

Women and Leadership

by **Kevin P. Shea**

The defense of our nation is a shared responsibility. Women have served in the defense of this land for years before our United States was born. They have contributed their talents, skills and courage to this endeavor for more than two centuries with an astounding record of achievement that stretches from Lexington and Concord to the Persian Gulf and beyond.

***– General (U.S. Army, Ret.) Gordon R. Sullivan,
Chief of Staff of the Army, 1991-1995***

Although American women hold almost 52 percent of all professional-level jobs, they lag substantially behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership positions.

– Judith Warner

During his tenure as Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter lifted all gender-based restrictions on military service. This cleared the way for women to serve alongside men in combat arms units across the Services. When making this announcement Carter said, “The important factor in making my decision was to have access to every American who could add strength to the joint force.”¹ Carter went on to say, “Fully integrating women into all military positions will make the U.S. armed forces better and stronger.”²

This change on gender-based occupational specialty restrictions may also allow greater access to higher levels of leadership positions that were often filled with male officers who served in the combat arms. Women felt their ability to ascend to those positions of both higher leadership and increased responsibility was restricted by the ability to serve only in non-combat arms branches. The decision to lift the gender-based restrictions will open about 220,000 jobs in all, with most of them being in the ground combat arms of the Army and the Marines.³

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Some might argue that there are leadership positions within the other branches; yet, women do not make up the preponderance of senior officers. Service academies have been commissioning women since 1980; after 38 years why are women not ascending in greater numbers to higher levels of leadership in the military? This is not just a problem for the military; it happens throughout the American workplace

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Speaking in San Jose, CA, at the Worldwide Developers Conference before a select group of Apple employees and invited guests, former First Lady Michelle Obama said:

The absence of girls and women in the so-called STEM [science, technology, engineering, mathematics] fields has a deleterious effect on the tech industry.... I'm very passionate about girls' education, and we still have a long way to go on equality and access.... We have to teach young girls they are smart and can compete.⁴

Smart women are competing throughout the American workplace; however, the playing field is not always level. It certainly is not level when it comes to compensation. How would you like to be as smart and capable as the person next to you but earn 20 percent less based on your gender? That is not fair in a country that promotes values that should allow everyone to be successful if they work hard. In the case of a woman, working hard and doing the same work gets her an 80 percent solution in terms of pay equity. One half of our work force does not earn equal compensation for equal work. Women in the U.S. are now over half of the educated work

force and earn most of the advanced degrees but only earn 79 cents for every dollar their male counterpart earns in the same market place. Mary Britton speaking at the Harvard Summer School adds to this discussion by providing this perspective:

There is not a problem with female achievement. Women have caught up with men in terms of education. In fact, in the United States and several other countries, women now actually surpass men in educational achievement. The problem arises when young adults try to balance work and family, and women end up carrying nearly all of the caregiving responsibilities.... It is unrealistic to expect gender equality if workplaces demand that women be available all the time.⁵

A study last year by the American Association of University Women found that one year after graduation, there was a significant difference in pay between a hypothetical man and woman who had graduated from the same university with the same academic major and chosen to work the same number of hours full time in the same occupation. At the end of the first year of employment this hypothetical woman would already earn 7 percent less than the man.⁶

Judith Warner serves as a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, and in August of 2015 she said:

Women have outnumbered men on college campuses since 1988, they have earned at least a third of law degrees since 1980, and since 2002 have earned more undergraduate business degrees than men. They have not, however, moved up to positions of leadership and power in America at anywhere near the rate that should have followed. It is now estimated that, at the current rate of change, it will take until 2085 for women to reach parity with men in leadership roles in our country.⁷

