

# Mentoring Women:

## The Basics of Leadership

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# Agenda

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Origins of the Project
- ▶ Research Development
- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Findings
- ▶ Conclusions

# Overview: BLUF

- ▶ Mentoring is an integral part of good leadership
  - Know your people
- ▶ Services continue to have too few senior women to mentor junior women
  - Senior men must “bridge the gap”
- ▶ This may require a paradigm shift for both men and women
- ▶ ALL leaders must overcome potential obstacles to discussing gender-specific concerns of junior women
  - Obstacles may include comfort level, perceived expertise, perceived impropriety
  - Personal experiences may assist/detract from overcoming obstacles
- ▶ Proposal complements existing and proposed women-to-women mentoring plans
  - Not to replace
  - Not mutually exclusive

# Origins of Project

- ▶ Personal experience – former active duty Navy Surface Warfare Officer (SWO)
  - Lack of compatible mentors
    - ▶ Dissimilarity of my interests/goals/priorities with experience of senior women
  - Family balance concerns remained unaddressed
    - ▶ Mothers-in-Uniform conference
  - Paradigm of my senior leaders
    - ▶ “I’ll find you a woman to talk to” – but couldn’t
    - ▶ “I’m not sure I would stay in if I were you”
  - SWO sabbatical program focus group

# Research Development

- ▶ Began as Navy SWO(F) officer research
- ▶ Question 1: Where are the senior women?
  - Hypothesis: Not enough senior women mentors
- ▶ Question 2: Are gender-specific concerns key to female retention?
  - Hypothesis: “Women’s” issues important to retention
- ▶ Question 3: What are the options to address this mismatch?
  - Main focus of this presentation

# Methods

- ▶ Review of military and corporate literature
- ▶ SWO manpower analysis
- ▶ Small sample of in-depth personal interviews
  - Not random sample; results not statistically significant
  - Would like to expand into larger survey

# Findings: Number of senior women improving, but still low

- ▶ Accession rates of women increasing
  - Service Academies, ROTC, OCS: reaching critical mass
  - Accession of SWO(F) increasing
- ▶ Retention rates for women SWOs disproportionately low beyond O-4
- ▶ Mismatch results in low number/availability of senior women to serve as mentors

Sources:  
PERS 41

# Findings: Gender specific concerns affect retention

- ▶ Many concerns impact retention in the SWO community:
- ▶ Some are gender-neutral
  - Inconsistent leadership
  - Excessive work hours
  - Negative aspects of SWO community culture
  - Etc.
- ▶ Some are gender-specific for women
  - Inflexibility of career to family planning
  - Perception of discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of respect for women
  - **Lack of positive senior role models**

Sources:  
Graham, NPS 2006  
SWO JO Surveys

# Findings: Mentoring may be path to improvement

- ▶ Mentors and role models are not identical, but similar
  - Tendency to equate mentor with role model
    - ▶ Conventional wisdom assumes senior woman = role model
  - Confusion in discussing mentoring
    - ▶ Within chain of command vs. not
    - ▶ Professional vs. personal
    - ▶ Official vs. unofficial
- ▶ Given numerical limitations of female “role models,” mentoring may be next best option
  - Focus on unofficial holistic mentors

# Findings: Mentoring may be path to improvement

- ▶ Two ways to “bridge the gap” in mentors:
  - Matriculate more senior women (will happen over time)
  - Use men
- ▶ Potential obstacles to holistic senior male/junior female mentoring
  - Comfort level discussing gender specific issues
  - Experience or knowledge level discussing gender specific issues
  - Notions that certain issues “not appropriate” in mentoring relationship
    - ▶ Perceived impropriety specific to male-female relationships
    - ▶ Perceived impropriety of specific issues
      - “Discussing family planning is not appropriate for any mentor-mentoree relationship” --male Navy O-5
  - Lack of mentoring training

# Findings: Obstacles not insurmountable, not specific to men

- ▶ Personal Interviews (n=10)
  - Average YOS = 15.7
  - 3 female, 7 male
- ▶ Asked comfort and knowledge level when discussing select issues as a mentor
  - Managing male/female relationships in service
  - Managing femininity
  - Family planning
  - Return to work after childbirth
  - Breastfeeding on the job
  - Child care issues
  - Dual career planning
  - Work/Life balance in general
- ▶ Scores were generally higher than expected
- ▶ Life experiences (often spouse experiences) cited as boosting comfort and knowledge level of senior men in discussing variety of concerns
- ▶ Lowest average scores
  - Single female officers without children

