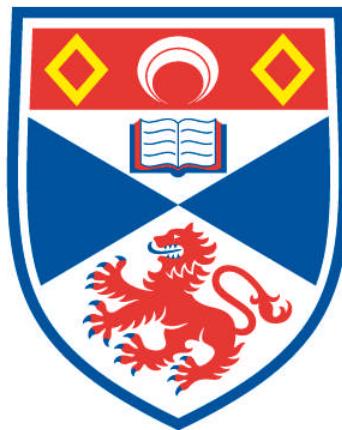


**CONSTRUCTED SERVICE : GENDERED DISCOURSES
ACROSS THE UNITED STATES MILITARY**

Sarah Finch Weinstein

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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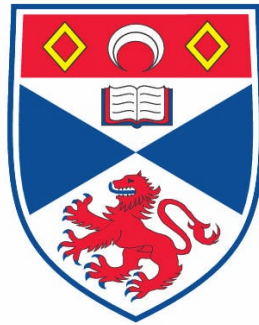
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Constructed Service: Gendered Discourses across the United States Military

Sarah Finch Weinstein



This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of MPhil at the
University of St Andrews

24 October 2013

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I, Sarah Weinstein, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 40,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2010 and as a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Studies in September 2010; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2010 and 2013.

I, Sarah Weinstein, received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of grammar and spelling, which was provided by Kathryn Sharpe.

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2. Supervisor's declaration:

I, Jaremey McMullin, hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Studies in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Abstract

The status of female service members in the United States military evolved significantly during the years between 2001 and 2013 due primarily to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the changing nature of warfare, and military manpower requirements. However, despite women's increased participation in combat and throughout the organization, there is limited understanding of how gender is constructed in the military, its consequences for women's status, and the nature of cultural change in the organization. This thesis analyzes gender construction in the military across three levels: official documents, recruiting, and service member experience. Discourse analysis is used to uncover the dominant discourses articulated at each level and to understand what identities and policies are legitimated or prohibited. The primary finding is that there is no monolithic construction of gender in the military or single understanding of women's status and the nature of military culture. The most prevalent discourses illustrate movement towards a more inclusive organization, where gendered traits are downplayed relative to traits understood as 'gender-neutral,' equally available to both men and women. The desire to maximize military effectiveness is central to discourse at the official level. Recruiting is the only level of analysis without an explicit challenge to women's equal service in the military. Service members, articulating their identity and that of those they work with, subordinate femininity, but allow women who reject feminine traits to participate on equal footing with men. The January 2013 decision by the Department of Defense to lift policies that formally exclude women from some types of combat reflects the policies articulated in the dominant discourses uncovered across the three levels of analysis. What new discourses will emerge and how the dominant discourses in the organization will change as a result of this new policy, comprise areas deserving future research.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION	4
INTRODUCTION	4
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
THEORY AND METHOD	6
LEVELS OF ANALYSIS	9
CHAPTER OVERVIEW	11
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW	13
INTRODUCTION	13
TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF WOMEN AND WAR	13
POLITICAL VIOLENCE/ TERRORISM/ INSURGENTS	14
MILITARY MASCULINITY	18
SETTING UP MILITARY MASCULINITY	18
TYPES OF MILITARY MASCULINITY	18
CONSEQUENCES OF FEMINIST UNDERSTANDINGS OF MILITARY MASCULINITY	21
CULTURAL CHANGE	22
DOING GENDER	24
PEACEKEEPING – CASE STUDY OF EVOLVING MILITARY MASCULINITIES	27
MILITARIZED FEMININITY	29
IDEAL TYPES – LYNNDIE ENGLAND AND JESSICA LYNCH	29
ABUSE	31
COMBAT	34
MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS AND UNIT COHESION	35
JOURNALISTIC ACCOUNTS	36
FIRST PERSON ACCOUNTS	37
CONCLUSION	38
CHAPTER THREE – OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS	40
INTRODUCTION	40
RESEARCH AIMS	40
DESCRIPTION OF DOCUMENTS	41
ANALYSIS	43

DEPARTMENT DEFENSE ANNUAL REPORT ON SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY – FISCAL YEAR 2011	43
REPORT TO CONGRESS ON THE REVIEW OF LAWS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS RESTRICTING THE SERVICE OF FEMALE MEMBERS IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES – FEBRUARY 2012	47
FROM REPRESENTATION TO INCLUSION: DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21 ST -CENTURY MILITARY	51
CONCLUSION	56
CHAPTER FOUR – MILITARY RECRUITING	59
INTRODUCTION	59
RESEARCH AIMS	60
METHOD	60
ANALYSIS	63
GENDER IN THE RECRUITING PROCESS	63
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT	65
LESSER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION	68
WOMEN’S CAPABILITIES	70
COMBAT EXCLUSION POLICIES	71
MASCULINITY IN MILITARY CULTURE	72
CONCLUSION	74
CHAPTER FIVE – SERVICE MEMBER EXPERIENCE	76
INTRODUCTION	76
METHOD	76
ANALYSIS	78
CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF	78
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ‘OTHER’	82
RECEIVED CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER	87
COMBAT	92
CONCLUSION	96
CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION	98
INTRODUCTION	98
GENDER CONSTRUCTION	98

HOW DISCOURSES CONSTRUCT MILITARY CULTURE AND WOMEN’S SERVICE	99
CONTRADICTIONS PRESENT BETWEEN DISCOURSES	101
SILENCES IN DISCOURSES	102
POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS	103
ASSESSING THE LITERATURE	104
NATURE OF MILITARY CULTURE	104
CULTURAL CHANGE	107
GENDERED EXPRESSIONS AND STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO NAVIGATE MILITARY CULTURE	108
GENDER AS A LENS FOR ANALYSIS	110
FUTURE RESEARCH	111
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	<u>114</u>
<u>APPENDIX ONE – RECRUITER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</u>	<u>120</u>
<u>APPENDIX TWO – SERVICE MEMBER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</u>	<u>122</u>
<u>APPENDIX THREE – ETHICAL APPROVAL</u>	<u>125</u>

Chapter One - Introduction

Introduction

In the United States military, the period from 2001 to 2013 is characterized by the integration of female service members. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan brought women soldiers into unprecedented positions and proximity to combat. More than 280,000 female service members participated in these wars from 2001 to 2013 alone, and over 150 were killed.¹ These new roles have brought increased attention to the service of women, as well as debate over their participation, both in the military and in American society.

Despite their increased participation in the United States military, women in the organization continue to face significant structural and cultural challenges to their service. Until the January 2013 repeal of the 1994 Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, women were formally excluded from participation in the following: ground combat below the brigade level;² positions that involved long-range reconnaissance and special operations forces, that required physically demanding tasks, or where the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements were prohibitive; and in units that physically co-located with direct ground combat units.³ Despite these combat exclusion policies, women experience combat in numerous official and unofficial ways. These include ‘attaching’ women to combat units to get around the prohibition, the Lioness Program, the creation of Female Engagement Teams, and the changing nature of modern warfare, which lacks clearly defined boundaries and distinctions between combat and support roles.

Women in the military also face the threat of physical and emotional violence perpetrated by their fellow service members. Sexual assault and harassment remain prevalent in the organization. Despite these issues being associated with women, large numbers of male service members also report sexual assault while serving.⁴ The military estimates that 19,000 service members are victimized each year, although only 3,000 report the incidences.⁵ The

¹ Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, “Pentagon Set to Lift Ban on Women in Combat Roles,” *The New York Times*, January 23, 2013, sec. U.S., <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/pentagon-says-it-is-lifting-ban-on-women-in-combat.html>.

² Since February of 2012, women have been permitted to serve in direct ground combat units at the battalion level, in select occupational specialties already open to women.

³ *Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces* (Department of Defense, February 2012).

⁴ Timothy Elig, *2010 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members: Overview Report on Sexual Assault* (Defense Manpower Data Center, March 2011).

⁵ *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Department of Defense, FY 2011).

high prevalence of sexual assault is generally understood to be, in part, a result of military culture and the military's failure to effectively address the issue.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has modified policy towards creating a more inclusive organization. In addition to repealing combat exclusion policies, the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' rule that prohibited openly homosexual individuals from serving in the military was repealed in September of 2011.⁶ Despite concerns, few negative repercussions to service members or to military effectiveness have been reported as a result of this change. In February of 2013, benefits⁷ were extended to same-sex domestic partners of service members.⁸

Many feminists understand the military to be an organization that is inherently exclusionary towards women, based on hegemonic, hostile masculinities.⁹ It is rarely seen as an organization where women can find fulfillment, and participation in the organization is not understood as a means to achieve equality between men and women.¹⁰ In light of the major changes that have occurred both in DoD policy and women's participation in the military since 2001, women's status in the organization and the role of gender in military culture deserve a re-evaluation.

Research questions

The question guiding this exploration of women's service is, how is gender constructed in the military? A number of questions must be asked to provide a meaningful answer. These include: What are the dominant constructions of gender in the military? What status and roles for women do these constructions legitimate and prohibit? Are the articulations of gender and status consistent across the military, or do they vary? How is military culture changing? Who or what can cause cultural transformation?

⁶ Clifford L. Stanley, "Memorandum: Repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'" (Department of Defense, September 20, 2011), http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0610_dadt/USD-PR-DADT_Repeal_Day_Memo_20Sep.pdf.

⁷ As a result of the Defense of Marriage Act, the DoD is currently prohibited from granting certain major benefits including health care and housing allowances. If the Defense of Marriage Act is repealed (a goal of the Obama administration), these benefits will also be granted to same-sex partners.

⁸ Leon Panetta, "Memorandum: Extending Benefits to Same-sex Domestic Partners of Military Members" (Department of Defense, February 11, 2013), <http://www.defense.gov/news/Same-SexBenefitsMemo.pdf>.

⁹ Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (University of California Press, 2000); Karen O. Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity," *Armed Forces & Society* 20, no. 4 (Summer 1994): 531–547.

¹⁰ Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?: the Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora, 1988).

Theory and method

This study on the construction of gender in the US military is grounded in two theoretical frameworks within International Relations: post-structuralism and feminism. The combined framework, post-structuralist feminism, is concerned with discourse and how the articulation of identity constructs subjects, legitimizing or delegitimizing particular policies and subject positions in a mutually constitutive process.¹¹ Within this framework, gender is understood as performative and regulatory.¹² Individuals perform, or ‘do gender,’ meaning they act out male and female traits in ways that present an appearance of flexibility or stability.¹³ In Judith Butler’s understanding, the material body does not exist prior to articulations of gender; there is no extra-discursive gender separate from expressions of masculinity and femininity. Each individual performance is understood in the context of all previous performances of gender.¹⁴ Although a range of gender performances may be conducted, individuals are pushed into a two-sex/gender framework through the enforcement of gender boundaries.¹⁵

The method used in this thesis is discourse analysis. It is based on the understanding of discourse developed by Lene Hansen.¹⁶ The starting point of her post-structuralist approach is the idea that, “language is ontologically significant: it is only through the construction in language that ‘things’—objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures—are given meaning and endowed with a particular identity.”¹⁷ The focus of discourse analysis is identity construction, how articulations simultaneously construct identity and policy.¹⁸ Discourse analysis uncovers the relational terms of identity—the privileged and devalued signs, meaning the simultaneous positive process of linking and the negative process of differentiation.¹⁹ Discourses appear to contain stable constructions of identity, but always contain instabilities in their linking and differentiation.²⁰

In this study, three sets of texts are selected to correspond to the three levels of analysis. They are: Department of Defense documents related to gender and women’s service

¹¹ Karen O. Dunivin, “Military Culture: Change and Continuity,” *Armed Forces & Society* 20, no. 4 (Summer 1994): 531–547.

¹² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Psychology Press, 1990), 30.

¹³ Harriet Bradley, *Gender* (Polity, 2007), 18.

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge, 1993), 30.

¹⁵ Shannon L. Holland, “The Dangers of Playing Dress-up: Popular Representations of Jessica Lynch and the Controversy Regarding Women in Combat,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (2006): 29.

¹⁶ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (Routledge, 2006).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

in the military, transcripts from interviews with military recruiters from the four services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force), and transcripts from interviews with service members. An in-depth exploration of the interview process and description of the participants can be found in Chapter Four (military recruiters) and Chapter Five (service members).

In addition to drawing on an understanding of gender as performative, this research is situated within a number of debates within feminism, including the proper subject of feminist inquiry, the role of women's experiences in methodology, and the political and emancipatory goals of feminist research.

Feminist orthodoxy places women's experiences at the center of the research project. Mainstream International Relations has excluded both women as subjects and their experiences as the basis for theory.²¹ Bringing women's experience into research and privileging it as a source of knowledge about the world and social processes can correct this omission.²² Although some feminists believe that women's experiences, unmediated by the researcher, should constitute the results of feminist research, this research is based on the more common view that focus on women's experiences alone lacks theoretical rigor. Instead, research should be grounded in explicit methodological choices.²³ It is impossible to let women's experiences truly 'speak for themselves;' presenting women's experiences requires the researcher to make decisions about what is important and what can be left out.²⁴

In this research, women's experiences as articulated in interviews are understood as texts upon which discourse analysis can be conducted. This theoretical framework rejects the view that there is an authentic women's experience or identity that exists extra-discursively to be discovered by the diligent researcher.²⁵ The focus is instead on how different women construct themselves as subjects, and the particular gendered articulations of identity present in their discourse. Particularly important are competing discourses, expressions of a gendered identity that are contradictory.

The theoretical framework utilized by this project is sympathetic to the argument that

²¹ Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction* (Rutgers University Press, 1998), 73.

²² Sandra Harding, "Introduction. Is There a Feminist Method?," in *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues* (Indiana University Press, 1987), 6–7.

²³ Julie Stephens, "Feminist Fictions: A Critique of the Category 'Non-Western Woman' in Feminist Writings on India," in *Subaltern Studies, VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 95; Carolyn Nordstrom, "Creativity and Chaos: War on the Front Lines," in *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, ed. Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 139.

²⁴ Miranda Alison, *Women and Political Violence* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 15.

²⁵ Mary Maynard and June Purvis, *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective* (Taylor & Francis, 1994), 23.

feminism is best understood as gender analysis that is conscious of the role of power, rather than the study of women specifically. With this understanding of feminism, anyone can be a feminist and anyone can ‘do’ feminism. This research does not support the view that feminist research is conducted by women, about women, and for women,²⁶ a view that is shared even by some male researchers sympathetic to the feminist project. Stephen Heath argues that, “Men are the objects, part of the analysis, agents of the structure to be transformed, representatives in, and carriers of the patriarchal mode; and my desire to be a subject there too in feminism—to be a feminist—is then only also the last feint in the long history of *their* colonization.”²⁷ This understanding excludes men from being the subjects of feminist inquiry.

Broadening the focus to gender, rather than on women exclusively, prevents essentializing and reifying a category called ‘women.’ Particularly in this study, with its focus on the United States military—an institution dominated by men both numerically and culturally—men must be accounted for in the analysis. Not as the embodiment of a hostile military masculinity, as some feminists might understand men, but as individuals navigating a gendered environment. If a poststructuralist understanding of gender is taken seriously, there is as much to learn from military ‘men’ as from military ‘women.’ The categories of male and female do still matter to this study; the military categorizes individuals as male and female. The majority of service members identify as a member of one of these two categories. Despite this, how an individual ‘does gender’ and articulates an identity is what is most important, not an assigned category.

Although the primary focus of this research is on women’s experience of military service, men are not ignored as subjects. Women’s experiences can be understood in comparison to men’s, or as common shared experience in the organization. Men face many of the gendered limits that military women do. For example, a homosexual man in the military might share certain identities and experiences with a homosexual woman that he would not share with heterosexual men. With the recent repeal of the military’s ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy, ways of doing masculinity and femininity outside of the heteronormative model are emerging and are accepted, at least to the point that they are no longer a means of formal exclusion. Bringing men into the analysis, and being aware of the multiplicity of identities held by individuals, forms the basis of a deeper and more sophisticated analysis.

This research does not seek to serve an emancipatory function. Feminist research

²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²⁷ Stephen Heath, “Male Feminism,” in *Men in Feminism*, ed. Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, New edition (Routledge, 1987), 1.

should not necessarily strive to empower or emancipate a marginalized research subject. Instead, the starting point is that military women are political agents who act in their own interest, not victims in need of rescue. This research is born out of curiosity and the belief that the topic of gender construction in the military is important. It is not driven by a paternalistic desire to save women from their circumstances.

Levels of analysis

This thesis utilizes three levels of analysis to understand how gender is constructed across the military. Comparing constructions between levels enables the formation of a holistic understanding of gender within the organization, as well as an understanding of the differences and contradictions that exist among the discourses uncovered at each level. The three levels selected are: official discourse, in this case Department of Defense (DoD) and DoD commission reports to the United States Congress; recruiter articulations, focused specifically on the interaction between military recruiters and interested individuals; and service member experiences, how service members articulate their experiences in the military, their understanding of their own and others' gender, and gender expression.

Official documents have certain characteristics that make them especially interesting for an exploration of gender. First, they are an articulation by the military of its stance on women in the ranks, their status, and appropriate roles. Second, their audience, Congress, gives these articulations of gender a level of importance that few other individual sources have. There is an assumed level of consensus over these articulations, both where the military is and where it sees itself going, because they come from the highest levels of the Department of Defense and associated committees. Congress, as an audience, is varied. It is a difficult audience to gauge in terms of ideological positions, increasing the likelihood that these discourses represent genuine expressions on particular issues. Third, the major issues surrounding women's participation in the military, such as sexual assault, assignment policies, diversity, and challenges they face, are covered by reports to Congress. Therefore, these reports offer an opportunity to look at official discourses for the majority of topics covered in the chapters on recruiting and service member's experience.

The official documents selected are: the *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military – Fiscal Year 2011*, *Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces – February 2012*, and *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the*

21st-Century Military – March 2012. These documents were selected for two primary reasons. First, they cover three areas relevant to gender and women's experiences in the military: sexual assault, combat exclusion policy, and diversity initiatives. Sexual assault is one of the major threats to personal safety and well-being that service member's experience. It is often identified as a result of the military's particular culture and inherent hostility towards women.²⁸ The prevalence of sexual assault within the military is frequently used as a reason to exclude women, both for their personal safety as well as to protect the careers of men who might be accused of assault.²⁹ Combat exclusion policies are the largest structural barrier to women's integration into the military, as they limit women's service in certain types of jobs and units. Diversity initiatives are one of the ways women's service is understood by the organization, as a reflection of efforts to increase diversity, predominantly in order to maximize military effectiveness. Second, these reports are frequently cited in discussions of women and gender in the military, indicating that the articulations they contain have been widely read and play an important role in debates and discussions over women's service.

The second level of analysis is military recruiting, specifically the portion of the process that takes place in a recruiting office and is focused on the interaction between the recruiter and interested individual. This interaction serves three main purposes for the military. First, it is the means by which the majority of service members enter into a contractual relationship with the organization.³⁰ Second, it is the process by which interested individuals become educated about the particular opportunities, benefits, and jobs available to them in the military. Finally, military recruiting is a socialization process. Interested and committed individuals learn about the history, customs, and function of the particular branch and the United States military as a whole, including what will be expected of them during basic and job training. They are exposed to the uniforms and forms of address for individuals of different ranks, and they often learn about the experiences of their recruiter in the military.

In addition to the importance the recruiting process plays in the military, studying recruiting as a site of gender construction is important because it has received little attention

²⁸ Madeline Morris, "By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture," *Duke Law Journal* 45, no. 4 (1996): 651–781.

²⁹ Kingsley Browne, *Co-ed Combat: The New Evidence That Women Shouldn't Fight the Nation's Wars* (Sentinel HC, 2007).

³⁰ Excluded from this process are individuals who attend service academies such as The United States Military Academy at West Point or participate in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs at their college or university. These individuals apply to, and are selected by, the admissions office of the respective service academy, or alternatively apply to the appropriate ROTC program.

from a gender perspective. The only major feminist exploration of recruiting is Melissa Brown's study of gender in recruiting materials, such as print and television advertisements.³¹ Brown does not explore gender in the interaction between recruiter and interested individual, making recruiting a suitable topic for focused attention.

The third level of analysis is the lived experience of the women and men who serve in the military. The goal is to understand how they articulate gender: their gender and gendered expressions, those of the service members they work with, and how they interpret the received constructions of gender they are exposed to in the military. This level of analysis allows for an exploration of how service members understand themselves, their colleagues, and the organization they work in; an understanding of how discourses articulated at the higher levels of official documents and recruiting are (re)articulated at this lowest level of analysis; and how policy is understood and experienced by typical members of the organization.

There is a dearth of research on gender at the macro level. As the literature review in the next chapter describes, the majority of the focus on the experiences of individual service members has been by journalists. Exploring this level of analysis will help to correct this deficit.

One commonality between all service members selected for interviews is a deployment to either Iraq (between 2003 and 2012) or Afghanistan (2001 to the present). This ensures that individuals participating have had significant experience in the military and can speak in-depth regarding their experiences. The participation in, or close proximity to, combat by all interview participants allows them to speak to the combat debate and the combat exclusion policies that delineate women's limited roles in the organization. Information about the individuals participating in the interviews is in Chapter Five.

Chapter overview

Chapter Two reviews the large body of literature exploring women's participation in war and violence, including women's involvement in both non-state organizations and state militaries. Chapter Three analyzes three official documents for constructions of gender. Chapter Four explores military recruiting and the interaction between recruiters and interested individuals. Chapter Five looks at service member experiences and understanding of gender within the military. Chapter Six covers the findings of this thesis and its

³¹ Melissa Brown, *Enlisting Masculinity: Gender and the Recruitment of the All-volunteer Force*, 2007.

relationship to literature. It also discusses gender as a lens for analysis, and suggests future avenues for research.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Introduction

Although this research is focused exclusively on women serving in the United States military, research on women's participation in organized violence by both state and non-state actors has much to contribute to the understanding of American military women. This review explores literature on the following: traditional understandings of women and war; women's violence on behalf of non-state organizations; the United States military as a gendered organization, including a discussion of military masculinity and various feminist understandings of the gendered nature of the military; how cultural change in the military is understood and explained; how women navigate gendered organizations; military cultural change and military masculinity as studied through women's participation in peacekeeping; feminist conceptions of militarized femininity and its consequences for the study of women and their agency; soldiers Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England as examples of ideal-types of militarized femininity; detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and the women involved; the debate over women's involvement in combat and the feminization of the military; research on women's affect on unit cohesion and combat effectiveness; and the other main bodies of literature on women in the military, including first person and journalistic accounts.

The literature review concludes with a summary of the main limitations in existing research in relation to my research question of how gender is constructed and articulated across different levels in the US military.

Traditional Understandings of Women and War

Most feminist scholarship on women and violence interrogates and complicates traditional understandings of women's relationship to war and peace. The core assumption of traditional views is that men and women play different roles and occupy different spheres of society. Men operate in the public realm of politics while women are relegated to the private life of the home. Within these dichotomous spaces, men and women have clearly defined social roles tied to their essential natures.³²

Jean Bethke Elshtain's work is essential in explaining how these traditional gender roles influence men and women's relationship to war. Her work shows the continuing relevance of these understandings, despite their origins in Ancient Greece. Elshtain identifies

³² Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton University Press, 1993).

two prototypical gendered constructions, the male ‘Just Warrior’ and the female ‘Beautiful Soul.’³³ Men are combatants, takers of life, while women are noncombatants and the givers of life.³⁴ The construct of the ‘Beautiful Soul’ carries with it a number of assumptions about women in war. ‘Beautiful Souls’ provide the justification for war, as the weak and innocent needing protection, while simultaneously justifying the fighting on their behalf. As a result, they are both the victim, and the cause, of all war.³⁵ The ‘Just Warrior,’ as protector, derives honor from protecting and fighting for the woman.³⁶ The ‘Beautiful Soul,’ as the opposite of the ‘Just Warrior’ is peaceful and against war, but supports and cooperates in the ‘Just Warrior’s’ fight on her behalf.³⁷ In what feminists have terms the ‘protection racket,’ women are marginalized in the name of their protection.³⁸

The idea of a ‘Beautiful Soul’ also sets women up to be viewed as the source of chaos and a threat during war. Camp followers, often wives playing vital support roles for military forces, are remembered as prostitutes. Stories of the Amazon warrior women from Ancient Greece tell of women who mutilated their bodies to fight.³⁹ These portrayals indicate a deep fear about women’s sexuality, promiscuity, and femininity. These constructs of men and women in war represent the stories men tell, reflecting the absence of women’s voices and experiences from mainstream International Relations theory and scholarship.⁴⁰

Political Violence/ Terrorism/ Insurgents

One of the largest bodies of literature of women’s violence is the study of women’s involvement in political violence on behalf of non-state organizations. This literature makes visible women’s participation outside of traditional, archetypal roles in war. The literature finds women actively involved in a range of violent organizations, from terrorist groups to insurgent movements. Scholars have looked at women’s involvement in the LTTE in Sri Lanka,⁴¹ the FARC in Colombia,⁴² Maoist organizations in Nepal,⁴³ insurgent groups in

³³ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), xii.

³⁴ Ibid., xiii.

³⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Theory* (New York University Press, 2004).

³⁶ Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq: a Feminist Reformulation of Just War Theory* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006); Elshtain, *Just War Theory*; Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Just War as Politics: What the Gulf War Told Us About Contemporary American Life” (1992): 43–60.

³⁷ Elshtain, *Women and War*.

³⁸ Judith Hicks Stiehm, “The Protected, the Protector, the Defender,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 5, no. 3–4 (1982): 367–376, doi:16/0277-5395(82)90048-6.

³⁹ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 52.

⁴⁰ Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction* (Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Swati Parashar, “Feminist International Relations and Women Militants: Case Studies from Sri Lanka and Kashmir,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2009): 235; Alisa Stack-O’Connor, “Lions,

Kashmir,⁴⁴ the IRA in Northern Ireland,⁴⁵ ETA in Spain,⁴⁶ the civil war in Sierra Leone,⁴⁷ and as suicide bombers in Israel and Palestine.⁴⁸ Scholars have focused on identifying women's motivations for participating and the activities they carry out. Through this work, past understandings of women's roles in war have been addressed, showing how women's participation in violence interrupts the image of women as peaceful. Questions of agency are raised in much of this work, as well as victimization, forced participation and coercion, in an attempt to understand women's agency in instances where their choices are constrained and they may have experienced violence.

This literature better addresses questions of political motivation and agency than does scholarship on women in state militaries. Whereas identification of political motivations and roles is largely absent from work on women soldiers, these topics are central to much original feminist research in this area, as well as critical responses to other work on women in political violence. This body of literature offers insights that can be applied to women acting on behalf of the US military.

Feminist scholars working in this area also seek to complicate traditional understandings and representations of women in war and violence discussed previously. They interrogate concepts of victim and perpetrator, tracing their construction and challenging simplistic understandings of women's relationship to war and violence. They challenge the dichotomy between victim and perpetrator, showing how women may commit, as well as experience, violence. They explore questions of women's agency in non-state violence,

Tigers, and Freedom Birds: How and Why the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Employs Women," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1 (2007): 43; Miranda Alison, "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security," *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 4 (2004): 447; Miranda Alison, *Women and Political Violence* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2009).

⁴² Natalia Herrera and Douglas Porch, "'Like Going to a Fiesta' – the Role of Female Fighters in Colombia's FARC-EP," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 4 (2008): 609, doi:10.1080/09592310802462547.

