



Army team at Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center wins Commandant's Cup relay race at Presidio's Price Fitness Center Field, Monterey, California, June 15, 2016 (U.S. Army/Steven L. Shepard)

Women, Regardless

Understanding Gender Bias in U.S. Military Integration

By Elizabeth M. Trobaugh

Women have been part of the U.S. military and its campaigns since the American Revolution. With the advent of the Women's Army Corps in 1943, women could officially enlist for military service. During this time, female enlist-

ees faced unofficial slander campaigns that sharply reversed enlistment. Over the last 70 years, women's roles in the Army have morphed as fast as—or in some cases faster—than society has changed. Many of these changes have been good. For instance, many women have succeeded and excelled in newly accessible jobs, specialties, and skills. However, women still face stereotypes about who they are and how capably they perform their duties. These atti-

tudes and beliefs threaten the integrity of the Armed Forces as well as their mission.

The war on terror and the U.S. military's use of counterinsurgency ushered in a new era of warfighting: there are no frontlines, and everyone must be prepared to fight. Regardless of whether society *thinks* women should be in combat, the reality is they already have been in the fight. Yet the current combat arms culture has been slow to adjust as

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evidenced by the ongoing commentary about what women can and cannot do in the military. As Marine Corps Commandant General Robert B. Neller noted in his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, we can no longer go to war without women.¹

Therefore, as former Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced in 2015, women will be (and subsequently have been) integrated into previously closed combat jobs and training. To promote the former Secretary's proposal, there also needs to be a change of culture within the Army (the Service in which my own experiences are rooted), as well as in the broader military, to ensure the success of women entering combat arms. Policymakers often do not notice adverse attitudes toward women serving in combat arms capacities. Although leaders may be aware of sexism when it takes the form of blatant comments, they may be less aware of more subtle forms of sexism that manifest as reduced training standards for women. Whichever the case, women may have to go above and beyond the standard to prove themselves and may routinely have their work overlooked until there is an immediate benefit. These commonplace events are indications of pervasive stereotypes that prevent women from doing their jobs effectively and accomplishing the mission.

Current Research

In 2015, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Analysis Center published its *Gender Integration Study*.² The research team conducting the study looked to the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy and to the senior noncommissioned officer corps to help identify risks that may come with female integration into combat arms. Furthermore, the research team conducted a feasibility assessment to evaluate the risks associated with integrating women into previously closed military occupational specialties (MOSs). The research team contacted 4 Brigade Combat Teams and interviewed 35 command teams for the assessment. Additionally, the study engaged with senior Army leaders at high levels for additional

guidance and feedback. The results from the study stated:

*The Army should proceed with integrating women into previously closed combat arms MOS/units. To successfully integrate, the Army must address the following barriers: inconsistent enforcement of existing standards and perceptions of double standards; incidents of unprofessional behavior and indiscipline; fear of sexual harassment and assault; cultural stereotypes; and ignorance of current Army policy.*³

The data presented in this article underscore much of what was explored in the *Gender Integration Survey*. Similar conclusions were extrapolated from many of the same concerns presented from research participants. Male Soldiers are afraid of lowered physical standards, increased sexual assault and harassment, reduced readiness, and destruction of the masculine culture of brotherhood. However, much of what is discussed here goes beyond the thoughts and attitudes about women integrating into jobs in previously closed MOSs. This article explores women's thoughts about their own abilities, Soldiers' experiences with training women to perform physically demanding tasks compared with what they thought women could achieve, and how men think they would react to the presence of women.

Investigating Gender Bias

Gender stereotypes and institutional bias within the military come as no surprise to anyone, least of all women, in the military. However, how to pinpoint these incidences as they occur and to formulate solutions seems to befuddle leaders at all levels. Researchers have distinguished between two forms of sexism: hostile and benevolent.⁴ Whereas hostile sexism is more obviously negative, benevolent sexism is often disguised as positive, portraying women as needing and deserving greater care and protection. Both forms deem women as less capable and competent, justifying lower expectations of them and limiting their roles. These beliefs are apparent in a variety of male-

dominated professions, including the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions as well as the military.⁵

Drawing from my own experiences in the Army, I devised an online survey as part of an independent study for Soldiers to evaluate the areas where gender biases may prevent women from succeeding in Army culture. This survey aimed to assess where stereotypes may exist within Army training environments as well as attitudes toward female integration into previously closed jobs and schools. Army culture may be a permissive environment for attitudes that women do not belong. For this reason, the survey also aimed to address some of the institutional gender biases plaguing the Army and hopefully to inform the broader military community of such biases. Out of these findings come proposed policy recommendations to course-correct as the joint force begins to "gender integrate" all jobs within the Services.

