity, and mutual respect that is the hallmark of the Academy tradition.

Honor, Integrity, Mutual Respect

The United States Air Force is the greatest air and space force on the planet because of the personal honor, integrity and loyalty of its people individually contributing their utmost to achieve a common goal: unbeatable air and space power for the nation. These characteristics can only be cultivated in a climate of trust and mutual respect: between the service and the nation; between the institution and its members; and, between the individuals who are the institution. In the absence of this fundamental compact, none of the values we cherish – integrity, service, excellence – can endure. Loyalty to these values and the institution must be placed above loyalty to any individual who betrays these values.

The Air Force Academy must bolster those processes and systems that guide honorable conduct, of which discipline for infractions is an integral component. The Academy must ensure cadets understand and exercise the spirit of these values in the context of their future in the Air Force. Discipline must be administered with measured judgment and in accordance with our core values. Ultimately, the success of the Air Force Academy depends on cadets, mentored by squadron-level officers and non-commissioned officers, internalizing these values and emerging from the Academy as officers of high character. The climate we strive to achieve at the Air Force Academy is one in which cadets take appropriate action to deter, stop, or report the criminal actions of a few that sully the reputation of themselves, their fellow cadets and the United States Air Force.

The Cadet Honor Code

The Cadet Honor Code is a statement of intent: the intent to hold both ourselves and our peers to an explicit standard of conduct. Enforcement of the honor code must be based on the goal of instilling in our cadets an imperative to voluntarily live by the *spirit* of the code rather than encouraging interpretive efforts to evade punishment under the *letter* of the code. A lie is a lie, the mere construction of which requires intent to deceive. Failing to acknowledge this simple moral truth reinforces an attitude accepting the evasion of responsibility for the consequences of one's own behavior. This behavior is unacceptable in a commissioned officer and is, as a result, not to be tolerated at the Air Force Academy.

A critical characteristic distinguishing a profession from a vocation is the willingness of its members to establish and enforce standards of professional conduct, removing those who fail to meet the standard when necessary. Character is a requirement for a practitioner of the profession of arms in the US Air Force. For this reason, we place special emphasis on the “toleration clause” of the Cadet Honor Code. It must be made

clear that loyalty should never be confused with excessive tolerance, and that covering up another cadet's criminal activity cannot be viewed as loyalty to a comrade. Ignoring or covering up illegal activity among our peers is to protect one who has violated his or her own loyalty to the institution and his or her fellow cadets. Active duty officers who oversee and provide advice to cadets about the administration of the honor code should assure compliance with its spirit.

Policy Directives and Initiatives

Leadership

- The Superintendent is responsible for overall strategic leadership and planning at the United States Air Force Academy. The Superintendent will initiate a strategic planning process, which will define goals, specify measurable objectives, tasks, and metrics. These goals will be aligned with the stated mission and values of the Academy. The Superintendent will review all USAFA Instructions for compliance with the mission statement, the strategic planning goals, and USAF policies. The office of Vice Superintendent will be eliminated and redesignated as Director of Staff.
- The Commandant of Cadets is responsible for creating an atmosphere that ensures officer development and academic excellence are maintained to the highest standards. To enhance and ensure every aspect serves the cause of leadership and character development, the Director of Athletics will report to the Commandant. The Academic Dean, also bound by the leadership and character development mission, will continue to report to the Superintendent of the Academy. These two officers, the Commandant and the Dean, will work closely together in the development of our future Air Force leaders. The Office of the Vice Commandant, under the Commandant, will assist the Commandant in fulfilling his/her duties and act as an ombudsman for the Commandant and Superintendent.
- In addition to other duties assigned to this position, the Vice Commandant is specifically tasked with overseeing Academy sexual climate issues. In fulfilling the duties of an ombudsman, the Vice Commandant will:
 - Develop an effective template, along with performance metrics and databases, for the management of sexual assault cases in an expeditious, judicious and sensitive manner with the goal of ensuring justice is served both for the victim and the accused.
 - With the support of officers detailed to the Vice Commandant from the Office of the Judge Advocate, the Counseling Center, and the Office of Special Investigations, develop and implement procedures for an Academy Response Team (comprising medical, legal, counseling, and command elements) to provide a victim of sexual assault immediate assistance, develop the facts, and initiate appropriate actions. The

members of this team will receive special training on the management of sexual assault cases including victim psychology. The cadet alleging sexual assault will be thoroughly briefed on the investigative and legal process.