⁴³ Rita Manchanda, "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal," *Cultural Dynamics* 16, no. 2–3 (October 1, 2004): 237–258, doi:10.1177/0921374004047750.

⁴⁴ Parashar, "Feminist International Relations and Women Militants."

⁴⁵ Alison, *Women and Political Violence*.

⁴⁶ Carrie Hamilton, "The Gender Politics of Political Violence: Women Armed Activists in ETA," *Feminist Review* no. 86 (January 1, 2007): 132–148.

⁴⁷ Megan MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone," *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 241, doi:10.1080/09636410902900061; Chris Coulter, "Female Fighters in the Sierra Leone War: Challenging the Assumptions?," *Feminist Review* 88, no. 1 (April 2008): 54–73.

⁴⁸ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (Coughlan Publishing, 2007); Dorit Naaman, "Brides of Palestine/Angels of Death: Media, Gender, and Performance in the Case of the Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers," *Signs* 32, no. 4 (2007); Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (McFarland, 2006); Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (Rodale Books, 2003); Joyce Davis, *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance, and Despair in the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Frances S. Hasso, "Discursive and Political Deployments By/of the 2002 Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers/Martyrs," *Feminist Review* no. 81 (January 1, 2005): 23–51.

particularly in the context of the motivations behind their actions and the extent that they may have been coerced into participating.

Traditional constructions of violent women have been shown to influence current understandings of a wide range of female behavior, including women's violent acts on behalf of non-state actors. Dorit Naaman argues that through their actions, women who commit political violence are challenging these traditional constructs. In response, media portrayals paint women as deviants, acting in ways that are counter to their natural roles.⁴⁹ Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry provide a clear summation of these ideas by laying out three narratives of violent women, the mother, monster, and whore, to show how women's violence is interpreted and understood in relation to traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity.⁵⁰ Sjoberg and Gentry's premise is that these narratives 'other' violent women, by assuming that their violence is unnatural and the result of something that is biologically wrong. They argue that these framings allow traditional conceptions of femininity to remain intact, while stripping women of political motivations for their actions.⁵¹

Given that the traditional understanding of women in relationship to violence has been as victims, highlighting women's roles as perpetrators raises important questions about women's roles in violence. Some scholars have sought to make it clear that the categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are not mutually exclusive and to complicate our understanding of victimization. Chris Coulter, in her study of women in the Sierra Leonean civil war argues that in situations where women commit violence, it is likely that violence may be committed against them as well.⁵² She is acknowledging the difficulty of speaking about women's violence during war without also recognizing the many instances where women have violence directed against them. Coulter argues that the victim label serves to obscure other roles these women have played, including perpetrator. The victim is a construct that feminizes and infantilizes, constructing women's 'natural' role in war as victim and men's as the opposite.⁵³ This sentiment is reflected in much of the work on the topic.

These explorations are tied to the large issue of women's agency during war. Scholars focused on women's political violence have offered much to the larger feminist debates about how to understand and recognize women's agency, especially in complex situations of

⁴⁹ Naaman, "Brides of Palestine/Angels of Death: Media, Gender, and Performance in the Case of the Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers," 935.

⁵⁰ Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (Zed Books, 2007).

⁵¹ Ibid., 13.

⁵² Coulter, "Female Fighters in the Sierra Leone War," 57.

⁵³ Ibid., 66.

violence and coercion. One way that has been proposed is to consider women's agency within the context of the structural constraints that limit women's decisions during war.⁵⁴ A woman abducted and forced into fighting must still act, but does so within a constrained set of choices.⁵⁵ Many feminist scholars favor this theory of relational autonomy.⁵⁶

Feminists have yet to reach conceptual clarity or consensus around issues of agency in war. Their explorations of agency should be taken a step further to more explicitly address the role of power. Barbara Shaw argues, "the agency of those who deploy 'weapons of the weak' is very different from the agency of those whose authority allows them to act upon the world through control of an apparatus of domination."⁵⁷ This is especially important for informing feminist research in general and deepening understandings of the agency of women in the US military, whose power is presumably different from women involved in political violence on behalf of non-state actors.

Equally important is recognizing political motives behind women's actions. A number of scholars looking at women's violence have focused exclusively on personal or emotional motivations, with the assumption that women commit violence for different reasons than men.⁵⁸ In response, some scholars have shown not only that women are politically motivated, but that these portrayals of violent women focused on personal motivations reflect well known discourses that depoliticize women's actions and assign them to the private sphere.⁵⁹ These debates over personal versus political motivations exist in all bodies of literature focused on women's violence, but are especially important here as feminists have demonstrated the range of motivations and circumstances that lead women to choose violence in non-state organizations.

Finally, scholars have made important policy connections, showing how denying women agency and depoliticizing their roles during conflict lead international organizations to leave them out of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. Even when women are allowed a place in revolutionary or other non-state movements, they are often left

⁵⁴ Nancy J. Hirschmann, *Rethinking Obligation: a Feminist Method for Political Theory* (Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁵⁵ Coulter, "Female Fighters in the Sierra Leone War," 67.

⁵⁶ Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 13.

⁵⁷ Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 19.

⁵⁸ For example, Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers*; Victor, *Army of Roses*; Bloom, *Dying to Kill*; Davis, *Martyrs*.

⁵⁹ Claudia Brunner, "Occidentalism Meets the Female Suicide Bomber: A Critical Reflection on Recent Terrorism Debates; A Review Essay," *Signs* 32, no. 4 (2007); Laura Sjoberg, "Feminist Interrogations of Terrorism/Terrorism Studies," *International Relations* 23, no. 1 (2009): 69; Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*; Naaman, "Brides of Palestine/Angels of Death: Media, Gender, and Performance in the Case of the Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers."

out of political and military roles in the post-conflict society and emancipatory gains made during the conflict are reversed.⁶⁰ Megan MacKenzie's work on the desecuritization of women in post-conflict reconstruction efforts, such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, provides a specific example of this phenomenon and offers an explanation of how this process to shut women out might occur. She argues that women's actions during war, especially in support of combat type operations, leads them to be labeled as non-combatants. Without recognition as soldiers, women are desecurtized post-conflict and left without access to the same resources offered to men who are labeled as soldiers.⁶¹

Military Masculinity

Setting up military masculinity

There is a widespread consensus in feminist literature that the military is a gendered organization, and is gendered masculine.⁶² Dana Britton defines a gendered organization as having three main characteristics: the centrality of a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, domination by one gender, and discourse within the organization based on hegemonic masculinities and femininities.⁶³ Joan Acker understands gendered organizations to "mean that gender is present in the processes, practice, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life."⁶⁴

Types of military masculinity

Many feminists view the military as aggressively masculine and a repository of violent sexual attitudes and practices towards women.⁶⁵ Among scholars, contention exists as to the precise nature of the masculinity, whether it can change, and its impact on women in the military and their prospects for full integration and participation.

⁶⁰ MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization."

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Helena Carreiras, "Gendered Culture in Peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 4 (2010): 472.

⁶³ Dana M. Britton, "The Epistemology of the Gendered Organization," *Gender and Society* 14, no. 3 (June 1, 2000): 418–434.

⁶⁴ Joan Acker, "From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions," *Contemporary Sociology* 21, no. 5 (1992): 567.

⁶⁵ Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (University of California Press, 2000); Karen O. Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity," *Armed Forces & Society* 20, no. 4 (Summer 1994): 531–547; Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Judith Reppy, *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Discrimination in Military Culture* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999); Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Madeline Morris, "By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture," *Duke Law Journal* 45, no. 4 (1996): 651–781.

Cynthia Enloe understands the military as a fundamentally masculine organization.⁶⁶ She uses the concept of militarization to understand not only how women in the military are militarized, but also women across a wide range of occupations and experiences. She seeks to understand the connections and shared experiences between these women. Enloe defines militarization as the process by which a person or object comes under the sway of militarization or becomes dependent on the military for support and survival.⁶⁷ Militarization can also be understood as the process by which the glorification of the military becomes normalized into everyday life and society is ‘maneuvered’ into supporting its function and goals. Enloe’s *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* is a seminal work in the field of feminist scholarship and makes important contributions to understandings of militarization and the ways in which diverse segments of society and aspects of women’s lives are affected by this process. Enloe emphasizes the importance of looking beyond women in the military to understand militarization. In her earlier work, she argues that the narrow focus on military women in the study of militarization is a result of the militarization of the scholar.⁶⁸ Therefore, Enloe devotes only a chapter in each of her works on militarization to female soldiers.

Enloe’s focus on women soldiers is primarily concerned with how military manpower needs and the recruiting efforts that result shape women’s militarization, their status, and their experiences in the military. She argues that the military’s fundamental masculinity is central to its identity as an organization and is required in convincing men to join.⁶⁹ Military manpower issues are, in Enloe’s estimation, the primary reason that the military has permitted the integration of women into its ranks.⁷⁰ The military remains resistant and hostile to women’s integration, denying women roles and opportunities that could challenge the masculine nature of the military.⁷¹ Enloe argues that the military emphasizes sexual difference to draw distinctions between women and men and keep women in a subordinate role.⁷² In this way, military masculinity is maintained and the process of militarization continues.

⁶⁶ Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 238.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁸ Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarization of Women’s Lives* (London: Pandora, 1988), xvii.

⁶⁹ Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 238.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁷¹ Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, 127; Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 238.

⁷² Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, 138.

Enloe does not interrogate her understanding of the military as inherently masculine and is therefore unable to fully address the question of why women's roles continue to expand and why many women feel satisfied in the military. Enloe remains best as a source for general understanding of militarization and the many ways in which women's lives are militarized.

Regina Titunik is one of the few feminists to reject the common understanding that the military is marked by an aggressive masculinity that subordinates women. Instead of an aggressive, unrestrained masculinity, Titunik argues that military masculinity should be understood as a 'rule-bound masculinity'⁷³ that allows qualities such as "camaraderie, discipline, and service"⁷⁴ to coexist with masculinity. Further distancing herself from many other feminist scholars, Titunik argues that military culture is actually favorable to women.⁷⁵ Titunik shows that the type of masculinity assumed to be inherent to military culture is counter to military effectiveness and discipline. Titunik emphasizes the meritocratic nature of the military, which she describes as "neutral to personal qualities," offering women opportunities to prove themselves and compete alongside men, not as subordinates, but equals.⁷⁶

Titunik's important argument is weakened by a lack of evidence. In her article *The Myth of the Macho Military*, Titunik cites military women's high job satisfaction⁷⁷ and the feminine traits required in war⁷⁸ to support her argument that a different kind of masculinity exists in the military. She constructs her argument by working backwards, looking at how the military functions and the traits she believes are required for effectiveness in war, then extrapolating to the particular construction of masculinity best suited to those requirements. Although she importantly recognizes women who are happy and satisfied in the military, Titunik does not account for the very real violence, often in the form of sexual harassment and assault, that many military women face. Titunik therefore struggles with the same contradictions of many other feminist scholars. They have been unable to describe the gendered nature of the military in a way that can account for the wide range of experiences

⁷³ Regina F. Titunik, "Are We All Torturers Now? A Reconsideration of Women's Violence at Abu Ghraib," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2009): 271.

⁷⁴ Regina F. Titunik, "The Myth of the Macho Military," *Polity* 40, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 137–163.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 147; Regina F. Titunik, "The First Wave: Gender Integration and Military Culture," *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 247.

⁷⁶ Titunik, "The First Wave," 241.

⁷⁷ Titunik, "The Myth of the Macho Military," 145.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 147.

women have in the military and the changing nature of the U.S. military and the wars it fights.

Consequences of feminist understandings of military masculinity

These understandings of military masculinity have consequences for feminist scholarship. Particular conceptions constrain the understandings of women's roles in the military and limit which perspectives and voices feminists recognize and which they do not. Enloe reveals that military women accused her of being condescending when she argues that the military is fundamentally masculine and therefore inherently hostile to women in its ranks. She states that she recognizes their frustration with being told, "they cannot do what they have set out to do."⁷⁹ Enloe fails to explain why her understanding of the military and its culture differs dramatically from that of the female soldiers who criticize her work. This is a fundamental issue with feminist research on the military. It has been widely recognized that many feminists are ambivalent at best to the military and the choices some women make to be involved.⁸⁰ Enloe is aware of her own views and potential biases and should be recognized for that, but feminist scholars must find ways to better account for gender in the military, while simultaneously maintaining their normative agendas and accounting for the wide range of experiences women have in the military.

Feminist understandings of military masculinities also raise issues of women's agency as soldiers. Orna Sasson-Levy recognizes that military women are involved in the formation of military masculinity as well as men, despite sharing the view held by many feminists that the military is a masculine organization that is fundamentally hostile to women as a result of its core function and culture. In Sasson-Levy's understanding, women are agents whose gendered expressions impact the organization, rather than simply subjects that are acted upon. Women's actions have the potential to perpetuate or interrupt militarism and the roles women play in the military system.⁸¹ This claim fills conceptual space ignored by Enloe and ascribes agency to women's actions in the military.

Some feminists, including Enloe, remain focused on personal motivations for women's involvement in the military, thereby relegating women to the private, non-political sphere and failing to recognize political agency. Enloe ascribes a modicum of agency when she states, "it would be a mistake to think of [women] as mere puppets on the ends of military

⁷⁹ Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, xvii.

⁸⁰ Titunik, "The First Wave."

⁸¹ Orna Sasson-Levy and Sarit Amram-Katz, "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military," *Signs* 33, no. 1 (Autumn 2007): 105–133.

strings” when discussing how recruitment efforts seek to attract women.⁸² Unfortunately, Enloe then ignores the possibility that women are attracted to the military for reasons other than their “desire to be independent and economically secure and to live and work closely with other women.”⁸³ Because Enloe never directly addresses the political and violent nature of the roles women play in the military, it raises the question of whether Enloe believes that women would ever freely chose violence or join the military for reasons other than improving their life situation. Enloe makes it clear that she recognizes the violence inherent in soldiering, when she argues against viewing the military “as if it were just another job site and threatening soldiers as if it were just another job – as if its members were no less likely to wield organized violence than, say hospital orderlies or Webmasters...”⁸⁴ But Enloe fails to apply this insight in her discussion of why women join. Because many feminist scholars (including Enloe) oppose militarization and many of the ways that the military operates in society and in the larger world, they neglect to understand why some women make different choices and understand the military differently than they do, and that these other understandings are valuable. Although it is likely that Enloe recognizes this, she is unable to explain why women’s experiences in the military have changed over time and their opportunities and roles enhanced, except for reasons of military necessity.

Other work on women in the military, most notably Jeanne Holm’s history of women in the US military, emphasizes the importance of manpower needs in opening roles to women.⁸⁵ Yet, manpower needs cannot account for all changes in women’s status in the military. Women’s status in the military is largely reflective of women’s place in American society and culture more generally. The topic of women’s expanding roles in the military remain contentious, as the later discussion of the combat debate will show, but women’s roles have increased dramatically since they were officially integrated in 1948, as has military culture and its views of women in uniform.⁸⁶

Cultural Change

Feminists are divided as to whether military masculinity is fixed and hegemonic or whether women soldiers can change the organization from the inside. One proponent of the view that women’s participation can positively affect military culture is Judith Steihm. She

⁸² Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, 133.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 32.

⁸⁵ Jeanne Holm, *Women In the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, Revised (Presidio Press, 1993).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

argues that military masculinity is dependent on women as the ‘other’ against which the soldier can be constructed. If women join the organization, this process can be subverted.⁸⁷ Traditional constructions of man as protector, women as protected during war are interrupted when women take on traditionally male roles in war.⁸⁸

Karen Dunivin also raises the possibility of change in military culture. Conceptualizing cultural change within the framework of paradigms and paradigm shifts, Dunivin argues that the “combat, masculine warrior” paradigm is dominant, and in conflict with the egalitarian model of cultural change.⁸⁹ The culture of the military has evolved, but the cult of masculinity remains.⁹⁰ Women soldiers challenge this dominant paradigm, requiring a paradigm shift if women are to be accepted as equal members of the military. Dunivin argues that the new paradigm must accept soldiers who serve in other than combat functions and whose abilities are not tied to gender alone.⁹¹ If a paradigm shift does not occur, Dunivin posits that the cultural change occurring in the rest of society will leave the military behind, as an isolated counter culture.⁹²

Feminists have also explored whether changing military missions and nature of warfare affect masculinity as it is expressed in the military. Claire Ducanson seeks to understand whether the increasing prevalence of peacekeeping operations by Western forces is changing masculinity in the military. She posits that participation in peacekeeping operations may lead to the emergence of alternative masculinities, but concludes that these alternate masculinities are unlikely to present a robust challenge to the hegemonic traditional warrior model.⁹³ These alternative masculinities retain the dichotomies of the traditional model. They require a feminine ‘other’ to construct themselves against.⁹⁴ Women, therefore, remain unequal, and femininity is subordinated. In addition, many soldiers involved in peacekeeping see the missions as feminine. This view supports the traditional model of warrior masculinity and helps to maintain its hegemony.⁹⁵ Peacekeeping is not incorporated into the masculine military tradition, but ‘othered’ along with women and femininity.

⁸⁷ Judith Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 225.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁸⁹ Dunivin, “Military Culture,” 533.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 536.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 542.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 543.

⁹³ Claire Duncanson, “Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11, no. 1 (2009): 76.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

Others argue, given the nature of peacekeeping operations and the ways in which they differ from regular combat, space exists for women's participation to change military masculinity.⁹⁶ Helena Carreiras argues that this has yet to occur because women have been discussed and understood in the military in ways that prevent women from taking on what are seen as masculine roles.⁹⁷

Consensus does not exist regarding the role women play in changing or perpetuating hegemonic military masculinities. Orna Sasson-Levy and Amran-Katz explore the impact women have when they are integrated into all-male environments. Looking at an Israeli officer training course, they argue that women's presence and the effort to integrate women simultaneously degender and regender the course.⁹⁸ Drawing on Judith Lorber's definition of degendering, they argue it is a process by which the dichotomy between the genders breaks down and similarities are revealed.⁹⁹ In the case of the officer training course, degendering was a conscious process that involved structural changes to enable the integration of women. Regendering, on the other hand, is a process that occurs when gender norms are acted out through daily behavior and in speech.¹⁰⁰ As a result, the actions taken to integrate women backfired in certain instances as there were more opportunities for gendering when women were present and men could construct their identities in relation to the women. Men continued to be advantaged in the program despite efforts to make the training egalitarian.¹⁰¹ Sasson-Levy and Katz conclude that regendering possible because structural efforts to degender the training the program did not go far enough. They failed to address different values or offer new criteria by which soldiers could be measured.¹⁰²

Doing gender

Scholars have also looked specifically at how women navigate military culture, how they 'do gender.' This approach draws on postmodern understanding of gender as

⁹⁶ Carreiras, "Gendered Culture in Peacekeeping Operations"; Liora Sion, "Can Women Make a Difference? Female Peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47, no. 4 (2009): 476; Olivera Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter? Towards Combating Male Sexual Violence in Peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 2 (2010): 188.

⁹⁷ Carreiras, "Gendered Culture in Peacekeeping Operations," 483.

⁹⁸ Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz, "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military," 106.

⁹⁹ Judith Lorber, *Breaking the Bowls: Degendering and Feminist Change* (W.W. Norton, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz, "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military," 107.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

performative and regulatory.¹⁰³ An Individual performs, or ‘does gender,’ meaning he or she acts out both male and female traits in ways that present an appearance of flexibility or stability.¹⁰⁴ Although a range of performances may be conducted, individuals are encouraged to fit into a two-sex/gender framework, through enforcing their gender boundaries.¹⁰⁵ According to Judith Butler, the material body does not exist prior to articulations of gender, and each individual performance is understood in the context of all previous performances of gender.¹⁰⁶

The fullest treatment of this topic in relation to the US military is Melissa Herbert’s *Camouflage Isn’t Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military*. Herbert’s work is an in depth exploration of the specific means women employ to ‘do gender’ in the US military, based on large-scale surveys of military women.¹⁰⁷ She argues that women must find a balance between masculine and feminine traits in order to be taken seriously as a soldier and still be regarded as a heterosexual woman.¹⁰⁸ To a greater extent than any other scholar, Herbert describes the behaviors that military women adopt to navigate the system and gain acceptance, such as wearing lipstick or feminine clothes when off duty.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, Michael Kimmel argues that women adopt a range of gender strategies in order to navigate hostile, military, masculine environments, in this case Norwich University, a military college, and the United States Military Academy at West Point.¹¹⁰ These gender strategies arise out of situations where women find it difficult to be both a woman and a cadet. Kimmel describes this oxymoron by arguing that soldiering is a “gender nonconforming” act for women, “one could not be both a woman and a cadet at the same time.”¹¹¹ This results in a paradoxical situation, where success in either role or aspect of one’s identity automatically precludes the other.¹¹² Kimmel identifies four strategies women used to negotiate their environment: ‘emphatic sameness’ to emphasize identity as a cadet and distance themselves from other women, ‘strategic overcompensation’ to prove their ability to

¹⁰³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Psychology Press, 1990), 30.

¹⁰⁴ Harriet Bradley, *Gender* (Polity, 2007), 18.

¹⁰⁵ Shannon L. Holland, “The Dangers of Playing Dress-up: Popular Representations of Jessica Lynch and the Controversy Regarding Women in Combat,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (2006): 29.

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 30.

¹⁰⁷ Melissa S. Herbert, *Camouflage Isn’t Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (NYU Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 86–93.

¹¹⁰ Michael Kimmel, “Saving the Males: The Sociological Implications of the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel,” *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 505.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 504.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

compete with men, development of informal support networks to mirror the mentorship structures men benefit from, and gendered displays of traditional femininity in social situations.¹¹³

Orna Sasson-Levy also has taken on the question of how women negotiate gender in the military, but from an Israeli context. Although important differences exist between the cultures of the Israeli Defense Forces and the US military, as well as women's roles in these organizations, Sasson-Levy's work is applicable in that she demonstrates how women exist in a masculine organization. She argues that women shape their gender identities through three practices: copying male combat soldiers speech and mannerisms, rejecting traditional feminine characteristics, and ignoring or downplaying sexual harassment and abuse.¹¹⁴ These share many similarities with the strategies Kimmel identified military women adopting.

Sasson-Levy takes the argument to the next level by recognizing what these identity practices mean in the larger context of 'doing gender.' She argues that they have two meanings; they both disrupt the gender of the military by countering accepted definitions of masculinity and femininity in the military, and they reify the military gender regime by adopting the speech and mannerism of the combat soldier.¹¹⁵ Quoting Claire Synder, she further argues that by focusing on how they individually 'do gender,' the political consequences of military masculinity and its perpetuate militarism and subordination of women is neglected.¹¹⁶

Understanding how women 'do gender' can begin both to explain how women can find success and sometimes fulfillment in a masculine environment, and to make explicit the challenges women face in militaries. In addition, Kimmel makes an interesting point about the relationship between the gender identities of individuals and gendered organizations. He argues that, "The gender of institutions does more to shape the behaviors of people in them than the gendered identities of individuals who populate them."¹¹⁷ As a result, "both men and women "do" masculinity and appear to do it pretty well."¹¹⁸ This is a crucial point; one perhaps overlooked by feminists who argue that the military is fundamentally masculine and hostile to women. Gender from a performative understanding, is an act, not a reflection of the

¹¹³ Ibid., 505–506.

¹¹⁴ Orna Sasson-Levy, "Feminism and Military Gender Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in 'Masculine' Roles," *Sociological Inquiry* 73, no. 3 (August 1, 2003): 447.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors*, 154 quoted in Sasson-Levy, "Feminism and Military Gender Practices," 448.

¹¹⁷ Kimmel, "Saving the Males," 512.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

biological sex of a material body.¹¹⁹ Therefore, regardless of the gender of an organization, individuals may ‘do gender’ in ways that fit those particular gender norms. Certain individuals will likely have difficulty conforming to those norms and certain gender expressions will be considered transgressive. Butler and others have shown that transgressive performances may be disciplined back into a two-sex/gender framework, limiting the ability of individuals to ‘do gender’ in certain ways.¹²⁰ Despite these limitations, women are not destined to be excluded from masculine organizations. To assume that they are requires a traditional, essentialized view of women and femininity and regards masculinity as the exclusive preserve of men. Scholars who show how women and men ‘do gender’ counter these understandings and better explain the workings of gendered organizations, how women and men navigate them, and are accepted or excluded. Importantly, these arguments encourage exploration and critical analysis of men in masculine organizations. It is not only women who negotiate a difficult, gendered path in the military.

Peacekeeping – case study of evolving military masculinities

A small body of literature exists on women’s involvement in peacekeeping and on changing conceptions of military masculinity. These shifts in military masculinity result from the evolving nature of warfare and missions, and reveal how military masculinity is not a static construct. This work also demonstrates how gender in the military is articulated and rearticulated through the words and actions of soldiers. Claire Duncanson shows how male soldiers involved in peacekeeping appropriate the traditionally feminine characteristics required for peacekeeping and elevate them above the formally masculine practices required in conventional conflicts.¹²¹ This raises the question of whether anything can be masculine or feminine and only requires constructions with sufficient power to subordinate past understandings of these dichotomies. This understanding reflects a postmodern understanding of gender as fluid, constructed, and dependent on power relations. Duncanson’s work supports the argument that the way masculinity and femininity are understood in the military can change, as well as the specific traits associated with each construct, and perhaps the roles women can take in the military as well. Duncanson argues that these (re)constructions of masculinity and femininity pose a potentially important challenge to the traditional

¹¹⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 30.

¹²⁰ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge, 1993); Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Holland, “The Dangers of Playing Dress-up.”

¹²¹ Duncanson, “Forces for Good?” 70.

associations of masculinity with war and femininity with peace.¹²² As has been argued at length by feminist scholars conducting discourse analysis of representations of women soldiers, these traditional gender dichotomies are powerful in disciplining women's behavior.¹²³

Duncanson's work raises the question of whether men's articulations of these constructions might do more to interrupt these traditional understandings than women's actions and might serve to open more discursive space for women to take on nontraditional roles. Optimism should be guarded, however; men with their privileged position in the military have the power to rearticulate gendered constructions in ways that women appear unable to do. Women's increasing participation might therefore depend as much or more on changing attitudes of men towards women and soldiering, rather than on the women's own actions.

Liora Sion, on the other hand, argues that soldiers reject the presence of women in order to maintain their masculinity because they see peacekeeping as feminine.¹²⁴ Women are therefore further excluded from peacekeeping because of the challenge it poses to traditional masculinities, rather than integrated. Liora Sion's work differs from Claire Duncanson's in that Sion looks at the impact of women peacekeepers on peacekeeping operations and the resulting affect on military masculinity, rather than just men involved in peacekeeping. Sion argues that peacekeeping relies on the same constructs of masculinity and femininity and associated gender roles as combat.¹²⁵ She finds that men exclude women through functional, physical, and sexual methods.¹²⁶ In addition, women distance themselves from the other women and describe each other in stereotypical terms. These tactics focus attention on the women as individuals rather than women as a group.¹²⁷ This particular tactic has been identified by a number of scholars as a tactic women use to navigate gendered organizations.¹²⁸

¹²² Ibid., 76.

¹²³ Sjöberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*; Holland, "The Dangers of Playing Dress-up"; John W. Howard III and Laura C. Prividera, "The Fallen Woman Archetype: Media Representations of Lynndie England, Gender, and the (Ab)uses of U.S. Female Soldiers," *Women's Studies in Communication* 31, no. 3 (2008): 287–311.

¹²⁴ Sion, "Can Women Make a Difference?," 480.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 477.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 489–490.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 483.

¹²⁸ Kimmel, "Saving the Males," 505; Sasson-Levy, "Feminism and Military Gender Practices," 490; Herbert, *Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat*.