The online survey asked female respondents about their training in warrior-type tasks. *Warrior-type training*, for our purposes, is defined in the survey as having the skills required to be successful on the battlefield or frontlines—for example, basic rifle marksmanship or patrolling. The online survey asked women across all officer and enlisted ranks—and across all MOSs available to women in 2015—about the quality of training received, if they struggled, why they might have struggled, if they received additional help, and if they would like to join combat arms jobs or training. The point was to identify each woman's view of her own abilities in this crucial area and to determine if she felt supported in training. Next, both male and female Soldiers were asked if they had trained women in the Army. The survey also asked respondents to think of one instance of training women in a warrior task. Furthermore, it looked at warrior-type training among men and women in order to establish whether women were or are receiving the same training and whether they were held to the same standards as male Soldiers. The survey asked respondents if they had trained women



Georgia Army National Guard's 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Soldier participates in Best Warrior Competition's obstacle course event, Fort Stewart, March 9, 2017 (U.S. Army/James Braswell)

in a warrior-type task, what the quality of that training was, and, ultimately, what may have prevented women from doing better. The goal of this section was to identify attitudes toward women and their abilities in training among both male and female Soldiers, across military ranks, and across military skills.

The online survey then sought to evaluate the attitudes about women integrating into combat arms and combat arms training. It posed questions about the difficulty of such warrior tasks and the ability to perform them. These sections also asked respondents to evaluate their beliefs and attitudes about the biggest effect of integrating women into combat arms. The data collected in this section can easily be compared to data about how women were actually trained and performed during that training.

The survey also sought to discover whether women were failing en masse in

warrior-type skills training. If anecdotal evidence showed that women were not failing to meet the standard, why are gender-based stereotypes so pervasive when it comes to female integration? If women were failing en masse, what was the root cause? Two outcomes could be extrapolated from questions about culture. First, trainers either have been allowing women to pass at a lower standard by turning a blind eye to their failures or were refusing to push women to retrain if they failed (I refer to this as the “if she fails, therefore she can’t” syndrome). The second conclusion is its reverse. In this scenario, women were held to a harsher standard as a means to prove their capability above and beyond male standards.

Confirming the Bias

In the first section of the survey (women only), 70 percent of respondents stated that they received adequate

training in warrior-type tasks in basic training or officer basic. Yet 70 percent of respondents also stated they could have used additional training in a warrior-type task. Discouragingly, nearly 53 percent responded “no” when asked if their chain of command would support additional training if they (the respondents) needed more training. The three answers most frequently cited for why female respondents may have failed a warrior-type task were, in order, “need of additional training or familiarization,” “never failed or anticipated failing,” and “lack of time and/or resources to properly train to meet the standards.”

The survey showed female Soldiers had a generally positive view of their abilities. They were willing to and capable of completing the warrior-type tasks. Moreover, respondents noted they were not perfect and would have liked more

training in some areas, but their chains of command would not support additional training. Not unsurprisingly, many women are still eager to prove themselves in combat arms jobs and training, but more often than not, they would like more training before even trying to enter combat arms.

The next section of the survey asked both male and female respondents if they had trained women in a warrior-type task. Results indicated that 72 percent of those who trained women in warrior tasks reported that they trained women the same as they trained men. Furthermore, nearly 72 percent of respondents reported that the women they trained met the standard. The data are clear in showing that most female trainees were trained about the same as their male counterparts. Yet both male and female respondents cited lack of familiarization with the task as the most prevalent deficiency that prevented female trainees from doing better. Male respondents indicated a lack of physical strength as the second most prevalent deficiency, while female respondents indicated a lack of motivation.