- Direct the Academy Counseling Center and maintain liaison as appropriate with community counseling entities.
 - Determine the appropriate policies and procedures toward separating those alleged to have committed sexual assault offenses from the alleged victims.
 - Every effort will be made to assist the alleged victims throughout the inquiry and assure victims that their concerns will be dealt with through the command channels. We will not tolerate criminals, nor will we tolerate their behavior. We will not tolerate individuals who harbor these criminals. We will not tolerate any individual who shuns alleged victims of criminal activity, nor will we tolerate retribution against these victims.
 - Under guidance from the General Counsel of the Air Force, apply definitions of sexual assault at the Academy consistent with standard, Air Force-wide definitions. Ensure all Academy instructions, training materials, and guidance reflect Air Force-wide definitions.
- Academy leadership must communicate with the faculty and cadets in a forthright manner about the status of cases being prosecuted, while protecting the privacy rights of the individuals involved. This will ensure the cadet wing is aware of the seriousness of the leadership's commitment to timely justice.

Cadet Life

- Basic Cadet Training: Beginning in the summer of 2003, the Basic Training program will be augmented to enhance cadet preparation for the military environment they are entering and the interactions that will occur. Basic Cadet Training must emphasize fair treatment and mutual respect. The orientation will provide substantial material on sexual assault prevention and overall behavior expected of cadets. The program syllabus will include guidelines on workplace behavior – including consistent USAF definitions of sexual assault and harassment – as well as demeanor and consequences.
- Fourth Degree Training: During Basic Cadet Training, in order to instill a sense of responsibility and uphold the standards of good order and discipline of the United States Air Force Academy, only First Class or Second Class Cadets will interact with Fourth Class cadets. In the first half of the fall semester, only First Class cadets will discipline Fourth Class cadets. After Thanksgiving, selected Second Class cadets can be given training responsibility for Fourth Class cadets. Third Class cadets will only interact with Fourth Class cadets in academic mentoring/tutoring circumstances or on the spot training guidance. The exercise of discipline toward a Fourth Class cadet by Third Class cadets will be governed by a First Class cadet.

- **Billeting/Dormitory Life:** Separate billeting arrangements will be established for female and male cadets upon entering the Academy for Basic Cadet Training. During the academic year, Fourth Class cadets will be billeted with their assigned squadrons.
- Rooms will be arranged in the dormitories to provide for squadron integrity. Within a squadron, rooms occupied by female cadets will be clustered in the same vicinity near the women's bathrooms. The intent is to preserve basic dignity, deter situations in which casual contact could lead to inappropriate fraternization or worse, and to aid mentoring of lower-degree female cadets by senior female cadets.
- No cadet will enter the room of another cadet of the opposite sex without knocking on the door and announcing themselves, and waiting for the door to be opened by the cadet occupying the room. Doors shall be fully open at all times when a non-roommate or several non-roommates are present in the room. The Commandant of Cadets will determine the appropriate level of punishment for any violation of this standard.
- The Commandant will establish a 24/7 dormitory security and monitoring system. An officer will be on duty at all times in the dormitories. This duty officer will be responsible for good order and discipline, and will manage a roving patrol in effect at night and on weekends. Fourth class cadets will not be assigned such duty.
- Any cadet found to provide, purchase for, or sell alcohol to an underage cadet will be disenrolled immediately.
- **Reporting Incidents of Sexual Assault:** All allegations of sexual assault will be reported to the officer chain of command immediately.
- The Counseling Center and the CASIE program will be realigned under the 34 Training Wing and report to the Vice Commandant. The Counseling Center will be staffed with qualified officer counselors.
- All efforts will be made to encourage victims of sexual assault to report any incident. Specific attention will be paid to the education of both male and female cadets regarding action they can take to prevent or to report instances of assault on them or their fellow cadets. Annual Training is required for all cadets, staff, and faculty. The Vice Commandant of Cadets is responsible for establishing, monitoring and documenting this annual training requirement.
- Because loyalty to values and loyalty to institution must be placed above misplaced loyalty to someone who's betrayed our values and our institution, shunning of cadets who attempt to maintain high standards and report sexual assault will not be tolerated and will be dealt with by cadet squadron commanders

who have responsibility for maintaining and enforcing standards. Cadet commanders will be held accountable for ensuring that such behavior does not occur.