Olivera Simic also assesses the extent to which women's presence in peacekeeping affects peacekeeping operations, looking specifically at male soldiers behavior towards women soldiers and locals. She concludes that women do not have a significant impact on changing the particular masculinity of the military. They do not to influence behavior.¹²⁹

Militarized Femininity

The term 'militarized femininity' is both a description of women's gender roles in the military, and a reflection of feminist's understanding of the limits the military places on women's expressions of their gender. At its most basic level, militarized femininity is the idea that women can be soldiers and accepted into the military system only if they are masculine enough to meet the traditional requirements of soldiering but feminine enough to not challenge the gendered order of the military.¹³⁰ Because of its dual meaning, acceptance of this framework as shorthand for women's experiences in the military should be challenged, and does so in light of the range of feminist understandings of gender in the military and lack of consensus around how women experience and negotiate gendered environments.

Ideal Types – Lynndie England and Jessica Lynch

Laura Sjoberg argues that media representations of Lynndie England and Jessica Lynch reflect an ideal-type of militarized femininity,¹³¹ and many scholars have found it useful to understand the popular representations of Lynch and England in relation to one another. Media attention that focused on women in the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – and by extension the feminist scholarship that seeks to understand representations of women and violence – has been dominated by two stories: the capture and subsequent rescue of Private First Class Jessica Lynch, and the detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib prison perpetrated by Private First Class Lynndie England, and two other women, Specialist Megan Ambuhl and Specialist Sabrina Harmon, and a number of men.

Christina Masters argues that England and Lynch were cast in the roles of Madonna and Whore respectively, but were really part of a single discourse in support of a

¹²⁹ Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter?," 196.

¹³⁰ Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E. Russo, and Lorenza Sebesta, *Women Soldiers: Images and Realities* (St. Martin's Press, 1994), xvi; Laura Sjoberg, "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others: Observations From The War In Iraq," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (2007): 82.

¹³¹ Sjoberg, "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others," 92.

“hypermilitarized masculinity.”¹³² Lynch was not a soldier, but a woman needing saving.¹³³ Without her, the military had no one to fight and die for.¹³⁴ England became the “Ugly Un-American,” distinct from the rest of the US military.¹³⁵ Masters argues that England serves a further purpose, to remove responsibility for the actions at Abu Ghraib and the other casualties of the war from the US military and government.¹³⁶ The casting of England served to exceptionalize the abuse at Abu Ghraib, moving it out of the political sphere.¹³⁷ Her story and its framing distracted the American public away from violence the US military was engaging in and refocused attention on how a woman’s actions had shamed the military and the state.¹³⁸

Laura Sjoberg also focuses on the larger implications of the framing of England and Lynch. In her analysis, women will be allowed into the ranks of the US military if they are able to be as masculine as the men without losing their femininity as a woman.¹³⁹ Lynch serves as “a cause for the war, a justification for the war, and the human face of the war” all at the same time.¹⁴⁰ Like Masters, Sjoberg believes that this framing of Lynch distracted from other US actions in Iraq, obscuring the original justifications of the war and replacing them with saving a woman in need. Despite women being allowed to fight and allocated a place in the US military, Sjoberg argues that the ideal type of militarized femininity Lynch represents is simply a “reformulation of the traditional understanding of women as the innocent who need to be protected by war.”¹⁴¹

Jennifer Lobasz makes a similar argument, showing how Lynch was framed as the woman in peril¹⁴² while England was portrayed as the ruined woman.¹⁴³ Focusing on liberal feminists and their attempts to offer an understanding of these women that are counter to traditional narratives, Lobasz concludes that these counter narratives were unsuccessful. The framing of Lynch and England followed traditional Western tropes of women in war. Instead

¹³² Cristina Masters, “Femina Sacra: The ‘War on of Terror’, Women and the Feminine,” *Security Dialogue* 40, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 36–38.

¹³³ Ibid., 36.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 38–39.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹³⁹ Sjoberg, “Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others,” 93.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 92.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Jennifer K. Lobasz, “The Woman in Peril and the Ruined Woman: Representations of Female Soldiers in the Iraq War,” *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 29, no. 3 (2008): 318.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 24.

of advancing understanding of roles women could play in war, the discourses around Lynch and England served to reinforce existing gender norms.¹⁴⁴

Abuse

Little of the feminist literature on women and violence focuses on women's actions on behalf of states. What does exist is focused on proscribed violence, violence outside of what is permissible in war. Research on detainee abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, following the US-led invasion and occupation, dominates this literature. Feminist scholars have been particularly interested in media and popular representations of the women and their actions.¹⁴⁵ Only limited attention has been given to the political roles these women played or political motivations behind their actions. The literature also ties the conversation about women's abuse of detainees to larger debates in feminist scholarship about agency and concepts like militarized femininity, the combat debate, and the political uses of violent women.¹⁴⁶ Finally, some feminists question the fundamental assumptions of some strands of feminist thought in light of revelations of women's involvement in proscribed violence.¹⁴⁷

Feminist scholars who examined the abuse at Abu Ghraib saw media representations of the women's actions as reflecting well-known discourses of violent women. These discourses deny the agency of the violent women and function to explain women's actions within normative gender categories based on traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity and appropriate behavior for men and women. These discourses also serve political purposes, determining who can take which roles in society and in politics, and also attributing blame and responsibility. Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry argue that the representations of the women at Abu Ghraib reflect the 'whore narrative.' In this discourse, violent women are depicted either as sexually dysfunctional, unable to satisfy men, under the sexual control of a man, or possessing a deviant and violent sexuality.¹⁴⁸ By reducing these women to their sexual dysfunction alone, their agency is not recognized.¹⁴⁹ John Howard III and Laura Prividera argue that representations of Lynndie England reflect the 'fallen woman'

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 329–330.

¹⁴⁵ Shannon L. Holland, "Gender, National Identity, and Public Discourse Making Sense of Operation Iraqi Freedom" (University of Georgia, 2006); Howard III and Prividera, "The Fallen Woman Archetype"; Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, "Reduced to Bad Sex: Narratives of Violent Women from the Bible to the War on Terror," *International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2008): 5; Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*.

¹⁴⁶ Sjoberg, "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others"; Titunik, "Are We All Torturers Now?"

¹⁴⁷ Barbara Ehrenreich, "Feminism's Assumptions Upended," *South Central Review* 24, no. 1 (2007): 170–173.

¹⁴⁸ Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Sjoberg and Gentry, "Reduced to Bad Sex," 11; Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 13; Holland, "Gender, National Identity, and Public Discourse Making Sense of Operation Iraqi Freedom," 106.

archetype. England is framed as failing to act virtuously, which disguises military responsibility for the conduct at Abu Ghraib, preserves “patriarchal militarism,” and keeps women in a subordinate position to men in the military.¹⁵⁰ Shannon Holland argues that the main media representations of Lynndie England and the other violent women were an attempt to “constrain the meaning of these acts of gender deviance by articulating them within the realm of normative gender categories and heteronormativity.”¹⁵¹ In this way, the women were ‘othered,’ positioned outside the realm of normal behavior. In addition, Lynndie England was portrayed in a way that made her gender ambiguous,” allowing traditional conceptions of femininity as well as the masculinity of the military and England’s fellow soldiers to remain intact.

Some feminist scholars have used the abuse and subsequent media and academic focus to examine how other feminists understood the women’s actions. Barbara Ehrenreich struggles with her own reaction to the abuse, her shock at women’s involvement, and reprises her particular understanding of feminism as a result.¹⁵² Rather than adopting an approach that essentializes women’s roles, viewing them as morally superior to men, and as the victim in war, she proposes a feminism with “no illusions.”¹⁵³ For such a frequently referenced article, Ehrenreich’s argument is surprisingly unoriginal. Many feminists have argued against essentializing women’s roles in war. Especially in the study of women’s involvement in non-state organizations, it has long been clear that women are far more than simply victims of conflict or would always seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts if they were in power. Therefore, this work is at best a reminder that these views of women still exist, even among feminists, and demonstrate the power and longevity of traditional gender roles. Ehrenreich also states that she had hoped women’s presence would change military culture, “making it more respectful of other people and cultures.”¹⁵⁴ Events at Abu Ghraib make her think differently.

Regina Titunik argues that two common feminist responses to the abuse at Abu Ghraib are both flawed: the assumption that men and women were equally capable of violence, and the view that women are subordinate to men in the US military. She argues that these responses are very similar to anti-feminist approaches to understanding women in the military. In her view, both understandings neglect the changes in detainee policy that made

¹⁵⁰ Howard III and Prividera, “The Fallen Woman Archetype,” 308.

¹⁵¹ Holland, “Gender, National Identity, and Public Discourse Making Sense of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” 95.

¹⁵² Ehrenreich, “Feminism’s Assumptions Upended,” 171.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 173.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 171.

the abuse possible and misunderstand military masculinity.¹⁵⁵ Titunik argues that the Bush administration created a permissive environment where detainee abuse and mistreatment were condoned as interrogation methods. In line with these changes, a new form of military masculinity emerged that favored individual, aggressive, ‘unrestrained masculinity.’ As opposed to many feminists who believe the military is gendered aggressively masculine, Titunik believes the military is better described as having a ‘rule bound masculinity’ that is based upon military codes of behavior.¹⁵⁶ In later work, she focuses solely on her premise that feminists have misunderstood the gendered nature of the US military, arguing that the military would not function if it actually was a representation of the type of masculinity many feminists assume it to be.¹⁵⁷

Representations of women at Abu Ghraib also tie in to the combat debate. Opponents of women’s involvement in the US military use the events at Abu Ghraib to exemplify the negative impact of women’s participation on the military and on the women themselves.¹⁵⁸ These issues are particularly relevant in relation to Janis Karpinski, commander of the military police battalion responsible for the abuse. Laura Sjoberg outlines gendered responses to Karpinski’s leadership, identifying two gendered discourses in support of exclusion. The first questions the suitability of women in war, arguing that women lack the necessary traits to fight, which mirrors concerns about the feminization of the military. The other argues that Karpinski is too tough and masculine and therefore not a real woman, as a real woman would not have permitted or participated in the type of violence that occurred at Abu Ghraib.¹⁵⁹

Sjoberg takes the argument further by showing how militarized femininity not only describes the women themselves, but also the enemy. Their femininity, and the masculinity of the American soldier, are used to subordinate and conquer the masculinity of the Arab, Muslim enemy.¹⁶⁰ Sjoberg discusses the political roles of women who abuse detainees in more detail in *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, where she and Caron Gentry argue that the women were part of a “victory narrative for American masculinities over Iraqi masculinities,” and the narratives applied to their actions were “a shield to hide the misogyny of American empire building.”¹⁶¹ These are important insights, but they only address how representations

¹⁵⁵ Titunik, “Are We All Torturers Now?,” 259.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 271–272.

¹⁵⁷ Titunik, “The Myth of the Macho Military.”

¹⁵⁸ Holland, “Gender, National Identity, and Public Discourse Making Sense of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” 120–124.

¹⁵⁹ Sjoberg, “Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others,” 88–89.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 98.

¹⁶¹ Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 207.

of women soldiers serve a political purpose, they do not explore the political roles played by the women themselves or whether the women were politically motivated in joining the Army or in committing abuse.

Combat

A large body of literature that takes a position on the merits of women's involvement in the military and specifically in combat operations. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw increased attention focused on these issues as the US government and military debated opening combat ships and combat aviation to women. Liberal feminists, writing in journals such as *Minerva*, argued for women's increased participation and against those who offered reasons why women were ill-suited to combat.¹⁶² Arguments against women in combat focus on physiological differences between men and women, concerns over unit cohesion and combat effectiveness, and challenges to traditional gender roles.¹⁶³ The main texts most commonly cited for arguments against women in combat are ideological, often drawing upon anecdotal evidence or failing to offer evidence at all.¹⁶⁴ Martin Van Creveld makes one of the most egregious examples of anecdotal claims. He recounts a story of a woman soldier whose ovaries "fell out" during a long march. He provides no evidence to verify this claim or explain how this is physically possible.¹⁶⁵ Arguments against women in combat are often tied to larger debates about the 'feminization' of the US military, including lower standards and an increasing inability to win wars because of the loss of aggressive, hypermasculine military culture.¹⁶⁶

These works have at their core traditional understandings of gender roles, which remain largely unexamined. These works raise issues around women's participation in

¹⁶² Francine D'Amico, "Women At Arms: The Combat Controversy," *Minerva* VIII, no. 2 (1990): 1; Lucinda J. Peach, "Women At War: The Ethics Of Women In Combat," *Minerva* XII, no. 4 (1994): 1; Stephan Maninger, "Women in Combat: Reconsidering the Case Against the Deployment of Women in Combat-Support and Combat Units," ed. Helena Carreiras and Gerhard Kümmel, *Women in the Military and in Armed Conflict* (n.d.): 9–27, accessed October 16, 2011; Paul E Roush, "Combat Exclusion: Military Necessity Or Another Name For Bigotry?," *Minerva* VIII, no. 3 (1990): 1; J. Michael Brower, "The Mother Of All Future Debates: Women In Combat," *Minerva* XIV, no. 3 (1996): 1; Patricia M. Shields, Landon Curry, and Janet Nichols, "Women Pilots In Combat: Attitudes Of Male And Female Pilots," *Minerva* VIII, no. 2 (1990): 21.

¹⁶³ Brian Mitchell, *Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military* (Washington, D.C: Regnery Gateway, 1989); Brian Mitchell, *Women in the Military: Flirting With Disaster* (Regnery Publishing, 1997); Stephanie Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military: Can America's Gender-Neutral Fighting Force Still Win Wars?* (New York: Scribner, 2000); Martin van Creveld, *Men, Women & War: Do Women Belong in the Front Line?* (Cassell, 2001); Kingsley Browne, *Co-ed Combat: The New Evidence That Women Shouldn't Fight the Nation's Wars* (Sentinel HC, 2007).

¹⁶⁴ Browne, *Co-ed Combat*.

¹⁶⁵ Van Creveld, *Men, Women & War*.

¹⁶⁶ Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*.

combat, but the manner in which these issues are handled, and the explicit ideological orientation of the authors, weakens these works. Other scholars have used more rigorous approaches to explore many of the issues they raise, including military effectiveness and unit cohesion.

Military Effectiveness and Unit Cohesion

Work by Leora Rosen and others is unique among research on women in the military, as it relies on quantitative methods and does not have an explicitly feminist orientation. Looking at how gender composition affects cohesion in combat support units in the U.S. Army, Rosen found that the higher the percentage of women, the lower the unit cohesion.¹⁶⁷ In a study of cohesion, combat readiness, and acceptance of women among enlisted male soldiers, Rosen found that the percentage of junior enlisted women in a unit negatively correlated with cohesion and readiness among junior enlisted men. Among junior enlisted males, their cohesion and readiness increased with increased acceptance of women, but decreased relative to the number of women in the unit. Overall, acceptance of women negatively correlates with the number of women in the unit.¹⁶⁸ Measuring the impact of sexual harassment on cohesion and readiness, Rosen found that high prevalence's of sexual harassment correlated with low acceptance of women and combat readiness. In units with higher percentages of women, women experienced less sexual harassment and greater acceptance. Men in units with higher percentages of women were more likely to believe that sexual harassment was a problem in their unit.¹⁶⁹ Rosen also studied the way gender affects cohesion, readiness, and the variables associated with unit cohesion, such as culture in military units. She found that hypermasculine military culture was more prevalent in units with only men than in mixed gender units, and that hypermasculinity correlated with higher levels of unit cohesion in male units, but not in integrated units.¹⁷⁰

These studies offer evidence that women's integration into the US military and participation as equals is fraught with complications and likely not as smooth a process as some liberal feminists would like to believe. The methodological approaches taken, relying

¹⁶⁷ Leora N. Rosen et al., "Gender Composition and Group Cohesion in U.S. Army Units: A Comparison Across Five Studies," *Armed Forces & Society* 25, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 365–386.

¹⁶⁸ Leora N. Rosen et al., "Cohesion and Readiness in Gender-Integrated Combat Service Support Units: The Impact of Acceptance of Women and Gender Ratio," *Armed Forces & Society* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 537–553.

¹⁶⁹ Leora N. Rosen and Lee Martin, "Sexual Harassment, Cohesion, and Combat Readiness in U.S. Army Support Units," *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 221–244.

¹⁷⁰ Leora N. Rosen, Kathryn H. Knudson, and Peggy Fancher, "Cohesion and the Culture of Hypermasculinity in U.S. Army Units," *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 325–351.

on large-n quantitative studies, limit the usefulness of these studies, as they fail to interrogate concepts such as gender or account for ways results may be affected by the specific gender identities and ways of ‘doing gender’ adopted by males and females in the US military.

Journalistic Accounts

One of the goals of feminist research is to make visible women in international politics. Although scholars such as Enloe, especially in her most recent book, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War*, do focus on trying to tell the stories of women in war,¹⁷¹ many journalistic accounts go further in showing how women experience war and military service. While most scholars agree that articulating women's experiences should not be the only, or most important, goal of feminist scholarship, scholars differ in their theoretical and methodological understanding of the lived experiences of women and the role these experiences should play in their research.¹⁷² Some feminists privilege the direct experiences of women, circumventing theoretical frameworks. Julie Stephens criticizes this approach, arguing that research methods lacking intellectual rigor should not be excused by arguing that the process of women telling their stories to other women cannot be challenged as a source of feminist knowledge.¹⁷³ Carolyn Nordstrom argues that feminists must concern themselves not only with women's experiences, but how those experiences fit into the feminist research agenda and how they relate to methodological choices.¹⁷⁴ Given these caveats, it should still be recognized that women's experiences matter for feminist scholarship, and the scholarship is strongest when it can present both a rigorous theoretical and methodological framework, as well as speak directly to the lived experiences of women. Looking to journalistic accounts can both supplement highly theoretical feminist research as well as inspire scholars to listen more closely to women's voices.

¹⁷¹ Cynthia Enloe, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁷² Bina D'Costa, "Marginalized Identity: New Frontiers of Research for IR?," in *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, ed. Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 138–139.

¹⁷³ Julie Stephens, "Feminist Fictions: A Critique of the Category 'Non-Western Woman' in Feminist Writings on India," in *Subaltern Studies, VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 95.

¹⁷⁴ Carolyn Nordstrom, "Creativity and Chaos: War on the Front Lines," in *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, ed. Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 139.

Journalists have explored women's experiences integrating into all-male military environments,¹⁷⁵ their experiences in war and combat,¹⁷⁶ and their return to civilian society.¹⁷⁷ Two books in particular focus on sexual abuse and harassment and the military culture that produces these phenomena, without losing sight of individual women's experiences and their interpretation of their experiences. Jean Zimmerman explores the Tailhook scandal that occurred in 1991 at an annual conference of Naval aviators, charting how the hypermasculine military culture, that produced pilots who felt they were entitled to sexually harass women, underwent radical transformation following the scandal. Drawing on a range of sources, including interviews with female officers who were assaulted, Zimmerman is able to trace and account for changes in military culture while illustrating in detail how these changes influenced women.¹⁷⁸ Helen Benedict focuses on rape and sexual assault experienced by women serving in Iraq. What distinguishes her work is her recognition of the range of experiences military women have; she succeeds in presenting their stories and the very real threats they face without presenting military women as victims. Benedict also strives to present stories about women that reveal their bravery and valor in war, without adding to what she calls "the lies we tell about war." Benedict sees these stories as necessary to overcome characterizations of women that focus only on their roles as mothers or as traumatized victims of sexual assault.¹⁷⁹

First person accounts

There are a growing number of first-person accounts written by women soldiers.¹⁸⁰ All explicitly address issues of gender and their experiences as women in the military. Common to many is the feeling that they experienced unequal and discriminatory treatment

¹⁷⁵ C. S. Manegold, *In Glory's Shadow: Shannon Faulkner, the Citadel, and a Changing America*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000); Nancy Mace and Mary Jane Ross, *In the Company of Men: A Woman at the Citadel* (Simon Pulse, 2002).

¹⁷⁶ Kirsten A. Holmstedt, *Band of Sisters: American Women at War in Iraq* (Stackpole Books, 2007); Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (Beacon Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Kirsten A. Holmstedt, *The Girls Come Marching Home: Stories of Women Warriors Returning from the War in Iraq*, 1st ed. (Stackpole Books, 2009).

¹⁷⁸ Jean Zimmerman, *Tailspin: Women in the Wake of Tailhook*, 1st ed. (Doubleday, 1995).

¹⁷⁹ Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier*.

¹⁸⁰ Carol Barkalow, *In the Men's House: An Inside Account of Life in the Army by One of West Point's First Female Graduates* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990); Claudia J Kennedy, *Generally Speaking: A Memoir of the First Woman Promoted to Three-star General in the United States Army* (New York: Warner Books, 2001); Kelly Flinn, *Proud to Be: My Life, the Air Force, the Controversy*, First (Random House, 1997); J. Karpinski and S. Strasser, *One Woman's Army: The Commanding General of Abu Ghraib Tells Her Story* (Miramax books, 2005); Gail O'Sullivan Dwyer, *Tough As Nails: One Woman's Journey Through West Point* (Hellgate Press, 2009); Kayla Williams and Michael E. Staub, *Love My Rifle More Than You: Young and Female in the U.S. Army* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2006).

at times during their military service because of their gender. Janis Karpinski and Kelly Flinn's experiences represent the most extreme examples of these claims. Colonel Janis Karpinski, then Brigadier General, was commander of the Iraqi prison system at the start of the Coalition occupation of Iraq and during the detainee abuse committed by a military police company. Karpinski claims that during the investigation of the abuse, responsibility was placed on her shoulders to distract attention away from higher-level military and political leadership. She believes that she was singled out for punishment because she was a woman; it was a means to exclude her from an organization that men felt she should not be a part of.¹⁸¹

Kelly Flinn also alleges that she was treated more harshly than a man would have been in her position. Lieutenant Flinn was the first female B-52 pilot in the Air Force. Flinn committed adultery and fraternization, offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, with an enlisted Airmen and a married man. To avoid courts-martial, Flinn accepted an honorable discharge from the Air Force. She believes that her actions were treated more harshly because she was a woman and alleges that she would have received non-judicial punishment and been allowed to continue to the end of her service commitment if she had been a man.¹⁸²

Despite these allegations of discriminatory behavior, most first-person accounts of military service emphasize empowerment and fulfillment from a military career, even in the face of discrimination and sexual harassment or assault. Also emphasized by many women was their desire to join the military because of the unique opportunities it offered them.¹⁸³ Feminist scholars often focus on women joining the military because other career paths and opportunities do not exist for some women. Although many individuals do choose a military career to escape their circumstances, other women choose it because they genuinely want to be in the military and participate in national defense. Recognizing the range of motivations and experiences is important, but can be difficult for some feminists who are strongly opposed to the violent political role the military plays and to its treatment of women.

Conclusion

Despite this large body of literature, gaps remain in the understanding of women's service in the United States military. This thesis seeks to address the following: the lack of service members' voices and experiences in theoretical research; the need to understand how

¹⁸¹ Karpinski and Strasser, *One Woman's Army*.

¹⁸² Flinn, *Proud to Be*.

¹⁸³ Barkalow, *In the Men's House*; Kennedy, *Generally Speaking: A Memoir of the First Woman Promoted to Three-star General in the United States Army*; Flinn, *Proud to Be*; Karpinski and Strasser, *One Woman's Army*.

gender is constructed across the military, rather than focusing on the organization as a whole; and finally, the status of women and femininity in the military, as women participate more fully in combat operations, and as the military moves towards removing the remaining combat exclusion policies.

Chapter Three – Official Documents

Introduction

This chapter explores women's status and experiences in the military as articulated by official documents from both the Department of Defense (DoD) and Congressional commissions on the U.S. military. The following three reports to Congress were selected based on their timeliness and relevance to this thesis: the Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military – Fiscal Year 2011, Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces – February 2012, and From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military – March 2012. These reports highlight major issues surrounding women's participation in the military and combat, including the utility and necessity of combat restrictions, women's impact on military readiness, the relevance of physical standards, and the status and opportunities women should have relative to other groups in the organization.

These reports provide a rich source for understanding the military and how the organization constructs the women in its ranks. The texts constitute 'official discourse' of how the military and congressional committees view the institution at present and their vision for its future, including the role of women within that future. Analyzing these institutional forms of self-expression and self-reflection provides a unique opportunity to discern the public stance taken on the issues surrounding women's participation in the military and combat (listed above), even if the texts only provide one part of the story of America's military women. These articulations carry a special weight because they are official statements of military policy and therefore present a unified, consensus view of gender that other individual texts and more subjective interpretations, such as interviews, do not.

Research Aims

This chapter's primary aim is to analyze how official texts construct women's status within the military. To do so, the roles, positions, and types of behavior for women that are legitimated and prohibited in the texts are examined. The texts construct the relationship of military culture to women in alternately hostile, accepting, or neutral ways, which are inconsistent as policy statements and guidelines. Finally, the vision of the future and women's further integration into the military, and especially combat, that the documents paint will be analyzed.

Description of Documents

A short description of each document follows, with an explanation of why it was selected and how it relates to the larger questions of the thesis.

Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military – Fiscal Year 2011

In line with the requirement in the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2011—that the Secretary of Defense report on sexual assault across all branches of the military to the Committees on Armed Services—this report provides statistics and outlines and analyses the Department’s programs and policies towards preventing and addressing sexual assault.

The report is in two parts: the Department of Defense’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) five-point strategic plan, and the statistics on sexual assault from fiscal year 2010. The report explains each point of the strategic plan, describes steps taken to achieve each priority, analyzes policy and program effectiveness, and describes planned efforts for the future. The five points of the strategic plan are: institutionalize prevention strategies in the military community, increase the climate of victim confidence associated with reporting, improve sexual assault response, improve system accountability, and improve stakeholder knowledge and understanding of SAPR.¹⁸⁴ The statistical presentation describes military justice procedures and key terms, how statistics are gathered, and what they represent. Then it provides statistics, categorized by gender, age, rank, restricted and unrestricted reports, nationality, etc.

The DoD defines sexual assault as, “a range of crimes, including rape, aggravated sexual assault, nonconsensual sodomy, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, wrongful sexual contact, and attempts to commit these offenses.”¹⁸⁵ The term ‘sexual assault’ will be used as shorthand for this understanding throughout this chapter.

Sexual assault is one of the issues most readily identified with women in the armed forces and receives a large amount of attention within discussions of women in the military. Thus, the topic of sexual assault is tightly intertwined with female service members. The DoD’s report on sexual assault, although it focuses on both male and female victims of these crimes, provides insight into the experience of women in the U.S. military and the operation of gender in its ranks.

¹⁸⁴ *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Department of Defense, FY 2011),

1.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces – February 2012

This report by the DoD to Congress consists of a review of all DoD ‘gender-restricting policies’ to “determine the impact on the equitable opportunity for women to compete and excel in the Armed Forces.”¹⁸⁶ These policies are contained in the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, issued in 1994. They prohibit women from “assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground,” “positions where the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive,” “units and positions that are doctrinally required to physically co-locate and remain with direct ground combat units that are closed to women,” “positions involving long-range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions,” and “positions which include physically demanding tasks that would exclude the majority of women.”¹⁸⁷

The report details the findings of the study, assesses current assignment policies in each branch, lays out the eliminations and modifications in policy the DoD is making, and concludes with a legal analysis of the constitutionality of the changes.