The last section of the survey asked both men and women what they thought about women integrating into combat arms jobs and training. This section aimed to evaluate the culture surrounding integrating women into previously closed sectors. Contrary to previous sections in the survey, wherein a lack of familiarization with the task was the most cited challenge, physical strength was the highest ranked challenge for female Soldiers who may integrate into combat arms jobs, and training was cited among men, enlisted Soldiers, combat arms, and noncombat arms jobs. A dichotomy arose in the survey: despite respondents having *experienced* women in training pass the standard in warrior-type tasks, they *thought* women were less physically capable of passing warrior-type tasks. Unlike their counterparts, however, female (regardless of rank) and male officers ranked “attitudes toward women in training” as the biggest obstacle to female integration. The officers surveyed support female integration, with 86 percent of officer respondents believing women were capable

of meeting standards. However, among male officers, enlisted, and across all job demographics, negative effects of female integration were ranked highest in a list of possible results. “Logistical problems” were ranked the highest among those demographics, while female respondents ranked “increased readiness due to increased training of force” as the highest effect of integrating women into all jobs.

Even though respondents experienced women meeting the standards in their training, the section regarding thoughts and attitudes toward gender integration showed that 40 percent of male respondents believed standards would change to accommodate women. This response to integration, regardless of experience, suggests that women were not being fully trained as well as men or that there was bias among respondents about the abilities of women. Respondents may not have conducted training to standard, and they might have allowed women to “pass” even when they had not actually done so. Perhaps retraining was cumbersome, or they had to meet a quota for unit readiness.

Respondents experienced women in training passing the standard, and they indicated that “lack of familiarization” prevented them from doing better. Yet the idea of integrating women into combat arms and jobs seemed to evoke negativity about female ability. Male respondents cited “lack of physical strength” as the biggest obstacle to women entering combat arms. Combat arms jobs and training are a compilation of warrior tasks performed in succession. The endurance required may account for why respondents thought women would perform at a lower standard. However, with successful female integration into artillery, the inauguration of women into the infantry, as well as women passing Ranger training, women are demonstrating they can and will succeed. Additionally, it is unfair to state the standard would be lowered for women wanting to join the infantry if women have not been afforded the same training as men. As this survey demonstrates, women may not be receiving the same training.

Respondent Comments

To get a better sense of opinions, the survey asked respondents to provide comments or feedback. Respondents who had trained women were asked to provide comments on several questions, though not all questions. For instance, one question was, “During this same event, what were the female trainees’ most significant deficiencies that might have prevented them from doing well in training?” Some responses included:

- “Lack of perseverance while under duress.”
- “Many MOS in the Army seem to have a lower standard for women. It’s almost as though they don’t expect as much of them because they feel it’s a waste of time. It is absolutely not true and saddens me thinking of all the lost potential.”
- “Stereotype that they ‘couldn’t do it’ led to them being trained to a lesser standard.”

Written responses varied concerning thoughts and feelings about integrating women. When asked, “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: If the Army decides to integrate females into combat arms and combat arms-related training, the standards will be lowered to accommodate females,” some responses included:

- “There are two standards. The Army standard, and the female standard. Until the female standard is removed, females will never be equal to males.”
- “Standards aren’t the problem. [There are] plenty of strong women, the problem lies within the change in men around women. The biological and unpreventable reactions between males and females of the same species [do] not equate to a good cohesive unit. If you want to make a combat unit ineffective, assign women to it.”
- “Political demands will result in a degradation of standards to meet quotas and to prevent fallout from the imminent failure of a high majority of females with the current male infantry standards.”

Another question was, “If the Army decides to integrate females into combat arms and combat arms–related training, do you think that those females who succeed in meeting standards will have (mark all that apply) 1. Received special treatment; 2. Met standard; 3. Been allowed to pass at a lower standard?” One person commented:

Physiologically, women are composed differently than men and many cannot perform the same physical tasks as men. It is apparent even with the APFT [Army Physical Fitness Test] grading scale where the men and women scoring scales drastically differ. Since this is such a big push by the Army to integrate women into combat arms, they will do whatever [is] necessary to integrate as rapidly as the public wants them to regardless of the level a woman is at in comparison to her male counterparts within combat arms branches.

Two contrasting responses to the question, “Do you think that females are capable of meeting standards in combat arms units and training?” are telling:

- “Can’t speak for entirety of combat arms, but if you’re asking if I could see a female in the ranks with the pipe swinging meat eaters of a Ranger Battalion, hell no. Can’t see them carrying around a mortar tube living the grunniest [*sic*] dirtiest life in the military possible either. Physically capable is indifferent to me. I have literally watched a group of professionals completely change for the worse, become petty and show offish because 1 attractive female was attached to the platoon. If you want to make [a] combat unit ineffective, assign some women to it.”
- “I believe individual women certainly are [capable of meeting standards]. Once again, so long as we limit accessions to those individual women, the force should be okay. I am also far from confident we have the political and organizational will to pre-emptively weed out those [who] won’t [meet standards].”

The common thread throughout these comments is an acknowledgment by Soldiers that there is an institutional difference created in the APFT. Furthermore, the differences in the test for men and women lend themselves to Soldiers believing that women are incapable even when they witnessed women meeting the standard in training. Many other comments expanded on the gender-based bias with sweeping generalizations about physical ability. Women were viewed by respondents as weaker either because their institutional standards are so much lower or because they perceive women to be physically weaker. That leads to an important question: If women pass, will male Soldiers in the military accept that women met or exceeded the same standard as men, or will women be forever viewed as having been accommodated in order to meet some political agenda? These comments also highlight male Soldiers’ beliefs that they will react inappropriately around women. The very presence of women seems to elicit the belief that men themselves will become foolish, while readiness and cohesion suffer. The professionalism of men remains a concern as women integrate into these previously closed jobs.

Furthermore, other comments spoke to the culture of the combat arms being too hostile to women or demonstrated a respondent’s hostility. One person commented:

As far as combat arms units go, there would be an extremely negative effect within units which are traditionally male. The things that go on there, the bonds, would be damaged. SHARPs [the Army’s Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program] stuff would be through the roof. I would almost rather die before changing my demeanor within my unit. Standards need to be met and maintained, but we should all strive to exceed the standard.

This comment, and others like it, reveal deep-seated attitudes that need to change within military culture to allow women to serve free of bias and stereotypes. Because the mission

requires women to be on the battlefield, new policies could be implemented to help ease the transition of women into combat arms and break down gender-based stereotypes in order to improve readiness. One positive step Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley already implemented subsequent to the first three women passing Ranger training was to mask the names and number of women entering.⁶ However, more can be done to bolster an environment primed for fair gender integration.

Practical Policies

The *Gender Integration Study* provides a complex, detailed assessment of issues and attitudes facing the Army as it moves to gender-integrate the force completely. Yet many of the policy recommendations going forward are lacking in substance and practical application. Leaders at the highest levels can publish policy and issue statements in an attempt to mitigate many of the issues discussed in the study. However, without follow-through and practical guidance for all levels down to the platoon or development of a way to measure effectiveness, the policies will continue to fall flat. Stating that commands must create an equal opportunity environment and prevent sexual harassment and assault is not enough. Leaders at all levels must have practical tools to encourage a climate of tolerance while maintaining readiness.

U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 7-22, *Army Physical Readiness Training*, can be improved. The easiest way is to include pictures of women demonstrating physical tasks.⁷ There are currently no images of women in FM 7-22 beyond how to measure a woman’s body for her body mass index. Young Soldiers who need to seek guidance in the regulation regarding physical fitness will see pictures of both sexes completing tasks. Furthermore, showing women completing tasks with their male counterparts will make the institutional statement that women are capable.