## Comfort:

- ▶ Highest: Work/life balance
- ▶ Lowest: Family Planning

## Knowledge

- ▶ Highest: Male/female relationships and work/life balance
- ▶ Lowest: Breast feeding

# Findings: Key Element of Mentoring is Leadership

- ▶ Effective mentoring requires that you know your people
- ▶ Mentoring junior women may require paradigm shift for ALL leaders
  - Need to overcome barriers due to comfort or knowledge level
- ▶ Services institutionally strong on leadership development, but...
  - Unclear on mentoring development
    - ▶ Mixed results from interviews on if/how mentoring was included in leadership curriculum
  - Should explicitly address mentoring in DH/PCO/PXO schools, CPO Academy, etc
- ▶ Incorporating mentoring training into leadership courses can positively impact senior and junior officers
  - Incorporating women's concerns into training may also help

# Discussion and Conclusions

- ▶ Unofficial mentoring is “easy” way to begin to incorporate change immediately
- ▶ Where the research should go next...
  - Joint applicability
  - Enlisted applicability
  - Larger sample of interviews/systematic survey
    - ▶ Must incorporate all demographic groups
    - ▶ Split surveys of senior vs. junior personnel
  - Are there ways to facilitate unofficial mentoring? How?

Looking Forward to  
Questions and Feedback!