Contained in this document are many of the central themes present in discussions of women and gender in the military, including combat exclusion policies, physical standards, privacy and unit cohesion, and military effectiveness. Combat exclusion policies constitute the single most important structural barrier to women’s full integration and participation within the military, making this topic central to any discussion of gender and experience in the military.

From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military

This is the final report of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission to the President and Congress in March 2011. The Commission, created in 2009 by the National Defense Authorization Act to assess the state of diversity in the U.S. military, was comprised of 22 commissioners selected by the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security.

The report summarizes the military’s historical commitment to diversity and assesses its current state. It offers a new definition of diversity, based around operationally relevant skills and personal attributes, which the commission believes should be implemented in the military to improve the diversity of its leadership. This report is an important text because it

¹⁸⁶ *Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces* (Department of Defense, February 2012), ii.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, i–ii.

offers insight into one of the ways that women are understood within the institution, through the context of diversity. As will be explained in subsequent sections, the document offers a range of definitions of diversity, each with accompanying consequences for how women are categorized by the military, the value assigned to their service within the organization, and what actions and initiatives (if any) will be taken to support and promote women's participation in war.

Analysis

Department Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military – Fiscal Year 2011

In this report, the DoD clearly lays out the following positions relating to the presence of sexual assault in the U.S. military: the mission of DoD in regards to sexual assault, its stance on the issue, effects caused by the phenomenon, and its status within the military. Beginning the analysis with these positions, this section explores the discourses around the victim/'victim'¹⁸⁸ of sexual assault and the military's response, the relationship of sexual assault in the military to sexual assault in the civilian world, and the location of blame. It concludes with a discussion of how to read this document and what role it plays within the category of official discourse in constructing gender and shaping women's experiences within the military.

The first position the document presents is the DoD's mission; in other words, the reasons behind the DoD's motivation to take action against sexual assault. The document offers two statements that function as expressions of the mission: to ensure military readiness and to provide safety for service members. The report states, "The Department stands committed to its goal of ensuring military readiness by establishing an environment free from the threat of sexual assault."¹⁸⁹ Later it says, "Ensure the safest and most secure living and working environments with regard to preventing sexual assault."¹⁹⁰ These 'mission statements' offer two different goals for its efforts to raise awareness, prevent sexual assault, and deal with the aftermath of an incident. The first is part of the larger military effectiveness discourse. 'Military readiness' is presented as the ultimate goal and sexual assault as an obstacle that must be overcome in order to achieve it. The emphasis of the efforts is on the

¹⁸⁸ The term 'victim' is used here with the understanding that individuals who experiences sexual assault are not merely and forever victims. The use of quotes is not meant to trivialize their experiences, rather it is to indicate that a particular discourse exists around this term, a discourse that will be interrogated throughout this section.

¹⁸⁹ *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Department of Defense, FY 2011),

1.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

function of the military as a fighting force, rather than the well-being of service members and the eradication of these types of crimes for the sake of the victims. In this statement, sexual assault is also termed a ‘threat.’ This militarized language frames sexual assault the same way it frames a hostile enemy or a feared tactic. It specifically conceptualizes sexual assault and its relationship to the military as a phenomenon that presents serious risks for the core function of the military.

The second mission statement focuses on service members and their work environment. Eliminating sexual assault is an imperative because it negatively affects well-being in all aspects of their lives. This framing is part of the larger victim discourse to be discussed later, which prioritizes the needs and safety of service members.

The second position the document explores is the stance the DoD takes on sexual assault. The stance is articulated in three ways: “sexual assault is a crime,” “the Department’s leadership has a zero tolerance policy against it,” and sexual assault “is an affront to the basic American values we defend.”¹⁹¹ These articulations are interesting because they classify the act, indicate the response, and orient it within the ideology of the military and the nation it serves. All three combine to indicate the seriousness the military professes towards this topic and the firm commitment it has to effectively address the issue.

The third position the document explores is the effect of sexual assault, explaining what happens in the military once it occurs. Four effects are given: “may degrade military readiness,”¹⁹² “undermine trust within military units,”¹⁹³ “subvert strategic goodwill,”¹⁹⁴ and “change the lives of victims and their families.”¹⁹⁵ These effects fall neatly into the two categories outlined in the ‘mission statement’ section—military effectiveness and service member well-being—and provide evidence of two consistent framing devices used throughout the report.

The fourth position the document explores is status, the DoD’s appraisal of sexual assault within the organization. “Sexual assault...[is] a crime that is significantly underreported, both within and outside of the military services.”¹⁹⁶ There are two strands to this statement. The first is that the problem goes beyond the available statistics and more must be done to identify the victims, a variation on the victim discourse. The second is that

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 63.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

sexual assault in the military shares many similarities with sexual assault in the civilian world, namely that available statistics that do not represent the full extent of the problem. This second discourse, termed here the ‘civilian equivalency discourse,’ links the issue of sexual assault in the military to the phenomenon in the civilian world. Rather than resulting from the specific nature of the military and its culture, this construction stems from human nature or the greater American culture.

The equivalency deemphasizes structural problems in the military that might lead to the crime, identifying sexual assault as a single phenomenon that exists in all spheres, military and civilian. Such equivalence is also present in discussions of DoD programs to combat sexual assault, such as the DoD Safe Hotline operated by RAINN, a civilian organization combating sexual violence.¹⁹⁷ Relying on civilian programs and emphasizing the need for military-civilian collaboration in the report both underscore the generality of the phenomenon of sexual assault and deemphasize any role military culture may play in perpetuating sexual assault, or any variation between the nature and effects of the occurrences of sexual assault in the military and civilian spheres.

My next area of focus is how individuals affected by sexual assault are understood in the report. This is termed the victim discourse. The term ‘victim’ is used exclusively to describe individuals who are sexually assaulted. The victims in the report are gender-neutral, other than in the statistics section, where victims are categorized as either male, female, or “gender not specified.”¹⁹⁸ Women are not singled out as the target of sexual assault nor marked by an association with the term ‘victim.’ Similarly, there is a measure of equality in the use of the term as it is applied to both men and women. The gender neutrality in this language should be viewed as a positive discursive step, but cannot be assumed to provide proof of the end of gender-loaded assumptions and language that fix women as the unique and only victim of sexual assault.

How it locates blame and identifies the source of the problem provides further insights into how the DoD understands sexual assault. The report is not explicit as to the source of sexual assault, but it alludes to two primary sources in its strategic plan. Priority one of the plan includes a call for “population-based or system-level strategies, policies, and actions that impede the occurrence of sexual assault.”¹⁹⁹ The report also mentions a “comprehensive approach to sexual assault” that includes “interventions for the peer,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 5.

community, organization, and societal levels.”²⁰⁰ These statements indicate DoD’s belief that sexual assault stems both from the culture of the military as well as the values and choices of deviant individuals. The acknowledgement that sexual assault may have systemic sources differs from the discourses around sexual assault I found in recruiting. Those discourses allowed no room for military culture to play a role in the phenomenon; rather, blame was placed squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrators, service members with values that ran counter to the values of the military as an organization.

No blame is placed on the victims in the report, consistent with the victim-centric approach discussed previously. The military does not employ tropes about the victim as complicit in the violence committed against them. Instead, the focus is on investigating the alleged crime and bringing appropriate disciplinary action. In addition, the veracity of the reporting individual is not questioned, rather it is a matter of evidence and what actions should be taken based on the evidence uncovered in the investigation. For example, the report talks about lack of evidence to support disciplinary action,²⁰¹ but maintains the presumption that individuals making reports are truthfully telling their story. The report also states, “reviewing the investigation’s available evidence in determining whether disciplinary action is possible according to the high legal standard required.”²⁰² The discussion is therefore framed in the language of evidence and an effort to take disciplinary action. The well-being of the victim remains central, investigators are seeking evidence sufficient to take disciplinary action against the perpetrator, including for related, but lesser charges of misconduct.²⁰³ The focus on the victim is further emphasized by the option to make a restricted, rather than unrestricted report. A restricted report allows the victim confidential access to care and services without requiring the victim to provide most details about the assault, including the perpetrator.²⁰⁴ The aftermath and response by the military is on the victim’s terms, allowing them to control the process and decide what further action is taken.

The representation of sexual assault and the military’s response offered in this report differs greatly from much writing and discussion on the topic. The report shows an organization committed to eradicating the problem from its ranks, caring for the individuals that have been victimized, and imposing proper disciplinary actions against perpetrators. This departs significantly from representations of the military as indifferent, if not criminally

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 48.

²⁰² Ibid., 51.

²⁰³ Ibid., 48.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 27.

negligent, in its handling of sexual assault.²⁰⁵ Analyzing the discourses in this report may appear to be akin to taking the military's statements on sexual assault at face value. The opposite is occurring. Seeking out official representations and uncovering the discourses present is one step towards developing a nuanced understanding of sexual assault in the military, as well as the larger topics of women's experiences and gender construction. Exploring these discourses is a way to read between the lines, to gain understanding into how the military conceptualizes the issue, what it prioritizes, and where the it thinks it needs to go to improve programs.

Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces – February 2012

This document reviews all 'gender-restricting policies' codified in the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule of 1994 and lays out new policy on women's participation in the military. Two discourses dominate. The first is the military effectiveness discourse, which frames the motivation for, and all resulting decisions around, eliminating 'gender-restricting policies' in the language of what is required by the military to fight and win wars. The second is the special category discourse, which constructs women as a separate and different category from men, and as a special challenge for the military. In this discourse, women require careful, measured, and deliberate action to utilize their skills and integrate them more fully into the military, while also ensuring that their presence does not interfere with or negatively affect men, the natural warfighters who require no such special attention. These discourses will be discussed in turn, laying out the variations of each. Absent from this document are any concessions to the issue of equality or women's equal participation.

The document begins with a vision statement: "The Department of Defense is committed to removing all barriers that would prevent service members from rising to the highest level of responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant."²⁰⁶ This vision reveals the military's central concern with military effectiveness. It is focused on what an individual can contribute to the military and placing that individual in a role that takes full

²⁰⁵ Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (Beacon Press, 2010); Kirby Dick, *The Invisible War*, Documentary (Docurama Films, 2012), <http://invisiblewarmovie.com/>; Sabrina Rubin Erdely, "The Rape of Petty Officer Blumer: Inside the Military's Culture of Sex Abuse, Denial and Cover-up," *Rollingstone.com*, February 14, 2013, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-rape-of-petty-officer-blumer-20130214>.

²⁰⁶ *Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces*, i.

advantage of skills. There is no distinction between men's and women's roles, yet this statement reveals a gender-blind orientation without a concurrent commitment to gender equality or leveling an unfair playing field. The DoD will assess individuals based on their merits, rather than their gender, but will take no actions to correct for decades of systemic bias against women.

The report writes away the issue of inequality in the military with this statement, "The Department of Defense reviewed all available information from the Military Services and did not find any indication of females having less than equitable opportunities to compete and excel under current assignment policy."²⁰⁷ The DoD is taking the position that equality is not a concern in today's military; women are not at an unfair disadvantage in relation to men. This statement allows the focus of the review of gender-restricting policies to revolve around military effectiveness because equality is off the table, a non-issue at the policy level. The unstated position is that if equality of opportunity and career success already exists in the military, gender-restricting policies, which might be assumed to disadvantage women, can be assessed from other angles; and any changes to these policies are not motivated by a concern for equality.

In this document, the language of equality is replaced by the language of military effectiveness as well as the language of expanding opportunities. There is a difference between expanding opportunities and creating equality, which should not be conflated as the same phenomenon. Without the explicit language of equality, women are not entitled to any roles or positions in the military beyond those they are already permitted to have. The military may decide that women should be given expanded opportunities, but that decision will be made based on factors that fall within the rubric of military effectiveness. For example, in a discussion about eliminating the co-location exclusion, the report gives "the current operational environment, the evolution of doctrinal missions, and emerging requirements to support commanders and ongoing contingency operations"²⁰⁸ as reasons for this policy change, all reasons which fall directly within the military effectiveness framework. In addition, the listed results of the policy change include, "provide a greater pool of qualified members from whom our combatant commanders may draw, reduce the operational tempo for male counterparts by increasing the total number of personnel available for assignment to units co-located with direct combat forces, and improve consistency

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

concerning assignment policy impacting women and provide field commanders with greater flexibility in meeting combat support mission requirements.”²⁰⁹ These all help meet manpower needs, maximize military effectiveness, and address the dynamic needs of the military. There is one additional item listed, “expand career opportunities for women.”²¹⁰ This is the only effect listed that is not related to military effectiveness. Despite providing additional opportunities for women, this result is simply a follow-on effect of this policy change, rather than an intentional decision to integrate women more fully into the military and even the playing field with men.

The second, special category discourse draws a sharp distinction between men and women in uniform. Despite the DoD’s stated commitment to eliminating gender-restricting policies, this discourse does not take the next step towards a gender-blind military, where service members are no longer identified by their gender nor decisions made based upon it. Here, women are held apart as the special case, needing consideration and care to utilize their service. Driven by military effectiveness concerns and the needs of the services, the military draws upon the ‘natural’ choice, male service members, making any necessary changes or additions to accommodate their needs to have them as part of the fighting force. Women, however, are a different matter. Despite the recognition that increasing needs for well-educated manpower and other considerations make further integrating women a wise choice, the special needs of women are seen as harder to accommodate, thus requiring more thought and careful attention than those of men. For example, this document lists privacy and personal dignity as two of the practical barriers to removing gender-restricting policies.²¹¹ These concerns are presented as barriers large enough to slow, if not prevent, the removal of all limitations on women’s participation in some aspects of the military, such as service on submarines.

The military is therefore taking a very conservative approach to removing the restrictive policies, seeing women as a group that requires special care and consideration because their presence could be too challenging and costly. When explaining why this policy element will stand, for example, the report states, “because eliminating this provision [restriction on positions involving long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces mission] may take significant research, time, and effort to achieve, no

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., i.

change to this element is recommended at this time”²¹² Men are not seen in this light. As a group they are the manpower base of the military, and whatever needs they have will be accommodated to maintain a standing force. All men are not viewed equally or given fair treatment by the military. The ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy that existed until recently drew distinctions between men that relegated many to a second-class status. Yet despite those instances, men as a category are not treated with the same level of suspicion and concern as women, as the special category discourse illuminates.

The special category discourse is also present in the articulation of the new policies outlined in the document. Each policy change to further integrate women is presented explicitly as a test case, an opportunity to assess how well women do in the expanded roles, and the impact their presence has on other service members and the organization. For example, the text says, “The assignment of women to these positions [positions that reside at the battalion level within active duty direct ground combat units] will provide the Army with information upon which to make future recommendations on the assignment of women in open occupational specialties to closed positions within direct ground combat units.”²¹³ This approach—allowing a few women into previously closed roles to assess their impact—indicates the fragility of women’s presence in the military and the ambivalence of the organization towards their continuing presence. Women in the military, and especially women in combat roles, are foreign bodies that must be managed and policed, with decisions about their presence made in measured and careful ways. The approach also highlights the fragility of gains made by integrating women into certain roles; their positions could be revoked at any time. The ‘test case’ language renders women’s integration impermanent, always unstable.

Additionally, the ‘test case’ language cloaks itself in progressive terms as ‘potentially’ freeing up more integrative opportunities for women. Language is included that leaves open the possibility that more barriers could fall if these tests cases prove successful. One statement says, “the experience gained by assigning women to these select positions will help assess the suitability and contemporary relevance of the direct ground combat unit assignment prohibition and inform future policy decisions.”²¹⁴ In this case, it is not only the women being tested, but the current relevance of the combat restriction policy. These statements are more in line with the military effectiveness discourse than the test case

²¹² Ibid., ii.

²¹³ Ibid., 4.

²¹⁴ Ibid., i.

component of the special category discourse because they indicate a military interested not just in the presence of women and what affect they may have, but in all policies that could be negatively impacting military effectiveness. Despite the presence of these statements, the test cases remain important. They construct women as a potential danger to the military, a danger that must be managed against any threat that women are perceived to pose to military readiness and effectiveness, and a danger that must be balanced against the utility women provide in meeting manpower objectives.

From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military

This report presents a new understanding of diversity and lays out recommendations for the military to implement it in its policies and practices. Women and their presence in the military form one of the central concerns of this document. The recommendations, if implemented, would have a major impact on how the military views women, the roles they can play in the organization, and their status relative to other groups.

Analysis of this document reveals that it employs three distinct conceptualizations of the term ‘diversity’: ‘demographic diversity,’ ‘equal opportunity,’ and ‘enhanced diversity.’ Each will be explained in turn to show how the Military Leadership Diversity Commission understands each type of diversity, and each will be analyzed to understand what is privileged or legitimated and what is silenced in the application and propagation of these terms. In addition to the three distinct diversity discourses in this document, the Commission’s recommendations also, significantly, construct a fourth understanding of the term that is an amalgamation of the three distinct conceptualizations, primarily based upon the notion of ‘enhanced diversity.’ After providing an analysis of these constructions, the section discusses what these various ideas about diversity, as well as how the Commission recommends they be implemented within the military, mean for military women and their status within the organization.

The first understanding of diversity in this report is demographic, which means fostering a military organization that represents the demographic makeup of the United States. The demographic groups represented are usually racial, ethnic, and gender based. This means a military that “reflects the public it serves and the forces it leads.”²¹⁵ In this discourse, women’s service is legitimated because they represent approximately fifty percent of the American public. The group designation of ‘woman’ does not offer women any special

²¹⁵ *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military* (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, March 2011), xiii.

protection, nor deny them any opportunities. The demographic designator leaves women as a group equal to all other demographic groups, including men. Of course, which demographic groups are recognized and granted rights changes over time, a recent example being homosexuals. The acceptance of demographic diversity as a framework does therefore not guarantee all individuals equal rights.

The second understanding of diversity is the equal opportunity discourse, which constructs all individuals as equal, despite their differences, and in which all are due fair treatment. As articulated in the document, equal opportunity denotes “equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services.”²¹⁶ This understanding of diversity goes a step beyond the first; not only are all demographic groups be included, but individuals from those groups have certain rights in regard to how they are treated that must be respected. In this discourse, women face no limits because of their gender, as they do under the current combat exclusion policies. In addition, the utility of the category ‘women’ declines, since women are no longer identified and judged based on their membership in that group.

The final diversity discourse in this document is ‘enhanced diversity,’ all the qualities that an individual brings to the job that are consistent with the values of the Department of Defense and aid in military effectiveness.²¹⁷ This framing of diversity is a departure from the first two in its explicit focus on the utility of the traits that make an individual diverse. Instead of identifying a certain category of people and including them in the organization, or guaranteeing that all individuals will be treated equally, this framing identifies attributes that are integral to the military mission and seeks individuals that possess those qualities, skills, and experiences. This framing makes no allowance for any individual or group, nor offers anyone the right to be included in the organization unless they can offer what the military is seeking. This third type of diversity is central to this document, since it is the conceptualization of diversity that the Commission purports to be recommending to the military.

Despite the presentation of these three diversity frameworks as separate concepts and the endorsement of the third by the Commission, the report is inconsistent in its presentation of the term ‘diversity,’ drawing on aspects of each discourse to present its arguments. The Commission is actually recommending an amalgamation of the three discourses, rather than a consistent definition. The Commission makes three moves to unite the diversity discourses

²¹⁶ Ibid., vii.

²¹⁷ Ibid., xiii, 11.

into a new, fourth discourse on diversity. First and most commonly, the demographic diversity discourse is incorporated into the enhanced diversity discourse. For example, in one of the many definitions of the type of diversity the Commission is recommending, “diversity is all the different characteristics and attributes of individuals that are consistent with the DoD core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the nation we serve.”²¹⁸ By bringing in the demographic element to enhanced diversity, the Commission opens a door to women’s service that could be absent from the enhanced diversity framing alone. Representing approximately half of the American population, a conceptualization of diversity that includes an emphasis on demographic representation necessitates the inclusion of women. The way the example sentence is constructed raises the possibility that the demographic element is separate from the skills and capabilities portion, meaning that women’s presence might be permitted because it serves a separate purpose other than the meeting of military effectiveness concerns.

Second, the document also includes a mention of “leveraging all kinds of human differences, including demographic differences, to improve capability and readiness.”²¹⁹ This raises the question of how demographic differences, including being labeled as a woman, will be evaluated in comparison to other differences, such as having high-value skills or being physically fit. Because the demographic element of this framing of diversity necessitates reproducing categories such as ‘woman’ within the military organization, being female may continue to be less valued in the organization and mark women as less desirable service members, even if they also have attributes that are highly valued in the organization, such as certain skills or educational backgrounds. The Commission also states that the enhanced diversity framework moves away from “eliminating discrimination against members of certain groups and toward valuing and leveraging all kinds of human difference.”²²⁰ As a category of people who have faced systematic discrimination within the institution, a shift in how diversity is understood may not be enough to bring about a fundamental cultural change that will elevate women above their second-class status. Without the explicit focus on rectifying the discrimination women have faced, they may continue to face less intentional forms of discrimination.

²¹⁸ Ibid., xvi.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 6.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Despite claiming to have left behind the equal rights orientation of the past, the equal opportunity discourse works its way into the Commission's discussion of enhanced diversity. For example, the document states,

“The new definition aims to give all servicemembers [sic] equal treatment at every step in their military careers, but it also goes further: The words ‘all the different characteristics and attributes of individuals’ in the definition refer not only to characteristics and attributes legally protected by EO [equal opportunity] laws but to *any and all* [emphasis in the original] attributes that can benefit the Services, including thinking style, educational background, and skill sets.”²²¹

In this move, the equal opportunity discourse has been incorporated back into the enhanced diversity discourse. Gender is normalized by its association with many different attributes and loses its special protection and attention. Women are no longer identified as belonging to a special category, a category that was legally discriminated against, but may also be denied the benefits that come with being viewed as a category needing protection above most others.

Finally, a third move is made by the Commission to place the equal opportunity discourse within the demographic diversity framework. For example, “Actively seeking demographic diversity also ensures that no talented individual will be ‘left behind.’”²²² Once again, the protection of the equal opportunity framework is lost for women, as they become just another demographic category that will be included because of the pairing of demographic diversity with the new enhanced diversity framework.

As the previous discussion demonstrates, the new enhanced diversity framework the Commission is recommending to the military actually draws heavily from the demographic and equal opportunity discourses. Rather than being a departure from previous understandings of diversity in the military, the enhanced diversity framework builds upon former conceptualizations of diversity.

There is a central tenant of the new definition of diversity, military effectiveness, which should be emphasized, especially for what it means for the military's understanding and treatment of its female service members. The desire to maximize military effectiveness is the driving force behind the new definition of diversity. The Commission states explicitly

²²¹ Ibid., 13.

²²² Ibid., 17.

that increasing military effectiveness is the goal of the new effort, “[the definition of diversity] acknowledges that these differences are operationally relevant. With proper leadership, diversity can increase military agility and responsiveness.”²²³ The Commission does provide two other motivating considerations for these changes: having a representative military and ensuring fairness and equality. These motivations, however, are still part of the larger goal of maximizing military effectiveness because the follow-on effects of achieving each goal positively impact military effectiveness. For example, the Commission says, “Perceptions of a noninclusive [sic] military leadership can estrange the military from the people it represents and from which it ultimately draws its strength.”²²⁴ Although the focus of this statement is on inclusivity, the effect is military effectiveness, meaning that military effectiveness predominates as the focus of diversity efforts. What this means for women is the new diversity framework will offer them less protection and fewer opportunities if their service is not deemed as an aid to maximizing military effectiveness. Given that the new definition of diversity does include so many attributes beyond gender, however, individual women potentially will be recognized as making important contributions to the military because of their skills and experiences. Women as a category, however, may not be seen as positive contributors to military effectiveness if, for example, they are not seen as capable of participating in the combat operations that form the core function of the military.

The Commission is not blind to this conundrum for women and spends a good portion of the document directly addressing women’s status in the military. Separate from the new definition of diversity and the discourses it draws upon as discussed above, the document makes a recommendation that offers a view into its understanding of women, which could have a major impact on women’s experiences and status in the military. The Commission recommends that, “DoD and the Services should eliminate the ‘combat exclusion policies’ for women, including the removal of barriers and inconsistencies, to create a level playing field for all qualified service members.”²²⁵ This statement is a departure from its discussion about diversity because it has an explicit equal opportunity orientation and is relevant for only one demographic group, women. The military effectiveness concern is not absent from this recommendation, however. The Commission believes that, “The blanket restriction for

²²³ Ibid., xiv.

²²⁴ Ibid., 15.

²²⁵ Ibid., 71.

women limits the ability of commanders in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.”²²⁶

These two motivations behind this action, one related to equality and the other military effectiveness, are paired with a third, the obsolescence of the combat exclusion policy. Mirroring one of the justifications provided in the *Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces*, the Commission argues,

“DoD and Service policies that bar women from certain combat-related career fields, specialties, units and assignments are based on standards associated with conventional warfare and well-defined, linear battlefields. However, the currently conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been anything but convention.... Thus, the combat exclusion policies do not reflect the current operational environment.”²²⁷

This justification for the removal of combat exclusion policies has little to do with the women themselves or their ability to function effectively in combat; it is about whether the policy is still relevant. The question once again is why the decision was made to open more positions to women rather than further restricting their roles. The answer likely goes back to the equality discourse that is present in this discussion and a desire to create an environment where women can compete fairly with men. Removing the combat exclusion policies is therefore necessary for diversity to function as a guiding leadership principle. In this rationale, individuals cannot be judged solely on the skills and attributes they bring to the military if a very large group is handicapped by what the Commission terms ‘discriminatory policies.’²²⁸

Conclusion

The discourses uncovered in the three texts offer divergent constructions of women and their roles in the military. It is not a monolithic presentation, a finding that runs counter to some feminist assertions of a monolithic understanding of women within the organization. The military effectiveness discourse dominates in all three texts and is the framework that structures the discussion of women, their roles in the military, and the barriers they face. This utilitarian approach has little use for women as women; rather, the skills and abilities of individuals and how these aid the military in fulfilling its mission are what is central.

²²⁶ Ibid., 72.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

To a large extent, the discourses still construct women as the ‘other,’ a distinct and special category from men that must be carefully managed to ensure that negative side effects of their integration do not harm military effectiveness. This is reflected in the conservative, test case approach taken towards women’s further integration and participation in combat. The principle of equality, or that all individuals are entitled to fair and equal treatment, is largely absent from the texts. The language of expanding opportunities serves as a stand-in for this idea, but it is a follow-on affect of efforts to ensure military effectiveness, rather than a goal in itself.

None of the discourses uncovered is inherently hostile or exclusionary towards women. Many, such as the victim discourse from the report on sexual assault, are concerned with the health and well-being of all service members. The overall picture painted by the discourses is a military that remains ambivalent about women’s increased participation in the organization, but with a concurrent desire to utilize women’s service to maximize military effectiveness.

None of the discourses uncovered point to a conceptualization of women and their service consistent with the idea of ‘militarized femininity.’ Militarized femininity posits that women can be soldiers and accepted into the military system only if they are masculine enough to meet the traditional requirements of soldiering, but feminine enough to not challenge the gendered order of the military.²²⁹ Women in these texts are not constructed in relation to traits associated with either masculinity or femininity, unlike the military recruiting discourses discussed previously and the service member’s articulations of their experiences covered in the next chapter. Both those sets of discourses construct women and their service in gendered terms, legitimating or prohibiting certain roles for women. In the texts explored in this chapter, women are discussed both as a group that will be allowed to more fully integrate into the military in a careful, measured approach, and as individuals with varied traits, skills, and backgrounds who are of varying usefulness to the military. Rather than gendered traits and performances determining women’s acceptance, the discourses present practical considerations, such as privacy or physical ability, as the barriers to further integration.