The physical fitness manual should again read, as it did in 1980, “Just because women are different does not



Soldier qualifies with M4 rifle during New York Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith Training Site, March 30, 2017 (U.S. Army National Guard/Harley Jelis)

mean they are incapable of achieving satisfactory levels of performance.”⁸ This sentence instills the belief that women are capable and are expected to perform alongside their male counterparts. The importance of this statement will reverberate through not only combat arms but also all training as well. This form of legitimacy puts all female Soldiers on notice that they are expected to meet required standards. These standards apply whether trainers or the women themselves believe they are capable of meeting such standards. The Army as a whole would benefit from the institution of the Service and its leadership putting both in writing and in pictures its confidence in its female Soldiers.

Additionally, in Army Regulation 600-20, *Command Policy*, the Department of the Army outlines in chapter 6, paragraph 1, that “Commanders are responsible for sustaining a positive EO [Equal Opportunity] climate within their units . . . Create and sustain effective units by eliminating discriminatory behaviors or practices that

undermine teamwork, mutual respect, loyalty, and shared sacrifice of the men and women of America’s Army.”⁹ The rest of the chapter goes on to discuss in vague and legalistic terms an equal opportunity command climate. This chapter does little to influence the culture inside the Army or protect unfair treatment of minorities, including women.

The 1949 Army Pamphlet 21-41, *Personal Conduct for the Soldier*, did more for equal opportunity than the current regulation. It brought good order and conduct to the force. It raised the expectation that the Soldier was going to do what was right because “what was right” was in a manual in the Soldier’s pocket as an inspectable item. The pamphlet outlined conduct on and off duty, on and off post. The regulation stated, “Beware of the man who speaks disrespectfully of women. Your sister or one of your friends may be his next victim,” and stated of female Servicemembers, “In the Army you will frequently see members of the Women’s Army Corps. Accord them the same respect and courtesies you extend

male(s). . . They are doing a fine job and have established an excellent record in the Army.”¹⁰ Something similar could be outlined, such as:

Beware of the Soldier who speaks disrespectfully of others. He or she is not to be trusted. Your friends or family may be his or her next victim. You will often see members of the Army who are different from you. You are a professional and will treat all officers and noncommissioned officers with the respect due to them and their rank, regardless of how you feel about them.

The pamphlet could outline how to treat members of the opposite sex in subsequent chapters in order to further illustrate the importance of respect.

Lastly, the changing character of war reinforces the high level of physical readiness Servicemembers must achieve. Anyone, anywhere, and at any time can be engaged by the enemy regardless of gender, MOS, or age. It is imperative to maintain high physical standards. Because the current standard is so low for



Soldier learns survival skills during Exercise Kowari, designed to enhance U.S., Australian, and Chinese friendship and trust through trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, Northern Territory, Australia, August 30, 2016 (U.S. Marine Corps/Osvaldo L. Ortega III)

women, many female Soldiers are often discounted as weaker, even when they can meet the same standard as men. Female Soldiers between the ages of 17 and 21 are required to do 19 push-ups and run 2 miles in 18:54 to pass, while male Soldiers in the same age group are asked to do 42 push-ups and run 2 miles in 15:54. There is no difference for sit-ups.

The differences noted above serve as the basis for institutional bias. Since the Army policy requires women to do only fewer than half the push-ups males are required to do, the message conveys that women are half as capable as men.

It would benefit the Army to close or eliminate the gap altogether. The low standard for push-ups and run time for

17- to 21-year-old women is not only insulting, but it also serves to reinforce that women are not as capable as their male counterparts. Many women may find it difficult to run faster or do more push-ups, but they should be brought up to a higher standard because war demands it. Implementing a single standard for all 17- to 21-year-olds should adequately test the baseline for a passing rate no matter the gender, such as 16:30 for 2 miles, 30 push-ups, and 53 sit-ups.

Since these examples lower the standard for men, a fear may develop among Soldiers that a broad standard may hurt the combat arms skills where physical fitness is paramount to the job. Therefore, it would be better not only to have one standard for a baseline (not based on gender), but also to apply minimally acceptable standards for each job skill, as Army leaders have discussed in recent years.¹¹ For instance, if a score of 60 percent in each event on the APFT is passing, then a Soldier must meet an 85 percent requirement to stay within combat arms jobs, a 75 percent requirement to stay in combat support, and a 70 percent pass rate within Service support. Thus, the 60 percent would be maintained for Soldiers with professional jobs, such as lawyers, doctors, and chaplains.

A benefit to restructuring the APFT is that it gender neutralizes the standard. Everyone must pass the same APFT to enter the Army, but their jobs will demand more of them with job-specific minimally acceptable standards. This model takes “male” and “female” out of the standard and replaces it with “Soldier” in combat arms, “Soldier” in combat support, and “Soldier” in service support. It incentivizes staying fit because Soldiers who love their jobs will work to maintain their job-specific standards out of fear they could be involuntarily reclassified to another job for poor physical performance. Furthermore, this kind of APFT standard emphasizes quality at a time when the Army must sacrifice quantity. Each job classification demands an appropriate level of fitness and will ensure the best Soldiers remain in the correct jobs.

A job skill differentiating standard might unintentionally create hierarchy

among combat arms, combat support, and service support. Promotions might be affected to favor combat arms Soldiers. The bias might arise that since combat arms Soldiers would have to do more physically, they must be better Soldiers. An answer to this unintended consequence is to place more emphasis on education in the combat support and service support jobs. These jobs require organizational skills, technical expertise, and administrative management ability. The Army should invest in the Soldiers who perform these essential functions that require more brainpower than physical ability. Providing education would be a way to afford service support and combat support Soldiers the same promotion opportunities as their combat arms counterparts.

Instead of arguing whether we should integrate women into the force, the better question would be to ask how we can better prepare all Soldiers for upcoming global strategic challenges. The changing face of battle includes the fact that women are part of the success equation. If war is going to include winning hearts and minds, that will include the hearts and minds of women. Development is severely hindered when women are not included. Therefore, women in the military will continue to be on the battlefield. As such, they should be as battlefield-ready as their male counterparts. Furthermore, we should expect *more* of our male and female Soldiers, not less. The fact that women are different from men does not make them incapable of meeting satisfactory levels of fitness. Female Soldiers have to be able to pull the trigger, traverse the battlefield, and deal with casualties no differently from their male counterparts. In addition, the Army can expect its male Soldiers to act with decency and respect toward their fellow Soldiers, regardless of gender. JFQ

Notes

¹ U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, “Testimony of U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Robert B. Neller,” March 14, 2017.

² Lynette Arnhart et al., *Gender Integration Study* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Analysis Center, April 21, 2015).

³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴ Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske, “The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 3 (March 1996), 491–512.

⁵ Ernesto Reuben, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, “How Stereotypes Impair Women’s Careers in Science,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 12 (January 2014), 4403–4408.

⁶ Michelle Tan, “First Official Integrated Ranger School Underway, Army Won’t Talk About the Women,” *Army Times*, November 3, 2015.

⁷ U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 7-22, *Army Physical Readiness Training* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, October 26, 2012).

⁸ U.S. Army FM 21-20, *Physical Fitness Training* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1980).

⁹ U.S. Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2014), chapter 6, paragraph 1.

¹⁰ U.S. Army Pamphlet 21-41, *Personal Conduct for the Soldier* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1949).

¹¹ Kevin Lilly and Michelle Tan, “Army’s New Fitness Tests: New Details Emerge from Leadership,” *Army Times*, February 18, 2016.

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Cross-Functional Teams in Defense Reform: Help or Hindrance?
By Christopher J. Lamb



There is strong bipartisan support for Section 941 of the Senate’s version of the National Defense

Authorization Act for 2017, which requires the Pentagon to use cross-functional teams (CFTs). CFTs are a popular organizational construct with a reputation for delivering better and faster solutions for complex and rapidly evolving problems. The Department of Defense reaction to the bill has been strongly negative. Senior officials argue that Section 941 would “undermine the authority of the Secretary, add bureaucracy, and confuse lines of responsibility.” The Senate’s and Pentagon’s diametrically opposed positions on the value of CFTs can be partially reconciled with a better understanding of what CFTs are, how cross-functional groups have performed to date in the Pentagon, and their prerequisites for success. This paper argues there is strong evidence that CFTs could provide impressive benefits if the teams were conceived and employed correctly.



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