- Cadet support groups will be organized by the Superintendent to address aggressively the concerns of victims of sexual assault.
- Cadet commanders will be held responsible for the actions of their subordinates. Upper class cadets who are aware of or observe criminal activity will be held accountable if they fail to take charge of the situation and exercise their leadership responsibilities.
- In all reported cases of sexual assault, amnesty from Academy discipline arising in connection with the alleged offense will be extended to all cadets involved with the exception of the alleged assailant, any cadet involved in covering up the incident, any cadet involved in hindering the reporting or investigation of the incident, and the senior ranking cadet in attendance. The senior ranking cadet present will be responsible and accountable for all infractions committed by junior cadets.
- Any false accusations of sexual assault will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.
- All medical personnel will receive training in dealing with sexual assault and at least one nurse and doctor will be assigned to the Academy Response Team. Rape Kits will be available at both the Cadet Clinic and Academy Hospital.
- Mentors: The Commandant of Cadets will establish a cadet-mentoring program. Each Second Class female cadet will serve as a mentor to at least one Fourth Class female cadet not in her squadron or group, and each male Second Class cadet will mentor at least one Fourth Class male cadet not in his squadron or group. Evaluations of military performance for the Second Class cadets will in part be based on their mentoring performance.
- The “Bring Me Men...” sign on the Terrazzo wall will be removed immediately, and will be replaced by a statement that more suitably represents the aspirations of the entire cadet wing and the core values of the Air Force.
- An audit of Academy processes to deter, stop, or deal with sexual assault will be conducted every three years by the Headquarters Air Force.

Officer/NCO Selection, Training, Roles

- Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Selection/Training: AOC assignment processes will be enhanced to ensure that selectees are superior officers who achieve commanders’ list status. AOCs will be specially selected and academically

prepared to assume the unique duties of leading, mentoring, and training cadets. All AOCs will be Majors or Major selects. AOCs will meet a central board established by AFPC. The Commandant of Cadets is responsible for the final selection of all AOCs. All AOCs will be required to live on base.

- AOCs will receive one year of graduate education resulting in a Masters Degree in counseling or similar area prior to a 2-year role as AOC. During the year of study, the officer will have formal OJT with a sitting AOC. AOCs will be considered priority status for post USAFA assignments.
- A specially selected experienced Non-commissioned officer will be assigned to each cadet squadron as a Military Training Leader (MTL). This NCO will report to the Squadron Air Officer Commanding (AOC) and will be senior to any cadet at the Academy. These senior enlisted airmen will be in the chain of command, and will assist the AOC in maintaining good order and discipline.
- Military Training Leaders (MTLs) will receive specific training in the combination of skills required in the cadet setting.
- AOCs and MTLs will be placed on orders in the chain of command to the Commandant of Cadets, and will be noted as such in the organizational charts of the Academy.
- The duties of the AOC and MTL will be clearly defined in written instructions based on parallel activities in the active duty Air Force.
- The primary place of duty of the AOCs and MTLs is in the cadet squadron or all other areas best facilitating their involvement in the daily life and routine of the cadets in that squadron.
- AOCs will be commanders and will be so designated on G-Series orders. They will have Uniformed Code of Military Justice authority and responsibility commensurate with their rank.

Broader Academy Climate

The academic and athletic elements of the Academy will be recognized as contributions to the military purpose of the institution.

- As noted, the Director of Athletics will report to the Commandant. Those engaged in intercollegiate athletics will be required to engage in military and leadership training equivalent to their classmates. Off-season athletes will be required to participate in squadron activities.
- The Academy Board will be re-chartered as the Senior Executive Board. The board members will act as advisers to the Superintendent regarding the balance of

time devoted to academic and officer development activities with responsibility for final decisions resting solely upon the Superintendent.