There is no indication in these discourses that women will continue to be accepted into the military on limited terms only so long as they do not challenge the gendered order, as

²²⁹ Laura Sjoberg, “Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others: Observations From The War In Iraq,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (2007): 82.

militarized femininity would posit. The discourses in these texts do not point to militarized femininity operating at the policy level. These findings will be explored further in the final chapter of the thesis.

Chapter Four – Military Recruiting

Introduction

Recruiters are the gatekeepers of the U.S. military. They educate prospective recruits and officer candidates about the particular branch of the military they represent, including job opportunities, educational and other benefits, and daily life in the military. Recruiters serve as a guide throughout the enlistment or application processes, including administering physical fitness and knowledge tests. The relationship that develops between recruiter and the interested individual is significant; they work together for months or even years, from initial contact through basic or officer training programs.

The interaction between an interested individual and a recruiter is less easily observed than indirect forms of recruiting such as television commercials. In-person recruiting largely takes place in private, at recruiting offices. The importance of in-person recruiting, and the shared experience it represents for the vast majority of service members, make recruiting a likely site for gender construction in the military and an area that deserves closer inspection. Recruiters' articulations around gender and gender-based differences form a part of the initial socialization process of new service members. Recruits take the knowledge gained from recruiters with them into the military, including ideas about gender and appropriate roles for men and women.

As discussed in the literature review, research on military recruiting has focused on analyzing the constructions of gender in recruiting campaigns, analyzing the constructions of gender they contain. One avenue available to escape the tendency to take representations of masculinity at face value is to deconstruct recruiting pitches and their references to gender. Discourse analysis can help to explain the significance of gender constructions in military culture, based on how such constructions might be 'pitched' differently depending on the sex and gender identity of the applicant. Such a deconstruction also escapes the overreliance on recruiting materials, such as print and TV ad campaigns, in previous research by focusing on the meaning of the relationship between recruiter and applicant. Foregrounding the recruiting relationship is also a way to suggest that gender constructions in the military are not only passively transmitted through a recruiting campaign but are negotiated relationally. The recruiting relationship has tended to be invisible to the scholar and the general public. The encounter in the recruiting office—the site in which an individual contractually enters into membership with the military organization—deserves closer inspection.

This chapter first explores the research questions guiding the chapter and explains the interview method followed with recruiters. Next, it discursively analyses the interview transcripts. Finally, it assesses how recruiting should be understood as a source of gender construction in the military.

Research aims

The question this chapter asks is, what role does recruiting play in gender construction in the military? To answer it, the chapter analyzes the discourses that structure military recruiting. The goal is to uncover the extent to which such discourses are gendered and the different ways in which recruiting constructs male and female service members differently. For example: do recruiters, in their encounters with prospective and committed recruits, subordinate women, or are females constructed as equal to male service members? What ideas, actions, and behaviors do recruiters legitimate and proscribe, and do these differ for male and female recruits?

The findings from this chapter will be used, in the conclusion of the thesis, to assess the importance of recruiting as a site of gender construction relative to Department of Defense reports and service member articulations, as well as to draw larger conclusions about how gender operates in the military and its impact on male and female service members and their experiences.

Method

Five interviews were conducted with six recruiters from four branches of the U.S. military, two with recruiters from the Army (interviewed together), two from the Navy, and one each with the Marine Corps and Air Force.

The interview participants consist of two women and four men, half enlisted and half officers. Their time in service ranges from four to thirteen years active duty, with an average time in service of just over eight and one-half years. Time spent as a recruiter ranges from three months to six years. All recruiters work in the same geographical area of the United States. To protect their anonymity, participants will be referred to only by their service and gender.

To gain access to participants, individual recruiters were contacted directly through their publicly available contact information. In the case of the Army and Marine Corps recruiters, their Public Affairs offices became involved to grant permission to the recruiters to participate. Only the Army asked to review the interview questions ahead of time.

The meetings with all recruiters, except for the Marine Corps, consisted of semi-structured interviews. Each took between 30 and 90 minutes, depending on how much the recruiter had to say and whether the conversation expanded beyond the interview schedule. The Marine Corps meeting consisted of the recruiter treating the beginning of the conversation as a standard applicant interview for Marine Corps officer programs, followed by the questions from the interview schedule. The recruiter and Public Affairs insisted on this format, explaining it was their way of ensuring that they would provide a comprehensive view of Marine Corps recruiting. This interview lasted two and one-half hours and covered a wider range of topics than the interviews with the other branches, specifically the different programs available for officer candidates, the experience of Officer Candidate School (OCS), and how junior officers are trained and mentored.

Recruiter's statements should not be construed as necessarily representative of recruiters or of recruitment in their service as a whole. Nevertheless, the opinions of the recruiters interviewed represent authentic experience from which a broader analysis of military recruiting can proceed. All recruiters constitute the 'public face' for their service, even if they employ unique recruiting strategies or disseminate personalized experiences and ideas. Every recruiter indicates that his or her interactions with interested individuals are shaped largely by the latter's unique circumstances, concerns, and goals. Although speaking with more recruiters from each service would have ensured the identification and isolation of 'outlier perspectives,' doing so was not possible, for reasons of time and access. A smaller 'n' allows for a more qualitative and discursive analysis of each interview, in which significant details can be isolated and compared.

The interview schedule (see Appendix One) is designed to elicit basic information about institutional recruiting objectives (how the recruiting process in each branch resembled or differed from that of other branches), branch recruiting philosophy (how the recruiter understood and articulated the process), recruiting strategy (the 'selling points' and the sequencing, prioritization, and importance of issues that recruiters emphasized), branding (the advantages that recruiters believe make their branch and military service attractive to recruits), recruit profile (what recruiters are looking for in interested candidates, the questions and concerns that recruits raise), the personalization of the recruitment process (how recruiters use their own experience in the military during the recruiting process), and self-assessments of success (how successful do recruiters think they are, how do they define success, and what do they say about whether or not they enjoy their job). The issue of gender is raised directly in each interview by asking the following questions: Do you approach

recruiting women any differently from men? Does your service specifically target women for recruitment? What issues do you believe women face in the military? Do female recruits ask different questions or have different concerns than male recruits? Is it more difficult to get women to enlist or apply for an officer candidate program than men?

As a woman asking questions that are often explicitly about women and their experiences in the military, my own gender likely played some role in shaping their recruiter's responses. I attempted to ask questions in ways that encouraged recruiters to reflect on typical interactions with recruits, to take the focus off of me as an individual woman. In a few instances, recruiters turned my questions around, asking how I as a woman would respond, rather than providing their own answer. For example, in response to a question about concerns women have about the military, one of the recruiters asked me what my concerns would be. In these instances I drew upon my understanding of the common challenges women face in the military, such as discrimination or sexual assault.

Consistently, the questions I asked about gender and women's service were very different from the questions recruiters say they face on the job. They are far more likely to be asked about deployments and health care benefits for families than they are about the threat of sexual assault or discrimination. Asking questions about topics they do not usually discuss during the recruiting process differentiated me from an actual interested individual. Even during the Marine Corps interview, when the recruiter was purportedly treating it as a regular interaction between an interested applicant and recruiter, I broadened the focus by continually asked questions about the larger process, particularly what the recruiter says in specific instances and what they look for in the responses of the individual they are interviewing. The recruiter himself also stepped back from the process to explain why he asks certain questions and the larger approach he takes to recruiting.

The Marine Corps and Army recruiters both briefly asked questions to gauge my interest in joining the military and their particular branch. This is an indication that, despite knowing my purpose for meeting with them, they were still operating in their role as a recruiter. As a college educated woman in my mid-twenties, I fit the profile they are looking for in prospective officer candidates. Despite their interest, I do not feel their answers to my questions were uniquely designed to entice me to their service or represent the military in a falsely positive light. On the whole, the recruiters were forthcoming and open in their responses to my questions. Many expressed interest in the research topic and findings and seemed genuinely interested in contributing to the project in an open and honest way.

Analysis

Recruiting is based around a discourse of ‘benefits;’ in other words, the articulation of what a service member will receive during or after his or her service, such as a good salary, job training, and medical benefits, and money for education. These benefits are presented as the primary motivations for, and advantages of, military service. The majority of recruiters’ articulations are consistent with this discourse. Discourses less frequently articulated exist around service, the desire to serve the United States through the military. These are elite group identity (unique to the Marine Corps) about individuals proving themselves worthy of joining this select institution, and adventure, seeing the world and pursuing a challenging and interesting career.

Each of these discourses is gender-neutral, articulated in the same terms to both men and women. None favor one gender over others, nor emphasize masculine traits over feminine. The recruiting process as a whole relies little on the gender of the interested individual and instead focuses on educating that individual about the military and selecting the most qualified people to join. Gender is not central to the interaction between the recruiter and the interested individual.

Women’s service, and the topic of gender more broadly, only emerge when recruiters are asked to address it directly. Recruiters’ articulations relating to gender fall into five categories: sexual harassment and assault, lesser forms of discrimination such as disrespect, women’s capabilities, combat, and the role of masculinity in military culture. These will be explored in turn, after a discussion of how gender is handled by recruiters during the recruiting process.

Within these five categories, five distinct gendered discourses emerge from recruiters’ articulation of the recruitment process. Three are discourses present in the Department of Defense reports from the previous chapter: the equal opportunity, civilian equivalency, and military action discourses. Two discourses are unique to recruiters’ articulations, the diminishment and superiority discourses. The features of each discourse will be explored as they appear in the categories outlined above.

Gender in the recruiting process

In the dominant recruiting discourse, the ‘benefits’ discourse, women and illusions to gender are framed in ways that minimize difference. Recruiters do not construct men and women as identical; rather they construct each as equal in relation to military service. No recruiter presents differences in order to subordinate women or label them as inferior to men.

Men and women are shown as equivalent in their motivations to be in the military and serve their country. Women as a separate category are only brought up when an interview question explicitly asks about women or for a comparison of women and men. In all other instances, with every recruiter, applicants are treated as a single, gender-neutral category. At no point is this category gendered male with the use of a male pronoun or a reference to a man.

When recruiters are asked to identify differences between men and women, they do, but these differences are presented as being insignificant. Each time, the recruiter concludes their statement with a phrase that further minimizes these differences by equating men and women. For example, when responding to a question about what attracts men and women to the Navy, the male Navy recruiter indicates that more men than women come in because of films, "They want to be like Maverick in Top Gun." He goes on to say, "But really, the pros are the pros."²³⁰ This recruiter is able to identify difference, but downplays it, arguing that the central attractions are the same for men and women.

The traits each service is seeking and the way these traits are presented by the recruiter are similarly devoid of gendering. For example, the male Navy recruiter says, "We are kind of a technically oriented service, which I think works well for men and women... The Navy is looking for someone who is intelligent and who can operate under pressure."²³¹ Although operating under pressure could be viewed as a traditionally masculine trait, in this situation it does not appear to carry the association with masculinity because of the recruiters' previous statement about the Navy being equally suited to both men and women because of its technical orientation. Likewise, other than jobs closed to women because of combat restrictions, all other positions are presented as equally available to men and women. For example, no recruiter ever mentions the medical field in relation to women, the earliest place women could serve in the military and traditionally seen as a feminine field. Instead, the Navy recruiters, for example, said they go to women's engineering job fairs in order to find women interested in becoming nuclear engineers and working on aircraft carriers, fields outside the traditionally feminine sphere.

Recruiters further deemphasize the importance of gender by refusing to distinguish the individuals with whom they serve with based on their gender. The male Army recruiter says, "Having a female commander is not a big deal to me, because she is the commander,

²³⁰ U.S. Navy Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, February 6, 2012.

²³¹ Ibid.

she is a Captain. It is just the way it is, and that is great, male or female, it doesn't matter to me at all."²³²

Military society is likewise gendered neutral by recruiters identifying the barriers to women's expanding roles as originating in American society, rather than the military. This is a reflection of the civilian equivalency discourse, which de-emphasizes structural sources and equates issues within the military to those existing in American society as a whole. The male Army recruiter says,

"A lot of what has kept things closed to females in the past is more society's objection [than the military's]. I don't think in the 1990s that society was ready to see a female infantryman... but as we have progressed through this and been at war for so long, society's views as a whole are changing, as far as females in the workplace, in the military, or whatever. I mean there are females that have done outstanding things on the battlefield... So I think women are challenging those ideas every day as far as why they are equal."²³³

When pressed on the issue, he does acknowledge that some of the restrictions on women come from military culture,

"I think that you have senior leadership, that as people phase out and retire and new ideas and cultures and new things come around, I think they [society and the military] play off of each other.... You look at today and just the generation that is serving now as opposed to 20 years ago, we dealt with these issues in high school, we dealt with all the different issues, so it transforms the way military culture is."²³⁴

He still keeps the focus on society pushing change, individuals bringing new values into the military and causing a transformation.

Sexual harassment and assault

No recruiter raises the issues of harassment and sexual assault unprompted. The Air Force and Navy recruiters have little to say about the topics, but the Army and Marine Corps recruiters discuss it in depth. Their articulations are reflective of three discourses. The first is the civilian equivalency discourse, where harassment, sexual assault, and rape are

²³² U.S. Army Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, April 6, 2012.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

acknowledged to occur at times in the military, but not with greater frequency than in the civilian world. In this discourse, responsibility for, and source of, such acts lie with the perpetrators themselves, not with military culture or the organization as a whole. The second is the military action discourse, which presents the military as aware and concerned about these issues, taking serious and deliberate steps to educate, prevent, investigate, and punish. In this respect, the military is portrayed not as equivalent, but as superior to civilian society. The third discourse is the diminishment discourse, which downplays the importance of the issue within the military and to individual service members.

The link between rape, sexual assault, and discrimination in the military and the civilian world is made explicitly. The female Army recruiter argues, "I don't believe that the statistics [on rape and sexual assault] are any worse in the military than in greater society...I don't believe that it is any different than any place a female might work, or any organization that they might join, if not [the same] it is better in the military."²³⁵ The perception that these issues are prevalent in the military is explained by the bright spotlight the media shines on the military. The male Army recruiter clearly articulates both the civilian equivalency and military action discourses, "We have the same issues as society has. I think it is more publicized [in the military], it is way out there. There is a reporting system where there really isn't on the civilian side that is held accountable like ours is." He continues, saying, "I think a lot of that kind of stuff comes into light a lot more or a lot easier because of the way we are structured. But just like any other organization or value system, you do have people who stray to the left or right of that value system, but it is not a reflection of the whole organization."²³⁶

This recruiter constructs rape and sexual assault as caused by individuals with beliefs that fall outside of the values of the military. Rather than rape resulting from a systemic problem in the military, it results from the actions of individuals who are deviant and acting in opposition to the values of the organization they are a part of. The solution to these issues is more education, clearer standards, and accountability, not cultural change in the military.

Sexual assault is also presented as an issue that is out in the open and actively being dealt with within the military. The female Army recruiter explains, "It just makes press, or it is a bigger deal, because we have so many standards and requirements for educating ourselves, for prevention, for actions that must be taken upon something negative

²³⁵ U.S. Army Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, April 6, 2012.

²³⁶ U.S. Army Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

happening."²³⁷ She argues it is such a prominent issue, not because it is more common than in the civilian world, but because it is taken so seriously, and so much effort and resources are put towards combating it.

Despite highlighting the seriousness with which recruiters believe the military takes the problems of rape and sexual assault, only one recruiter, the Marine Corps recruiter, indicates that these issues are serious enough that it could be a significant issue for individuals in the military. When asked if women presented concerns to him about sexual assault, he says, "[They] have every right to be concerned about that."²³⁸ He continues with an articulation of the military action discourse, saying, "The military is concerned about it also. I guarantee that there are steps being taken to resolve that problem...I think we are making it to where people truly believe that it will be handled appropriately instead of just brushed under the carpet."²³⁹

The civilian equivalency and military action discourses assign blame for the act solely on the shoulders of the individuals committing the act, not on the victims themselves. Given how seriously recruiters argue that the military takes these issues, the military is presented as on the side of the victim and acting in their best interest to prevent, and if necessary, prosecute and punish the individuals responsible.

None of the recruiters interviewed has personal experience with rape, sexual assault, or any serious forms of discrimination, and each makes that explicit. This serves to downplay the issue to some extent, as recruiters draw extensively from their own experience in the military to educate applicants about military life. By presenting the issue as out of the realm of their experience, the issue takes on less immediacy and is presented as a less serious issue. An issue that exists, but not something they or anyone they know has experienced.

In addition, the Army recruiters both insinuate that sexual assault is understood by civilians to be a bigger issue in the military than it actually is. The male recruiter says, "I don't know, some of [the things] that people see on the civilian side are really kind of little issues for us." His colleague says, "It depends on their level of exposure. So if you have been to one of our installations, or if you have known any females, or if you have had the opportunity to come have dinner with a military family.... so it is usually just the strangers bringing it up." Here she implies that exposure to the military will show people that these

²³⁷ U.S. Army Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²³⁸ U.S. Marine Corps Male Interview, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, February 22, 2012.

²³⁹ Ibid.

issues are not of great concern, they will see, “the very humanness of how great everybody is.”

This is a potentially dangerous discourse in its potential to impact how recruits come to understand the problem of sexual assault in the military. They might misunderstand the likelihood of encountering these issues during their own service, as well as be less likely to take seriously and react appropriately to a fellow service member’s allegations that he or she has become a victim of sexual assault.

Lesser forms of discrimination

The same language and constructions are drawn upon when discussing lesser forms of discrimination, for example sexual assault and rape. The civilian equivalency, military action, and diminishment discourses are articulated by recruiters, as is the equal opportunity discourse. For example, in response to a question about whether women are ever treated as second-class Marines because of their gender, the recruiter responded, "Well, unfortunately I would say you probably will be treated like that at times, because there are some individuals who don't look at every single individual as a Marine, and they might have been raised that way from the beginning."²⁴⁰ This is a reflection of the civilian equivalency discourse. The recruiter acknowledges that an issue is present, but assigns the source of the problem as outside the military's culture and organization. These views stem from deviant values learned in American society, not in the military. He concludes his comments on this issue with statements that affirm the military's commitment to addressing the issue, a reflection of the military action discourse.

“You will experience that [discrimination], there is no doubt in my mind. It is gonna happen, you know, it is something that you don't have to necessarily accept that it is going to happen. If it does happen, you confront that person, you take it to your equal opportunity officer. We have things set in place, we have equal opportunity officers that you can talk to if you feel you were done wrong in any way, shape or form. You call that person up and say, ‘Hey, this is what is going on, I want to let you know, I don't appreciate it, I don't want it to escalate.’ Let's just hope that you don't [face discrimination], and if you do, you make sure that it gets handled in an appropriate manner and the person that did do it gets held accountable.”²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

The female Army recruiter articulates a variant of the diminishment discourse when recounting a story from her time in Iraq. She was told about a unit serving at her base that refused to salute female officers. She explains it was not something she was scared of, she felt prepared and empowered to deal with it and fulfill her role as an officer and a superior to those discriminating against her. Her curiosity and interest in these men indicates that this type of situation, if it were to occur, is so far outside the realm of normal experience that she would not be so much offended as interested. Her response was to be both curious, and slightly aggressive, "I have been on the lookout, let me see this."²⁴² When asked what she would have done if she had encountered these men, her response is, "Well, I'd have to say something, but mostly I was just fascinated. Is this an old wives tale or is there really a unit with this culture of belief that women officers are not real officers? And it is a joke to me, because it is not reality to the point that it would hurt my feelings. It is probably a myth, but it is still fascinating to wonder if someone is pushing it."

Unlike the articulation of the diminishment discourse in relation to sexual assault, the effects of its articulation here are not pernicious. Because the female recruiter feels respected and empowered as a woman within the Army, she treats some reports of discrimination with incredulity and even a bit of humor, not as a threat to her status, role, or safety within the organization. In her opinion, men with discriminatory aptitudes are deviant individuals, not representatives of a general attitude towards women. Her attitude towards them downplays the issue, but by doing so also saps their disrespectful actions of power. She sees them as almost comical, not threatening. She does not imagine letting them undermine her rank and accompanying authority. In this case the diminishment discourse legitimates a better environment for women, unlike its less innocent purpose in discussions of sexual assault, when it downplays a very real threat military women (and men) face.

The recruiter finishes her discussion of discrimination by further indicating her lack of tolerance for men with discriminatory aptitudes, and by reaffirming the Army's commitment to equal opportunity and treatment. "Unfortunately, we have seen a couple of infantry folk come here to leadership roles, and they are just not prepared to lead co-ed, and that is disappointing. I hope that I can just educate them or send them back, because I don't want them to be my boss, ever, if they are not willing to embrace it."²⁴³ She is confident in her belief in equality in the military, and she will take action to enforce it.

²⁴² U.S. Army Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁴³ Ibid.

The female Navy recruiter also articulates the equal opportunity discourse when asked about discrimination in the organization. Reflecting on her own experience, she states,

"I have no reason to believe that it is different [being a woman] from a man in the military, just based on my experiences. I don't really have a better answer than that. I feel like the gender equality is at least good enough that if they [a man] had anything bad to say to me based solely on me, being female, then it wouldn't be to my face. So how am I going to know if they, if that is a big deal to anybody that I work with?"²⁴⁴

She had not experienced any discrimination and therefore believes, "It's just like being a woman in any job... I don't feel like I've ever been subjected to any kind of special treatment in a good way or a bad way."²⁴⁵

Women's capabilities

The equality of men and women and their shared suitability for military service is the dominant gendered representation in recruiting. A variation does exist that elevates women recruits, and female service members more generally, above men in terms of their abilities. This is the superiority discourse. For example, the male Army recruiter says, "The female soldiers that I had, more often than not, outperformed the male soldiers and we found out there weren't any issues there."²⁴⁶ The female Army recruiter agrees with him, stating, "Most of the females I have worked with have done better than the males, not always, but a lot of times they have. I think it is phenomenal to show an organization that gender has no impact, necessarily, on if we should be considered for hiring in the first place, or for this really tough job."²⁴⁷

Similarly, both female recruiters indicate that they believe many of the interested women they speak with are set on proving that they can compete with men, do traditionally male jobs, and succeed. The Navy recruiter says, "On average, the type of woman who would be interested in joining the military is someone who likes to think of herself as being tougher, distinguishing herself in that way."²⁴⁸ Speaking from her own experience, the female Army recruiter indicates that, "Part of my pride does stem from pride that the average person wouldn't believe that a female would do it, a female would go to combat for so long. A lot of people don't believe that I could be in charge of men, that to some people is really hard to

²⁴⁴ U.S. Navy Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, February 6, 2012.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ U.S. Army Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁴⁷ U.S. Army Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁴⁸ U.S. Navy Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

comprehend."²⁴⁹

The Marine Corps recruiter echoes both of these sentiments, saying, "I have known quite a few females who can probably outdo a lot of male Marines on the physical fitness test and combat fitness test, because they want to prove that they are just as good as the next person and they are a Marine. They are not just necessarily a female Marine."

In these articulations, there are illusions to the pressure some women feel to prove themselves, the likely result of real or perceived features of a military culture that subordinates women or elevates men's abilities and contributions to the organization. The recruiters do not address this potential contradiction in their framing of military culture and women's success.

The superiority discourse is absent from the Air Force recruiter's articulations. He does not distinguish between men and women in either their ability or motivation. He says, "We all have different things that drive us. I don't see really any girls coming in acting any differently than the guys coming in. They all want to be successful, they all want to excel, they are all given the same opportunity."²⁵⁰ He remains firmly within the limits of the equal opportunity discourse he articulates throughout the interview—men and women are given the same opportunities and treated in exactly the same manner—because he believes that is the culture of the Air Force and how things are done within the organization.

The presence of the superiority discourse, as with the equal opportunity discourse, further supports the assertion of this chapter that when gender does infrequently enter into the recruiting process, it is not exclusionary towards women. This discourse does the opposite, it makes a case for women's inclusion and illustrates how they can succeed within the organization and compete alongside their male colleagues. It is an empowering discourse, as it socializes women to believe they can positively distinguish themselves in the organization from the very start of their military career.

Combat exclusion policies

Restrictions based on gender, such as policies barring women from participation in certain types of combat operations, feature very little in the discussions with recruiters. The recruiters indicate that women rarely ask about combat exclusion policies or express an interest in participating in combat during the recruiting process. The Air Force recruiter says women do not come to him wanting the jobs women are excluded from. Similarly, the female

²⁴⁹ U.S. Army Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁵⁰ U.S. Air Force Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, February 23, 2012.

Army recruiter says, "I don't run into too many who [say] that is their calling, until they have actually joined... I have seen more women who have already joined in a role they were comfortable with at the time, express the desire, 'I want to go to Ranger school. I am out running and I can run faster than all those guys, so why can't I do it?'" The recruiters are arguing that women do not usually seek these roles, at least not initially, so combat exclusion does not factor into the recruiting process, which is in part based around educating the prospective recruit about the job they are going into.

When pushed to speak about women's exclusion, the recruiters provide their personal perspectives on expanded roles for women. Their articulations reflect the equal opportunity discourse. The two Army recruiters both state that they believe women should have the opportunity to participate in combat. For example, the male recruiter says, "I think females should be able to do what they want."²⁵¹ Speaking to the female recruiter, he says, "Want to go to Ranger school, ma'am? Go to Ranger school."²⁵² Her response, "I just want to choose not to go."²⁵³ She continues saying, "[Combat] is not something I want to do, but I don't want to be told I can't do it. I just want the opportunity, if I can get myself in good enough shape or had any desire to go do that thing, I could." This is once again the language of opportunity and equality. It is about all individuals meeting a standard; there is nothing inherent about women that makes them ill suited to combat. Even if recruiters rarely articulate these views to prospective recruits, their belief in equality and equal opportunity for women shapes the values and perspectives they bring to the recruiting process. Expressing these views also shows that recruiters feel empowered to challenge the official policy that keeps women out of combat and certain roles in the military.

Masculinity in military culture

The prevalence of the civilian equivalency discourse, particularly the differentiation of deviant and exclusionary behavior from military culture, provides the primary opportunity to understand how recruiters view military culture in relation to women's service, and therefore how they articulate military culture to prospective recruits. Whether masculinity is a feature of military culture comes up in the interviews with the male Navy recruiter and with the Army recruiters.

The Navy recruiter states that masculinity does not factor into the recruiting process

²⁵¹ U.S. Army Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ U.S. Army Female Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

and then goes on to say, “Generally speaking, the Navy cares a little bit less about masculinity than say the Marine Corps. So I am not necessarily trying to sell somebody an ‘oorah, you get to blow something up’ kind of job.” Two points emerge from this articulation. First, he does not use illusions to masculinity or masculine activities to entice people to join the Navy. Second, he does not believe that masculinity is that important in the Navy. He does indicate its potential importance in the Marine Corps, the branch he served in prior to joining the Navy. In both ways he downplays the importance of masculinity in recruiting and in the military, at least in the Navy.