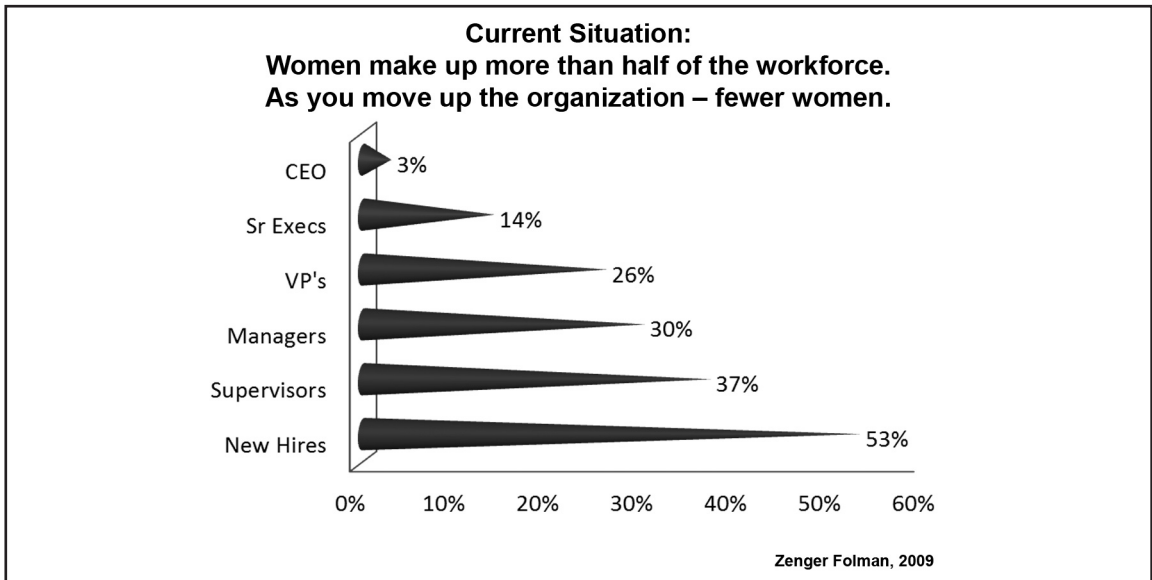


Figure 1. The “Current Situation” illustrates the statistics in greater fidelity.

In this country this gap originated as we began our movement away from an agrarian society. It started over a century ago with the Industrial Revolution and continues today with the lingering and deleterious effects of institutional and gender biases. Gender diversity may be a priority in many organizations, but the reality is that it is failing. We are not seeing more women as a greater percentage of senior leaders in all major organizations and institutions to include financial services, health care, technology, education, and the military. Even though these organizations are well intentioned, there are institutional and cultural barriers to individual and group success at the gender level. All organizations continue to have subtle gender biases that affect recruiting, retention, promotion, salary, job responsibility, and job equity. These biases are impacted by not only gender, but also by race, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference, and disabilities.

Given the recent advances of women, it is the gender disparity that is most disturbing. At the entry level women and men are equal, especially in initial job equity, but they begin to diverge shortly after that, as selections and promotions are made for leaders and managers.

Women seem to vanish as the corporate ladder get higher, and worldwide they represent only 3 percent of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).⁸ The 3 percent figure represented at the corporate level seems to correspond to an equal percentage within the Department of Defense at the general officer or flag level positions from Brigadier General (O-7) through General (O-10). Of the 1500 largest companies in the U.S., only 67 have female CEOs. Put another way, only 2.2 percent of the major Fortune 1500 companies are led by people who make up 53 percent of the workforce in these same companies.⁹

Women earn almost 60 percent of the undergraduate degrees and 60 percent of all master’s degrees awarded in the U.S. They earn 47 percent of all law degrees and 48 percent of all medical degrees. Women earn more than 44 percent of master’s degrees in business and management, including 37 percent of MBAs. They are 52 percent of the U.S. labor force and 59 percent of the college-educated, entry-level workforce.

In the financial services industry, they make up 54 percent of the labor force, but are only 12 percent of executive officers and 18 percent of board directors; only one is a CEO. On the

Why Are We Talking About This? DoD Active Duty Officer Numbers

Grade	Total	Men	Women	% Women in the Active Duty Force
O-1	25,072	20,102	4,970	20%
O-4	46,541	39,534	7,007	15%
O-6	12,009	10,631	1,378	11%
O-7	429	394	35	8%
O-8	321	296	25	8%
O-9	155	144	11	7%
O-10	40	39	1	2%

“Defense Manpower Requirements Report” Fiscal Year 2014-August 2013

Figure 2. Why are we talking about this?

banking side of the financial industry, none of the publicly-traded major banks—Chase, Bank of America, State Street, or Citigroup—has ever been led by a female. Wall Street’s reputation as a place where women struggle to succeed is well deserved, and if women work there as executives, the odds are that they will be underpaid in comparison to their male counterparts.¹¹

Women are 35 percent of all physicians and account for 78 percent of the labor force in healthcare and social assistance, but only 14 percent are executive officers, 12 percent are directors, and none are CEOs; this, is in a field where females are a dominant majority.

