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DEGENDERING AND REGENDERING: CONTEMPORARY GENDER TROUBLE IN THE  
UNITED STATES MILITARY

By

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Mary Hawkesworth

And approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Degendering and Regendering: Contemporary Gender Trouble in the United States  
Military

By: Stephanie Szitanyi

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Investigating the US military's changing self-representations over five decades, this dissertation examines shifting gender regimes in an era of growing gender and sexual equality and explores how these changing gender representations affect civilian-military relations. By using gender as an analytical category, I offer new insights into military operations, which in turn inform practices of citizenship in the contemporary US. Building upon analyses of male dominance, masculinist culture, and homosociality in the military, I depict the constant struggle within the military to preserve and promote particular constructions of masculinity. Using the recent integration of open homosexuality within military ranks, the end of the combat ban for women, and the military's public acknowledgement of the epidemic nature of sexual assault within its units as focal points, the dissertation analyzes how hegemonic military masculinity attempts to cope with explicit episodes of "degendering" and how it works directly and indirectly to "regender" itself as a system of hetero-male privilege. Informed by interpretivist methodologies, I develop a postpositivist analysis of gendered mechanisms of exclusion within the US military. Analyzing diverse military public discourses

“against the grain,” I demonstrate how certain masculinized narratives erase women’s roles in the military from public consciousness, placing military service performed by women below a threshold of visibility. Contributing to feminist scholarship that traces the profound effects of militarization, I suggest that these pervasive military discourses sustain a value hierarchy that subordinates the lives and contributions of ordinary individuals to the potent sacrifice of the ultimate (masculine) warriors.

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## DEDICATION

To my Mother, for her unwavering support and sacrifice over the last five and a half years. Thank you for continuing to be my greatest fan.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Recently, the U.S. military has encountered multiple instances of “gender trouble.”<sup>1</sup> The media has been flooded with accounts of high percentages of sexual assault among active-duty members of the military and Congressional efforts to address this sexual violence. After two decades, the government officially abandoned its “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which mandated compulsory public heterosexuality and closeted homosexuality in the military. In February of 2013, the military officially rescinded the combat ban on women.<sup>2</sup> Three months later, for the first time in its history, the Navy successfully launched the first completely unmanned drone from the decks of the USS George H.W. Bush. Less than one month later following the publication of statistics indicating dramatic increases in sexual assaults in the academies, on bases, and during deployment, the military’s top leaders appeared on Capitol Hill before the Senate Armed Services Committee to assure Congress and the American public of their ability to curtail sexual assault and protect the physical security of all military personnel.

“Gender trouble” was also rife in the trial of Army Private First Class Bradley Manning, who was convicted of espionage, theft, and fraud for leaking classified documents to the online information source Wikipedia. Manning’s decision to leak more than 750,000 classified documents was variously attributed to struggles with gender identity. A photo released by the military during the trial showed Manning in women’s garb, wearing a blonde wig. A military psychologist who treated Manning for “gender

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<sup>1</sup> The term “gender trouble” is borrowed from Judith Butler’s (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* to refer to instances of gender performativity and production in the context of the United States military.

<sup>2</sup> On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, the Pentagon announced that there would be no exceptions made, and all combat roles, including Navy SEAL and secret operations positions, would become available to women starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

identity disorder” (Pearson 2013, 8) prior to her arrest testified that she had been feeling acute isolation in a “hyper-masculine” environment. Yet when Manning announced her transgender identity as a woman after her conviction, the military initially denied her access to hormone therapy while serving her thirty-five year sentence in military prison.

These instances raise several interesting questions about the military: What do episodes of this sort reveal about the military as a gendered institution? How does the military construct and legitimate particular gender formations—both within its ranks and within society more generally? How has the military addressed complex issues of gendered inequities in the past? How has the military managed the representations of its gendered dynamics in the public eye? How has the military’s construction, legitimation, and management of gender been complicated by the emergent field of gender studies and changing gendered practices in society? How can investigation of the military’s gendered representations over time reveal new insights into the operations of the military as a gendered institution? This dissertation seeks to address these complex questions.

My dissertation investigates shifting gender regimes<sup>3</sup> within the U.S. military, examining not only how the armed services represent themselves in an era of growing gender and sexual equality, but also how the U.S. military’s changing gendered representations affect civilian-military relations. By using gender as an analytical category, I suggest that we gain new insights into military operations, which in turn provides a more nuanced understanding of how this intimate relationship informs both hierarchies and practices of citizenship in the contemporary United States.

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<sup>3</sup> For this dissertation, the term “gender regimes” refers to changing military policies that impact gender(ed) relations within the institution. Used in conjunction with the word “shifting,” the term is meant to provide a conduit through which to consider whether the military, as a gendered institution, has the ability to undergo “degendering” (the removal or gender from policies and implementation of those policies) and “regendering.”

Many scholars have noted that militaries are characterized by male dominance, a masculinist culture, and homosociality (Belkin 2012; Brown 2012; Burke 2002; Enloe 1983, 1990, 2000; Cohn 2000; Francke 1997; Goldstein 2001; Kronsell 2012; Levy 1997; Lutz 2000). Yet few have explored the constant struggle within the military to preserve and promote particular constructions of masculinity.<sup>4</sup> The recent integration of homosexuals into the military openly, as well as women into combat, along with public acknowledgement of the extensive occurrence of sexual assault across military sites provide a rich opportunity to analyze how hegemonic military masculinity attempts to cope with explicit episodes of “degendering” and how it works directly and indirectly to “regender” itself as a system of hetero-male privilege.<sup>5</sup>

Gendered institutions operate in accordance with norms that “construct and maintain power dynamics that favor men of the dominant race, ethnicity, and sexuality” (Hawkesworth 2012). Charged with the nation’s security, the military plays a crucial role in defining and upholding particular constructions of manhood and masculinized citizenship. As Carole Pateman (1998) has noted, military service holds pride of place in the construction of (white) “male independence” as the criterion for public citizenship, while simultaneously making it impossible for women, gays, and enslaved peoples to meet that criterion. The nascent republics of the long nineteenth century created “three elements of ‘independence’ ...related to the masculine capacity for self-protection: the capacity to bear arms, the capacity to own property and the capacity for self-government”

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<sup>4</sup> See Melissa T. Brown’s (2015) study on military recruitment campaigns across the individual branches of the United States military.

<sup>5</sup> As outlined later in this introduction, Acker (1990) outlines five mechanisms of “gendering,” that is processes through which gendering occurs. Her mechanisms view gender as a “constitutive element” (147) in which construction, revision, and change is constant. The constant ebb and flow associated with this understanding of gender suggests the possibility of not only processes of gendering, but also degendering and regendering.

(248). States used mandatory male military service, conscription, and militia duty as means to construct men as “bearers of arms” (248). Women, on the other hand, were “unilaterally disarmed” (248), barred from military service and from combat duty, as free, propertied men were assigned responsibility for the “protection of women and children” (248).

This privilege is not only felt through the military apparatus. When certain citizens are empowered to protect and defend, at the same time that they are privileged in business, education, religion, law, and politics, the message may readily suggest natural superiority. Mobilizations for equal citizenship have explicitly challenged the naturalization of white male power across economic, social, and political terrains, yet until recently, the military has remained rather well insulated from pressures toward equality. National defense has trumped claims of equal treatment and equal citizenship. As the military now attempts to handle its manifold gender troubles, it is under increasing pressure to become a more inclusive institution. My goal is to show how the pretense of gender inclusiveness masks the preservation of hetero-male hegemony.

By analyzing diverse military public discourses “against the grain,”<sup>6</sup> I will demonstrate how certain masculinized narratives erase women’s roles in the military from public consciousness, rendering military service performed by women negligible or even invisible. Other discourses note women’s presence while suggesting feminine weakness, lack of ability, or indeed, lack of courage, thereby shoring up the image of hetero-male service members as the nation’s ultimate defenders, reliable and trustworthy warriors—and as such, best citizens. Building upon the works of feminist scholars who

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<sup>6</sup> For exemplary examples of analyzing/reading discourses “against the grain” see Ferguson and Turnbull (1999) and Faust (2008).

have traced the profound effects of militarization (Enloe 1983; Ferguson and Turnbull 1999; Lutz 2002), I suggest that these pervasive military discourses sustain a value hierarchy that subordinates the lives and contributions of ordinary individuals to the potent sacrifice of the ultimate (masculine) warriors who risk everything for national defense.

Militarism and processes of militarization are themselves mechanisms of gendered exclusion. Focusing on the United States military, each chapter of the dissertation will present a case study of a particular mechanism of exclusion. Drawing on visual, textual, archival, and cultural materials, I will explore how specific forms of hetero-masculinity are produced and sustained in discourses regarding the shift from a universal male draft to an All-Volunteer Force, the privileging of combat wounds in ways that render sexual violence inconsequential, the construction and preservation of military memorials, and tactics of military recruitment.

### **Epistemology, Methodology, and Methods**

My dissertation research adopts an interpretivist methodology. Following arguments developed in the field of feminist international relations (feminist IR) theory, I use postpositivist approaches as the most appropriate for the analysis of gendered mechanisms of exclusion in the context of the US military. Taking a mixed-methods approach, I use specific qualitative methods to meet the discursive challenges of each chapter.

In keeping with the positivist presuppositions about the equivalence of explanation, prediction and control, mainstream IR theory relies primarily on quantitative analysis. However, as Jill Steans (2006) has argued, “Part of the project to ‘gender IR’ has been to

engage in the process of critiquing the mainstream to expose the profound gender bias that underpins positivist approaches to theorizing (in IR) and generate a debate about the powerful processes of inclusion and exclusion at work in the construction of theories, worldviews and research agendas in IR” (28). According to feminist postpositivist approaches to IR, gender is more than a mere variable to be controlled when testing universal generalizations, gender is both relational and a system of power. Insisting “that women cannot be studied in isolation from men,” feminist IR “go[es] beyond adding women” (Tickner 1997, 621).

Chiefly concerned with the maintenance of the state in a (supposed) anarchic international system, much of IR scholarship has focused on understanding the mechanisms and causes of war as well as the ability to predict the outbreak of future wars. War has often been defined in these literatures, by establishing thresholds for numbers of dead, and militarization has been operationalized as a monetary phenomenon that is studied in relation to fiscal measures such as annual defense budgets and spending figures per annum as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Slater and Nardin 1973). Discussions of militarization often focus on military capabilities in weapons and resources and in terms of arms capabilities, where the number of nuclear weapons one nation has is compared to those of another in suggesting a degree of threat it might pose. Large militaries and extensive arms capabilities are framed as necessary in order to maintain and secure the nation-state from outside threats. While militarization is not thought to be fixed or static in international relations theory, fluctuations are measured and analyzed through increases or decreases in military expenditures and arms supplies (Slater and Nardin 1973).

Postpositivist methods, however, allow for broader conceptualizations of militarization. Through the use of qualitative methods and interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, scholars such as Cynthia Enloe (1983, 1989, 2000) and Catherine Lutz (2002), have moved beyond numerical values as the sole measures of militarization, investigating how militarization impacts the lives of individuals who are often far removed from the military apparatus that figures so prominently in national defense-spending. Instead, feminist postpositivists conceptualize militarization as a “discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them” (Lutz 2002, 723). These discursive shifts, Lutz (2002) argues, result in more than increases in sizes and budgets of militaries – which has been the prime focal point of mainstream IR scholars. They also contribute to “the less visible deformation of human potentials into the hierarchies of...gender” (723).

### **Literature Review – Militaries as Gendered Institutions**

#### *What Are Gendered Institutions?*

In contrast to narrow views that link gender to particular forms of male and female embodiment, the theory of gendered institutions suggests that gender is “present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life” (Acker 1992, 567). For Joan Acker (1992), gendered institutions were created and established by men, are currently or were previously dominated by men, or whose logic and operations are “interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions” (567). As she suggests, “To say that an organization, or any

other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker 1990, 146). In contrast to the myth of gender neutral organizations that informs liberal political theory, gender should be thought of central to the functioning of an organization, as integral to the existence of operating processes (Connell 1987; West and Zimmerman 1987). Absence of women as participants in specific institutions is not the sole indicator of a gendered institution. Feminist scholars have traced the operations of gender in recruitment practices, divisions of labor at work, pay levels, decision power, structural hierarchies, performance of unwaged care work, retention and promotion practices, perquisites and benefit plans.

How then does “gendering” occur within organizations? Acker (1990) suggests five mechanisms through which processes of gendering occur. First, gendering occurs through establishing constructed divisions which are specifically and consciously created along and between differing genders. These divisions may be apparent in how labor is divided in the workplace, how different genders are to behave, the gendering of physical spaces, power in terms of institutionalized divisions among genders’ application to various labor markets, public versus private spheres including the family and the home, as well as the state. While each of these dimensions is “analytically distinct,” Acker (1990) argues that they are all “parts of the same reality” (146). Second, gendering of organizations occurs through the establishment of symbols, images and rituals and traditions that “explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose” (146) those lines of divisions of gender. Gendered symbolism of organizations may be visible in a multitude

of different mediums including discourse, pop culture, the national press, television and radio, dress and apparel, celebrations and ceremonies. Third, gendered divisions and structures are also constructed in organization through the interaction of the genders, particularly those patterns in which interaction “enact[s] dominance and submission” (146). Fourth, gender surfaces through individual dress and deportment, in appropriate clothing, language and self-presentation for working in the gendered environment (Reskin and Roos 1987). Lastly, Acker (1990) emphasizes that gender is continuously constructed, revised, and reestablished in the constant flow of social interactions and institutional regulations. While gender has long been acknowledged as central to some social structures such as the family or religious institutions, feminist scholars have noted that gender also “helps to frame the underlying relations of other structures, including complex organizations” (147). As Acker (1990) suggests gender is a “constitutive element” (147) in the creation and operation of organizations, an underlying logic that sustains judgments of what is normal, natural, and permissible.

### *The Military as a Gendered Institution*

The military is a prime example of a gendered institution – whether in terms of the military of the United States, other nations, or international forces. Within the U.S. context, women were officially excluded from the colonial militias<sup>7</sup> and later from the various branches of the U.S. military. Gender symbolism figures in military discourse, whether in the form of basic training rituals or in the language of nuclear defense analysts

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<sup>7</sup> Women did not officially serve in the U.S. Armed Forces until the creation of the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1901 and 1908 respectively. During the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican War, and Civil War, women often disguised themselves as men to contribute to the war efforts. Although women also served as nurses, cooks, saboteurs, and water bearers in these wars, their contributions are generally accounted for as contract or volunteer service. See Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. (2014) <http://www.womensmemorial.org/H%26C/Resources/hfaq.html>.

or the sexual banter of male cadets and soldiers. Feminist scholars have generated several hypotheses to explain the gendered exclusions in the United States military. Iris Young's article, "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State" (2003), contrasts three models: 1.) the literal exclusion of women from the armed services, and restricted opportunities after women were officially allowed to serve in the four branches, 2.) the Male Domination Model and 3.) the Masculine Protectionist Model. The first model which prohibits women from serving in official institutions of the state is often tied to biological determinism, which posits an inherent aggression and war-making capacity in men, and attributes an inherent pacifism to women (Goldstein 2001). According to this naturalized frame, the state simply models its institutions on natural capacities and inclinations of the two sexes. By contrast, the Male Domination Model rejects notions of natural roles in relation to war and peace, suggesting instead that "...masculine men wish to master women sexually for the sake of their own gratification and to have the pleasures of domination. They bond with other men in comradely male settings that give them specific benefits from which they exclude women, and they harass women in order to enforce this exclusion and maintain their superiority" (Young 2003, 4). This model seems well suited to account for rampant sexual harassment and assault in the U.S. military, and for male bonding rituals as part of basic training (calling those who struggle with certain tasks "wusses", "sissies" and worse). The Masculine Protectionist Model provides a very different account of masculinity from the Male Domination Model. In place of the male sexual aggressor, the Protectionist Model posits a concerned caretaker who strives to protect vulnerable loved-ones from the predations of an enemy that threatens destruction to the state, and the women and children who live within that

state. Each of these models supports the view that the military plays an important role in constructing hegemonic masculinity—although the specific form of hegemonic masculinity varies (Connell 1995; Goldstein 2001). Each model offers rich insights into the diverse uses of gender symbolism (Cohn 1987a, 1987b). And each sheds some light on the means by which the U.S. military celebrates values of strength, force, the capacity to kill as norms and behaviors typically associated with men who act to protect women and groups of feminized “others.”

#### *Women’s Historical Exclusion and Absence from the Military*

Although women have been instrumental in all wars conducted since the American Revolution (Kerber 1980) for centuries the U.S. military has existed as an exclusively male institution, where “Women’s participation [...] from the beginning, was built around understandings of appropriate gender roles” (Bailey 2009, 136). Women’s military service was first officially recognized through the formation of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps in the early twentieth century: 21,480 nurses served at home and abroad during World War I; 400 died in the war. In 1920, when the Army Reorganization Act was passed, military nurses were granted officer status with “relative rank” (Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. 2014, 10), which precluded them from having full rights and privileges. During World War II, 60,000 army nurses served in military hospitals at home and overseas. Sixty-Seven of those were captured as POW in the Philippines and Japan and held captive for two and a half years. In addition, the Army established the Women’s Army Corps in 1943 (previously the Women’s Auxiliary Corps) through which more than 150,000 women served during World War II

in various auxiliary and non-combat related positions in addition to the 60,000 who served as nurses at home and abroad.

Women's presence in the United States Navy was first officially recognized by Congress' creation of the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908 (Naval History and Heritage Command 2010). Although women served in various capacities and participated in activities related to Navy missions prior to this date, their service before 1908 was not formally recognized. During the Civil War, for example, nuns from the Sister of the Holy Cross treated wounded soldiers on the USS Red Rover, which became the Navy's first commissioned floating hospital. When Navy clerical workers were in short supply during the late 1910's, the Navy began enlisting women specifically to "alleviate" the lack of personnel (3). While more women were enlisted into the Navy by the time of World War II, they did so in caregiving capacities, most commonly in the role of nurses who took care of wounded soldiers on the ground, in the air, as well as on battle ships.

In 1920, when the Army Reorganization Act was passed, military nurses were granted officer status with "relative rank" (Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. 2014, 10), which precluded them from having full rights and privileges. When women were demobilized after the end of World War I, the army considered two proposals for women's service in the military. The first, the potential creation of a women's service corps, was instantly rejected. The second, a proposal put forth by Major Everett S. Hughes, sought to fully integrate women into the army, but was also rejected. As European nations returned to a Second World War, and Americans weighed the consequences of intervention, the idea of a women's military corps began to emerge once more. As Beth Bailey (2009) writes, "Nurse Edith Rogers, who had served

as a Red Cross nurse during World War I, worked with army leaders on a bill she introduced in the spring of 1941, as Americans continued to struggle over the nation's proper role in the war" (137). As a result, The Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) was established on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942, and a year later "auxiliary" was dropped from its title. It was not fully integrated into the regular Army, however, until 1948. Under its purview, 60,000 army nurses served in military hospitals at home and overseas during World War II. Sixty-seven of those were captured as prisoners of war in the Philippines and Japan and were held captive for two and a half years. In addition, the Army established the Women's Army Corps in 1943 (previously the Women's Auxiliary Corps) through which more than 150,000 women served during World War II in various auxiliary and non-combat related positions in addition to the 60,000 who served as nurses at home and abroad. Despite not all citizens serving in World War II, the U.S.'s participation in the war required an overall buy-in, and mobilization of American society in general. Bailey (2009) argues, however, that delineating specific roles for specific groupings of individuals in society were "heavily influenced by national values and cultural beliefs, not least those about gender" (138). In the case of the Army, the Women's Army Corps (WAC) was "a difficult sell, even on a purely voluntary basis" (138), even though "no one was suggesting breeching the fundamental divide between men and women – that men fight and women don't" (138).

Overall, some 400,000 women served in the various branches of the military during World War II in non-combat positions. The magnitude and importance of this service convinced military and governmental officials to permit women to serve as regular and permanent members of the armed forces during periods of peace (Naval

History and Heritage Command 2010, 4). Though Congress debated the legislation for two years, the passage of the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act permitted women to serve in certain positions in the Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy. The act, however, established a quota, restricting women to only 2% of the overall military force,<sup>8</sup> which was approximately representative of the number of women who had served during World War II. Women were also excluded from Air Force and Navy carriers that were at risk of engaging in combat.

During the second half of the 1960's and the 1970's, women gained some ground within the military, although they remained restricted to noncombatant roles. The 2% restriction was lifted in 1967. Some 11,000 military women were stationed in Vietnam during the conflict. Nearly all were volunteers; 90 percent served as military nurses, and the remainder worked as physicians, air traffic controllers, intelligence officers, clerks and other positions in the U.S. Women's Army Corps, U.S. Navy, Air Force and Marines and the Army Medical Specialist Corps. In 1972, at the same time that Congress debated the Equal Rights Amendment, the Navy initiated a pilot program to allow women serving in the Navy to be posted on warships, specifically, the USS Sanctuary. The same year, both the Army and Navy ROTC programs opened to women, as did all staff corps positions within the Navy. A year later, women were permitted to participate in aviation

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<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that legislation which eventually established the act was initiated by the military, not by members of Congress. After the successful participation of women during World War II, military officials urged Congress to recognize the utility of women in auxiliary positions both in periods of peace and war. Military officials also argued that permitting women to serve in the military in a permanent capacity would assist with recruitment efforts for maintaining a standing military during periods of peace. Prior to the introduction of the legislation, women were only permitted to serve during the period of the war, plus six months of demobilization as the war wound down. Through 1946 and 1948, Congress debated the legislation, often unconvinced that women should have a permanent position in the military at all (Frank, 2013). The enactment of a 2% quota, along with other stipulations excluding women from combat, female Marines not being able to serve on combat ships, female members of the Air Force not being allowed to serve on planes, and women not being allowed to command men acted to appear inclusive for the sake of having a prepared military for future wars, while also making women seem marginal to the military apparatus.

training, and in 1974, the first women graduated from Naval aviation training. Further training and academic inclusion came in 1975 when Congress authorized women to be admitted to military academies, with the first cohort of woman being admitted to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1976 (Naval History and Heritage Command 2010, 5). In the final years of the 1970's, the Navy – with approval from Congress – revised the combat exclusion law to permanently assign women to non-combatant ships.

Women made additional advances in the 1980s. The U.S. Naval Academy graduated its first female officer in 1980 (Naval History and Heritage Command 2010, 8). Women were selected for both the Airforce and Navy Test Pilot School, and qualified for jet training and as Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialists. Women became more visible Navy ships: 193 women officers and 2,185 sailors served on a total of 67 ships (8). In 1983, 37,000 women constituted 8% of the enlisted force of the Navy; the Department of Defense set a goal of increasing the number of women to serve in the Navy to 51,300 (9).

During the 1990's, combat aviation positions were opened to female aviators, the first woman sailor was permanently posted on a combat ship; and the combat vessel USS Abraham Lincoln was deployed to the Western Pacific for the first time with a mixed crew of both men and women. Despite these significant advances, in 2013, women remain only 14.5% (203,000) of the total Active duty force of the military (US Navy Fact Sheet 2013). Women comprise 18% of the 722,000 listed reservist and National Guard Troops. Women are currently assigned to fewer than 50% of ships in the Navy; only 135 ships have enlisted female sailors onboard (US Navy Fact Sheet 2013). Close to half of all currently enlisted women in the Navy work in administrative related positions (46%), while only 18% work in aviation, and 11% work in combat systems-related positions (US

Navy Fact Sheet 2013). The data on inclusion of female students reflects similar patterns. At the Naval Academy, women made up 19.7% of the students in the 2012-2013 academic year (US News Best Colleges 2013), compared to 16% of the student population at West Point Military Academy and 22% at the Air force Academy (US News Best Colleges 2013).

Historically, Congress and Pentagon officials have debated whether or not women should be allowed to serve in the military. But as Saskia Stakowitsch (2012) notes, the question has now become to what degree should women's integration into the military remain restricted. Until January of 2016, varying degrees of combat exclusion specifically directed towards women remained active, limiting women's advancement in the armed forces. These gendered policies utilize women in specific roles according to the military's assessment of its needs rather than women's abilities or aspirations (Brown 2012). Combat exclusions limit full-integration, funneling women into technologically advanced roles for which the military does not have sufficient male recruits available (Stakowitsch 2012). While the full effect of the end of combat exclusions will not be known until after 2016 when women start serving in combat roles, selective integration of women into the armed forces until recently has concentrated them in non-combat related roles. Without combat experience, women cannot rise in the ranks to attain leadership positions that afford power, respect and prestige. The end of absolute exclusion and service restrictions, then, does not constitute a full degendering of the armed services. The U.S. military can remain a predominantly male institution long after the ban on women serving in the military has been lifted.

The history of women serving in the military illuminates only one facet of the

gendered nature of military institutions. As Cynthia Enloe (1983) has documented, neither the number of women serving in the armed forces, nor attention to the persistent underrepresentation of women in the military affords a nuanced understanding of the military as a gendered organization or institution. In *Does Khaki Become You*, Enloe (1983) documents how women have been utilized and controlled in various ways by the military to serve the needs of male soldiers. Even as women constitute a small percentage of military personnel, they have been fundamental to the continued operations of wars and militaries the form of “soldiers’ wives, whores, man servants, maids, and other camp followers” (1) on and off military bases. Indeed, when considered in these terms, women have been very present and have been integral contributors to the effective functioning of militaries, even when officially absent.

### ***Male Domination through Gendered Institutions***

Military and defense institutions, in the United States and in other contexts, have been studied as a form of hegemonic masculinity, that is a constellation of norms and values such as courage, strength, national honor, bravery, and service to country associated with “a certain kind of male heterosexual sexuality” (Acker 1990, 153), which establishes and legitimates a hierarchy of power within the organization. Coined by R.W. Connell (1987, 1995), hegemonic masculinity is established in opposition to particular constructions of femininity and subordinate masculinities which are construed as inferior. For Annica Krosnell (2005), hegemonic masculinity becomes visible in institutions through “a particular set of masculine norms and practices that have become dominant in specific institutions of social control” (281). Although Connell notes that determinate types of hegemonic masculinity surface within specific organizations, the content of

hegemonic masculinity is specific and non-static. Within the military, hegemonic masculinity currently combines strength and ingenuity, loyalty to the troops, principled obedience to the chain of command, courage under fire, and ability to control emotions and carry out the mission even when facing the death. Those who conform to “the masculine-warrior paradigm” (Magnusson 1998 quoted in Krosnell 2012) help the nation achieve its national defense and foreign policy objectives, while also winning the respect of their peers and the admiration of their country. Although the masculine warrior paradigm vies with competing forms of hegemonic masculinity in the twenty-first century (e.g., the hyper-rational and inventive scientist, the super-rich finance capitalist, or the glamorous Hollywood star), military masculinity continues to play an important role in shaping public norms of manliness and leadership. Indeed, Connell (1995) argues that the military plays a particularly prominent role in establishing definitions of hegemonic masculinity within American and European social and political cultures. Although he is less concerned than Connell to tie specific forms of hegemonic masculinity to particular contexts, Joshua Goldstein (2001) suggests that military and defense organizations have consistently represented and been associated with particular gender stereotypes that hold impressive cultural cache. Further, Charles Tilly (1990) argues that the gender norms validated in military and defense institutions are particularly well suited to upholding pernicious gender stereotypes due to their close association with nation building activities and their prominence in international relations. Military and defense institutions necessarily change over time, including changing policies that regulate how gender is “acted out” within the institution, but Acker (1990) insists that ultimately there are limits to changes in gender regimes: “women’s bodies cannot be

adapted to hegemonic masculinity; to function at the top of male hierarchies requires that women render irrelevant everything that makes them women” (153).

The persistence of certain masculinist norms despite the integration of women into the armed services is apparent in basic training rituals. Scholars (Belkin 2012; Burke 2002; Enloe 1983; Kier 1998; Levy 1997) studying bootcamp socialization have identified two primary purposes of having newly enlisted service members go through bootcamp. Psychologically, basic training establishes a connection between combat and manhood that provides for a “justification of the superiority of maleness in the social order” (Enloe 1983, 12-13). Enloe argues that bootcamp ties violence to masculinity through “the widespread presumption that a man is unproven in his manhood until he has engaged in collective, violent, physical, struggles against someone categorized as ‘the enemy’” (13). In addition, bootcamp constructs the “other” not just as the enemy who soldiers confront during combat, but also as the feminized other – women – who men define themselves against. As Enloe explains:

To be masculine is to be not feminine. To prove one’s manhood is imagined to be to prove (to oneself and to other men and women) that one is not ‘a woman’. Consequently, experiencing military combat and identifying with the institution totally committed to the conduct of combat is, for those men trying to fulfill society’s expectations, part and parcel of displaying and proving their male identity and thus qualifying for the privileges it bestows (13-14).

Socialization to the military involves intensive rituals designed to build comradery among the troops and obedience to the chain of command governing them. Many studies have suggested that these rituals strip recruits of their individuality as they inculcate collective norms (Barkawi, Dandeker, Kier, and Petry 2002; Burke 2002; Enloe 1983; Kier 1998). Only those characteristics necessary for being a “good soldier” are permitted. Stereotypical masculine characteristics of “aggressiveness”, “bravery”,

“endurance” and “discipline” are demanded and institutionally valorized, while stereotypical feminine characteristics such as “compassion”, “cooperation”, or “nurturing” are belittled and weeded out (Burke 2002, 13). In studying homosexuals in the military cross-nationally, Elizabeth Kier (1998) documents how basic training curricula involve a strategy of “breaking” the recruits and “molding” them into fighters (8). In the words of conservative writer George Gilder, military indoctrination teaches that “the good things are manly and collective; the despicable are feminine and individual” (quoted in Francke 1997, 155). Grueling exercises and ritual taunts teach recruits to do away with “feminine” traits like sensitivity or weakness. As Gilder further asserts, the end goal of this process is “to create a solidaristic group of male killers,” which requires that “you kill the woman in them” (quoted in Francke 1997, 155). By insistently asserting a categorical binary between desirable traits coded “masculine” and undesirable traits coded “feminine,” military training simultaneously indulges in gender symbolism and shores up belief in biological sex differences (Hooper 2001, 43). Individual soldiers are encouraged to function as a “unit” and feel loyal to their “brothers in arms,” yet this fellow-feeling is far from egalitarian. Far from being grounded in a sense of community and cooperation, military rapport is based on a competitive hierarchy linked to a model of dominance, submissiveness and a rigid constructed role of masculinity (Kier 1998, 9).

This socialization process of men – which constructs hypermasculinity as the ideal to which new recruits aspire – raises severe challenges for the socialization of women in the armed services. In a strict hierarchical structure of domination and submission, the military creates a situation that requires someone to land at the bottom of

the competitive ladder. Systems that privilege upper body strength as the key to successful performance disadvantage women, who possess on average 25% less upper body strength (Cohn 2000). By proving their "manhood" through a series of training rituals that rely upon and develop upper body strength, male recruits demonstrate that they are not "weak," they are not "girls," they are not women. Those men who do less well in these competitive exercises, are taunted with obscenities typically reserved for women. Thus, basic training itself defines feminine traits in opposition to masculine ones (Burke 2002, 14). If, as Burke (2002) suggests, soldiers – and by extension "real" men – are strong and brave and aggressive, then "real" women must be the opposite: weak, passive and in need of protection. In this way, military training reinforces patriarchal notions about the strength and potency of the masculine soldier and contributes to the myth that women require protection. Gender integration of the military, then, occurs within an institution founded on opposition to equality between the sexes, an institution whose training rituals routinely disparage all things feminine and undermine notions that women are capable of valor, strength, and military service (Enloe 1983, 16-17). Within military institutions, women exist only in relation to men and that relation is one of stipulated inferiority, regardless of rank.

Feminist IR scholars have suggested that the military exists within a larger set of practices of state-craft, which involve the systematic institutionalization of gender differences. Tools of statecraft such as the use of military, war making, and foreign policy establish demarcations between political and civilian communities, which often situate and impact women and men differently. Carol Cohn (1987), Jean Elshtain (1990, 1992) and J. Anne Tickner (1992) have been particularly sensitive to androcentric

language and narratives used in the conduct of foreign policy, tracing male preoccupations with anarchy, scarcity, power-wielding, and violent conflict to narrow constructions of national self-interest and rational action, paucity of power that is projected through the language used to develop foreign policies. As in the case of basic training rituals, policy options are constructed dichotomously, and characterized in gendered binary oppositions that associate the positive with masculine prowess and the negative half with femininity. Foreign policy and international discourses further entrench oppositions between an androcentric model of a rational actor and feminized alternatives that appeal to convention, cooperation, or morality. The reinforcement of these gendered norms sustains the idea that recourse to violence, for example, is the rational response to any external threat to the state, while downplaying the importance of negotiation and diplomacy.

Cohn's (1987) path breaking study of euphemistic language among defense experts demonstrated the pervasive gender symbolism that structures national security discourses in defense institutions. Cohn's analysis traces parallels between the deployment of gendered tropes by "defense intellectuals" and the gendered rituals of basic training. Both create environments conducive to homosocial "bond[ing] with other men in comradely male settings that give them specific benefits from which they exclude women" (Young 2003, 4). Cohn's analysis of concepts such as "nuclear virginity" and the association of "disarmament with emasculation" demonstrate how particular male dystopias inform "Realism" in IR, narrowly structuring rational choices and precluding thorough assessment of the human toll such foreign policies entail or the range of alternatives to them. To be heard within these androcentric spaces, women must adopt

these masculinist conceptual frames and suppress any “irrational” “feminine” inclinations. Thus, Cohn notes that “both men and women are implicated in, constituted through, and positioned by gendered security” (quoted in Blanchard 2003, 1294). The insights of feminist IR caution that inclusion of women in the military and in matters of the state alone will not suffice to change the gendered discourses and gendered institutions.

*Male Protectionist Model: The Male Protectionist Racket?*

Rape as a tool of war has been the focus of extensive study by feminist scholars over the past four decades, yet the focus of that research has been rape of civilians by enemy combatants. The endemic nature of rape within the U.S. military has only recently received considerable attention and has yet to be subjected to systematic investigation. High-profile incidents such as the 1991 Tailhook Scandal and the 1996 sexual harassment incidents at the Army training facilities in Fort Leonard Wood, as well as the more recent occurrences of the 2003 sexual assault scandal at the U.S. Air Force Academy have brought the matter to the fore. Scholars investigating rape within military institutions have primarily sought to understand military sexual assaults’ (MSA) “prevalence rates, psychological and physical correlates of sexual assault, and factors that may increase sexual assault in the military” (Turchik and Wilson 2010, 267). Characterizing the prevalence of sexual assault in the military as an endemic problem, some studies note that attempted or completed sexual assault among military personnel is higher than national averages of rape among civilians. Scholarly investigations of sexual assault in the military, however, are far fewer than studies of sexual assault among civilians in various settings.

In Chapter 3, I provide a detailed overview of methodological issues that haunt research on military sexual assault, including lack of coherence and consistency in conceptual definitions, and the lack of attention given to male-on-male rape. For now, it is worth noting that studies suggest that anywhere between 9.5% to 33% of women *report* some attempted or completed rapes during their tenure in the military (Bostock & Daley, 2007; Coyle et al., 1996; Murdoch et al., 2007; Sadler et al., 2000; Skinner et al., 2000; Surís et al., 2007). Data suggests that nearly half of all female service members who served in Afghanistan and Iraq experienced some form of sexual harassment. Moreover, it is thought that up to 40% of female soldiers – whether they report it or not – experience at least one incidence of attempted or completed rape while completing their service in the military (MacKenzie 2015).

Women within the military complicate military authorities' efforts to regulate the sexual behavior of enlisted personnel. The provision of prostitutes for members of the armed services contributes to the creation of a hierarchy among women. Some women are constructed as pure and innocent and in need of protection; while others are positioned as corrupt, impure, unworthy of respect, and as such “available” for sexual use. Where do women in the military fall within this conceptual schema? Does their very presence in the armed services negate their need for protection? Does their refusal to conform to stereotypes of weakness and subservience make them targets for assault? Does their very presence in the military jam the logic of male protection by showing that military men themselves constitute the prime threat to their physical security?

If women in the military create one set of challenges to traditional military masculinity, gays and lesbians create another. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, homosexuals

were barred from military service. Under pressure from LGBT activists, President Bill Clinton converted the prohibition against gays and lesbians in the military to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. As Aaron Belkin (2012) and Dana Britton and Christine Williams (1995) have demonstrated, the narratives surrounding Clinton’s institution of the policy were thoroughly gendered. In a nation that ostensibly guarantees equal protection of the law, the “institutional and cultural privileging of a heterosexual masculine ideal” (1) requires some justification. Policy makers in Congress and the Department of Defense did not attempt to justify this policy of exclusion with claims concerning homosexuals’ lack of ability to excel in the military. Instead, they appealed to the military’s ability to “accomplish its overall mission” (2). Articulating “prejudice-based arguments,” policy makers asserted that enforced heterosexuality was necessary to maintain unit cohesion. They claimed that if gay and lesbian soldiers were to serve openly, they would be the victims of harassment by their heterosexual counterparts. In the case of leadership positions, policy makers posited that gays and lesbians would not be able to command the respect necessary to keep their units functioning effectively. As William Snyder and Kenneth Nyberg (1980) argued, by allowing homosexuals to serve in the armed forces openly, the military not only risked the alienation of the general American public (which is imagined to be homophobic), but also risked creating a “perception of the military as a gay organization” (81). Whether advanced to sustain exclusion or “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” military discourses manifest “political homophobia,” rhetoric circulated by political elites to justify differential treatment of some citizens (Currier 2010). In this case national defense is said to require compulsory

heterosexuality in the military. The rights of homosexuals and gender non-conforming citizens are readily sacrificed to the putative needs of the collective.

The debates about “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” suggest that it is a simple matter to categorize sexuality—whether in the military or beyond. Again a dichotomous classification is constructed that privileges heterosexuals at the expense of homosexuals. While some might decry the injustice of jettisoning the rights of gay and lesbian citizens, few question the adequacy of the conceptual classification itself. In *Bring Me Men*, Aaron Belkin (2012) investigates the sexual behavior of male cadets entering the military and raises fundamental questions about facile notions that heterosexuality/homosexuality exhaust the conceptual possibilities. Through a series of in-depth case studies, Belkin examines inherent contradictions that force recruits to conform to institutional rules and peer norms in order to attain some stability in their sense of masculinity. Belkin conceives militarized masculinity as a set of complex “tensions around which masculinity” is organized, which play out on and through military personnel’s bodies, forcing them to “enter into intimate relationships with its unmasculine foils, *not* just to disavow them” (24). Ironically, the production of masculine warriors requires individuals to embrace performances of feminine and queer acts, to engage in interactions with the “unmasculine” in order to distill and perfect the masculine. Rather than succumbing to the myth of invariant heterosexuality, Belkin explores these productive and contradictory dynamics that shape “the boundaries of military masculinity” (28).

In his first case study, for example, Belkin (2012) analyzes the “incidence and meanings associated with” male-on-male penetration and rape among midshipmen at the Naval Academy in 2000 (80). Drawing out the implications of a report withheld from the

public, he demonstrates how the “impenetrability” associated with masculinity is constituted by penetrating another male, who in the act of being penetrated is rendered unmasculine or demasculinized, as the penetrator in turn is viewed as the wholly masculine figure. In a second case study of US troops stationed in the Philippines, Belkin analyzes gendered associations of cleanliness (masculine) and filth (unmasculine) in the production of military masculinity. While the archetype of the pristine soldier is premised on sanitation, cleanliness, moral purity and an overall disavowal of filth, soldiers unavoidably enter into intimate relationships with filth in the context of training for and practicing warfare. Institutional anxieties associated with filth in turn produce “mechanisms through which contradictory meanings and expectations associated with excremental self-control [are] reinforced” (127).

Whether the point of departure is heterosexual or same-sex rape in the military, probing the complexities of contemporary practices raises crucial questions about the production of hegemonic military masculinity in gendered institutions that are rife with gender trouble.

### **Contribution to Literature**

This dissertation probes the military’s gender trouble to develop a more complicated and nuanced account of the military as a gendered institution. I am particularly interested in the military’s changing self-representations and their interaction with and influence upon cultural depictions of the military. By investigating the images and narratives the U.S. military circulates to explain its changing gender policies, it becomes possible to test claims about the “degendering” and “regendering” of the military. Despite explicit narratives that depict an inclusive organization, freed from the

strictures that barred women and gays from the armed services in the past, I will show how the military reinforces heteromascularity in ways that marginalize women, lesbians, and gay men. And I will suggest that these military discourses have spill-over effects on the devaluation of women and LGBTQ citizens in the United States.

A second contribution to the literature is also produced through the methods the project proposes to use. While many scholars have investigated the military as an institution, others have arguably shied away from it because of its closed-off accessibility. The culture of the military makes it very difficult for civilians with no tangible connection to the military to gain access to the individuals who may be experiencing the gendered implications of the functions and processes of that institution. My dissertation offers a new way of investigating the military, which does not require interviews with military officials, access to military bases, classified materials, or members of the armed forces who are or who have previously served in the military. By undertaking discursive analysis of materials that the military publicly circulates, the dissertation demonstrates the value of feminist qualitative methods for illuminating gendered dynamics within the military and their subtle, but pervasive, effects on ordinary citizens and U.S. society.

### **Chapter Overview**

#### *Chapter 2: The All-Volunteer Force: Patrolling Gendered Boundaries through the Combat Ban*

As a point of departure and to provide some historical grounding to the study, Chapter 2 juxtaposes an historical account of the statutory restrictions on women's military service since 1948 with a discursive analysis of the Congressional debates concerning the combat exclusion policy, particularly in relation to the creation of the All-

Volunteer Force, a period when women's inclusion in the military should have been self-evident. As the military tried to reestablish a positive public image after the Vietnam War, the move from conscription to a volunteer force should have suggested an increased role for women. In some ways it did, in many ways it did not. Framed under the guise of "incremental and deliberate" progress, the combat ban curtailed women's access to specific roles within the military for nearly fifty years, and largely informed ongoing debates around other gendered policies of the military.

Through the HeinOnline Congressional Documents database, the chapter conducts a discourse analysis of 70 Congressional hearings that were found through a constructed Boolean search between 1970 and 2015 in which there was a significant or note-worthy mention or discussion on women's role in the military. Testimonies provided by military officials during these Congressional Hearings provide a conduit towards understanding how the military represented its position on the combat ban to several stakeholders, including political officials, the general public, and diverse interest groups deeply vested in the shaping the policy towards gender integration.

Though the Congressional Hearings included in the study span five decades (see Appendix for full list of Congressional Hearings included in the study), arguments to support keeping women out of combat were not uniform across the period of the policy. These biological, psychological, and social arguments perpetuated anxieties regarding women's bodies that were seen as incompatible with the rational military institution and consequently, the state, which was largely positioned through the image of *homo economicus* during the first years of the AVF. The chosen period longitudinally acts to provide an understanding of what narratives were particularly prominent on women's

role in the military, and whether or not those changed through the move away from conscription, to participation in the armed forces on a volunteer basis.

*Chapter 3: Violated Bodies: Combat Injuries and Sexual Assault*

Chapter 3 of the dissertation considers the recent attention given to the sexual assault endemic in the United States military to examine how different forms of violence committed on (gendered) bodies of soldiers – specifically through perceptions of injury and wounds – are addressed by the U.S. military in relation to ongoing perpetuations of masculinity as a necessary ideal for soldiering. Juxtaposing wounding sustained through tours of combat in the war theater, versus wounding experienced through soldier-on-soldier sexual assault, the chapter argues that both physical and psychological effects of sexual assault do not constitute and are not heralded as military wounds. To probe this gendered hierarchy, I compare visual representations of sexual assault and combat injuries sustained through psychological wounding as depicted in several documentary movies, including the 2012 award winning documentary film, *The Invisible War*. The analysis of documentary movies as the main method of the chapter shows that military discourses on war wounds conjure up specific gendered images of soldiering. These gendered images of soldiering are assisted through the military's masking and silencing of sexual assault survivors. Instead of providing them recognition of their injuries and trauma, that military positions itself as the victim through a combination of securitization and medicalization discourses that frame the sexual epidemic as a cancer or plague that threatens the very viability of the military as an institution. Honing in on the deliberate usage of this securitization and medicalization rhetoric allows the chapter to provide

particular insight on how sexual assault in the military may be differentiated from sexual assault in the civilian sphere in marked ways.

*Chapter 4: Militarization through Societal Consumption: Semiotic Readings of Military Memorials*

Chapter 4 moves to analyze another common way non-military citizens in the United States consume the self-representations – images and narratives – produced and disseminated by the military. Through a study of military museums (primarily the USS Midway Museum in San Diego, California) as well as a Segs4Vets veteran’s ceremony that took place on the deck of the USS Midway Museum on the day of my visit, the chapter investigates military narratives that are showcased for visitors and consumed by them. Through a semiotic reading of military memorials, I illuminate gendered dimensions of public memory. Known as a theory or science of signs, semiotics explores how meaning is communicated, not only through various groupings of texts, but also in verbal and non-verbal communications, theater and drama, and in various forms of aesthetic communications such as music, photography and architecture (Noth 1995).

While women had increasingly been allowed to serve in combat-related positions up until the repeal of the combat exclusion policy, my study of the USS Midway shows that military institutions which could very well choose to convey specific depictions of women’s service in the military continue to deliberately leave them out of the picture. Doing so renders practices that could, in theory, be argued to be more gender-inclusive, or gender proactive, invisible to the average citizen who participates in the consumption of these narratives. By excluding and erasing these performances of women’s military service, war museums, along with their exhibits and ceremonies, assist in reifying war position as the masculine domain.

Semiotic readings of these militarized spaces and their configurations provide an especially fruitful way to further feminist IR's understanding of militarization as a societal phenomenon. In short, semiotics allows feminist scholars not only a way to understand how the military chooses to provide certain groups the highest possible accolade through public consumption, but equally as important, how the military excludes certain groups who serve by highlighting omissions, exclusions and silences. It also creates a discursive space for alternative voices to come to the fore that are otherwise silenced in the military's established narratives and histories. Moreover, in memorializing defense of the nation through service, war museums contribute to specific notions of citizenship that are established through social constructions of memory "embedded in complex class, gender, and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end" (Gillis 1994, 3). These narratives of valor contribute to understandings of national belonging, linking membership to service in wars, subtly encoding citizenship as a male privilege.

#### *Chapter 5: Recruiting for the Military during Time of Transition*

Chapter 5 investigates whether depictions of women in military marketing and recruitment campaigns have become more inclusive since the announcement of the repeal of the combat ban in 2013. To do so, the chapter provides a comparative analysis of recruitment numbers in the four branches of the military between 2013 and 2015 by analyzing online recruitment content. Building on Melissa Tracey Brown's (2012) seminal work on gender and recruitment for the All-Volunteer Force through print material, the chapter examines whether and how the gendered narratives of recruitment material have changed in light of the announcement of women's official inclusion in

combat related positions as of February 2013. This question is particularly relevant given the recent story about the military urging that “ugly women” be used in their marketing campaign to counter the notion that pretty women in the military get to higher positions by sleeping with their male colleagues (Smith 2013, 1).

Through the military branches’ official recruitment Facebook pages, the chapter presents an interpretivist content analysis for gendered depictions of entries posted on these sites. In total, I categorized over 1,000 Facebook posts to reveal trends across each individual branch, and across the military as a whole, since the announcement of the end of the combat ban on women. Since the late 2000’s, the military branches have increasingly utilized social media platforms for further recruitment efforts. While each branch of the military also uses Twitter and Instagram among a variety of social media sites, Facebook was chosen for the study for two reasons. First, each branch has the largest number of followers on this platform, and, second, Facebook has the largest number of users in comparison to the other social media sites for the military’s ideal age demographic, individuals between the age of 18 and 24. Despite the rescinding of the combat ban, Chapter 5 finds that women continue to be marginalized in online recruitment materials, frequently depicted in stereotypical roles or settings. While the individual military branches vary in their online representations of women, the selling point for recruiting across all four of the branches remains an overarching form of militarized masculinity, embodied in the image of a white male soldier.

#### *Chapter 6: Conclusions and Further Research: The Future (De)Gendered Military*

The concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the project, and assesses the utility of feminist epistemologies and qualitative methods for studying the gendered

mechanisms of exclusion of the military in the context of the United States. The chapter, in particular, revisits each qualitative method used, to showcase its contribution to the field of feminist international relations – identifying how it has provided a way to better understand the nuances of the military as a gendered institution through methods that do not require access to the military apparatus itself. Analysis of each “mechanism of exclusion” not only allows the dissertation to reassert where women are masked and erased in from the military’s history, but more importantly, allows scholars to understand how this actually occurs through the manipulation of certain narratives and the deliberate deployment of false narratives. Analyzing shifting gender regimes through these feminist interpretivist methods suggests that contemporary gender “integration” is largely complicated, and in specific instances, fictitious.

The observed focus on future technological developments of military service in online recruitment material presented in Chapter 5 provides fruitful avenues for future research. In particular, the prominence of drone aircrafts and other unmanned aerial strategies seemingly portray a notion of service that may no longer be predicated upon, or require, specific gendered characteristics. In the concluding chapter, I consider whether these technological developments allow the military to position itself through a “degendering” or “ungendered” narrative of identity. Removing the supposed human element from war by recourse to machines and robots raises important issues concerning gender in the future of the military. It may in fact undo mechanisms of exclusion by which women have conventionally been seen as weaker and less capable of meeting the needs of the various roles of the military, for example, by systematically excluding women from combat roles up until recently. While such narratives and framings may

attempt to present the military as a gender neutral organization or institution, they also disregard women's continuous fight for equality in the U.S. military, and against decades worth of systemized exclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE: PATROLLING GENDERED BOUNDARIES THROUGH THE COMBAT BAN**

### **Introduction**

Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's 2013 announcement of an end to the combat exclusion policy marked an unprecedented moment in women's history in the United States military. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chairwoman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee heralded the announcement as an "historic step for recognizing the role women have, and will continue to play, in the defense of our nation" (The New York Times 2013, 20). Concurrently, General William G. Boykin, a retired-three star general associated with the conservative Christian group, the Family Research Council, exclaimed that this decision by military officials was done "as part of another social experiment" (5) that would allow women to serve in combat units where "living conditions are primal in many situations with no privacy for personal hygiene or normal functions" (5).

Since then, the topic of opening all positions to women in the military has gained increasing media attention. The four branches of the U.S. military initiated a series of studies to determine whether gender integration in all military positions – including those categorized as frontline combat roles – could potentially impact military readiness. Despite the announced change in policy, the branches of the military were given until October 1, 2015 to make recommendations for exceptions from the policy, identifying positions they believed should remain closed to women. The design of these studies was often problematic and the results were marked by discrepancies and contradictions. The Army graduated its first female rangers in August 2015, just one month before a Marine

experiment in gender-integrated training suggested that men outperformed women in 27 categories, supporting a conclusion that gender integration would be “detrimental” to combat units. Whether women are allowed to serve in all roles is likely to shape the future of the U.S. Armed Forces.<sup>9</sup>

Although the role of women in the military gained heightened attention in the past few years, Congress and Pentagon officials have debated the degree to which women should be integrated in the military over the past four decades. Recent debates have focused on the scope of restrictions imposed on women’s integration in combat units (Stakowitsch 2012), but earlier debates questioned whether women should be allowed to serve in combat at all. Between 1970 and 2015, Congress held 70 hearings that involved significant discussions about whether women should be allowed to serve in combat capacities, in what fashion, and to what degree.<sup>10</sup> Certain arguments have remained remarkably consistent in these debates spanning 45 years. Notably, gender(ed) exclusion policies have defined women’s roles according to the military’s assessment of its needs, rather than on the basis of women’s abilities or aspirations, or a general commitment to establishing equality among troops.

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<sup>9</sup> On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced that all combat positions would be opened to women as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, without any exceptions.

<sup>10</sup> I arrived at this number by conducting a Boolean search of the HeinOnline Congressional Documents database, using the following search terms (women or female\*) and (soldier\* or military\* or combat\* or "armed forces" or "Marines" or "Army" or "Navy" or "Air Force") and (combat). A majority of these discussions arose in Hearings on National Defense Authorization Acts between 1970 and 2015. Of these 70 hearings, 16 had titles specifically referring to women in the military or gendered policies. To focus my analysis of key themes in these debates, I eliminated any hearing in which women in the military were mentioned, but not in the context of the roles they should perform, the policies that affect their ability to serve, or the need to increase numbers of recruits. For example, the phrase "...men and women who serve in the/or armed forces/military" appeared frequently in many of the Congressional Hearing records, but if this was the only way in which there was a mention, that hearing was not counted towards the total. The full list of the 70 Congressional hearings is listed in the Appendix of the dissertation.

Changing definitions of combat have also played a key role in determining the possibilities for women's integration. For example, women have been called upon to assist in military efforts during periods of war, often asked to serve in roles deemed as combat in the war theater, but not recognized as combat post-deployment. During Operations Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, for example, despite a clear ban on women serving in combat, female soldiers worked with male military members in combat operations. Between September 2001 and February of 2013, close to 300,000 female soldiers were deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. During those years, 800 of those female soldiers were wounded, and over 130 died. Women were assigned to technologically advanced roles for which the military did not have sufficient male recruits available (Stakowitsch 2012). Women soldiers were also deployed in counter-insurgency strategies in Afghanistan designed to capitalize upon their "feminine" capacity to "calm," "comfort," and interrogate Afghan women, while male troops raided their homes and questioned their husbands, brothers and sons. Such deliberate deployments of gender by the military produce not only certain versions of militarized masculinity, but also militarized femininities constructed according to the perceived needs of the military at any point in time.

Although the full effect of the end of the combat exclusion will not be known until women begin serving in combat missions after 2016, the impact of the concentration of women in non-combat related roles has been evident for decades. Without combat experience, women's ability to attain leadership positions that afford power, respect and prestige have been limited. As Dr. Edwin Dorn, Senior Staff member of the Brookings Institute suggested during a 1992 Congressional Hearing on gender discrimination in the

military, “women may not be regarded as ‘real’ soldiers until they are able to do what ‘real’ soldiers do, which is to kill and die in battle” (Gender Discrimination in the Military 1992, 35). The end of women’s absolute exclusion from combat then may not constitute a full degendering of the armed services. The U.S. military can remain a predominantly male institution long after the ban on women serving in combat has been lifted.

This chapter juxtaposes an historical account of the statutory restrictions on women’s military service since 1948 with a discursive analysis of the Congressional debates concerning the combat exclusion policy, particularly in relation to the creation of the All-Volunteer Force. I begin by tracing the changing policies that defined the terms of women’s military service and then explore the nuances of narratives advanced to justify women’s exclusion from combat roles throughout the decades. I develop a feminist analysis of prominent narratives produced by the military from 1970 through 2015 as plans were for an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) were initiated, refined and implemented. Testimonies provided by military officials in Congressional hearings provide a conduit for understanding how the various military branches represent themselves to political officials, interest groups, and the public. Debates surrounding women in combat do not occur in a vacuum. In addition to providing a medium for interrogating the military’s self-representation, Congressional hearings also provide insight into the views of diverse interest groups deeply involved in efforts to shape policies pertaining to gender segregation and gender integration in the military. My analysis of Congressional hearings illuminates pervasive assumptions about the threats that women’s presence

poses to fighting units and to national security—threats that have little to do with women’s actual performance in military service.<sup>11</sup>

### **Leaky Borders and Gendered Boundaries: A History of U.S. Combat Exclusion Policy**

Women have been integral to the All-Volunteer Force since its inception, yet restrictions placed on women’s service between the years of 1973 and 2013 were informed by views about women’s service during World War II, which were articulated in the 1948 Women’s Services Integration Act. Women’s exclusion from combat was established through statutory restrictions, which limited the military jobs and careers available to women, and in turn, affected the number of women who have chosen to serve in the military. Statutory restrictions are not uniform, but vary according to policies established by the individual military branches.

Statutory restrictions on women’s military service were first established through the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. Although women had served in the military during World War II, the Act “institutionalized the role of women in the services by establishing career opportunities for them in the regular active duty

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<sup>11</sup> My analysis includes hearings held in both the House and the Senate, including hearing conducted by the Senate Committee on Armed Services, the Senate Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, the House Committee on Armed Services, the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary, the House Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the Senate Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations of the Committee on Government Reform, the House Military Personnel Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, the House Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the House Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the House Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the House Committee on National Security, the House Military Readiness Subcommittee, the House Subcommittee on Civil Service of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, the House Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the House Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, the House Subcommittee on Education and Health of the Joint Economic Committee, the House Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice of the Committee on the Judiciary, and the House Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

components as well as the reserve forces” (1). The Act was not created as a response to concerns with women’s service, however. On the contrary, it institutionalized a view that women’s labor was not needed any further because the war had come to an end. The Act imposed three specific limitations – or boundaries – on women’s service: it restricted the number of women who could serve, the roles in which they could serve, and the ranks they could achieve through service. Women in the Air Force, Army and Navy were capped at two percent of the overall authorized force. Female officers in the Navy could not exceed ten percent. In terms of roles, women in the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps could not be assigned to combat aircraft. In addition, women in the Navy and Marine Corps were not allowed to serve aboard vessels that were not hospital ships.<sup>12</sup> These restrictions created a physical boundary for women and men while also structuring a spatial boundary between certain military bodies and the vessels on which they could serve. Women were also restricted from command positions (except in the medical fields) and were prohibited from “a permanent grade above lieutenant colonel or Navy commander” (United States General Accounting Office 1988, 32).

Megan MacKenzie (2015) argues that the institutionalization of these restrictions were part of a national post-war effort to “return to normal,” in which “normal” also meant a return to traditional gender roles where “men were encouraged to get married; the nuclear family was heralded as an essential element of the American dream; and women were encouraged to manage the home and raise children” (36). Women were expected to re-establish “normal” social order by returning to their “normal” spatial boundaries. that is, the home. Their participation and efforts in the war were seen as

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<sup>12</sup> Specific restrictions were not articulated for Army women because the existence of the Women’s Army Corps already provided its own exclusions.

temporary and only necessitated by the extremity of the threat to national security. The national call for a “return to normal” reified the normal as a re-domestication of women, which shored up the notion that real soldiering was the preserve of men.

The Vietnam War – and the need for women’s participation in the conflict – altered views and policies on women in combat. Some 7,000 women fought during the Vietnam War in medical, communication and supply units. However, many of these positions placed women at the frontlines of the war. Hospitals, for example, were prime targets. In 1967, the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act was repealed in order to enable women to support the Vietnam War efforts. This Act removed both the 2% restriction and combat restriction placed on women. Nevertheless, women continued to be excluded from combat roles throughout the conflict.

Overall, the repeal of the 1948 Women’s Armed Services Integration Act – along with other policy changes such as the opening of the service academies to women, the opening of Air Force ROTC and general ROTC programs, the creation of the All-Volunteer Force and the integration of the Women’s Army Corps into the Army in 1978 – produced a considerable increase in the number of women serving in the military. By 1980, nearly 8% of the armed forces were made up of women. But the political and social shifts of the time such as the mobilization of feminist activism and the Congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment also played a role in the growth of women in the labor force and in the military between 1976 and 1986. Although much of the feminist movement was opposed to the Vietnam War, it “critiqued traditional gender roles, providing support and encouragement for those women who chose a career in the military” (37).

The phrase “combat exclusion” began to be used increasingly after the creation of the AVF in 1973, signaling that women would not be given access to the most prestigious of roles despite their increasing numbers. Formalization of the combat exclusion did not occur until 1988, however, by which time nearly half of all roles in the U.S. armed forces were available to women. The lack of formalization allowed a blurring of boundaries between combat and non-combat. In 1983, for example, during Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, four women military police were sent back to Fort Bragg, NC after arriving in Grenada because Major General Trobaugh decided to remove all women from the mission unit. The women were later reattached to the unit and deployed in Grenada after Lieutenant General Mackmull reinterpreted the combat risk they faced and intervened.

Later in the decade, the “risk rule” provided a flexible version of the combat exclusion, which required a case by case determination of the limits to be imposed on women’s roles. Similar to the 1948 Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, the risk rule was not enacted in response to poor performance, evidence that women did not fare well in combat or were not performing in their assigned duties. The rule allowed military officials to prohibit women from serving in *non-combat* units of missions if they deemed “the risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to or greater than the risks in the combat units they support” (Bailey 2009, 6). The risk rule may be problematic on several grounds. Because it required individual military officials to assess risk, decisions concerning deployment or non-deployment of women became fluid and open to competing interpretations. Because risk was to be assessed prior to deployment, military officials were empowered to speculate about perceived threats before the threats had occurred. Thus, the risk rule was implemented differently across

the military branches based on individual missions, situations, and interpretations. Perhaps most detrimentally, the risk rule “formalize[d] the *idea* of the combat exclusion,” and “generated a general perception that women were not on the front lines of war, and that men were the primary protectors of the nation” (MacKenzie 2015, 38, emphasis in original).

The 1990s brought heightened attention to women’s potential participation in combat roles as 41,000 women served—and 15 died—in the First Gulf War. Several policy changes occurred during this period which informed the combat exclusion. In particular, the National Defense Authorization Acts of 1992 and 1993 lifted the ban on women in the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps serving on combat aircrafts. This Act also created the President’s Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces. The Commission’s task was to review women’s participation in the military, particularly their exclusion from combat positions. At the completion of the review, the Commission recommended that the exclusion be maintained for several reasons, including the fear that the capture and rape of female soldiers would impact public morale, and ultimately, the government’s ability to conduct war. As the Commission expressed, “Female Prisoners of War, no matter what the treatment they received, would have a far more demoralizing effect on the American public than similar treatment of male prisoners” (Presidential Commission on Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces Report to the President 1992, 70).

Public opinion polls conducted after the Commission released its recommendations indicated that 47% of respondents were against the combat exclusion. Nonetheless, the Department of Defense preserved its combat exclusion. It is important to

note that the Commission's concern about female POWs, and their recommendation to maintain the exclusion policy for that reason, was focused on speculation about the public's reaction. With only two women held as POWs during the Gulf War, these fears were largely hypothetical, as were speculations about the risks women would confront. Thus these policy recommendations were fueled by emotions--fears of possible, potential, and hypothetical situations, rather than being grounded in empirical evidence. The combat exclusion "remained... founded on, and supported by, subjective beliefs and judgements" (41).

Overall confusion and lack of consistency engendered by the risk rule led then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to issue the 1994 memorandum on "Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule." The purpose of the document was to provide a clear boundary between combat and non-combat, and, thereby determine unqualified grounds for women's exclusion from combat that could be applied across all branches of the military. The memorandum defined direct ground combat as "engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect" (1994, 1-2). More specifically, the memorandum made two recommendations for the implementation of the policy.

Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground ... (Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule memorandum 1994, 1).

Aspin's memorandum also imposed restrictions on women:

where the Service Secretary attests that the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive; where units and positions are doctrinally required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units that are closed to women; where units are engaged in long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions; and where job related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the vast majority of women Service members (2).

The memorandum and recommendations for implementing the combat exclusion against women were designed to alleviate confusion stemming from the risk rule, but in some ways, the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule caused renewed confusion. This stemmed from the question of just how the military was defining the term "combat." The memorandum provided its own definition for the concept, but failed to recognize that the concept of combat had never been uniform, changed over time, and varied across the separate branches. The memorandum contradicted the Army's understanding of the term combat, in particular. The memorandum's definition of combat heavily emphasized that combat is that which takes place on the "ground" and which exposes soldiers to one-on-one interaction with the enemy. What is noteworthy here is not whether the definition used by the memorandum makes "sense," but rather its failure to grasp that there was no uniform, stable and static definition of combat, despite the importance of the term to establish both physical and social boundaries between combat and non-combat, and to determining which military bodies would be allowed to fill combat and noncombat positions. Throughout the history of the United States military, the term "combat" has been fluid, instantiated in a multitude of interpretations. Indeed, Women in International Security representatives provided testimony during the 2013 House Armed Services Committee hearing on "Women in Service Reviews" that the terms "combat," "direct ground combat" and "forward deployed" were often used by the

military as a social construct which was ever changing and used arbitrarily when deemed necessary by the institution, particularly in contemporary military operations and theaters. The “effect, if not purpose” of these terms, they argued, has been “to discriminate against women” (Women in Service Reviews 2013, 99).

Despite its shortcomings, the Aspin memorandum fixed the Department of Defense’s position on the combat exclusion for the next 20 years until the ban on women in combat was lifted in 2013. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the policy on barring women from ground combat was rescinded by the Department of Defense. Despite the blanket suspension of the combat exclusion, Congress retains the ability to change how and under what conditions women serve in the military. According to the Constitution, Congress may continue to consider issues surrounding women’s participation in the military, “including equal opportunity, equal responsibility (such as draft registration), readiness and cohesion, manpower needs of the military, and training standards” (Burrelli 2013, 1).

This brief examination of the history of the combat exclusion in the United States military demonstrates that the gender segregation and the prospects of gender integration must be understood as social constructions “made up of a fluid set of rules and stories” (MacKenzie 2015, 34) concerning varying understandings of “combat.” It also shows that the military’s position – that women must be kept out of combat positions – was established arbitrarily. It was not grounded on sound research and evidence suggesting that women could not cut it in combat roles. At the most basic level, definitions of combat constitute gendered exercises in boundary construction. This boundary construction spatially delineates between combat and noncombat zones, and designates all zones open to men, while restricting women to the margins of combat. Women’s

bodies are deemed unacceptable for the hallowed ground of combat not because of any manifestation of poor performance, but as a result of wide ranging fears on the part of the military. Yet even as the military has built boundaries to circumscribe acceptable participation of women, its constructions of combat are markedly porous, allowing ample space for the deployment of women whenever it served the institutions' objectives. The coexistence of a blanket combat ban and selective deployment of women results in the invisibilization of women's military service.

In the following sections of the chapter, I undertake a discursive analysis of Congressional debates about women in the military. I contrast the military's self-representations as a rational comprehensive decision maker, an economic maximizer, and a modernizing force through careful incremental policy change with a host of stereotypes concerning women that pervade Congressional testimonies. I draw attention to several tropes that have been critical to the military's narrative of deliberate and incremental inclusion of women – biological determinist arguments, which suggest that women lack the ability to be “natural soldiers,” misogynist claims that women threaten homosocial bonds necessary for unit cohesion, and vague fears that women pose a generic threat to national security.

### **Gendered Subjects: The Masculinist Rational Institution and the Sentimental Leaky Body**

Feminist scholarship on women's participation in the U.S. military has argued that the justification for continuing exclusions of women rely on the circulation of negative stereotypes about women and myths associated with the “Band of Brothers” socialization model (Belkin, 2012; Elshtain, 1992; Enloe 1983, 1990; MacKenzie, 2015). Megan MacKenzie (2015) suggests that “the most persistent of these myths – that women

are physically unfit for the demands of war, that the public cannot tolerate female casualties, and that female soldiers limit the cohesion of troops in combat” (page) — have continued to circulate in public discourse despite being discredited by scholars and female soldiers alike. The myths propagated by military leaders, political leaders, and interest groups in favor of keeping women out of more highly respected positions in the military link soldiering to manhood. Both the female body and the female mind are seen as incompatible with military service. As the male body is imagined to be disciplined, self-contained, a steel trap, women’s bodies are envisioned as weak, porous, and “leaky” (Shildrick 1997). This reading of leakiness emerges primarily from two strands of argument which have informed the women in combat debate; those based on purported biological differences between men and women which impacts their physical ability to complete certain tasks, and those based on potential consequences associated with the insertion of women into interpersonal processes of military groups. These strands of argument have persisted throughout the post WWII period, although there have been certain variations and nuances in specific decades.

In tracing the various narratives utilized by the military to justify different modes of women’s exclusion, I provide a theoretical frame for considering these descriptions. I differentiate between narratives and tropes; narratives are overarching storylines or chronicles used by the institution, while tropes are arguments that underpin, support or justify those narratives. I argue that the overarching narrative used by the military casts the institution as a rational comprehensive decision maker engaged in a deliberate, incremental process to integrate women. At certain moments, the generic rationality ascribed to the military takes a particular form, stressing the role of economic maximizer.

Military officials cast themselves as *homo economicus*, whose decisions are made based on economic self-interest and fiscal responsibility. This fiscally responsible subject emerges as particularly dominant during periods of prospective military cuts, such as during the late 1960's and early 1970's as anti-draft sentiments contributed to proposals to create an All-Volunteer Force. Although the military characterizes itself as a rational actor, Congressional testimonies also articulate manifold irrational fears concerning the effects of women's presence on military operations—fears unsubstantiated by sustained research or by experiences of women serving in the military.

Thus the military's self-representation as rational decision maker coexists with claims grounded in emotions, concerns, anxieties, and often, plain old "gut reactions" to women's increased role in the military. I demonstrate that these emotionally charged arguments are primarily concerned with women's bodies, framed as feminized, abject, weak, and leaky. The leaky body reduces the female subject to biological capacities, foregrounding women's reproductive capabilities and menstrual processes as threats that must be contained lest they disrupt military order. The leaky body is also viewed as emotional and irrational, in many ways the dialectic opposite of the rational male subject. Indeed, concerns regarding women's ability to serve adequately in the military have often emphasized the question of service in combat theaters, spaces thought to be more hazardous to the unique "conditions" of womanhood. Within this reductive frame, menstruation and pregnancy are taken to be the definitive "conditions" of the feminized leaky body.

Within the frame of the leaky body (Shildrick 1997), placing women in combat roles is deemed an unacceptable "bodily practice." It is considered "unnatural" to put

women *qua* mothers and daughters in harm's way. Indeed, sexual difference structures the masculinist logic of protection (Young 2003). Men go to war, and are wounded or killed to protect their nation, symbolized by their women. While engaged in armed conflict, they envision home as a "natural state" of affairs in which women lovingly await their return, ready to greet them, care for them, rear children, and deal with the physical and psychological aftermaths of war. Intricately tied to this "natural state" is the notion and visual imagery of the "Band of Brothers," which depicts men fighting in combat as exceptional, essential, and elite, bound by intense ties of loyalty (MacKenzie 2015, 16). For those within the Band of Brothers, outsiders are seen "as inherent security threats" (17). And "violence is deemed the most efficient way to solve the political problems" posed by such threats (Ibid). In 1982, Mady Wechsler Segal captured the gendered psychology underlying military masculinism:

Let me offer an additional explanation for men's resistance to allowing women in combat units. I conjecture that there is a psychological differentiation between the real world and combat that enables some men to survive the enormous psychological stress of combat. One survives by preserving a mental picture of *the normal world* back home to which one will return from the horror world of combat. One is engaged in an elaborate game, albeit one with very high stakes, and when the game is over, one can go home to *an intact world*. One of the major components of the world back home is women, "our women", who are warm, nurturant and ultra-feminine. Woman, at least, "our women," are not part of war. Indeed, one of the reasons for fighting is to protect our women and the rest of what is in the image of the world back home. If we allow these women into combat with us, then this psychological differentiation cannot be maintained and we lose this psychological defense (emphasis added, Segal 1982, 272).

In this way, the idea of women in combat not only dissolves the romanticism of war, but may also be seen by the state as defective and disorderly, or as a threat to the state and sovereignty. Within such a frame, national security is best preserved through male-only military groups and the exclusion of women from military roles. In other words, as

MacKenzie (2015) argues, the policy of excluding women from combat roles in the United States military is not actually about women, but rather about men.

Entangled in discourses of war are notions of appropriate and inappropriate manifestations of femininities and masculinities, and how each may play out as a threat or intrusion to the orderly sovereign state. As Lauren Wilcox (2013) suggests, discourses on security that are seen as critical to the maintenance of the autonomous sovereign, “have produced violence as an intrusion upon the nation-state from an ‘other’ located outside of state boundaries rather than stemming from the instability of bodies themselves” (3). Within this framework, women are positioned as the ultimate “Other,” existing within the domestic sphere insulated from the dire world of armed conflict.

In addition to the logic of masculine protection, women run afoul of the plans of the rational military decision maker, who must place fiscal management high on his agenda as *homo economicus*. In moving toward the creation of the All-Volunteer Force, the military projects rational, objective decision making as central to its policy choices. The exclusion of women can be altered only through deliberate, incremental inclusion of women in combat according to military needs in periods of budgetary austerity. Fiscal constraint is as stern a task master as the homosociality of the Band of Brothers. Both entrench a gendered order at the heart of the military’s system of power.

Feminist scholarship has theorized sovereignty as the “institution of power relations” in at least three key ways. First, sovereignty is argued to be a masculine institution and is represented by the state as a masculine body. Second, the space that the state embodies is in and of itself gendered through dichotomies of scientific knowledge production “between body and mind, culture and nature, men and women, and the private

and public life of the state” (Wilcox 2013, 4). Third, the sovereign state is seen as a “protection racket,” which requires protection of women’s bodies by men – even at the cost of mutilation and death in war. Rather than moving toward women’s equality, the rational military actor is invested in these gendered dimensions of sovereignty. Hence, any integration of women into combat positions must proceed at a glacial pace.

Matters of the military are intrinsically connected and bound up in notions of state sovereignty, which assign specific bodies to specific ends. Wilcox theorizes that sovereignty, as a series of gendered practices that create “an orderly, internal space and an outside space of danger and disorder” (2). These gendered practices manifest themselves in multiple forms. In its most obvious form, sovereignty establishes (gendered) borders, and bodies are delineated in terms of insiders and outsiders, internal space and external space, subjects and “othered” subjects, protectors and the protected. Each dichotomy is gendered, pitting the inferior feminine against its dominant masculine counterpart. For sovereignty, this process of dichotomization socially constructs gendered notions of the threat of intrusion to the state from external forces and for which protection must be provided in the form of “national security.” The state and its territories are thought to be feminine, while protection provided to her – most often in some form of armed forces – is provided by the masculine. The concept of sovereignty in and of itself is a socially constructed narrative that is highly gendered.

In the case of women’s participation in the U.S. armed forces, the usage of this narrative has at its most basic level allowed military officials to make the case that women should not be afforded the opportunity to serve equally to men. By specifically evoking concerns of national security, military officials have projected the ban on women

in combat as a necessity for maintaining the health of the sovereign state. Interest groups that argue for “equality between genders” allow the military to position itself as a rational actor whose policy decisions are made in the best interest of the nation, as opposed to the (feminized) call for equality which is seen to be based on emotion and sensitivity, and is therefore inferior. In the context of such gendered oppositions, women are framed as an existential threat to the state’s existence. As their bodies attempt to conform to the masculinized standards established by the institution in hopes of “proving” their stability and utility, they are framed as leaky bodies and subjects that reside outside of the boundaries of combat through biological references that curtail them from ever being able to meet those standards.

### **A Story of Modernization: The Incremental and Deliberate Inclusion of Women**

The United States’ narrative on women’s integration into the armed forces has characterized “success” through “slow and steady” progress. Military officials cite longitudinal data points on the increasing number of women in non-traditional roles and the military overall throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. They have argued that this process of incremental integration since the dissolving of the Women’s Army Corps in 1948 has been necessary for two reasons. Incremental integration was necessary to maintain military readiness and effectiveness, as well as fairness to all service members impacted by the integration. As described by Christopher Jehn, Assistant Director for National Security Division of the Congressional Budget Office, during a 1992 Congressional hearing,

One of the reasons for the Department's success in this area is that these changes were conceived, planned and implemented in a careful and deliberate manner. Our principal objective has always been and will continue to be to ensure expanded roles for women do not adversely affect combat readiness or

effectiveness. We also want to ensure future changes to not inadvertently disadvantage either our female or male service members. In other words, we want to do it right, do it timely and do it fairly (Implementation of the Repeal of the Combat Exclusion on Female Aviators 1992, 113).

Similar language has been used by military officials in hearings throughout the last four and a half decades. Consider, for example, how this trope manifested in 2013 Congressional testimonies.

The Navy's plan is a continuation of our efforts over the past 19 years to steadily expand opportunities for women (Women in Service Reviews 2013, 7).

The Air Force is dedicated to continue the gender integration efforts initiated in 1993 when we lifted restrictions against women flying fighter aircraft and began assigning them to frontline combat aviation units (7).

The Department is proceeding in a measured, deliberate, and responsible manner to implement changes that enable service members to serve in any capacity based on their ability and qualifications (3).

Over time, these incremental changes will enhance the readiness and combat effectiveness of our forces (3).

Implementation through 2016 will be an evolutionary process. We are committed to opening positions and occupations when and how it makes sense, while preserving unit readiness, cohesion, and the quality of the All-Volunteer Force (35).

The commandant and all of our Marine Corps leadership are dedicated to taking care of all of our marines. Our deliberate approach to increasing career opportunities for our females is an example of this (5).

The military presents the process of women's integration into the armed forces as largely successful, furthering the notion that the military is one of the most – if not the most – socially integrated institutions in the United States. Indeed, the military has suggested that the incremental inclusion of women in expanding military roles has been a process of modernization for the benefit of national security.

Each step towards rescinding the combat exclusion may appear as a degendering of the institution on the surface, however, a closer look at the narratives used to justify limiting women's access to combat positions highlights a systematic attempt to maintain a masculinist identity for the institution. Indeed, applying a feminist lens to the narrative of incremental and deliberate progress showcases a story laden with social constructions masked with seemingly objective, measurable results, evidence, of which the lifting of the combat exclusion in 2013 is the culmination. This story paints a picture of an institution that is progressive and in-favor of equality among all groups participating in the institution. It also suggests that the military has modernized overtime, and has been successful at creating a military that is representative of social groups in American society overall. Perpetuating this story erases women's integral participation in the armed forces from before the inception of the All-Volunteer Force.

The incremental and deliberate progress referenced in the military's storyline can only be viewed as the positive buildup to women's supposed full inclusion in the military if the starting point of that story is one of exclusion, limitations, and lack of access. The combat exclusion, as well as the fluidity apparent in the changing and various understandings of the term "combat" lies at the heart of the narrative the military tells about women's participation in the armed forces. Not only has the interpretation of what "combat" references changed over time, but it has been interpreted differently across the branches of the military. This has allowed the military to limit women's access to roles at will. Thus the combat exclusion reaffirms that military service is intrinsically tied to manhood. The shifting concept of "combat" connotes a specific kind of combatant who assumes all risks in order to protect, i.e., a hypermilitarized, masculine warrior.

Undergirding the combat exclusion are several misogynist assumptions including the idea that women are not “natural soldiers,” and would never have the ability to obtain such status because of physiological defects. Moreover, including among combat troops would ultimately “ruin the bonds necessary for combat missions” (MacKenzie 2015, 15), undermining unit cohesion.

### **The Rational Military Actor and the Feminized Leaky Subject**

As noted above, many of the arguments used in the women in combat discourse are made through reference to biological differences between men and women serving in the military. On the surface, the biological argument against women serving in combat is a simple one; because of physiological differences, women do not have the same strength or stamina as men, are therefore weaker, and less able to complete tasks associated with combat infantry. However, the narrative is underpinned by two essential assumptions. First, that physical difference between men and women cannot be overcome, regardless of how much training women undergo. The second assumption relies on the notion that combat is a special kind of activity, which requires unique physical traits and which women lack. These assumptions allow the narrative to link combat directly with manhood.

A closer look at this argument allows for an understanding of the misogynist presuppositions that inform the combat exclusion policy. I highlight four strands of this argument that were used most frequently in the Congressional Hearings reviewed for this study. These are tropes related to women’s hormones and menstrual cycles, pregnancy and motherhood, sexual assault, and medical differences related to caring for women in the combat theater. These tropes frame women’s bodies as leaky. As I argue below, while

the military tries to present these reasons as rational causes to limit women's participation in combat roles, they are frequently underpinned by assertions that are based on generalized and arbitrary feelings or emotions instead of positivist methodologies and calculations.

Examining the debates surrounding the creation of the All-Volunteer Force reveals the frequent recourse to notions of the military as a rational actor that must tread carefully in developing policies concerning women in the military. When presidential candidate Richard Nixon promised to create an All-Volunteer Force in 1968, he did so without any information concerning its political, economic, or social viability. Once elected, Nixon commissioned a group of experts – known as the Gates Commission – to make recommendations concerning the feasibility of an all-volunteer force, and the steps required to make it happen. In the official Statement by the President Announcing the Creation of the Commission on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1969, Nixon assured the public that the commission would “study the estimated costs and savings resulting from an all-volunteer force, as well as the broader social and economic implications of this program” (Gates Commission Report 1970, vii). Delivered to the President on February 20, 1970, the Gates Commission Report asserted:

We unanimously believe that the *nation's interests* will be better served by an all-volunteer force, supported by an effective stand-by draft, than by a mixed force of volunteers and conscripts; that steps should be taken promptly to move in this direction; and that the first indispensable step is to remove the present inequity in the pay of men serving their first term in the armed forces. We have satisfied ourselves that a volunteer force will not jeopardize national security, and we believe it will have a beneficial effect on the military as well as the rest of our society (iii, emphasis added).

Created by President Nixon on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1969 and chaired by former Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates, Jr., the Gates Commission relied heavily on a working

group led by former University of Rochester President, Dean William H. Meckling in its 100 hours of deliberation. The fifteen member commission represented individuals from the academic, military and business sectors, but most prominently, also featured contemporary heavy hitters from the financial industries, suggesting that the question of whether or not an all-volunteer force would be possible was heavily based on economic principles. Both Milton Friedman (Paul Snowden Russell Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago at the time) and Alan Greenspan (Chairman of the Board for Townsend-Greenspan & Co. Economic Consultants) were members of the commission. Of the 15 members of the commission, 14 were men. The only woman on the commission, Jeanne Noble, was a professor at New York University, but perhaps more notably, the Vice President of the National Council of Negro Women and a former member of the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service. As an African American woman herself, Noble's presence on the commission covered two "token" categories of representation.<sup>13</sup>

In debating whether or not an all-volunteer force was feasible and socially desirable, the commission members sought a solution that would allow for the maintenance of an armed force between the size of 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 individuals. But the commission didn't seek just any individuals to fill these numbers; for them, not surprisingly, an all-volunteer force was specifically imagined as being filled by men. "The Commission base[d] its judgments on long-range considerations of what method of recruiting man power [would] strengthen American society's foundational convictions"

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<sup>13</sup> The committee was made up of Thomas Gates, Thomas Curtis, Frederick Dent, Milton Friedman, Crawford Greenewalt, Alan Greenspan, General Alfred Gruenther, Stephen Herbits, Father Theodore Hesburgh, Jerome Holland, John Kemper, Jeanne Noble, General Lauris Norstad, W. Allen Wallis, and Roy Wilkins.

(Bailey 2009, 6). Indeed, the Commission argued that returning to an All-Volunteer Force would “strengthen our freedoms, remove an inequity now imposed on the expression of the patriotism that has never been lacking among our youth, promote the efficiency of the armed forces, and enhance their dignity. It is the system for maintaining standing forces that minimizes government interference with the freedom of the individual to determine *his* own life in accord with *his* values” (emphasis added, 6).

The creation of a primarily male all-volunteer force represented the possibility of strengthening notions of masculinity that were thought to be in crisis in American society. Melissa T. Brown (2012) argues that this “crisis” stemmed from changing gender roles promoted by the feminist movement, the loss of good paying, blue collar industrial job opportunities that gave men privilege and the economic ability to support a family and the Vietnam War. This masculinization is also illustrative through the “Band of Brothers” myth achieving “hegemonic status” during the post-Vietnam era (MacKenzie 2015). The Commission noted that at that given moment, approximately 250,000 men enlisted annually as “true volunteers,” that is men who volunteered for service because they believed in the importance of patriotism through service and not because choosing to not volunteer would result in being drafted regardless, usually under worse fiscal compensation than if one chose to serve on their own. To achieve a voluntary force of 3 million, the Commission argued would require an additional 400,000 enlistees each year, or approximately 150,000 volunteers from the pool of eligible men turning 19 years old each year. How could the military branches achieve these increased recruitment numbers among 19 year olds who would “also meet the physical, moral, and mental requirements” of service? (The Report of the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force

1970, 7) For the Commission, the solution was an economic one – to improve the salary and benefits offered to recruits who chose to volunteer. The plan would add \$2.7 billion to the 1971 fiscal year defense budget.

As the Gates Commission report was made public, a discrepancy emerged between the Commission’s recommendations and how those recommendations could be implemented. While female recruits were conspicuously missing from the report – indeed, the terms “women,” “female recruits,” or “women/female volunteers” were never mentioned in the 211 page publication – the Army, which took on the largest burden in ensuring that the AVF would become a reality, was not as quick to dismiss the need for female volunteers in order to reach the numbers the Gates Commission proposed. The Army had been considering the need for increasing the number of women enlistees in order to diminish the number of draft calls as early as 1967.

Ultimately, the creation of the All-Volunteer Force initially acted as a strong factor in expanding the roles available to women serving in the military, and its success was viewed by some in Congress as dependent on women. The expansion of women’s service was initially established through a series of enacted policies. However, when the Senate Armed Services Committee considered the issue of women in combat during hearings on reinstating registration for Selective Services in 1979, confusion arose over the military’s position on women’s role in the military. Arguing for differential treatment between men and women’s eligibility for the Selective Service program, the Committee suggested, “...that it is not in the best interest of our national defense to register women for the Military Selective Service Act, which would provide needed military personnel upon mobilization or in the event of a peacetime draft for the armed forces” (Requiring

Reinstitution of Registration for Certain Persons under the Military Selective Service Act, and For Other Reasons 1979, 5). By contrast, in that same year, hearings on the Defense Authorization Act of 1980 included several discussions focused on the need for a “fair and equitable reform of existing law providing for the registration and induction of persons for military service” (Defense Authorization Act 1980, 2). If women were to be treated fairly in the military, the argument went, they should be equally eligible to be drafted during a time of war. Proponents of the measure believed it would provide them “with greater flexibility in determining assignments” (2). Debates surrounding whether women should be required to register for selective service were directly informed by views on whether women should be allowed to serve in combat. Military officials argued that women would have to be included in some form of Selective Service ensuring “we believe in equality” and “won’t deny anyone the opportunity to serve their country” (12).

But despite the proposal to include women in a reformed version of the Selective Service program, the proposal did not allow for providing women the opportunity to serve in combat. Rather, women would be more heavily utilized in support services which in turn would make more men available for combat. Military and Congressional leaders argued that ultimately, men would make or break the All-Volunteer Force, as they were still seen as the ultimate soldiers to engage in combat situations. When questioned during a hearing on the Equal Rights Amendment Extension before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary in 1978 on how he believed this would establish equality between men and women, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas Hinman Moorer of the United States Navy, suggested that equality would not be established when all could serve in all positions and in the same

amounts, but rather "...achieved when both men and women are asked to serve in proportion to the ability of the Armed Forces to use them effectively" (Equal Rights Amendment Extension 1978, 217). In this case, using women effectively refers to using them in ways to support men who see combat and receive honor in various ways.

Narratives surrounding the issue before the creation of the All-Volunteer Force used biologically determinist arguments to suggest that women's extended participation in the military would "weaken the combat efficiency" (347). Admiral Moorer suggested that not allowing women into combat was simply "commonsense" (342) given that "...men should have this protective attitude toward women. I would hope that in our society we never get to a point where we do not have the courtesies, the considerations, and the protective attitude toward women that we have today. I think that it would distract, in a heavy fire fight, the men in the unit who see around them large numbers of wounded and dead women. I do not think we should subject our men to that environment" (350).

Women's potential duties in the AVF were continuously questioned. In particular, women were characterized as having raging hormones that caused them to be overly sentimental and to make decisions emotionally, not rationally. As Beth Bailey (2009) has noted, the opinions among high ranking military officials on the topic often shifted throughout the 70's. In the mid-70's for example, Army Chief of Staff, Bernard Rogers expressed disdain over the thought of women serving in combat: "women with rifles and fixed bayonets holding a forward position gives me heartburn," a guttural reaction to women serving on the front lines of the combat theater (quoted in Bailey 2009, 163). However, by 1978, Rogers' position became one which saw women as "an integral part

of the Army. They are not ‘part-time soldiers – here in peace, gone in war.’ Should war come, women will deploy with their units and, like male soldiers, share all risks...inherent in their specialty” (163). Further pressure to integrate women into combat positions also stemmed from the Congressional decree to allow women into all military academies. Women who entered the academies’ first co-educational classes performed better than their male counterparts, surviving their first year in the academies at a higher percentage, and graduating as officers and at the top of their class. However, as this first class of women graduated in 1980, the military began to question how to utilize these graduates if they would not be allowed to serve in combat.

While conservatives remained adamant that women’s military roles should be limited, including excluding them from combat opportunities, a review of the health of the all-volunteer force at the end of the 1970’s also placed women on a list of concerns that were labeled “problems of quality, of readiness, of size and training and capability” (Bailey 165). This concern was particularly articulated through a protective narrative of the military’s conceptualization of masculinity. For James Webb,<sup>14</sup> one of the most outspoken critics of women in the military and military academies, the creation of the All-Volunteer Force was an abandonment of the “essential masculinity and rigorous nature” of the institution (Webb 1980, 3). When comparing the integration of African-American men into the military, Webb rejected a comparison to women’s experiences as “unfounded bigotry.” Instead, Webb argued that women would never be combat ready soldiers, and would never be able to lead male soldiers into combat because of biological

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<sup>14</sup> Working at the time as part of the staff of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Webb was an outspoken critic of women in the military academies. He published several articles on the topic, including “Women Can’t Fight” which was published in 1979 in *The Washingtonian*. He went on to serve as the country’s first Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, as well as Secretary of the Navy before entering office as Senator for the State of Virginia in 2007.

differences, writing “[D]espite what some would like to think, men and women are fundamentally different.”

### **Exploiting Women’s Talents vs. Containing Threats**

During the 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, hearings by the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee during the summer of 1977 focused attention on the Role of Women in the Military. Four years after the initial roll-out of the All-Volunteer Force, the subcommittee was, in particular, “interested in the results of the actions taken regarding the employment, and utilization of women and the results in terms of economics, economic savings, costs and productivity gains or losses” (The Role of Women in the Military, 1977), and why, just four years after the creation of the AVF, there seemed to be a lull or pause in further increasing the number of women serving in the armed forces. Overall, the committee viewed the gains attributed to the increasing involvement of women in the military as a positive, but simultaneously acknowledged the “national security factor involved” (5).

Chaired by William Proxmire<sup>15</sup> (D-WI), the hearing framed the failure to increase women’s numbers in the military (as compared to the initial increase experienced when the AVF was created), as careless, unsubstantiated prejudices. This framing was further extended in Senator Proxmire’s opening remarks to characterize a painful lack of women in U.S. politics, pointing out that at the time of the hearings zero women were serving in the Senate, and only a few in the House. His remarks specifically suggested a notion of gendered institutionalism in which half of the population was being made completely invisible.

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<sup>15</sup> William Proxmire served in the United States Senate, representing Wisconsin from 1957 and 1989.

I might conclude by saying that almost nobody in this society, particularly in the U.S. Senate, can speak by pointing to their own institution. Of the 100 Senators, there is not a woman who is a Senator. This institution is completely male. We are ignoring half of our intelligence, half of our population, half of our resources. The House has a little better situation but not much, with just a very few women in the House. Only 2 of our 50 Governors are women. So, throughout our society, we have certainly failed to provide the opportunity that we should provide that would serve our country so well (3).

Overall, the committee members argued that the military was not taking full advantage of the potentiality of women.

For the military branches, central to the hearing discussions was the question of women's qualifications for combat (5). In opening statements made by Robert Nelson, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, as well as Major General J. P. Kingston, Assistant Deputy Chief for Staff Personnel for the Army, made comments about women engaging in sexual relations with male counterparts and becoming pregnant as a result of it, limiting the Army's ability to deploy them to combat zones when necessary.<sup>16</sup> For the Army, the view remained that "substantially more men than women [would be needed] to insure mission accomplishment...We must not institute policies which will drive men away from the recruiter and enlistment counselor" (6). For the Air Force, the issue of having women serve in combat roles was a larger issue than just effectiveness. Referring to the combat exclusion policy being put in place by Congress, not by the military as an institution, Antonia Handler Chayes, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Installations questioned, "We have to ask ourselves, are we ready to ask women to serve as crew members on

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<sup>16</sup> Military data suggested that, at the time, that as an aggregate across all the branches about 10 percent of female soldiers became pregnant during their time in the military (the highest numbers experienced by the Army at eight percent), making them ineligible for assignments overseas. In 1975, the military ended its policy requiring women who became pregnant during service to be discharged involuntarily, however the policy was framed from an economic standpoint, pointing out that the policy had "resulted in a cost avoidance of \$7.5 million – the estimated cost to replace those women had they been discharged" (The Role of Women in the Military 1977, 13).

aircraft that may be shot down in hostile territory? Are we ready to require women to turn the keys to launch nuclear missiles?" (11). The linking of these two disparate concerns was suggestive of a misogynist militarized culture which was at least partially established through the notion that women needed to be protected from war, and from themselves. The reference and questioning directed specifically at women indicated that both being shot down in hostile territory and launching nuclear missiles were activities deemed appropriate for the hypermasculine warrior. Such remarks also make it possible for the institution to systematically mask the manipulation of exclusion by suggesting that allowing women to serve in combat capacities was a larger, general society issue in which appropriate roles in the military were attached to genders differently.

While Senator Proxmire's urging of including more women in the military was admirable and may be considered an attempt to make the institution more gender inclusive, many of the arguments and comments made during the hearing had strong sexist underpinnings. One such example is the utilization of an argument that more women should be allowed to serve in the military simply for the sake of attracting more men to serve. When Senator Proxmire pointed out to the Army that their recruitment numbers were projected to be 40% short of recruitment goals through 1985, he suggested that similar to colleges switching to coeducational campuses, research showed that the Army would have an easier time recruiting highly qualified males for service if there were more women in the service. "I know that one of the reasons why young men go to a particular college or did a few years ago when so many of them were segregated was because it was coeducational and young women for the same reason. It would seem to me

you have a better opportunity to attract male recruits in the Army if you had more women in the Army” (17).

Similarly, in an exchange between Senator Proxmire and Air Force Secretary Chayes, Senator Proxmire returned to Secretary Chayes’ opening statement in which she raised the issue of women turning the switch on nuclear weapons. He asked her,

“By raising this question, are you saying there are characteristics inherent in women that make them less responsible or less capable of making decisions than men? Why in the world should we hesitate to give women this responsibility any more than say appointing women as Assistant Secretaries of Defense or Assistant Secretary of the Air Force?” (19-20).

Secretary Chayes: “There is no reason. The only issue here is the definition of ‘combat.’ I only raise it to indicate that currently it falls within the definition of ‘combat,’ and, because there is no clear-cut definition, interpretations do occur.”

Senator Proxmire: “I don’t understand why you raised that as a question, a question apparently on your mind. Why do you ask that?”

Secretary Chayes: “The question already has been raised, not in my mind, Senator, but as I said previously the question is in the minds of many Congressmen and in the minds of many military personnel. I only raised it to illustrate the deep concern of military and congressional leadership. At present they seem to have an uncomfortable feeling about imposing this responsibility on women.”

Senator Proxmire: “What is your own personal feeling? Can you make a good, clear, strong recommendation one way or the other?”...To wit, I want to get your views. I want to get your views.”

Secretary Chayes: “My personal views?”

Senator Proxmire: “Yes, indeed, your views on whether or not women should be in the position of turning the key on a nuclear missile.”

Secretary Chayes: “I guess I would be more comfortable with my views after the study. My view going in is really a wide open one – that is theoretically, I expect the study to offer a practical military viewpoint that will enhance my understanding.”

Senator Proxmire: “I can’t understand any difference here. Here – some people are that men have some different characteristics, certainly, there may be a difference in characteristic with respect to physical strength, that is the only one I can think of offhand. I don’t know how people can argue that women are more emotional or less emotional, whatever. This is the thing that concerns me as to the

reason why some people in the services seem to think women shouldn't be allowed to have this critical position. Certainly, there is no greater danger than in many other positions and probably a lot less." (20)

Secretary Chayes: "Senator, I think really it is the combat definition that is clouding the issue now. I think that that issue is going to be cleared

This exchange reflects a particular institutional anxiety over the definition of combat in the new context of a changing landscape of war that was brought about by the Cold War. Evidently, it was not clear whether pressing a button on a nuclear weapon constituted combat. As I argue in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, this institutional anxiety is similar to an ongoing debate in the military currently regarding drone warfare.

As the exchange between Senator Proxmire and Secretary Chayes continued, the focus shifted to the question of whether or not women exhibited the necessary characteristics to launch a nuclear weapon.

Senator Proxmire: "Are there any characteristics of women which in your view would make them unacceptable in this position of being able to turn they key on a nuclear weapon?"

Secretary Chayes: "...I think you have to look at the definition of combat in the context of the statutes. In my view, there are no qualities which disqualify women from doing any job that a man can do except certain factors of strength. In my personal opinion, there are no qualities of emotions, or attitudes that would seriously disqualify them from any job"

Senator Proxmire: "Very good. I understand your position, then. That would apply in missile silos, too? Certainly, they have the strength to turn that key."

Secretary Chayes: "And they need to be able to obey orders."

Senator Proxmire: "What was that?"

Secretary Chayes: "I said they need to be able to obey orders and – "

Senator Proxmire: "Do you have any feeling there is any difference between men and women in obeying orders?"

Secretary Chayes: "If anything, women tend to be more obedient. [Laughter].

Senator Proxmire: "I want to introduce you to my wife sometime. [Laughter.]"

In trying to assess what concerns the military branches had regarding integrating female enlistees into combat related positions, Senator Proxmire also raised an important differentiation between law and policy during the hearing. In an exchange with General Nelson from the Army, