

Boxing Requirements at the Military Services Academies

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Policy Analysis Exercise Prepared for Defense Advisory
Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)

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The Policy Analysis Exercise

- Capstone project for students in the second year of the Master in Public Policy program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government
- Variation on a traditional master's thesis by engaging a client organization to address a particular public policy or management issue
- Students work with that organization to develop concrete solutions tailored to the organization's needs and context
- Supervised by a Harvard Kennedy School faculty member, assigned to students based on area of expertise, and helps guide the student

This PAE reflects the views of the author and should not be viewed as representing the views of the DACOWITS, nor those of Harvard University or any of its faculty.

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Situation Overview

USMA and USAFA integrated women into the 4th class boxing requirement for the first time in fall of 2016.

This brought renewed attention to three key issues:

1

The Training Debate at Large

2

Inconclusive Concussion and Sports
Medicine Research

3

Public Relations and Communication

Central Questions

- 1 Do women need identical training programs?
- 2 Should protocols be standardized?
- 3 Should programs have required review cycles and reports?
- 4 Should boxing be optional for women? For all?
- 5 What other courses (if any) could meet the boxing objectives?
- 6 What are the most polarizing issues?
- 7 What information should be communicated to the public?
- 8 How should that information be communicated to the public?

Why It Matters

1

**Return on
Investment**

2

Mission Alignment

3

**Changing Face of
War**

4

**Realization of
Integration Benefits**

Scope

In

- USMA, USAFA, USNA
- 4th class boxing course
- Program objectives
- Safety risks
- Concussion factors
- Barriers and accelerants to recommendation implementation at MSAs

Out

- USCGA
- Club boxing program
- Other components of physical education and combatives curricula
- Academy based gender integration initiatives

Methodology

1

Literature Review

- Concussions
- Boxing safety and ethics
- Gender integration debate
- Stress response

2

Interviews

- Boxing directors
- (When available) athletic director, head of phys. ed., asst. boxing coaches, Grand Alliance POC

3

Data Previously Collected by DACOWITS

- December 2016 briefing materials

Concussion Research

Topic	Key Finding
Multiple Concussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must operate with a high risk aversion towards students who have experienced 2+ concussions
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inconclusive gender differences in TBIs to keep women out of boxing• Gender may need to be considered in return to play protocols

All three Military Service Academies are engaged in the Grand Alliance studies, which will conclude in one year and add immense value to these debates.

Grand Alliance Study

Overview

- Joint NCAA and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)
- \$30 million initiative to study and prevent concussion
- **Concussion Assessment, Research and Education (CARE) Consortium** serves as the scientific and operational framework

Impact

“The proposed three-year study marks what is considered to be the most comprehensive investigation of sport-related concussion conducted to date. This study will facilitate a better understanding the natural history and neurobiology of concussion in athletes.”

The Grand Alliance Study addresses the largest shortcomings in the application of current concussion research to the Academies’ boxing programs: **a direct comparison controlling for age and activity.**

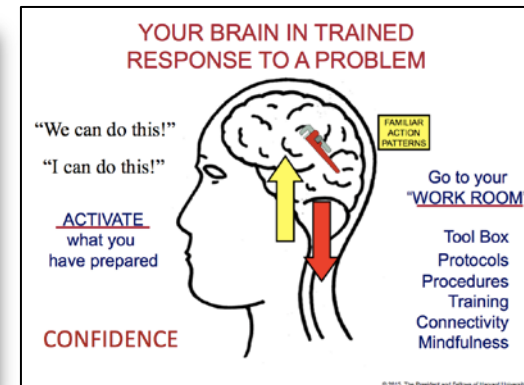
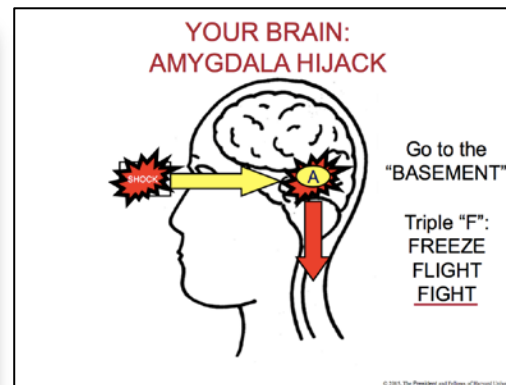
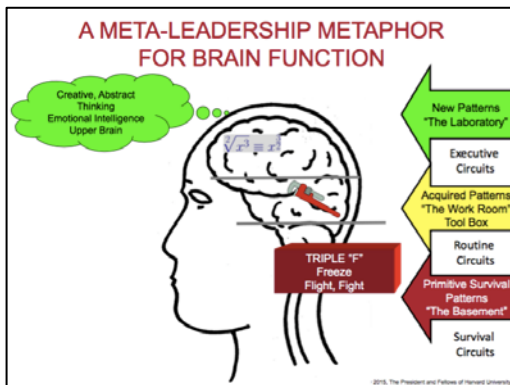
Acute Stress Response

Course Objectives

- Resiliency in face of pressure
- Moral responsibility and discipline
- Physical aspects of combat interaction
- Self-confidence

Acute Stress Response Training

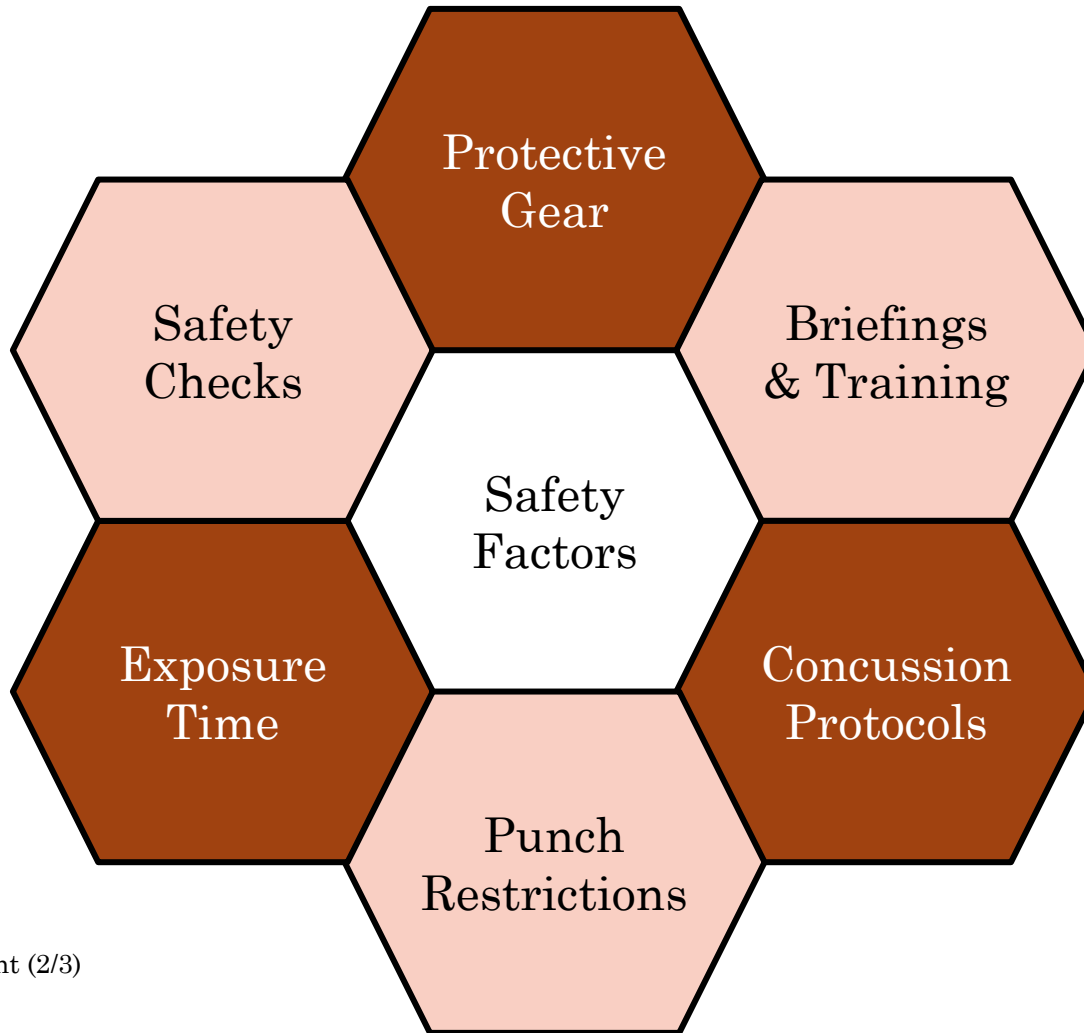
National Preparedness Leadership Institute: Meta-Leadership*






Safety Factors: Theory Overview



Safety Factors: Current State Analysis



-  Full Alignment
-  Partial Alignment (2/3)
-  No Alignment

Current State Comparison

	USMA	USNA	USAFA
No. / Time of Classes	19 / 55 minutes	8 / 50 minutes	8 / 75 minutes
Glove Weight – Men	20oz if > 175lbs, 16oz if ≤175lbs	14oz	14oz
Glove Weight – Women	14oz	14oz	14oz
Student/Instructor Ratio	1:12	1:20 (min)	1:12 (min)
Time Sparring (total)	Varies	12 min (max)	3 min*
Time in Bouts (total)	6 min	2 min	5 min
Punch Restrictions	Varies by lesson**	None	Jab and Cross only
Baseline Tests	Grand Alliance	SCAT3	Grand Alliance

*Introduction of “line-drills” reduced time spent sparring

**Lesson 6: No power punches to head; Lesson 11: 1 Rear handed Cross to head per round (2 total in a bout); Lessons 16/17/19: 1 Rear Handed Cross to head, 1 Lead Handed Hook to head, 1 Rear Hand Uppercut to head per round (6 total for a bout).

Alternatives and Potential Options

Option	Risk Reduction?	Learning Objectives Met?
1 Elimination of boxing requirement	✓	
2 Optional boxing for men and women	✓	
3 Replacement by wrestling, mixed martial arts, or another combative	✓	
4 “Body Boxing”	✓	
5 Increased Punch Restrictions	✓	✓

Recommendations*

- 1 Keep the boxing requirement for men and women
- 2 Codify punch restrictions across the academies
- 3 Make concussion identification less instructor-discretion based
- 4 Formalize annual shared lessons learned program
- 5 Institutionalize knowledge, standards, and procedures
- 6 Publish injury and safety practices to the public
- 7 After Grand Alliance results published: immediately reevaluate concussion protocols
- 8 After Grand Alliance results published: capitalize on study findings to build public trust

**Recommendations do not constitute endorsement by DoD, DACOWITS, or the Military Services.*