For Fortune 500 companies, 14 percent of executive officers and 8 percent of top earners are women. Only 16 percent of Fortune 500 board seats are held by women, and only 4 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. Although they hold almost 52 percent of all professional-level

jobs, American women substantially lag behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership positions.¹²

You might think the military is exempt or in better shape because of pay equity. And while pay equity for military service members is controlled by grade with males and females receiving the same amount based on rank and time in service, the same cannot be said about promotions at the upper levels. Female officers in the military seem to do well up through the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or the pay grade of O-5, which in the civilian world would make them a manager and probably just short of a Senior Manager or a Director level position. Women in the military seem to face the same ceiling as their civilian counterparts as this next Department of Defense (DoD) table indicates. Writing in the *Academy of Management Executive*, Ragins et al. concluded, “Whatever the reality, the

perception that there are limited opportunities for advancement is sufficient for turnover decisions and reduced career aspirations among talented females.”¹³

And women in the U. S. military do lag behind. An on-going concern within the DoD about the lack of diversity among senior military leadership prompted a review of promotion data for officers in 2012. The RAND Corporation conducted that analysis using data from promotions in 2009. In fiscal year 2009, female officers made up 17.96 percent of junior officers in the grade of lieutenant through captain, but then only made up 12.72 percent of officers in the grade of major through colonel. Finally, female officers constituted just 5.6 percent of all general officers in the four services. A 1999 RAND study found that white female officers were less likely to achieve promotion to major, and that white and black male officers both had a higher selection rate to the rank of major.¹⁴

Admiral Mullen, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, quoted in the National Security Strategy says, “Countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are afforded full and equal rights and opportunity. When those rights and opportunities are denied, countries often lag behind.”¹⁵

Having Women in the Room Matters

Women are underrepresented in boardrooms and in executive suites around the country, as well as within DoD. By not allowing women access to these senior levels of responsibility and leadership, the U.S. is missing an entirely different perspective, as well as an opportunity to make better decisions and provide strong, comprehensive leadership across the spectrum of human dynamics. Writing as a contributor to a compendium on women in the military, Admiral Mike Mullen says, “It is vital to have people and voices at the table who, collectively, offer broader perspectives than anyone could alone.”¹⁶

What is the potential result of not allowing all

women a seat at the table? In the civilian sector, it clearly means poorer corporate results from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. When women are included in the corporate office, suites, and boardrooms the stock performance of those companies increases. From 2005 through 2011, Credit Suisse examined the records of just under 2,400 large-cap corporations and found that those with at least one woman on the board outperformed comparable companies with all male boards by 26 percent.¹⁷ The income growth for these companies was higher also, using the same six-year period and the same companies; it was noted that the companies with women on the executive boards experienced a 40 percent income growth over those with all male boards.¹⁸

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Fidelity Investments conducted a recent survey on Women and Money and found that women earned higher returns and saved more than men last year. Their investment gains topped their male counterparts by 0.4 percent based on an analysis of over eight million accounts at Fidelity Investments. A similar analysis found that women were better savers than males averaging over 9 percent of their paycheck while men routinely set aside 8.6 percent in retirement accounts. Although this data involves individual retirement accounts, it speaks to accountability and long-term risk management from a gender perspective and reinforces the records examined by Credit Suisse.¹⁹

Collective intelligence seems to improve in organizations when women are part of the group or in the room helping to make strategic or key decisions. Women demonstrate greater collective intelligence and work better collaboratively than

their male counterparts.²⁰

Kim Campbell, the former Canadian Prime Minister, spoke about predominately male cultures and how they can foster fundamentalism that can be corrupt, intolerant, and antidemocratic

Multiple studies have shown that women are marginalized in meetings.

at the secular or state level. In the corporate world that macho culture makes MCI, Enron, Wells Fargo, and Uber scandals possible.²¹ Jim Turley, the CEO of Ernst & Young tells a story about having women in the room, their ability to collaborate, their political patience. and his unconscious gender-bias in a board meeting:

Three women on the board made individual comments that were similar in direction, which I didn't respond to. Not long after they spoke, a fourth person, who happened to be a man, made a comment in line with what the women had been saying, and I said, 'I think Jeff's got it right, not even aware of what I had just done. To their great credit, the women didn't embarrass me publicly. They pulled me to the side and played it back to me. It was a learning moment for me.'²²

According to Admiral William H. McRaven, the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and the current Chancellor of the University of Texas System, "We will never fully understand the human domain when we have access to only half the people who live within it, which means that women are and will continue to be a critical means to this end."²³ As women move up in various setting and venues within the military and corporate environments they have yet to be fully appreciated for the unique leadership qualities and abilities they bring to the workplace.

What Can We Do?