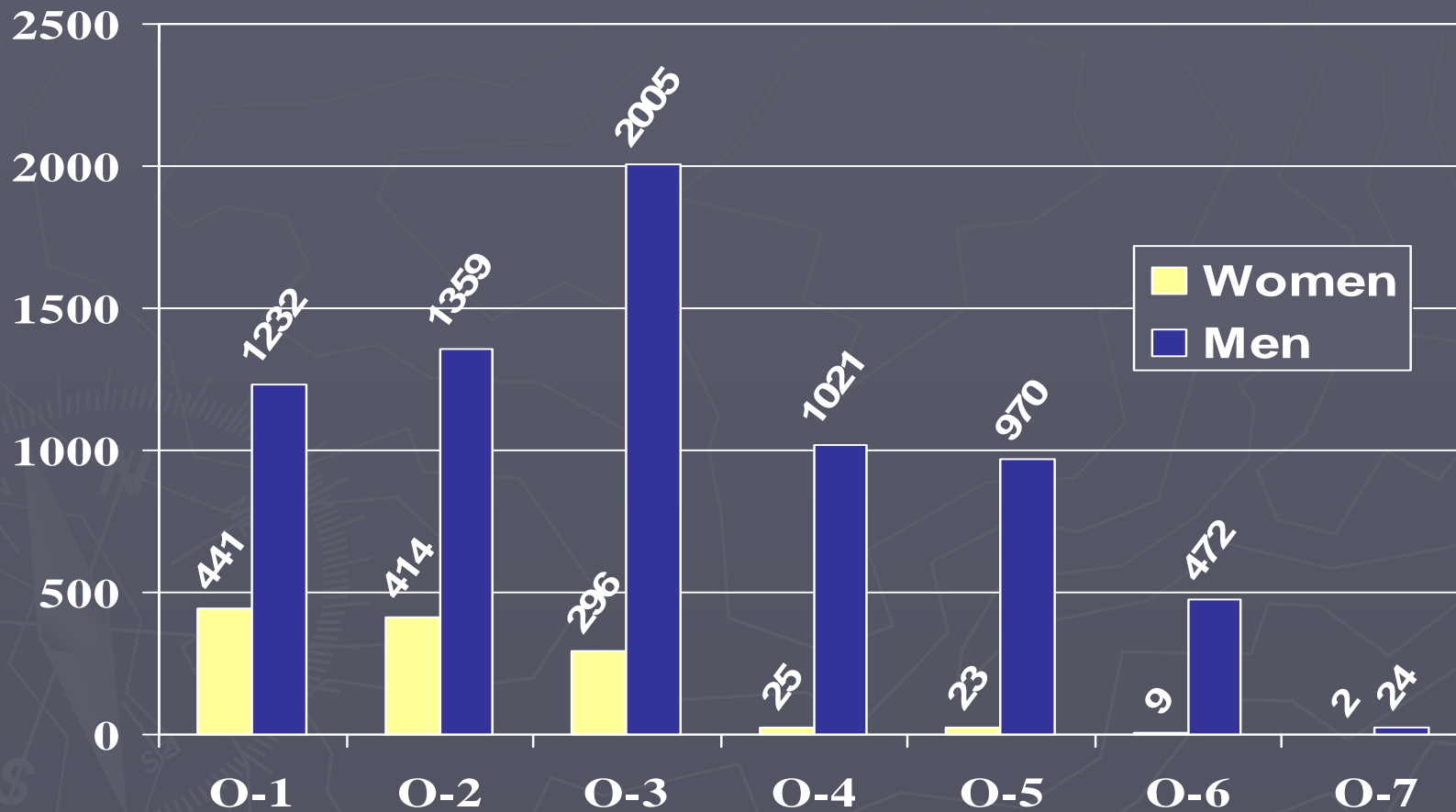


# Backup Slides



# SWO Inventory by Rank

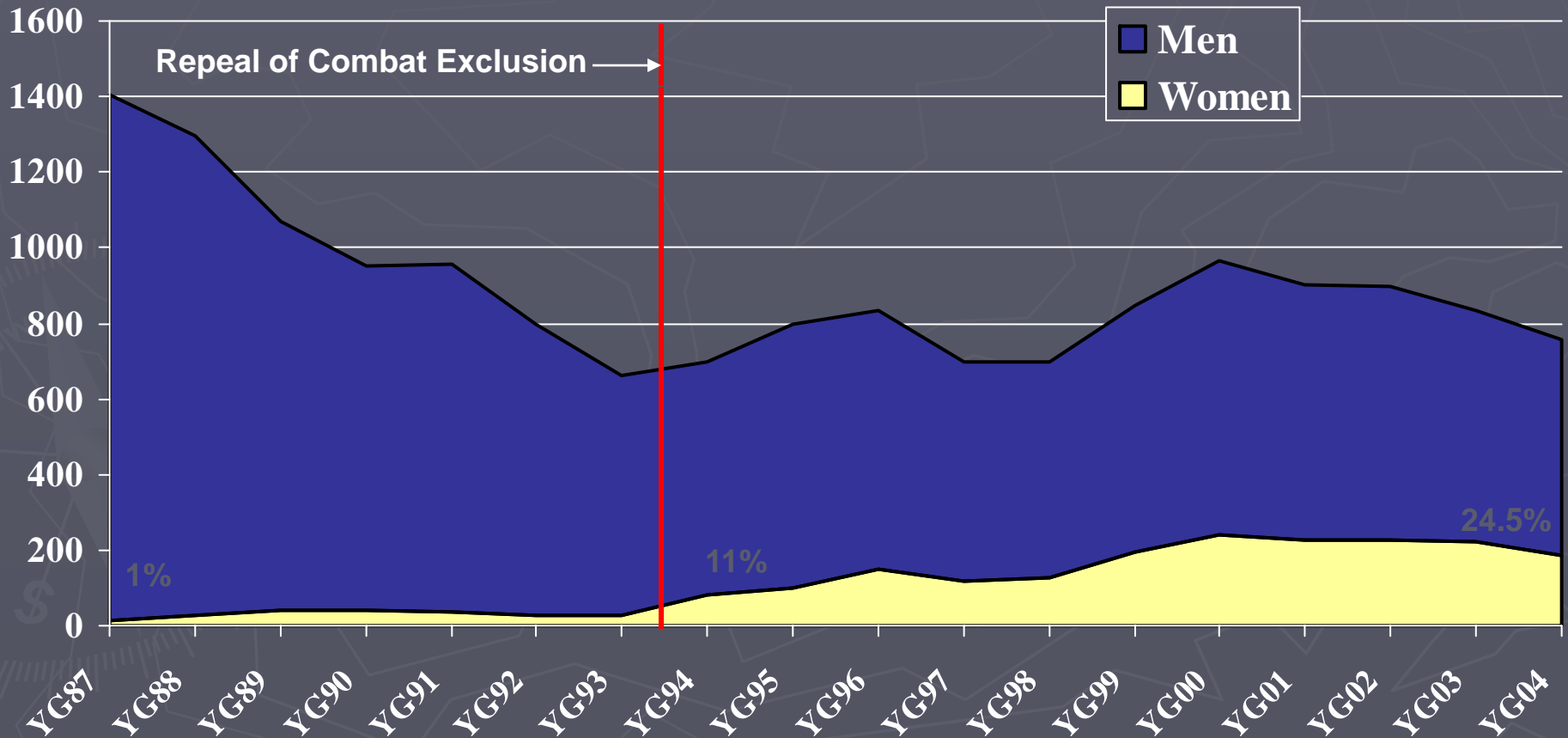
(May 2004)



Source: PERS 41

# Women SWO Accession History

- ▶ In FY04, the SWO Community Accessed 185 Women SWO Candidates of 755 Total (24.5%)



Source: PERS 41