The Army recruiters express two different understandings of the role of masculinity. The female Army recruiter rejects the term ‘masculinity’ to describe military culture. Her rationale is that other types of traits besides masculinity are favored in the military, and accessible to both men and women. Additionally, she does not see military men as masculine, rather she believes many are in the military to prove their masculinity because they believe they are lacking in some way. She says,

“I don't think that ‘masculinity’ is a good term [to describe the military]. I think that we put a lot of admiration in being, what you could maybe say, ‘elite.’ A combination of intelligent, which includes competence, and physical fitness...I think that we really admire the people that are excellent at either their ability to lead or their ability to understand something complex. Their ability to just really kick butt in the fitness area. I don't think fitness is necessarily a masculine thing though, and I think that all society is shifting away from that body builder kind of an image to an elite, all around fit. And I think the Army is reflecting that, so I don't see many things in the Army as that [masculine]. And you know, having had an opportunity to observe quite a few infantry men, I don't find them to be masculine. In a lot of cases, I find them trying to prove masculinity... it seems to be that a lot of the men, specifically on the officer side, feel like they need to join to prove masculinity that maybe they don't have.”²⁵⁴

Unfortunately, she does not reconcile the contradiction between men seeking masculinity in the military and her assertion that the military is not a masculine organization. In response to these comments, the male Army recruiter revises his own statement on masculinity, which had characterized masculinity as important in the military, but available to both men and women. Giving an example of a woman he had worked with who he felt was very masculine, he states in response,

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

"The leaders that we build in the Army [are] type A. I think a lot of times that is associated with male, with masculinity. And maybe that is probably where that is coming from, because we build leaders no matter what your gender is. So everyone that is a leader in the Army has those traits, and I think sometimes for females to have that, be hard charging... sometimes people [misunderstand], especially on the civilian side, where I think women are still kind of expected to fulfill traditional roles that are not so out in front."

He concludes his statement by reflecting on how soldiers are trained, "Every leadership school that I have ever been to had both males and females, and there is no different training, no different expectations for keeping soldiers safe, and alive, and performing."²⁵⁵ He is making it clear that the Army favors certain traits and trains all its soldiers, men or women, to possess them. These traits may traditionally be understood as masculine, or be misunderstood by outsiders as reflecting masculinity, but instead they are traits valued within the organization. In his opinion, both men and women can achieve the most important goals of the organization.

For these recruiters, masculinity is of limited importance. The masculine traits that do appear in the military are not the exclusive preserve of men and do not create an environment that excludes women, nor are women unable to possess these traits along with their male colleagues.

Conclusion

This exploration of military recruiting discourses generates two main findings. First, the dominant discourses of recruiting are constructed without a major gendered component. Second, the gendered discourses that do exist in recruiting construct men and women as equals in relation to their potential to participate and succeed in the military.

The presence of gender discourses in recruiting indicates that military recruiting is a site of gender construction; however, the most dominant discourses in recruiting are gender-neutral. Gender is therefore not central to the recruiting appeal or the conversations most individuals have with recruiters. Recruiters frame military service in terms of benefits and service, constructions without a gendered component.

Individuals who speak with a recruiter and bring up the subject of gender will be introduced to a few common constructions of gender in the military found in the discourses

²⁵⁵ U.S. Army Male Recruiter, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

of equal opportunity, civilian equivalency, military action, diminishment, and superiority. All the discourses construct men and women as largely equal and equally well suited to military service. The differences that do exist are downplayed and not presented as barriers to joining the organization. Therefore, the gender discourses legitimate women's full and equal participation in the military. Additionally, the discourses minimize the barriers that are known to exist, such as sexual assault and rape, placing the blame outside the organization and reassuring women that if they experience unequal or violent treatment, there are steps they can take and the military will come to their aid. Women are portrayed as capable, and sometimes more talented and well suited to the military than many men.

These findings are at odds with the common feminist assumptions about military recruiting as a masculine enterprise that are discussed in the literature review. The findings point to the need for greater exploration of and deeper scrutiny applied to recruiting, especially to recruiting materials, which are overwhelmingly identified as masculine in other research, in order to understand how they interact, with the portion of the process explored in this chapter, to comprise the recruiting process.

Although gendered discourses do exist in recruiting, the small role these discourses play in the recruiting pitch as a whole leads to the conclusion that recruiting plays only a small role as a site of gender construction in the military. This will be discussed at length in the conclusion of the thesis, when recruiting will be compared to Department of Defense reports and service members' articulations as a site of gender construction.

Chapter Five – Service Member Experience

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to understand how service members articulate their experience in the military, particularly as it relates to the operation of gender within the organization. Service members' articulations are discussed in four categories: construction of the 'self,' construction of the 'other,' received constructions of gender, and combat. These categories structure service members' articulations and provide a roadmap for analyzing the discourses present in their discussions of military service.

Two discourses dominate these discussions — the military professional discourse and the distinction discourse. The military professional discourse presents itself in gender-neutral terms. It is based around a set of characteristics and behaviors relating to professional competence and ability that are favored within the military and available to both men and women. This discourse is used to describe both current gender dynamics and what they should be like in the future.

The distinction discourse raises questions about women's suitability for military service and, in doing so, highlights differences between men and women in the military. This discourse is particularly focused on combat and women's suitability for expanded roles in combat operations, namely ground combat. Therefore, it does not challenge women's continued participation in support roles, in combat aviation, or in service on combat ships. In this discourse, women are constructed as unnatural warfighters, often physically inferior to men, unable to function well in ground or close combat, and too weak or feminine to meet the organization's standards of behavior. Importantly, this discourse, while subordinating women, is not retrograde. It reveals an ambivalence and discomfort with women's presence, but not to the point of total exclusion from the organization.²⁵⁶

Method

Six interviews (averaging one and a half hours each) were conducted by telephone with current and former service members. The interview participants represent a diverse set

²⁵⁶ The distinction discourse is distinct from what has been termed the anti-feminist militarist discourse. This latter discourse, most notably articulated by Brian Mitchell and Stephanie Gutmann, constructs women as fundamentally incapable of participating effectively in the military, both because of their own physical and emotional limitations, as well as a military culture based exclusively on a hostile and exclusionary masculinity. In this conceptualization, women have no place in combat or the military, even in support roles. Women are not only inferior warfighters, but their very presence, and the cultural forces supporting their inclusion, are major threats to America's national defense.

of military backgrounds and positions. They have all deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan and range in age from their mid-twenties to mid-thirties. These interviews do not constitute a random sample. Nevertheless, they represent a significant degree of diversity of experience, and in any case were designed to highlight the unique perceptions and experiences of distinct individuals, particularly in terms of the respondents' understandings of gender (and of gender expression) in the military. The commonalities and shared constructions the participants draw upon in their interviews indicate that their experiences, and their interpretations of those experiences, are not wholly unique. The interviews constitute a set of texts that provide insight into gender construction and the status of women in the military, while remaining specific enough to allow these service members' experiences and perspectives to be recognized and valued as sources of knowledge. Participants are identified with a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity and to facilitate clarity. A short description of each individual follows.

Dan Miller is a Captain (O-3) in the Armor branch of the US Army. He commissioned as an officer in 2008 through the Reserve Office Training Corps (ROTC). He has done one deployment to Afghanistan as a Scout Platoon Leader. He currently works in the Special Forces community.

Emily Stone is also a Captain (O-3) in the US Army. She commissioned through ROTC in 2008 and was assigned to work in the Signal Corps. She completed one deployment to Afghanistan and is completing the Captain's career course in preparation for work in Civil Affairs.

Andrew Taylor is a Captain (O-3) in the US Army National Guard. He enlisted in 2002 and served in the Guard while simultaneously completing an ROTC program as he pursued a master's degree. He commissioned as an Intelligence officer in 2004. He has deployed twice, first to Kosovo doing Division intelligence planning, then to Afghanistan in 2010 as a Red Team member at the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters.

Meg Williams is a Staff Sergeant (E-5) in the US Air Force Reserves. She enlisted in 2006 and works for a Special Forces pararescue unit doing radio equipment maintenance. Meg has deployed twice, to Afghanistan and North Africa.

Jennifer Brown is a 1st Lieutenant (O-2) in the US Marine Corps. She commissioned in 2008 through Officer Candidate School. She is an attack helicopter pilot. She is preparing to deploy to Afghanistan. Jennifer also spent five years enlisted in the US Army National Guard working in signals intelligence, and she deployed to Afghanistan in 2006.

Amber Collins was a 1st Lieutenant (O-2) in the US Army. She graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point and commissioned into the Adjutant General branch in 2001. She completed one deployment to Kuwait and Iraq as part of the initial Coalition invasion in 2003. Amber left the Army in 2006 at the end of her initial service commitment.

The interviews were semi-structured and used the same interview schedule for both men and women (see Appendix Two). Questions were crafted in order to allow each service member to articulate their gender identities as they saw fit, rather than identifying them as men or women in the question.

The topics discussed include: how and why they joined the military; their experience meeting with a recruiter; their expectations of military service and how those match with the reality they experience; the role gender has played in shaping their experience in the military; how conscious they are of their gender while serving; what factors have been more or less important than gender in their experience; instances where their gender either has or has not been important; whether they feel helped or limited by their gender, both in achieving individual missions as well as in personal, career success; whether or not other people in the military are helped or hurt by their gender; whether there is an ideal or model service member, how that ideal is constituted, whether they meet that ideal, how many people meet it, whether the ideal is the same for men and women, whether they want to meet the ideal; what role masculinity plays in the military; personal attributes that either help or hinder them in doing their job; which aspects of their experience in the military have been positive, and which negative; and finally, their overall assessment of their time in the military and if they are happy with their experience.

Analysis

Construction of the self

This first category, construction of the self, explores how service members articulate their identities and analyzes the role that gender and gender expression play in these articulations. Gender expression refers to how individuals ‘do gender,’ that is, how they act out male and female traits in ways that present an appearance of flexibility or stability.²⁵⁷ This approach draws on postmodern understandings of gender as performative and

²⁵⁷ Harriet Bradley, *Gender* (Polity, 2007), 18.

regulatory.²⁵⁸ Although a wide range of performances may be conducted, gender norms are enforced through the policing of performances, encouraging individuals back into a two-sex/gender framework.²⁵⁹

This category begins with descriptions of service members' articulations of their gender identity. Next, the favored position that masculinity holds within these articulations is explored, followed by a discussion of how the responses about gender expression fit within the two primary discourses – the military professional and distinction discourses – and what consequences such a discussion has for the broader construction of gender in the military.

Men's and women's responses to questions about gender expression consistently point to the devaluation of feminine traits and the privileging of masculine expressions. They provide different reasons for those expressions, but all but one service member, Meg, provide responses that fit within this framework.

Emily, Jennifer and Amber all identify negative connotations with feminine behavior. Jennifer and Amber both take steps to appear less feminine, while Emily takes no steps to change her behavior, but is critical of women who express feminine traits. Meg maintains that she takes no steps to alter her gender expression.

Jennifer identifies conscious actions she takes to alter her gender expression. When at work or around her colleagues, she purposely wears unfeminine, androgynous clothing. She says, "When we are doing a squadron event, I am not going to wear high heels, I am not going to wear a skirt or a dress, I am not going to wear a nice blouse....I do change what I wear." When asked why, she says, "Because I want them to take me seriously, I want to show them I am a serious person, that I think more about the job and the group than I do about making myself look good." Outside of work, Jennifer says she will wear feminine clothing.²⁶⁰ In her estimation, dressing in feminine clothing at work will result in her not being viewed as a committed, competent member of her squadron. She is rejecting feminine dress in order to fit in and be taken seriously. Her discomfort with expressions of femininity reveals her belief that femininity is not valued within the organization and serves to mark women as unfit outsiders.

Amber mirrors Jennifer in her actions and rationale. While a student at West Point and in her job prior to her deployment, she attempted to downplay her femininity. She says,

²⁵⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Psychology Press, 1990), 30.

²⁵⁹ Shannon L. Holland, "The Dangers of Playing Dress-up: Popular Representations of Jessica Lynch and the Controversy Regarding Women in Combat," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (2006): 29.

²⁶⁰ Jennifer Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, April 20, 2012.

“I definitely tried not to be girly, absolutely. [I] purposely went out of my way to not wear pink, not too much makeup or jewelry. Neutral clothing.” She says, “Because my gender was considered a weakness, I felt like if I appeared more feminine, it would come across as me being weak.” Remarkably, Amber underwent a dramatic transformation in her gender expression during and after her combat experience in Iraq, actively trying to appear more feminine. Her understanding of feminine gender expression changed, shifting from a sign of weakness to a source of power. She says the shift occurred because of two men she worked with during her deployment. She says, “They taught me how powerful women can be over men and that men can buckle at the knees with a powerful, really attractive women... so I basically used myself as a social experiment to do just that.” She reflects, “My gender is such a separating character, why not really play it up?” Amber identifies only positive consequences from this dramatic change in her behavior, “I think the attention that I got... boosted my confidence so it made me get more of what I wanted... I wasn’t this weak force that could be messed with, I became more in charge of how I was going to be treated.” When asked to distinguish between the impact of her makeup and more feminine clothes, as opposed to an attitude change, she observes, “Well I see now that it really was just an attitude change, but I do think that the makeup and the clothes helped a lot, because it is the first thing that people notice.” Interestingly, Amber notes that she has continued to express her gender in this way after leaving the military and entering the corporate world. This feminine gender performance has become a means to navigate not only military culture, but civilian society as well.²⁶¹

Amber’s transformation in her gender expression exemplifies a dramatically different response to military culture than demonstrated by any of the other women interviewed. She upends her views and believes her femininity is a source of strength and power. Amber emphasizes the traits that are widely considered ill suited to the military, but experiences positive results. She believes that with feminine dress and expression she gains power over men, rather than being taken less seriously.

Emily, like Jennifer, shares a critical opinion of women who wear a lot of makeup or use nail polish. She says, “Whenever I see someone with a lot of makeup on...[it] bother[s] me because you are in the Army, and you need to be able to use a radio or type on a computer or carry a ruck.... And in terms of makeup, I just don’t think it is very military.”²⁶² Her

²⁶¹ Amber Collins, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, December 11, 2012.

²⁶² Emily Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, April 8, 2012.

critique of feminine behavior indicates that although she has not altered her own behavior, she would not adopt a feminine gender expression because she sees it as a barrier to performing the duties of her job, as well as inappropriate for a military environment.

The men interviewed provide a more consistent version of gender performance in comparison to the female participants, who expressed a variety of opinions on the subject. They accept that masculinity is privileged within the organization, implying that femininity as the binary is subordinated, and, therefore, adopt masculine expressions to fit in. Dan says, “I work out in the gym often, in an effort to appear bigger and stronger. I definitely assert my physical presence in group settings more forcefully.... I also, unfortunately, swear a lot more than I ever used to.” Throughout Andrew’s interview, he refers to the presence of a masculine archetype within the military. He says he has done little to alter his behavior, because he already fits the archetype, at least in terms of his physical presence. He says, “[I do not] feel like I am more masculine than I was before [joining the Army].” He also admits to swearing more when in uniform than when out.²⁶³

Dan and Andrew’s statements indicate that the perception that they must conform their gender expression to the sensibilities of the organization is not reserved exclusively for women. Instead, gendered understandings shape male behavior in the military, too. Their responses, as well as Emily and Jennifer’s, all indicate that masculinity holds a favored position over femininity within the military. The norm against feminine expression elicits a change in the behavior of service members.

Amber began her military career from this shared understanding of femininity in the military, but evolved into radically different views. Amber therefore raises important questions about how masculinity and femininity operate within the organization and how individuals with deviant gender expression are handled. It is clear from the interviews, and it is demonstrated throughout the thesis, that a policing of behavior occurs that brings individuals in line with the cultural standards of the organization. It is possible that Amber’s overtly feminine gender expression is tolerated and perhaps embraced because it is consistent with the heteronormative understandings of gender and women’s behavior that exist in American society as a whole and with the accepted two-sex/gender framework.

Amber – a heterosexual, white woman – adopts forms of gender expression that fit within the norm of ‘acceptable’ behavior. If Amber had chosen to dress in a hyper masculine way and adopt traditionally male characteristics, she might have experienced serious,

²⁶³ Dan Miller, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, February 24, 2012.

negative consequences. Jennifer's statements support this view when she indicates that acting or dressing 'butch' is as unacceptable as "being girly" in the Marine Corps. She says, "You need to not be girly. You need to not be butch. You know there are some girls who keep their hair really short and act like guys; that doesn't make you a good Marine." Jennifer admits to judging women who chose to express their gender differently than she does.²⁶⁴

Service member's own articulations of their gender expression serve to delineate acceptable and unacceptable forms of gendered behavior and therefore (re)produce these norms, or serve to disrupt them. These themes will be discussed in depth in the received constructions section later in this chapter.

The two discourses – the military professional and distinction discourses – explored in this chapter are present in the service member's articulations of their gender expression. A form of the distinction discourse is being articulated in the explicit allusions to masculinity and femininity, as well as the devaluation of femininity by the majority of respondents. Feminine women are excluded, meaning that many women chose to reject feminine traits in exchange for more gender-neutral or even masculine expressions.

Echoes of the military professional discourse are present in Emily's view that long nails are functionally inappropriate for military jobs. Her reasoning is related to the job, and doing it well, rather than directly arguing that women must adopt more masculine traits to fit in. Emily's articulation of the military professional discourse offers the first indication that femininity may still be devalued in this discourse, as it is in the distinction discourse. The difference is that femininity's link to women is severed in the military professional discourse, because it offers the possibility that women can be accepted into the organization if they meet a set of (allegedly) gender-neutral standards, whereas in the distinction discourse, women are marked and excluded because of their inherent femininity.

Construction of the 'other'

This section on construction of the 'other' describes how service members articulate the identities of others, particularly within the context of working with people of the same or different genders in the military. As explored in the literature review, the ways in which men and women in the military relate to the 'other' help explain how they constitute their identity within the organization and navigate gendered organizations.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁶⁵ Michael Kimmel, "Saving the Males: The Sociological Implications of the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel," *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 494–516; Orna Sasson-Levy, "Feminism and Military Gender

One of the dominant gender constructions that emerged from women's discussion of female service members is the 'othering' of feminine women. Many of the women interviewed differentiated themselves from women who exhibit stereotypically feminine traits, as well as from women who fail to perform to the standards of the military in areas such as physical fitness tests.

The driving forces behind this process of 'othering' are two features of military culture and structure that work in tandem. The first is the devaluation of femininity in the military and the concurrent privileging of masculinity. The second is the strict categorization of male and female that exists within the organization, and the requisite categorization by the military of all service members into only one of those two groups.

This process of 'othering' and differentiation from the majority of women in the military is also readily apparent in the interviews. Jennifer says, "I think I am better than a lot of the other women... I have always done well in physical fitness, and I might not get a concept right off the bat, but I tend to understand it over time better, than a lot of other women."²⁶⁶ Emily echoes this sentiment as well. Meg and Amber both emphasize their positive feelings towards the other women in the military, but they acknowledge the tensions that often exist between military women.

Jennifer and Emily are severing the link between the category female and femininity through articulations of their relationship to other military women. The manpower structure that categorizes all service members into either the male or female category dictates women's inclusion into the female category, requiring that these same women exclude others for their femininity. If women do not articulate this differentiation, they will be marked by their association with femininity and subordinated within the organization because of it. In addition to articulating this distinction, women perform it through their gender expression, as discussed in the previous section on self-expression.

In their interviews, women also made it clear that other women's femininity, lack of ability, and failure to act more like men lead these women to be rejected not only by male service members, but to be rejected by female service members, too. While arguing that she believes herself to be more physically and professionally capable than many women, Emily states, "I am a serious person by nature, so when I see someone acting kind of stereotypically girly in uniform... that bothers me." She goes on to say, "I think that it is just filling the

Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in 'Masculine' Roles," *Sociological Inquiry* 73, no. 3 (August 1, 2003): 440–465.

²⁶⁶ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

stereotype. It makes it easier for guys to look at women in general, with me in there with that lump [and say], ‘they are not taking the Army seriously,’ or, ‘this is why we don’t want you in our unit.’” Emily indicates further discomfort with the demeanor of women in the military when she says, “Honestly, there is something to be said for military bearing... the female officers I have known... are not that impressive to me, honestly, they don’t have that good command presence. When they walk into a room, I don’t think, ‘wow, that is a military officer.’”²⁶⁷ Jennifer echoes similar sentiments in her interview and offers an explanation, “Even women look up to strong male figures...we tend to push each other away, so that we will almost appeal to those strong male leaders.... The last thing you want to do is look girly. If you are hanging out with a bunch of girls, you look girly.”²⁶⁸

Amber indicates that women react to the negative attention military women receive from both their males and female colleagues by becoming competitive with, and tough on, other women. She says, “I think there are a lot of women in the military who are tougher on more junior women because...there is this pervasive sentiment, [that] we have to be better than the men to get treated better, and if you are out of line, you are going to ruin it for the rest of the women, and I am going to be extra tough on your because you are a women.” She goes on to say, “I think it is rare when there are really altruistic, senior female leaders who are really looking out for the junior women and mentoring them.”²⁶⁹

The process of ‘othering’ and the devaluation of femininity that drives it fit into the narratives of the distinction discourse. Women are being singled out for their femininity, a trait that is differentiated from the serious business of serving in the military. Two dynamics result from these articulations. First, through their gendered articulations, the women interviewed can be seen as part of a process that polices women’s behavior, and establishes and reifies a gender hierarchy. They are rejecting femininity and the women who possess those traits, and in doing so, perpetuate a military culture that subordinates femininity. Second, and to a far lesser extent, they are establishing a new gender order where femininity’s implicit correlation with the female is severed. As a result, these women are refusing to be marked by their association with negative gendered traits. The women who differentiate themselves from the female majority are looking for a place of higher status in the organization through their opposition to femininity. Other women who continue to express feminine traits or who do not articulate their difference as strongly will continue in

²⁶⁷ Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁶⁸ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁶⁹ Collins, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

their position of lower status within the organization. Therefore, this new gender order does not function to improve the lot of women as a whole, rather it rewards women who reject membership in their gender.

Both men interviewed articulated their experiences with women predominantly through the military professional discourse. Their exposure to women in the workplace, although limited for both of them, leads them to believe that women are largely as capable and competent as men in fulfilling their duties. Describing a female service member, a military working dog handler with whom he worked with for six hours in Afghanistan, Dan says, "...she was very professional, she was competent, did her job fairly well. I wouldn't say she was outstanding, but there were really no issues with her."²⁷⁰ He draws no distinctions based on her gender, nor gives any indication that he evaluated her differently because of her gender.

Andrew goes further than Dan in his articulation of the military professional discourse. He says, "Honestly, I never really differentiated them [men and women]. It was never, never an issue, period." While recounting discussions he has had with other male soldiers, he says, "I will hear, 'she [female soldier] cannot drag a soldier off the battlefield.' My favorite one is that somehow the sight of a woman getting shot will horribly distort the unit's ability to fight because... they will see their mothers or something. Seeing someone shot is horrible no matter who it is, I don't think their genitalia comes into your mind, unless you are a really sick person."²⁷¹ He provides a strident reproach of men who raise concerns about women's involvement in the military. It appears that he is deeply invested in being viewed as accepting and non-discriminatory towards women. Neither Dan nor Andrew draw on discourses that limit women's full participation in the military or delineate acceptable behavior based on their gendered behavior.

The women interviewed expressed a range of experiences working with men in the military. Central to this discussion were the sexual harassment, assault, and unwanted attention known to be prevalent in the military.²⁷² The service members were asked directly about these topics and their experience working with men more generally. The four women interviewed covered a large portion of the spectrum of possible responses, from having frequently experienced sexual harassment, to identifying unwanted attention, to playing off

²⁷⁰ Miller, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁷¹ Andrew Taylor, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, May 3, 2012.

²⁷² Jean Zimmerman, *Tailspin: Women in the Wake of Tailhook*, 1st ed. (Doubleday, 1995); Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (Beacon Press, 2010); Kirby Dick, *The Invisible War*, Documentary (Docurama Films, 2012), <http://invisiblewarmovie.com/>.

men's behavior as harmless; however, no one interviewed identified themselves as having experienced or participated in sexual assault or rape.²⁷³

Amber experienced sexual harassment, and also significant sexual attention that she classified as welcome. When speaking about her experience with men generally, she says, "I think it was always influenced by some level of sexual tension. I think that with my peers there was always some level of dirty talk... these were my friends too, but there was always some level of, 'Hey, do you want to get laid? Let's do this!'"²⁷⁴

Amber not only experienced sexual harassment while in the Army, she reported it to her chain of command on multiple occasions, including while at West Point and during her deployment to Iraq. When speaking about how she dealt with the negative attention, at times from her supervisors, she says, "I definitely addressed it. When it came to supervisors and how they were treating me... if I was not getting anywhere, I went to my chain of command and complained about it." She sought the advice of senior enlisted that she felt would side with her. Her Chain of Command responded by reassigning her to a new position.²⁷⁵

Although she took action when she faced harassment, Amber acknowledges that many women do not. She says, "It is fear, fear of repercussions. They fear that their chain of command will not do anything, and then on top of that, because they made the complaint, there will be severe consequences." She continues, saying "They also do not want to be labeled as a trouble maker, they think their gender is such an identifying characteristic to begin with, that they do not want the additional label of trouble maker or complainer."²⁷⁶ Here Amber identifies the barriers service members can face in responding to harassment, but demonstrates the ability to act despite them.

Meg and Emily provide a different view of working with men than Amber. Emily says, "I have never had one [boss] that treated me poorly because I was a women. I have never been in a sexual harassment type of environment, and I have never been in a unit that had that command climate either."²⁷⁷ Meg offers a largely positive view of working with men. She says, "It has been good for the most part, the guys I work with, I love them to death. Some of the other men on my deployments, if they don't know you, they don't treat

²⁷³ The range of experiences expressed by the interview participants should not be taken to represent the issue as whole, nor the experiences of all service members. Rather, these expressions represent particular service member's experiences and the articulations they chose to share for this research. Accounts of the sexual violence perpetrated against women and men are well documented elsewhere.

²⁷⁴ Collins, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

you with the same respect sometimes, and usually they pick on you or makes jokes or whatever.”²⁷⁸ Jennifer says very little on the topic of working with men, other than remarking that more is made of her gender as an officer in the Marine Corps than was made when was enlisted in the Army.²⁷⁹ None of the women construct their male colleagues as threats; they suggest that they can deal with any negative treatment they receive and on the whole relate well to men on a professional and personal level.

Received constructions of gender

Received constructions are the understandings of gender that the military organization presents service members. That organization comprises service members’ peers, superiors, recruiting campaigns, and high-level leadership. These constructions are primarily present as the ideals put forth to service members as examples of behavior and conduct required by, and strived for, within the organization. Received constructions allow for an exploration of official discourses through the lens of service members’ experiences. Service members’ subsequent re-it is their interpretation of the dominant ideas about gender that are bestowed to them by the military organization in turn reflect the extent to which service members’ internalize the received constructions.

Every service member interviewed acknowledges having been presented with an ideal or model service member by the military. Participants identified a range of traits and behaviors that constitute such ideals and exemplars, and also identified multiple sources as the font of ideal articulation and dissemination. Responses to the interview questions clearly articulate both the military professional and distinction discourses.

The presence of both discourses indicates a number of things about received constructions. First, gender constructions are not monolithic. They vary in experience and organizational culture, as well as in the specific way an individual articulates their understanding of the organization. Second, the discourses operate at different levels of the organization. The articulations of high-level leaders might differ from those of junior enlisted. Third, ideals that reflect the military professional discourse are sometimes aspirational; they serve as indication of where an individual believes the military should be on issues of gender, rather than a reflection of the current gender dynamics within the organization. Finally, the presence of both discourses reveals the continuing tension and

²⁷⁸ Meg Williams, Interview with Sarah Weinstein, March 30, 2012.

²⁷⁹ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

contradictions present around women's service in the military; most individuals articulate a range of roles and statuses for women.