We can allow women to finish their sentences. We can afford them the same respect afforded their male colleagues. When males repeatedly interrupt their female colleagues, it indicates a lack of respect for their knowledge, skill, talent, and expertise. Multiple studies have shown that women are marginalized in meetings. Researchers at both Princeton University and Brigham Young University found that women pointedly speak significantly less often than men in a variety of meeting formats to include legislative forums and committees, school board meetings, corporate settings, organizations and firms, and general informational meetings.²⁴

A study at George Washington University indicates that during a three-minute-conversation, men will interrupt a women 2.1 times, and on average that is 33 percent more than when they speak with a fellow male.²⁵ Sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman recorded and analyzed conversations between men and women. There were 7 interruptions in the same-sex group, and 48 in the male-female groupings; 46 of the interruptions were a man interrupting the woman.²⁶

This situation is repeated in a variety of male-female personal dynamic interactions in venues ranging from business to government. In fact, sociologists have now coined a name for it. It is called a "manterruption." And it happens even in the Supreme Court of the United States with remarkably similar statistics and regularity. Tonja Jacobi, a law professor at Northwestern University, analyzed transcripts from 2004 through 2015 for oral arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court. She found that female justices were interrupted 32 percent of the time, while their male counterparts were only interrupted 4 percent of the time. Female justices were three times more likely to be interrupted by male justices in the period from 2011 to 2015.²⁷ In 2015, over 65 percent of the interruptions

were directed against the three female jurists, while currently the most interrupted is Justice Sotomayor, the only woman of color on the bench.²⁸

So, if it is not possible to stop these interruptions, what can a woman do when conversing in mixed-sex groupings? Women should learn to keep talking and not relinquish the speaker position nor acquiesce to a louder male. She should state that she is being interrupted by politely and firmly saying, “Bill, I’m not finished making my point. You can talk when I’m done,” and continue on with her comments until she is finished.

What Does This Mean?

The current lack of gender diversity on corporate boards has highlighted the need to stop talking about gender diversity and actually do something about it. Stockholders are asking for accountability. Presently, there is one company that has reversed the trend. Travelzoo, an online travel service, has a board of directors that is 80 percent female. Ralph Bartel, the chairman, says, “I find it disconcerting that only five of the more than 4,000 U.S. companies have 60 percent or more female board members. Having different perspectives is very important.”²⁹

Zoe Saldana is a successful actress and movie producer. She has appeared in *Avatar*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and *Star Trek*—all blockbuster movies. In an interview for *Time* magazine, she indicated she was tired of being the lone female actress surrounded by many men:

I feel lonely on set. And it’s not just that you’re the only woman in the cast. There are very few women in the crew. You hardly ever get to work with a female director. Some female producers try to blend in with their male colleagues and won’t stand up to them. You’re completely outnumbered. And you take a hit in your paycheck as a

woman too. I’m so ...tired of it.

Later in the same interview she added, “We keep our heads down because we’re afraid of losing our jobs. But we can’t just complain anymore. We have to band together with love and respect and do something about it.”³⁰

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How Can Women Help Themselves?

There are a variety of best practices or strategies that females may employ to work productively in their current environment and provide the momentum to break through the glass ceiling. When successfully employed, these strategies also have the added effect of reducing some of the cultural biases associated with increasing the levels of diversity at the upper levels of management and leadership in all career fields, to include the military. The following practices are not an all-inclusive list, they are meant to be used selectively based on the individual situation. However, when two or three of these are combined, research indicates that they have been central and crucial to the advancement of women executives. The list of the most effective strategies includes:

- Develop leadership outside the office.
- Network with influential colleagues.
- Seek difficult or high visibility assignments.
- Upgrade educational credentials.
- Consistently exceed performance expectations.

- Initiate discussion regarding career aspirations.
- Have an influential mentor.
- Gain international experience.
- Develop a style that men are comfortable with.
- Create professional relationships with males and leverage that rapport and respect.
- Demand to be treated as an equal but be prepared to work as an equal.

Within this list, four strategies stand out for advancing the careers of women executives: have influential mentors, exceed performance expectations, develop a style male colleagues are comfortable with, and seek out difficult or challenging assignments.³¹

Mentoring is a strategy that has the greatest opportunity for substantial payback...

Mentoring is a strategy that has the greatest opportunity for substantial payback and significant impact on one's career whether they are female or male. Within the U.S. Army, the name Fox Connor conjures up everything positive you can associate with the term mentorship. Major General Fox Connor's mentorship of Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton, and George C. Marshall in the 1930s had a tremendous impact on U.S. Army successes in WWII.