- Department Chairs will participate in an Academic Board that will report to the Dean.
- Communications among the military, academic and athletic departments will ensure that the status of cadet probations, current status of active or inactive participation on athletic teams, and academic progress are openly and promptly communicated across departments.
- Appropriate academic courses in leadership and character development will be made part of the core academic curriculum. A lecture series sponsored by the Secretary of the Air Force and supported by senior Air Force leadership will emphasize the moral and ethical standards expected of Air Force officers. The Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership will offer courses in military leadership.
- All candidates for Permanent Professor slots will be interviewed and selected by the Secretary and Chief of Staff. Unless extended by the Secretary of the Air Force, a Permanent Professor will be expected to retire in the rank held at 30 years of service. The senior officer in each department will be held accountable for all subordinate military officers and will ensure good order and discipline within his/her department.
- Department Chairs will rotate among the faculty within that department. No faculty member will hold a departmental chair for a period exceeding five years.
- Officer assignment policies and tour lengths at the Air Force Academy will be reviewed and revised by the Secretary of the Air Force. USAFA assistant and associate professors should be recruited from the top personnel out of the line force, teach for a designated period, and then return to the line.
- With the exception of those designated at the discretion of the Secretary and Chief of Staff, all graduates of the Academy will enter the Air Force as 2nd Lieutenants in operational line AFSCs at the wing level or below. Our objective is to ensure that all physically qualified Academy graduates become fully immersed into expeditionary wing level operations, maintenance, and staff or mission support squadrons of the Air Force. It is imperative that graduates first gain experience in the front line warfighting mission of the Air Force before branching off into non-combat related fields. Law school, medical school, liberal arts graduate schools or functional career fields such as acquisition or public affairs may be pursued only after these officers have proven themselves as operational Air Force professionals.

- Those cadets interested in cross commissioning to other military services will retain that option under existing regulations.
- Pilot training slots will be evenly divided between Academy and ROTC scholarship accessions. In addition, OTS accessions may compete for pilot training slots.
- In accordance with Title 10, U.S.C., all AFROTC cadets who are appointed as officers in the Air Force in May or June will have the same date of rank with Academy graduates, regardless of their graduation date. After twelve months, the lineal list will be published. The top officer for that year group will be the top graduate from the United States Air Force Academy. All other Second Lieutenants with this date of rank will be slated according to their cadet performance – either at the Academy or in the AFROTC program. Any cadets may have their lineal ranking as officers affected by disciplinary action during their time at the Academy or AFROTC.

U.S. Air Force Academy, USAFA, CO 80840, (719) 333-1110 DSN: 333-1110, Updated:
21 Aug 08

APPENDIX B. Source of “Bring Me Men...” Quote

by *The Coming American*, Sam Walter Foss (1894)

Bring me men to match my mountains;

Bring me men to match my plains;

Men with empires in their purpose,

And new eras in their brains.

Bring me men to match my prairies,

Men to match my inland seas,

Men whose thought shall pave a highway

Up to ampler destinies;

Pioneers to clear Thought's marshlands,

And to cleanse old Error's fen;

Bring me men to match my mountains

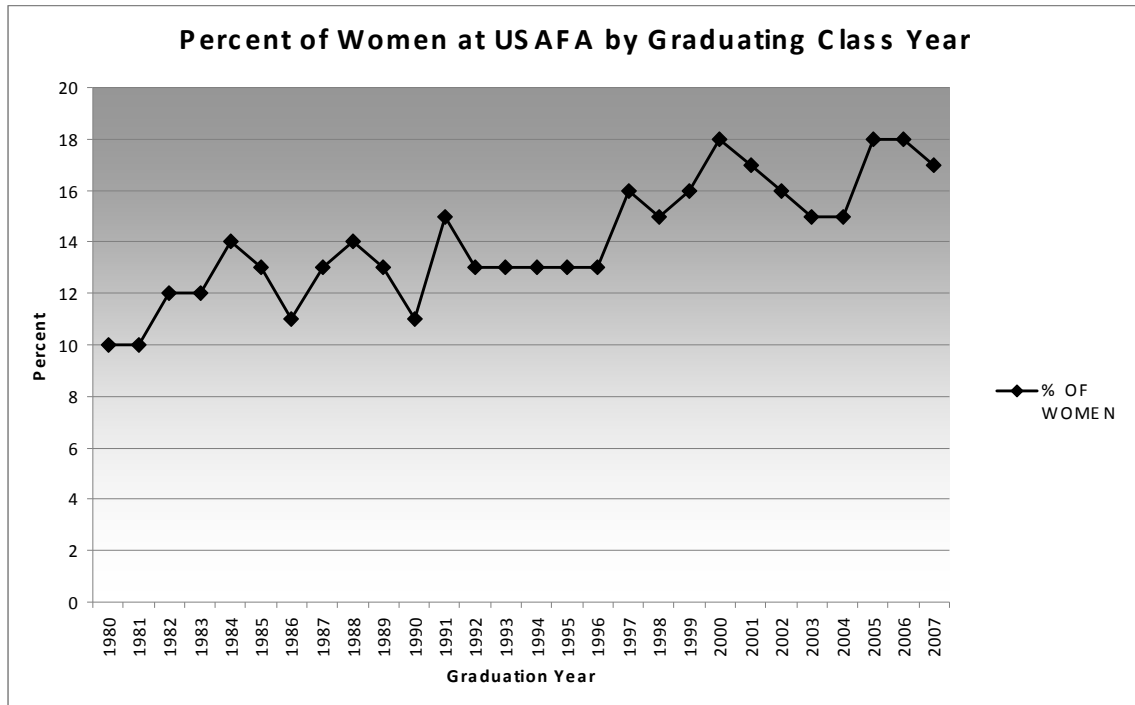
Bring me men!

(United States Air Force Academy 2003)

APPENDIX C. IMAGES OF RAMP



APPENDIX D.



SOURCE: USAFA XP Office

APPENDIX E. USAFA TODAY CODING SCHEME

I. Descriptive Information

A. Code Reference Number:

B. Date of Posting:

C. Writer

1. M or F

2. Graduating Class Year:

3. Cadet Squadron:

4. Other personal information (military career, personal values, etc):

D. Discussion Thread

1. Loss of the “Bring Me Men...” Ramp

2. Bring Me Core Values Ramp

3. Poll: Should the Bring Me Men Have Been Taken Down?

II. Policy Response

A. Decision to enact *Agenda for Change*

a. Support

b. Oppose

c. No comment

B. Decision to dismantle “Bring Me Men...” ramp

- a. Support
- b. Oppose
- c. No comment

C. Academy will benefit from decision

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No comment

D. Decision to add core values to ramp

- a. Support
- b. Oppose
- c. No comment

III. Themes

[Removal of ramp as having: (+) positive effect or (-) negative effect for theme.]

A. Tradition

- a=(+) b=(-) c=no effect d=no comment

B. Gender Relations/Integration

a=(+)

b=(-)

c=no effect

d=no comment

C. Sexual Assault Deterrence and/or Reporting

a=(+)

b=(-)

c=no effect

d=no comment

D. Air Force Academy mission

a=(+)

b=(-)

c=no effect

d=no comment

E. Cadet cohesiveness

a=(+)

b=(-)

c=no effect

d=no comment

F. Faith in organizational leaders

a=(+)

b=(-)

c=no effect

d=no comment

G. Public Opinion

a=(+)

b=(-)

c=no effect

d=no comment

IV. Personal Experience at USAFA

A. Ramp as part of USAFA memory

a=yes

b=no

c=no comment

B. Overall experience at USAFA

a=positive

b=negative

c=no comment

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AOG - Association of Graduates

BCT - Basic Cadet Training

CSAF - Chief of Staff of the Air Force

ROTC - Reserve Officers' Training Corps

SECAF – Secretary of the Air Force

USAFA – United States Air Force Academy

USCGA – United States Coast Guard Academy

USMA – United States Military Academy

USNA – United States Naval Academy

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