Within the military professional discourse, common themes and traits identified as fitting the ideal include professionalism, control, physical fitness, appearance, and rule enforcement. These traits are presented in a gender-neutral manner. For example, Emily says, "You are always supposed to look and act like a complete professional. Being controlled, being everything to everyone, that sort of thing." She continues, "Loyalty to duty, selfless service, honor, integrity, I think all those things are fairly standard between men and women." Emily's understanding of the ideal in the Army comes from officers she admires, as well as from a drilling of Army values.²⁸⁰

Likewise, Jennifer explains that the ideal in the Marine Corps is, "somebody who is physically fit and who advances in their career, somebody who is very well informed about what is going on in the Marine Corps." Jennifer cites the source of these ideals as coming from the leadership, "I guess it is kind of culturally driven, so the people in charge, whenever they say, 'wow, this person is really good and this person is motivating,' we all look to see who this person is, and that becomes the model."²⁸¹

To Meg, the ideal is both physical, "It is someone who looks the part," and based on personality, "They tend to be the rule enforcers, kind of like a hall monitor, they are the one who [when] your commanding officer is not looking, is keeping an eye on you and they will do it regardless of whether they have the power position or not." The ideal is instilled from the beginning in training situations and is reinforced when individuals who meet that standard are placed in leadership positions.²⁸² Meanwhile, Amber, throughout her career, was presented with the ideal of the superhuman, a person who strives for perfection in all aspects of their life and career. This ideal was presented as being available to both men and women.²⁸³

A variation of the military professional discourse articulated constructs the ideal as dependent on playing a specific role in the military, namely participation in the combat arms or combat leadership. Although this articulation has little to do with gender in an overt sense, it is inherently exclusionary towards women as long as they are widely barred from

²⁸⁰ Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁸¹ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁸² Williams, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁸³ Collins, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

participating in many forms of combat. Importantly, it also excludes men, those in support roles such as logistics or intelligence.

Andrew, as a male intelligence officer, speaks from personal experience when arguing that the ideal is not principally based on gender. He says that the ideal is about the combat arms and, “A tactical level proficient leader of soldiers.” What is important is the branch of service that an individual is a part of, the function that branch serves, and their ability to lead. Combat leadership is ascribed a higher level of authority that is not available to individuals, like Andrew, who serve in other branches, even if they meet other, physical ideals, as Andrew does as a tall, physically fit man. He emphasizes that the ideal is only about gender to the extent that women are excluded from the combat arms in the Army and ground combat in the other branches. He says, “The unintended consequence of making [it so] that women can and cannot serve in certain areas makes it tend to look like gender, but [is often] a function, at least now, not historically, of those career trajectories.”²⁸⁴

Andrew presents a view of a military culture not driven directly by masculinity, but rather by combat, the core function of the military. In this view, women’s exclusion and subordination by military culture is a direct function of their exclusion from the core function of the institution, rather than a favoring of a specific set of traits that constitute masculinity, and that are devoid a driving purpose. He explains why he himself does not meet the ideals, “I am an intel guy, right? So even if I am the most physically fit or technically proficient, just by virtue of not having that trajectory means I don’t meet them.”²⁸⁵

This argument, that gender is less important in the military than career trajectory or branch of service, is rarely found in feminist literature because many scholars fail to distinguish among men who are in the combat arms and men who are in support roles. Instead, men and masculinities are treated as monolithic, men as the in-group and women as the alien, subordinated other.²⁸⁶

Andrew articulates a more traditional version of the military professional discourse when he explains how the military handles an ideal based around combat. He says, “The institutions do a good job of trying to correct that implicitly, in terms of what it means to be

²⁸⁴ Taylor, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ The exceptions to this include: Helena Carreiras, “Gendered Culture in Peacekeeping Operations,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 4 (2010): 471; Claire Duncanson, “Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11, no. 1 (2009): 63; Liora Sion, “Can Women Make a Difference? Female Peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47, no. 4 (2009): 476.

an excellent officer and proficient as a professional, but still, it is very hard to escape the larger institutional norm around that type of service.”²⁸⁷

Andrew’s insight that the military attempts to correct for the combat-based ideal is consistent with the other service members’ explanations that the ideal is based on professional competence. Andrew is arguing that the ideals presented at the institutional level differ from the ideal that is articulated and rearticulated within the organization. This insight can help explain the disconnect that exists between the official discourses, which all err on the side of gender-neutral inclusion, and service member and recruiter articulations that articulate other, less inclusive discourses that draw distinctions between men and women and legitimate women’s exclusion from certain roles in the military. Contradictory discourses exist simultaneously within the organization, offering both competing interpretations of women’s current status, as well as alternative visions for the future of women’s integration and participation.

The dominance of the military professional discourse in explanations of the ideals that exist in the service indicates that the push towards gender-neutrality and the redefinition of military service away from masculinity towards professional behavior and competence is coming, at least in part, from the top down.

The simultaneous operation of competing discourses is seen when interview participants articulate the distinction discourse. Emily and Jennifer, who first present the ideal in gender-neutral language, both proceed to articulate the ideal in explicitly gendered terms. Emily states that although she believes anybody could possess the ideal qualities of calm control, “I have just not met a female officer who had them yet.”²⁸⁸ By failing to recognize these ideal traits in any woman she has worked with, Emily raises doubts that they are easily available to women.

Jennifer also draws distinctions between the ideals for men and women, “I think the prerequisites are the same, needs to be physically fit, good at their job, love the Marine Corps, motivated.... You also need to not be girly, you need to not...be a butch. You know there are some girls who keep their hair really short and act like guys, that doesn’t make you a good Marine. What makes you a good Marine is just being, just you know, a Marine. Not too girly, just good at your job, physically fit and sort of quote ‘normal.’”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Taylor, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁸⁸ Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁸⁹ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

In this characterization, it is actually not enough to do your job well and be physically fit, as she stated previously. She explicitly differentiates femininity from the traits required to be a good Marine. Women are not excluded from the ideal, rather their range of behavior is limited. Interestingly, she notes that behavior that is too masculine, “acting like a guy,” is also considered outside of the ideal.

Jennifer’s statement offers a particular reading of the military professional discourse that she and the others articulated at the start. The gender-neutrality that is favored in the military is not constructed by ignoring gender expressions, it is created by delineating a range of accepted behavior. As demonstrated in the gender expression section, deviant gender performances are disciplined. Jennifer’s simultaneous articulation of the military professional discourse and the distinction discourse indicate that the military professional discourse is contingent on women and men performing gender within a narrow, accepted range.

Dan also raises the role of masculinity in the ideal, to some extent mirroring Andrew’s argument when he argues that the importance of masculinity is dependent on the particular branch of the Army.²⁹⁰ There are likely competing ideals within the organization, some that fall within the military professional discourse and leave open the possibility for women to conform to them, and others that reflect the distinction discourse, and inherently exclude women.

The power of these ideals in shaping the behavior, experiences, and careers of service members should not be overstated. Although every participant agrees that ideals exist, none feel that they fully conform to the ideal. For example Meg feels that she, and the vast majority of people in the Air Force, do not meet the ideal. She identifies little desire to conform, citing her personality, independence, and willingness to speak up when she feels that she has ideas about how to better achieve success in missions.²⁹¹ Jennifer, who was explicitly told she was not masculine enough for some jobs in the Marine Corps, does not indicate that her gender or gender expression are hindering her in meeting the ideal, nor that she is concerned that she does not fully measure up to the standard.²⁹²

Amber voices the most strident rejection of one of the ideals she was presented in the Army, that of the superhuman. She believes that the pressure to be perfect and high achieving

²⁹⁰ Miller, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁹¹ Williams, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁹² Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

leads a person to, “a very secretive life with certain behaviors that compensate for that superhuman persona that they are projecting. And I see that with alcohol, and sex, and maybe drugs.” Amber explains, “I definitely learned that there are human needs that can not be neglected... the military has a lot of false expectations, or unrealistic expectations... I see that now, and I definitely have a different vision of an ideal soldier.” Her ideal now is someone dedicated to service, very physically fit, intelligent, and dedicated to a mentorship role – one that is concerned with taking care of the people they work with and advances their career.²⁹³

Service members’ admission of their own failure to conform, as well as their lack of motivation to fit the ideal, indicate that received constructions, or ideals, carry limited weight in the organization. The ideals are well known and easily articulated by service members, but their power to change behavior is far from absolute. Service members’ desire to meet the ideal, and the way they articulate the importance of the ideals, are a form of reinterpretation of the received constructions, and could be a reason why these received constructions lack a high level of salience in the experience of service members. The behavioral changes that result from the presence of these received constructions are not as great as those identified in the literature. For example, Michael Kimmel’s work on gender strategies at military schools and Orna Sasson-Levy’s research exploring women’s negotiation of gender within the Israeli military both identify specific behavioral modifications due to military culture.²⁹⁴

Combat

The further expansion of roles for women in combat is the final category of the articulations explored in this chapter.²⁹⁵ All the interview participants spoke about women’s involvement in combat by drawing on common themes. These include: military culture, the behavior of service members, physical ability and standards, American values such as equality and fairness, and military effectiveness. Consistent with articulations in the categories discussed previously, the constructions service member’s draw upon when discussing reflect the military professional and distinction discourses.

²⁹³ Collins, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁹⁴ Kimmel, “Saving the Males”; Sasson-Levy, “Feminism and Military Gender Practices.”

²⁹⁵ Women have been permitted to participate in combat aviation and serve aboard combat ships, excluding most submarines, since the mid-1990s. Until the removal of the remaining combat exclusion policies in 2013, women are barred from serving in most units that engage in ground combat. The precise current limits on women in combat can be found in Chapter Three as part of the discussion of the DoD’s *Report to Congress on the Review of the Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces*.

Interview participants are split on the issue of expanding combat roles for women. Emily, Amber, Dan, and Andrew support women in combat, as long as they are able to meet the required physical standards. Jennifer and Meg support the current combat exclusion policies, believing women are culturally and physically ill-suited to the requirements of ground combat.

Supporters of women in combat all articulate the military professional discourse, supporting a single standard for men and women that does not discriminate based on gender and allows individuals to pursue whatever career paths they are qualified for. They argue along the well-known themes of the combat debate. Emily rejects concerns over unit culture and cohesion. She says, “If you hear a man making that argument, I am sorry, but you make it sound like the only thing standing between you and acting inappropriate is the presence of a woman. I mean, what does that say about you? Are you a military professional or not?”²⁹⁶

Andrew also dismisses many of the concerns about men and women working in close proximity, “There is really weird Victorian sexuality stuff there though too, like somehow women are these succubus; soldiers will not be able to contain themselves... Well, you are screwed up, you missed your calling in Victorian England.” He attributes such attitudes to the inevitability that issues around sex will arise, “You are talking about a highly sexually active segment of the population and putting them in confined, dangerous spaces together,” but goes on to argue that the real concern is fraternization, not women’s presence, and neither should be a barrier to participation in combat.²⁹⁷

Physical standards as a requirement for participation are an important element to Emily, Amber, Dan, and Andrew. By emphasizing the requirements of combat positions, Amber explains, “Don’t make it about gender, make it about the performance.”²⁹⁸ They all support a single physical standard reflects the necessities of combat. Amber argues that, in combat, physical ability is not always that important. Dan makes a variation of this argument, pointing out the disjunction between the current physical requirements and the realities of combat. He says, “Part of the experience in combat was learning that I don’t have to be able to run two miles in combat. If I have to run two miles, something terrible has happened... that should never have happened and likely will never happen.”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁹⁷ Taylor, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁹⁸ Collins, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

²⁹⁹ Miller, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

Emily argues that women are not of equal ability or will to succeed, pointing out the inherent flaw in a blanket exclusion of women. She differentiates the physically fit women who are involved in Female Engagement Teams from women who, “can’t finish a four-mile run and would probably curl up in a ball and cry if someone tried to make them an infantry soldier.”³⁰⁰

Dan rejects the cultural argument, purposing that men will relate to women in combat in much the same way as men. He says, “We don’t fight for a cause in the military, we fight for each other.” Dan does ascribe some cultural barriers to women’s involvement, saying that although he believes that women should be allowed to compete for the same jobs as men, “There is a cultural learning that has to occur before soldiers, privates, will be able to function effectively with women in the ranks.”³⁰¹

The importance of equality between men and women is raised by Emily and Andrew. Emily recounts being shocked when she first found out that women were barred from most combat positions. She says, “It is the United States right? Women can do whatever they want.”³⁰² Andrew explains that inequality has negative consequences for the military organization, “My fear is that if you don’t have a common physical standard, it will always give people a reason to discredit, I mean people are always going to look for any reason they possibly can to discredit somebody else.” Andrew believes that “inequalities will reproduce tensions in the organization.”³⁰³ Both Emily and Andrew acknowledge that the pursuit of equality cannot come at the expense of military effectiveness, but they believe that the goals can exist in tandem.

Meg and Jennifer place themselves in opposition to the service member’s discussed above, supporting the continued combat exclusion policies that limit women’s participation in ground combat. Interestingly, of all the interview participants, Meg and Jennifer have the roles in the military that are most constrained by combat exclusion policies, either currently for Meg or historically, for Jennifer. Meg, as a support member of a Special Forces pararescue squadron, is prohibited from participating in certain missions solely because of her gender. Jennifer, as an attack helicopter pilot, has a job in the Marine Corps that was closed to women prior to 1994.

³⁰⁰ Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

³⁰¹ Miller, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

³⁰² Stone, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

³⁰³ Taylor, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

There are two possible explanations for their stance. The first is that their proximity to combat, and the men who participate in it, has shown to them that women's participation should continue to be curtailed. The second is that through their exclusion (in Meg's case) and acceptance (in Jennifer's case) in combat missions, they are (re)producing gender roles that ascribe women to either support roles out of harms way, or into lesser combat roles, those that do not include ground combat. There is evidence that both are occurring, although it is clear from the women's statements that they believe the first category best describes their situation.

Meg believes there is a good reason for her exclusion from the combat missions her unit conducts – they are too physically challenging for most men, let alone women. She believes women have less innate ability than men in combat, “Women, they are not ready to see the things, the sort of brutalities, and they don't act in the same manner. If someone is shooting at you, you should probably shoot back...but women tend to have a harder time with it, in my experience.” In her view there are also cultural barriers to women's participation in ground combat. She says, “The infantry is very crass, it is very gross, it is very, very high school boy...if you put a woman in there, even if she was completely capable, even more on the masculine side, she is still a girl, and she is still going to affect that culture, just by her presence.”³⁰⁴ Jennifer agrees with this characterization, recounting a story where the men in her squadron were watching a movie that objectified women and were uncomfortable when she entered the room.³⁰⁵

Jennifer does not challenge the crude, masculine culture of her unit. Instead, she claims not to be bothered by it and implies that it is necessary to have a similar attitude to excel at ground combat. She is normalizing this behavior and the culture it comes from, as well as reaffirming women's exclusion because, in her estimation, women's participation in ground combat is not compatible with this type of attitude. She also infers that this culture leads to sexual assault, “If you had women fully integrated, you are really opening yourself up for all kinds of possible negative sexual situations, whether it just be objectifying someone else, looking at someone else...”³⁰⁶

Jennifer even emphasizes that women are capable in combat, “... I can shoot better than most of the guys I work with... I could probably carry a backpack just as far.... The doing of the job, I don't think that would be affected.” To her the issue is the nature of the

³⁰⁴ Williams, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

³⁰⁵ Brown, Interview with Sarah Weinstein.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

job. “We don’t go to work in the morning and then go home and that is it. We live together, we’re a family, so the social side of the organization does affect how we work together.”³⁰⁷ Here Jennifer departs from Meg, as Meg does not believe women are as capable in combat. This split may be attributed to Jennifer being permitted to participate in combat as a helicopter pilot, while Meg is prohibited from accompanying her pararescue unit on combat missions. In their interviews, they (re)produce their exclusion and subordination.

As shown in this analysis, both opponents and proponents of women in combat draw upon a shared set of themes. What differentiates their arguments is the importance they place on the challenges to women participation, their assessment of the stability of military culture, and the discourses they draw upon to legitimate their arguments, namely whether a service member’s gender should be a salient factor in military assignment policy. Among the participants, their own gender is not determinative of their views on combat, but as Meg and Jennifer illustrate, their own exclusion might be a factor in their (re)production of exclusionary discourses, just as Andrew’s admonishment of men who exclude women could be a reflection of his desire to appear inclusive and distance himself from these men.

Conclusion

Service members’ articulations of their experience in the military across the four categories reveal the presence of both the military professional and the distinction discourses, rather than a single, monolithic understanding of gender and women’s roles in the organization. Neither discourse is overtly hostile to women’s involvement in the military, but the presence of the distinction discourse reveals the continuing discomfort and uncertainty towards women’s participation. The military professional discourse differentiates between women and femininity, offering path a for women to thrive within the organization if they remain within the range of acceptable, ‘gender-neutral,’ gender performances. Femininity remains subordinated within the organization, even as women are finding acceptance and new opportunities.

The (re)production of gender norms that are exclusionary towards femininity is largely found within the articulations of the women participants. The men interviewed more consistently articulate views accepting of a wider range of gender performances. Therefore, the subordination of femininity is a discursive process driven, at least in part, by women’s articulations of acceptable behavior and gender expression, and their policing of deviant

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

gender expressions. Women are complicit in the creation of military culture, at least to the extent that they rarely challenge the prevailing gender norms in their articulations of their experiences. Explanations for this dynamic will be offered in the final chapter of this thesis.

Largely absent from the interviews is a concerted effort to either reject the prevailing gender norms or work to modify them in some way. Some exceptions to this did appear, such as Amber's deliberate effort to capitalize on her femininity discussed in the previous section, and some women's statements on received constructions and combat in the later sections. These exceptions notwithstanding, the women interviewed are participating in the delineation and strengthening of established norms of behavior and devaluation of gendered traits. These women are not responsible for military culture, rather these norms of behavior are deeply embedded in the military organization and its members, and as a result, frequently found in articulations of experience.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis asks: How is gender constructed in the United States military? Focusing on gendered articulations across three levels of analysis—official documents, recruiting, and service member experiences—a number of discourses have been identified, each with a particular construction of military culture and gender, and unique consequences for military women.

This conclusion has four main sections. It begins by exploring how the discourses articulated construct gender in the military, particularly in relation to women's service and status in the organization. This first section includes the challenges to forming a holistic understanding of gender in the organization from the articulations studied, contradictions present between discourses, silences in the discourses uncovered, and the political consequences of these gender constructions. The second section explores how the findings of this research fit within the large body of literature on gender and women in the military, particularly how the findings relate to the nature of military culture, how culture is theorized and described; cultural change, who or what has the power to initiate a transformation; and finally, how women navigate military culture, including the gendered expressions and strategies they employ and the rationale behind their approaches. The third section assesses gender as a lens of analysis, examining what is revealed as well as obscured if gender is the focus. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of avenues for future research, particularly in light of the January 2013 repeal of combat exclusion policies.

Gender construction

The task of identifying and comparing gender constructions across the three levels explored in this thesis is complicated by a number of factors. These factors include the following: the diverse range of purposes behind the creation of each text—whether a report to congress, a recruiting pitch, or the expression of an individual's experience within the organization; the wide variety of topics covered, including sexual assault, combat exclusion policies, and diversity enhancement programs; and the manner in which the texts address their topic, from formal report to reflection on past experiences. Making a direct comparison among all the discourses present in the texts is of limited utility when there are so many factors involved. Instead, it is necessary to understand how the discourses articulated across

all three levels come together to constitute military culture and understandings of gender in the ranks.

The primary finding of this thesis is that the diverse range of discourses articulated indicate that there is not a single, monolithic understanding of gender in the military; rather, there are many, competing understandings, and each has different consequences for women's status in the organization. Despite the presence of diverse discourses, the most prevalent discourses—including the military effectiveness, equal opportunity, and military professional discourses—illustrate a movement towards a more inclusive organization, where gendered traits are downplayed relative to traits understood as 'gender-neutral,' equally available to men and women.

This section explores how discourses construct military culture, gender, and women's status in the organization. Next it seeks to understand the contradictory discourses articulated across the three levels, silences in discourses, and the political consequences of these gendered constructions.

How discourses construct military culture and women's service

The dominant discourses present in across the three levels of analysis—including the civilian equivalency, military action, military effectiveness, test case, equal opportunity, military professional, and distinction discourses—each offer divergent constructions of gender and female service members. For example, the equal opportunity discourse maintains the gender-based categories of male and female, while legitimizing women's full and equal participation within the organization. In contrast, the military professional discourse obscures gender-based distinctions, focusing instead on the traits each individual can contribute to the organization to optimize military effectiveness. This is not a gender-blind construction of service members, rather, the importance of gendered traits are downplayed relative to skills an individual can contribute. Finally, the distinction discourse maintains the link between women and the subordinated traits of femininity, constructing women as ill-suited to ground combat, but able to participate in support roles.

Despite these divergent constructions, military culture is constructed across levels as relatively open and accepting of women's service, with a few notable exceptions. Official documents and recruiter articulations greatly downplay the importance of gender, constructing a military culture that has little interest in gender, seeking instead of maximize military effectiveness by drawing on the talents and abilities of service members. Service member articulations of their experiences provides two competing constructions of military

culture, one that values individuals based on their contributions to the organization, rather than their gender, and another that permits women's service in support and some combat roles, but excludes them from ground combat because women are inherently ill-suited to those roles. Both constructions subordinate femininity. Constructions of military culture and women's service present in each of these levels will be explored in turn.

In the official documents from Chapter Three, the desire to maximize military effectiveness by drawing on the talents and abilities of all service members is tempered by concerns over the negative impacts of fully integrating women into all positions and units. A conservative approach towards women's integration results in women conceptualized as a distinct category from men, the natural warfighters. Women's service is constructed as requiring special, often costly, considerations, while the needs of men are downplayed and normalized as the requirements of the fighting force. Despite the presence of the conservative, test case discourse, the dominant military effectiveness discourse legitimates women's participation and service. The distinctions drawn between men and women in relation to combat are blurred in the report on diversity in the military, *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military* – March 2012. The desire to maximize military effectiveness constructs a culture that values the contributions of all service members, regardless of gender.

In recruiting, gendered articulations are rare. When gendered distinctions do emerge, the equal opportunity discourse dominates. Recruiting is, therefore, the only level of articulation without an explicit challenge to women's full and equal service in the military. Gender rarely features in the recruiting pitch, but when it does, recruiters want individuals to feel that the military is a place where they can thrive and achieve their goals. The strongest articulations of inclusionary discourses appear to reflect the personal views and values of the recruiters. These articulations seem to be their legitimate opinions on women's service, rather than a reflection of a sales environment.

At the level of service member articulation, both constructions of military culture—the military professional and distinction discourses—subordinate femininity. What distinguishes them is whether women are marked, and therefore, excluded because of their inherent femininity, or whether women can eschew feminine characteristics and traits and participate in the organization within a set of 'gender-neutral' standards of behavior. No widely articulated service member discourse constructs military culture as uninterested in gender and the gender expressions of its members. Although some articulations supporting this view are present in the interviews, they are overshadowed by articulations that are hostile

to femininity and to individuals who express feminine traits. The presence of both discourses indicates that military culture may be in a period of transition. Exclusionary practices based on the subordination of femininity are fading as women become accepted, by fitting into the gender-neutral ideal.

It must be noted that the subordination of femininity, which is central to service member articulations, is not accompanied by the privileging of masculinity. Although privileging of masculinity might be expected, as femininity and masculinity are often understood to exist in a dichotomous relationship, it is, rather, a set of purportedly gender-neutral traits, equally available to men and women, that are privileged over femininity. These traits are about professional competence, not explicitly about traditional masculine traits.

The dominance of the military effectiveness discourse, as well as articulations that emphasize traits available to both men and women, indicate a military culture in transition. Gendered constructions still are present, including constructions that subordinate femininity, such as the military professional discourse, or constructions about women's service, such as the test case discourse. Despite these constructions, many discourses articulate women's service in equal terms to men's, and, in addition, move away from distinctions between genders, instead focusing on the contributions all individuals can make to the organization.

Contradictions present between discourses

As described above, the range of discourses articulated across the three levels of analysis offer competing, contradictory constructions of military culture and women's service. This thesis posits that among the primary sources of these contradictions are the combat exclusion policies that differentiate male and female service members and mark women as unfit to participate in the core function of the military—combat.

Combat exclusion policies are in stark contrast both to discourses that articulate equal opportunities for women and that construct a military culture concerned with the skills, traits, and abilities that an individual can contribute. Women are marked by their association with the category 'female;' there is nothing an individual woman can do to escape that categorization, even if she eschews feminine traits and clothing, participates in combat, and distances herself from other women. Any discourse that is gender-neutral, for example articulating equal opportunity for service members, is contradicted by combat exclusion policies. These policies provide a structural constraint that supports exclusionary, subordinating discourses, even as inclusive, gender-neutral discourses gain precedence in the military.

Silences in discourses

Two major silences exist in the discourses uncovered in this thesis. The first relates to sexual assault and other forms of violence experienced by service members. Discourses on sexual assault articulate three distinct conceptions of the phenomena. All are potentially troubling for an organization, and its members. The discourses either assign the blame to deviant individuals (civilian equivalency discourse), highlight the military's efforts to combat the problem (military action discourse), or downplay the severity of sexual assault (diminishment discourse). Although the purpose of this thesis is to identify constructions of gender, not to assess the validity of these constructions based on any outside rubric, such as statistics, it must still be acknowledged that these articulations, in light of other widely available information about sexual assault, are a gross misrepresentation of the issue within the military and an indication that the military is not fully ready or able to effectively address the issue.

At the official level, both the focus on deviant individuals as the source of the problem, as well as prevention programs centered on education and bystander intervention, fail to fully address structural issues (e.g., how reports of sexual assault are handled by a command) or cultural factors (e.g., the degradation of femininity). The same discourses are articulated by recruiters, service members, and official documents, meaning these understandings of sexual assault are consistent across the organization.

The impact of these discourses on the construction of military culture and gender is two-fold. Primarily, the downplaying and misrepresentation of sexual assault constructs an organization that appears safer and better prepared to meet the challenges that service members face than the statistics indicate. Not only are people within the organization given a false view of the problem; individuals considering military service are disserved by an organization unable to truly face and address this serious problem. To a lesser degree, the downplaying of sexual assault fits into a larger narrative of women's inclusion and women's suitability for military service. If sexual assault is not seen as a major threat to female service members, or, alternatively, if it is seen as a threat that is understood and being dealt with, sexual assault can no longer be used as a barrier to women's service. One of the arguments against women's service in the military, and in particular combat, is concern over sexual assault. Articulated both out of concern for women, as well as concern for men whose careers could be tarnished by accusations of assault, both the prevalence of the phenomena and the negative repercussions are seen as great enough to prevent women's inclusion. When sexual assault is neither framed as a serious concern nor as something female soldiers are

likely to face, it ceases to function as a barrier to women's inclusion. On some level, this appears to be a positive step towards women's equality within the organization, but it must not come at the price of real and substantial movement towards combating the problem of sexual assault in the military.

The second major silence relates to the core function of the military, combat, and to related questions of participation in violence. Despite the fact that the organizing feature of the military is the application of lethal political violence in the name of national defense and national interests, this played almost no role in the discourses articulated across the three levels of analysis. The use of the terms 'military effectiveness' and 'combat' come closest to addressing the function of the military, but they are a sanitized versions of the term 'violence.' This omission is important because, as literature on traditional understandings of women and war has shown, women's status in the military is intimately linked to a society's consensus on who is permitted to participate in the defense of the nation, and thus who is permitted to commit state sanctioned violence. Discourses that mark women as unfit to participate in national defense are present in discussions of women's service generally³⁰⁸ and in media representations of women's service during the Iraq War.³⁰⁹

Political consequences of gender constructions

Constructions of gender in the military, and consequently women's status within the organization, have the ability to impact how the organization is understood both as a social institution (e.g., a place where men go to become men³¹⁰), as well as an instrument of national security (how it is and is not used, and how successful military operations are). These consequences are illustrated both in the literature on gender in the military, such as Claire Duncanson's work on peacekeeping,³¹¹ as well as in responses to the United States turning away from conventional war to warfare, including counterinsurgency and related

³⁰⁸ Brian Mitchell, *Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military* (Washington, D.C: Regnery Gateway, 1989); Brian Mitchell, *Women in the Military: Flirting With Disaster* (Regnery Publishing, 1997); Stephanie Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military: Can America's Gender-Neutral Fighting Force Still Win Wars?* (New York: Scribner, 2000); Martin van Creveld, *Men, Women & War: Do Women Belong in the Front Line?* (Cassell, 2001); Kingsley Browne, *Co-ed Combat: The New Evidence That Women Shouldn't Fight the Nation's Wars* (Sentinel HC, 2007).

³⁰⁹ Shannon L. Holland, "The Dangers of Playing Dress-up: Popular Representations of Jessica Lynch and the Controversy Regarding Women in Combat," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (2006): 27; John Howard and Laura C. Privera, "Rescuing Patriarchy or Saving 'Jessica Lynch': The Rhetorical Construction of the American Woman Soldier," *Women and Language* 27, no. 2 (2004): 89-97; Laura Sjoborg, "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others: Observations From The War In Iraq," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (2007): 82.

³¹⁰ Browne, *Co-ed Combat*.

³¹¹ Claire Duncanson, "Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11, no. 1 (2009): 63.

operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, the sentiment has been expressed as, ‘real men do not do MOOTW’ (military operations other than war).³¹² This quotation illustrates the fact that choices seemingly divorced from gender, such as how to fight the enemy, can in fact be intimately linked to how gender is understood, as well as to the value judgments individuals make when assessing their place in the organization and the purpose the organization plays.

Assessing the literature

This second section returns to the literature explored in Chapter Two, as a means of evaluating how the findings of this thesis relate to the larger body of literature on women and gender in the military. In particular this section explores the nature of military culture, including how it is theorized and described and its consequences for military women; cultural change, particularly who or what initiates change, the extent that change is possible, and the impact on women; and finally how women navigate military culture, such as their gendered expressions and the rationale behind their gendered performances.

Nature of military culture

Many scholars construct military culture as monolithic; contradictory discourses, especially those that construct the military as accepting towards women, are rarely identified. The findings of this thesis refute this work. Not only is military culture found to include diverse constructions of both gender and women’s service, many of its discourses are inclusive of women, and little concerned with gendered traits.

The discourses articulated across all three levels are counter to the claim made by Cynthia Enloe, Linda Bird Franke, Madeline Morris, and others that the military is aggressively masculine and hostile to women’s integration.³¹³ Discourses articulate a range of constructions of military culture, from a subordination of femininity and ambivalence about women’s service to arguments for equal opportunity for all individuals in the organization. The distinction discourse, the most exclusionary of the discourses articulated, still permits women’s service in support roles and does not articulate a vision of masculinity that is hostile

³¹² James Traub, “Making Sense of the Mission,” *The New York Times*, April 11, 2004, sec. Magazine, 2, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/11/magazine/11PEACE.html>.

³¹³ Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (University of California Press, 2000); Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Madeline Morris, “By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture,” *Duke Law Journal* 45, no. 4 (1996): 651–781; Karen O. Dunivin, “Military Culture: Change and Continuity,” *Armed Forces & Society* 20, no. 4 (Summer 1994): 531–547.

to women. Regina Titunik's understanding of military culture comes closest to the ones found in the discourses uncovered in this thesis. She emphasizes a meritocratic military that allows all individuals to compete as equals because it is neutral to personal qualities. The findings of this thesis do suggest that she goes too far in downplaying the importance of personal qualities in the military, as many discourses subordinate femininity and exclude women who exhibit feminine traits.

As described in the literature review, much attention has been paid to identifying links to traditional understandings of women and war in present day representations of military women, particularly understandings expressed in the media.³¹⁴ These traditional understandings, which construct men as natural warfighters and women as belonging in the home, along with a view of masculinity and femininity that upholds this public/private dichotomy, are present in some of the articulations identified in this thesis. However, these are neither present in the majority of the discourses nor frequently articulated across the three levels of analysis.

Traditional understandings emerge primarily in official discussions of combat exclusion policies where the test case approach to women's integration marks women as a separate category from men, unnatural warfighters that must be handled conservatively to ensure that they do not interfere with the proper functioning of the military. To a lesser extent, traditional understandings feature in the distinction discourse articulated by service members. But here the illusion is less explicit—it is about the legacy of these traditional understandings still impacting how women are viewed in the military, as less able and culturally misfit for military service.

The findings of this thesis are similar to some work on gender in the military. Sarit Amram-Katz and Orna Sasson-Levy, in their exploration of an Israeli officer-training course, argue that women's presence and efforts to integrate women simultaneously degendered and regendered the course. Structural changes degendered the course by allowing for the integration of women, but regendering occurred when men in the course constructed their

³¹⁴ Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, "Reduced to Bad Sex: Narratives of Violent Women from the Bible to the War on Terror," *International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2008): 5; Sjoberg, "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others"; Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (Zed Books, 2007); Jennifer K. Lobasz, "The Woman in Peril and the Ruined Woman: Representations of Female Soldiers in the Iraq War," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 29, no. 3 (2008): 305; Cristina Masters, "Femina Sacra: The 'War on of Terror', Women and the Feminine," *Security Dialogue* 40, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 29–49; Holland, "The Dangers of Playing Dress-up"; Howard and Prividera, "Rescuing Patriarchy or Saving 'Jessica Lynch': The Rhetorical Construction of the American Woman Soldier"; Shannon L. Holland, "Gender, National Identity, and Public Discourse Making Sense of Operation Iraqi Freedom" (University of Georgia, 2006).

identities in relation to women.³¹⁵ Although the findings from this thesis are somewhat different, as both men and women constructed identities in relation to a subordinated femininity, a process that is not inherently exclusionary to women; Amram-Katz and Sasson-Levy's framework, and simultaneous identification of processes that degender and regender, is useful for two reasons. First, it acknowledges that contradictory discourses, with divergent consequences for gender and the status of women, can exist in an organization at the same time, which is an important finding of this thesis. Second, Amram-Katz and Sasson-Levy emphasize the importance of structural features. They conclude that the regendering process was able to take place because structural efforts to degender did not go far enough.³¹⁶ This emphasis on the importance of structural features in the construction of gender is mirrored in the findings of this thesis. Combat exclusion policies that bar women from many types of combat both account for many of the contradictory discourses present in articulations across the three levels, as well as prevent discourses that articulate equal opportunity and gender-neutrality from becoming dominant in the organization.

Subtle distinctions exist between the findings of this thesis and past understandings of militarized femininity. That framework posits a form of militarism that functions through the subordination of women and femininity in relation to masculinity. It requires women to remain vulnerable and without agency, so as not to challenge men's status in the military and as traditional protectors, even as women are integrated into the military.³¹⁷ Although both subordination of femininity and devaluation of women's service are present in the discourses, they are not accompanied by discourses that privilege masculinity or men's traditional roles as protectors. Instead, femininity is subordinated below traits related to professional competence, traits equally available to men and women. The distinction and test case discourses come closest to articulating a version of militarized femininity, but they lack the emphasis on traditional masculinities found in militarized femininity. Laura Sjoberg and others who study militarized femininity have charted its evolution as women are integrated into the military. It is possible that articulations of traditional masculinity are less prevalent in the military than in the past, or that because scholars have focused on media representations of female soldiers, they have missed the changing culture of the military as it moves away from the privileging of masculinity and the exclusion of women, towards a more gender-

³¹⁵ Orna Sasson-Levy and Sarit Amram-Katz, "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military," *Signs* 33, no. 1 (Autumn 2007): 105–133.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

³¹⁷ Sjoberg, "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others"; Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E. Russo, and Lorenza Sebesta, *Women Soldiers: Images and Realities* (St. Martin's Press, 1994), xvi.

neutral military culture that allows for the participation of women as agents, not as subjects in a hostile and exclusionary institution.

Cultural change

The findings in this thesis identify two sources for cultural change in the military, service members themselves (both men and women) and structural features, such as the removal or loosening of combat exclusion policies. These work in tandem to facilitate either the transformation or the stagnation of military culture. The existence of structural factors, particularly combat exclusion and assignment policies, can either support inclusive and transformative discourses in furthering cultural change, or they can prevent discourses from affecting change because they cannot overcome structural barriers.

Service members in their articulations do little to challenge the prevailing gender norms. Their articulations supported both the inclusive and exclusionary discourses present at other levels in the military. Despite not challenging the gender order, service members revealed themselves as agents whose articulations contribute to the formation of military culture, including how it constructs women. The men and women interviewed are participating in the delineation and strengthening of established norms of behavior and the devaluation of gendered traits. The most extreme example of this is the ‘othering’ of feminine women by female service members. Women are active participants in this process of (re)articulating gendered standards of behavior and expression.

Scholars including Judith Stiehm and Karen Dunivin also raise the possibility of cultural change through women’s participation.³¹⁸ Stiehm posits that women’s participation subverts the process by which military masculinity is constructed against an absent, female ‘other.’³¹⁹ Although women might serve this function, their articulations indicate that their impact on military culture might include continuation of some features, such as subordination of femininity, even as women are further integrated, and accepted, into the organization. This is not an example of what Cynthia Enloe terms ‘militarization.’ To identify it as such would be to posit that feminine traits are women’s essential nature. The subordination of femininity does not necessarily mean the devaluation of women as individuals with diverse traits or women as a group. The individual women who do subordinate femininity in their articulations still believe they can participate in the organization and have skills and

³¹⁸ Dunivin, “Military Culture,” 533; Judith Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 225.

³¹⁹ Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*, 225.

knowledge to contribute. If women are not willing (or able) to challenge prevailing gender norms, femininity is likely to remain subordinated. Women can be accepted as equal members of the organization as long as they are not too feminine. Gender remains a salient factor in military culture and a means of exclusion, particularly exclusion of women. The movement towards gender-neutrality is, therefore, incomplete.

Gendered expressions and strategies employed to navigate military culture

Findings around gendered expressions and strategies employed by service members to navigate military culture are similar to previous research on the subject. Melissa Herbert emphasizes the struggle women face in their gender expression. She writes, "[Women] must strike a balance between femininity and masculinity in which they are feminine enough to be perceived as women, specifically heterosexual women, yet masculine enough to be perceived as capable of soldiering."³²⁰ Although this challenge likely exists for many military women, as Herbert illustrates in her research, this sentiment was absent from female service members' articulations in their interviews for this thesis. The majority of the women interviewed indicated that their focus is on eschewing femininity. None stated that they feel pressure to retain some level of feminine expression. Instead, they described it as gender-neutral clothing choices and expressions. Amber, who does choose to express her femininity, feels that this choice goes against what is expected of women in the organization, rather than being a requirement for acceptance. None express concerns over the perception of their sexual orientation. This could be a function of the repeal of the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' law that prohibited openly homosexual individuals from serving in the military.

Michael Kimmel and Orna Sasson-Levy both lay out strategies that women use to navigate military culture.³²¹ Sasson-Levy argues that, "women soldiers in 'masculine' roles adopt various discursive and bodily identity practices characteristic of male combat soldiers."³²² Her work differs from this thesis in its exclusive focus on women in what she terms 'masculine roles.' The strategies she identifies women adopting are not, however, so different from those seen in the behavior of women interviewed for this thesis. The strategies she identifies are more similar than those Michael Kimmel identifies in his research on

³²⁰ Melissa S. Herbert, *Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (NYU Press, 2000), 82.

³²¹ Michael Kimmel, "Saving the Males: The Sociological Implications of the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel," *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 494–516; Orna Sasson-Levy, "Military, Masculinity, and Citizenship: Tensions and Contradictions in the Experience of Blue-Collar Soldiers.," *Identities* 10, no. 3 (2003): 319.

³²² Sasson-Levy, "Military, Masculinity, and Citizenship," 441.

women at military colleges. The women interviewed articulated behavior that fits into two of Sasson-Levy's strategies—the rejection of traditional feminine characteristics and the downplaying of sexual harassment and abuse.³²³ The women's articulations, while not directly reflecting the third strategy of copying male soldier's speech and mannerisms, cannot be excluded as women did not speak directly to this point.

In the case of Kimmel's framework, only his strategies of empathetic sameness and strategic compensation operate. Empathetic sameness, meaning identifying as a service member before a woman, occurs in a number of instances, including the identification of gender as a relatively unimportant factor in their experience in the military and the articulation of the military professional discourse that focuses on professional competence. Kimmel's strategy of strategic overcompensation, when women prove their ability to compete with men, is present to a lesser extent, particularly in recruiters' articulations of women seeking military service to prove themselves and excelling physically once in the military, and women's frequent illusions in their interviews to their physical ability relative to men. There was little indication of the development of informal support networks, as some women emphasized the opposite, that women are very hard on each other and rarely acted as mentors to younger women. There was also little reference made to gendered displays of traditional femininity outside of work. Women explained that they might dress differently at work than at home, but never that they dressed differently outside of work in order to reassert their femininity. If their manner of dress changes, it is at work to downplay femininity, not outside of work to play up their femininity. Amber's overt displays of feminine behavior are also excluded from his framework, as they occur both at work and outside.

Sasson-Levy uses her framework to argue that these identity practices both disrupt gender in the military, as well as reify the military gender regime,³²⁴ a finding supported by this thesis as well. Although not directly addressed by Sasson-Levy, this thesis finds the identity practice that serves to both disrupt and support the existing gender regime is the 'othering' of feminine women. Women disrupt the gender regime by differentiating femininity from women through their articulations, but at the same time they participate in the subordination of feminine traits and the women who possess them.

³²³ Ibid., 447.

³²⁴ Ibid., 447–8.

Gender as a lens for analysis

This third section evaluates gender as a lens for analysis, seeking to understand what is both revealed and obscured by this framework.

Gender is so often used as the key to understanding military culture that the question remains why further research, including this thesis, is necessary. The answer is that the particular ways that gender is applied to military culture and service members' experience matters, as well as the particular understanding of military culture that is generated. One of the primary reasons for undertaking this research was a concern that previous research focusing on gender in the military either misrepresented certain aspects of military culture and women's experiences, or was missing important elements needed to form a holistic view of the military as it exists today. Military culture continues to evolve, as do the roles military women play in the organization. Gender as a lens of analysis must then continue to be applied to chart these changes and ensure that they are understood, both inside and outside the organization.

Using gender as the lens for analysis makes gender appear to be the most important factor in understanding the organization and its members. Especially in the case of service member experiences, it is important not to overstate the importance they place on gender in their experience in the organization and their career as a whole. Every service member interviewed stated that gender played less of a role in the military than other factors, such as attitude, ability, career trajectory, or branch. Especially in the case of women—where their military service is so often understood only in relation to their gender, and, in particular, the obstacles that their gender presents to them and to the organization—choosing gender as the frame of reference can serve to reify these limited understandings of women and further obscure how other aspects of their identities shape their military experience and contribute to the formation of military culture and to mission success or failure. With this in mind, interview questions were crafted to encourage recruiters and service members to analyze their experience from many different frames of reference, not only gender. In addition, when analyzing articulations, an effort was made to identify and describe discourses that do not include a gendered component and to assess how important gendered discourses are relative to other types of articulations. For example, in recruiting, gendered discourses were found to be rare. Gender played little role in the vast majority of recruiter articulations.

Future research

This final section assesses the findings to determine what is left unanswered or unexplored by this thesis, within the purview of gender construction in the US military. Four areas in particular deserve continued attention: the phenomenon of sexual assault; the relationship between recruiting materials, including television commercials and billboards and articulations by recruiters; how service members' experiences and gendered articulations are influenced by their branch of service and the function they serve; and the January 2013 decision by the Department of Defense to remove all remaining combat exclusion policies.

Sexual assault, as described earlier, remains a poorly understood issue. This thesis helps to elucidate public articulations of the issue, such as those in official documents and recruiting, as well as the personal experiences of six service members. The discourses uncovered cannot account for the high levels of sexual assault and rape that are endemic in the military, both in terms of those who participate in, and are victimized by, these crimes, as well as the source—whether structural, cultural, or because of deviant values and behaviors of individual service members. Significant future research is needed on this issue, research that is both sensitive and inclusive of service member experiences as well as the competing understandings of military culture described in this thesis.

Recruiting materials rely heavily on appeals to traditional forms of masculinity, according to Melissa Brown's study of military recruiting.³²⁵ These masculine appeals are not articulated by recruiters in their interactions with potential recruits. Research is needed to understand why this disconnect exists, the relationship between recruiting materials and recruiter's articulations, and the role gender plays in the entire recruiting process.

In this thesis, service members' articulations were not broken down into categories based on the role they played in the military, such as support versus combat jobs. It would be unsurprising if members of different service communities constructed gender and women's status and roles in divergent ways. This deeper analysis would have required considerably more interview participants, which was not possible in the limited format available in this thesis. Given that the findings of this thesis are counter to much of the accepted understandings of gender in the military, more work should be done to explore these findings.

In January of 2013, the Department of Defense (DoD) rescinded the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, the policy that governed the military's combat exclusion policies. The rationale provided is, "We are fully committed to removing as

³²⁵ Melissa Brown, *Enlisting Masculinity: Gender and the Recruitment of the All-volunteer Force*, 2007.

many barriers as possible to joining, advancing, and succeeding in the U.S. Armed Forces. Success in our military based solely on ability, qualifications, and performance is consistent with our values and enhances military readiness.” The stated goal is to, “Fully integrate women without compromising our readiness, morale, or war-fighting capacity.” Each service has until May 15, 2013 to release its plans to the DoD to open closed positions to women. The integration process must be completed by January 1, 2016. Services may request exceptions to the new policy, which must be approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the Secretary of Defense. The memorandum outlining the new policy explains that, “Exceptions must be narrowly tailored, and based on rigorous analysis of factual data regarding the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the position.”³²⁶

In light of this policy change, a few points need to be made to understand how this major shift impacts the findings of this thesis. First, all the texts analyzed in this thesis are from before the decision was announced. They were created during the period immediately (one-to-two years) prior. Whatever cultural and structural shifts legitimated this decision were arguably present during the research process. Second, the primary finding of this thesis, that there are competing constructions of gender, both between levels of analysis (recruiting versus service member experience, for example) and within an individual's articulations or a document's articulations, does not preclude this type of shift. Some of the constructions identified legitimate women's full and equal participation in the organization; some sever the link between women and feminine traits, allowing women to participate in the organization if they maintain 'gender-neutral' gender expressions; and some draw distinctions between men and women's service, based on femininity being ill-suited to the mission and cultural requirements of combat. Some of these constructions are consistent with the decision to repeal the remaining combat exclusion policies, and some are not.

What is not yet known is how each service will react to the new policy, or what the policy will actually mean for women's status and the roles women are allowed to have in the organization. Women might continue to be excluded from Special Forces or the infantry, or women could find themselves in many roles previously closed to them. Therefore, the magnitude of this policy change cannot yet be fully understood. The DoD has made the shift from excluding women unless strong evidence is provided that women can participate

³²⁶ Martin E. Dempsey, “Memorandum for secretaries of the military departments acting under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness chiefs of the military services - Elimination of the 1994 direct combat definition and assignment rule” (Department of Defense, January 24, 2013), <http://www.defense.gov/news/WISRJointMemo.pdf>.

effectively, to permitting women unless an exception is proved necessary. This shift could be a sign of fundamental change in how women are understood in the organization, but there is no way to know how it will actually play out.

This is an area ripe for future research, once the policy begins to be put in place. The findings of this thesis indicate that this policy could herald a fundamental shift in military culture if two things happen. First, the Secretary of Defense must not allow any exceptions to the policy that now permits women; they must not exclude individuals based primarily on their gender. Second, each new job and unit that is opened to women must have entry standards that are perceived to reflect the requirements of the job, neither designed to be inherently exclusionary to women nor deliberately lax to ensure women's inclusion. If, for example, the Special Forces remain closed to women, this policy shift will have little actual and meaningful effect on military culture and perceptions of gender.

Gender will cease to be a salient feature of military culture only through its removal from entry standards for all jobs in the military. If all qualified individuals are permitted to compete for, and gain entry to, any unit in the military, gender based distinctions will cease being backed by structural features of military culture and will likely lose much of their importance in the organization.

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Appendix One – Recruiter Interview Schedule

1. Please describe the recruiting process. How do you first come into contact with interested individuals, what brings them into the recruiting office, what are the primary questions you ask them or topics of conversation discussed?
2. How do you view recruiting? Are you selling the [particular service], making a match, weeding out unqualified applicants, etc.?
3. What are the most important selling points or things you emphasize?
 - Are these different when speaking to males or females?
4. What attracts individuals to the [particular service]?
 - What do you think attracts females to the [particular service]?
5. How do people first become interested in the [particular service]?
6. What does the [particular service] look for in interested applicants?
7. Does the [particular service] market itself directly to females?
 - Are there specialized recruiting materials?
 - Are TV ads and print recruiting materials targeted equally towards males and females?
8. Does your sales pitch or the way you present the [particular service] differ if speaking to males versus females?
 - Do you say different things?
 - Do you acknowledge their gender?
 - Did your training address recruiting males versus females?
9. Is it harder to get females to enlist? Why or why not?
10. Do males and females ask different questions?
 - What kinds of questions do they each ask?
11. What are the messages you are trying to send to individuals interested in joining?
12. What do you think the main messages or takeaways of your recruiting materials are?
13. Do you think males and females respond to the recruiting materials any differently? Why or why not?
14. Do recruits consider more than one branch of the military or do they come to you only interested in the [particular service]?

- Why do you think that is?
15. What are the issues you think females face in the [particular service] or the US military in general?
 - How do you deal with those during the recruiting process?
 - Do females raise any concerns related to their gender?
 - Do you bring up gender specific issues?
 16. How important do you think being female is for a female's experience in the [particular service]?
 17. How do you think a female's experience in the [particular service] differs from a male's experience?
 18. How do you think a female's experience in the [particular service] differs from the experience of females in the other branches of the US military?
 19. To what extent to you use your own experience in the [particular service] during the recruiting process?
 - Do you talk about it?
 - Do people ask about it?
 20. Why did you choose to join the [particular service]?
 21. What was your experience speaking with a recruiter like?
 22. Do you enjoy being a recruiter?
 23. How long have you been recruiting?
 24. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about recruiting or the [particular service] in general?

Appendix Two – Service Member Interview Schedule

I have a number of questions I would like to ask you about your experience in the [branch of service]. If there are any that you feel uncomfortable answering, please let me know and I will move on to another question.

I'd like to start with some basic questions about your time in the [branch of service] and then get to some more specific questions in a bit.

1. Please tell me about your military service. For example, how did you [enlist or commission], how long have you served, what branch of the [particular service] are you in, where have you served, how many deployments have you done, where did you deploy, what did you do during those deployments?
2. When did you first become interested in the military or the [particular branch of service]?
 - a. What interested you?
3. Why did you choose the [branch of service] as opposed to one of the other branches?
4. What did you think being in the [branch of service] was going to be like?
 - a. To what extent have those initial perceptions been accurate?

Most of the questions I would like to ask you relate to gender in the military and your experience as a [service member] in the [branch of service]. Some of these questions might seem strange or like you don't apply to you. Feel free to give whatever answer comes to you or tell me if you feel the question does not apply to you and I will move on to something else.

5. How important do you think your gender has been in shaping your experience in the military?
 - a. what factors been more important in shaping your experience?
6. How often do you think about your gender while serving?
7. In what situations has your gender been important during your time in the [branch of service]?

- a. When has it not been important?
- 8. Do you feel like you have been limited in the [branch of service] by your gender?
Helped by it? why or why not?
- 9. Do you think that other people in the military are helped or limited by their gender, or are your experiences unique?
- 10. Do you think your gender has helped or hindered you in achieving specific missions?
 - a. Do you have any specific examples of this?
- 11. Do you think your gender has helped or hindered you in achieving personal, career success in the [branch of service]?
- 12. Have you played roles in the military that are based solely on your gender?
 - a. Special Forces, FETs, CSTs, etc.
- 13. Do you think there is an ideal type or model soldier? Where does that view come from?
 - a. to what extent do you think you meet that ideal?
 - b. to what extent do you think most people in the [branch of service] meet that ideal?
 - c. Do you think that there is a different ideal type for men and women?
 - i. Why do you think that the ideal is different for men and women?
 - ii. To what extent do you think that women can meet the male ideal?
- 14. Describe your overall experience working with people of the opposite gender?
- 15. What has been your experience working with people of your same gender?
- 16. Do you think you are similar to other people of your same gender in the military? In what ways are you similar? How are you different?
- 17. What has your experience been working with people from other branches?
- 18. Do you feel you are judged differently than people of the opposite gender?
- 19. Have combat exclusion policies ever limited the roles you play in the military?

20. What personal attributes help you to do your job? Which hinder it?
21. Overall, how important do you think masculinity is in the military and the [branch of service] specifically?
- a. In what ways is masculinity important or not?
 - b. How do you know?
 - c. When does it become an issue/ not an issue?
 - d. Do you think that masculinity is expressed differently in different branches?
22. How do you express your gender in the [branch of service]?
- a. Do you take any steps to act or appear more masculine or feminine?
 - b. Do you express your gender identity differently then before you were in the military? Before you deployed? Are these permanent changes or will you revert back to a previous expression of gender identity? Why did you do all these things?
23. What are your feelings on women serving in combat?
- a. What experiences shaped these opinions?
 - b. Have your opinions changed over time?
 - c. How common do you think your views are in the [branch of service] as a whole?
24. How different do you think your experience of gender in the military would be if you were in a branch other than the [branch of service]?
25. What have been the most positive aspects of being in the [branch of service]?
26. What has been negative?
27. Have you been happy with your experience in the [branch of service]?
28. What do you think you have gained from it?



18/11/2011
Sarah Weinstein
International Relations

Ethics Reference No: <i>Please quote this ref on all correspondence</i>	IR8097
Project Title:	American Counterinsurgents: Gender and Violence in the Afghan War
Researchers Name(s):	Sarah Weinstein
Supervisor(s):	Dr Jaremey McMullin

Thank you for submitting your application which was considered at the <name> School Ethics Committee meeting on the 19/10/2011. The following documents were reviewed:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Ethical Application Form | 19/10/2011 |
| 2. Participant Information Sheet | 19/10/2011 |
| 3. Consent Form | 19/10/2011 |
| 4. Debriefing Form | 19/10/2011 |

The University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) approves this study from an ethical point of view. Please note that where approval is given by a School Ethics Committee that committee is part of UTREC and is delegated to act for UTREC.

Approval is given for three years. Projects, which have not commenced within two years of original approval, must be re-submitted to your School Ethics Committee.

You must inform your School Ethics Committee when the research has been completed. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year validation period, you will be required to write to your School Ethics Committee and to UTREC (where approval was given by UTREC) to request an extension or you will need to re-apply.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice' (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/UTRECguidelines%20Feb%2008.pdf>) are adhered to.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jeffrey Murer
Convenor of the School Ethics Committee

cc. Mary Kettle, IR Postgraduate Secretary