His Army Regulation 600-100 (Military Leadership) defines mentoring as the "voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect."³² The Army continues

this mentorship discussion with guidance in their "Leadership" doctrine manual, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22. In ADRP 6-22, the Army expands on mentoring and mentoring relationships by stating that mentorship is not always confined to a senior-subordinate relationship but can be found in peer to peer interactions also. This is an important distinction because it makes the point that mentoring is not always about senior-subordinate but about the experience you can gain from a referent leader to become more skilled and competent in your career field. This mutual collaboration and mentoring with a peer expands a person's professional knowledge and increases his or her skills to make them more valuable to the organization.³³

Corporate Initiatives

The United Kingdom-based international consulting firm of Deloitte Touché Tohmatsu Limited employs approximately 245,000 people in 150 countries and territories, providing audit and assurance, tax, legal, risk and financial advisory, and consulting services and is heavily committed to diversity and the promotion of women. Acknowledging that males control the pipeline for promotion and leadership opportunities, Deloitte re-examined its diversity model. Like many other large organizations, Deloitte formed support or affinity groups in the 1970s for minority groups under its employment. Deloitte now recognizes the ineffectiveness of those groups. Those groups allowed Deloitte to say it was doing the right thing by providing a forum or platform for the diverse groups of race, gender, and other preferences within the company; however, mingling with each other does not help promote potential leaders, increase their visibility, nor improve organizational leadership.³⁴

Currently, Deloitte is offering all its leaders, especially the white males who dominate its leadership positions the tools and skills to

become more inclusive and then holds them accountable for the personnel diversity within their respective divisions. For Deloitte, diversity is leadership in action and taking care of people, and it wants to educate and then hold its leaders accountable, because in the end it is the corporation's responsibility and in many ways its legacy.³⁵

Deloitte is not the only company dealing with this gender disparity and inequality among its senior leadership. State Street Corporation, the 225-year-old, global, financial giant, is facing similar issues. Founded in the era of George Washington's presidency, this Boston company has been striving to bring more women into senior leadership positions. Among its initiatives are unconscious-bias training and numeric diversity objectives for managers. Its overall numbers seem to mimic many other industries and the military at senior levels. At State Street, 53 percent of the 17,000 associates are women, but only 27 percent of vice presidents and above are women. Consulting giant McKinsey validated these employment numbers, but added, "...only 40 percent of firms hold senior managers accountable to meeting diversity goals."³⁶

Jay Hooley is the current CEO at State Street and is working hard to increase senior leadership participation among qualified women. He, too, has implemented policies to nurture an inclusive culture and has put the onus on managers to increase diversity. He has established numeric leadership targets for women. Hooley believes that "qualified women are invisible to men who could advance their careers."³⁷ Hooley reported that his top leaders, mostly white males, promoted leaders who were also mostly white males, with females making up about 10 percent of a recent promotion list. The list was then run through the company's standardized scoring process to get a better exemplification of potential female executives, where the females were all ranked in the top 33 percent. Hooley said, "It was a classic teaching moment about

unconscious bias."³⁸

Talent management and the promotion of talent is vital to the success of any organization. Many women leaders today who have earned that distinction and responsibility as leaders have been selected, groomed, and mentored by male leaders. Deepa Purushothaman, a director and principal for diversity at Deloitte said, "A lot of our leaders are still older white males, and they need to be part of the conversation and advocate for women. But they're not going to do that as much if they don't hear the stories and understand what that means."³⁹ Isaac Dixon, a vice president at Portland State University, has seen a shift away from support groups that were prevalent in the 1970s. His study indicates these groups fail because white male executives who make decisions are not directly involved in them. Dixon said, "The groups can actually insulate executive leadership from being involved. You have to get people with different backgrounds partnered up with more executive leadership."⁴⁰

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Conclusion

It is not just State Street and Deloitte, other companies, corporations, educational institutions, governmental agencies, and the military need to pay attention to this issue. The recent spate of daily stories demonstrates that many male leaders throughout the corporate world, the government, and the media have not practiced any sense of justice or integrity in protecting and promoting the other 51 percent of the population. Deloitte now recognizes that support groups have outlived their usefulness, if they ever were useful, to the affected parties. They are disbanding them and putting the onus

and responsibility for inclusiveness, diversity, and promotion where it belongs—on the shoulders of their white male leaders.

The clear reality is there is an injustice in both promotions and pay. It is about power. And there is a power imbalance in a system where women are not valued as much as men. Many leaders in the workplace have been abusing their power for quite some time now, and we are continuing to see this play out in the media. The movement against the current imbalance of power and increased promotions and protection for women in the workplace is overdue. We would all do well to embrace Deloitte's efforts and follow its lead, because as Admiral McRaven said earlier, "We will never fully understand the human domain when we have access to only half the people who live within it."⁴¹ **IAJ**

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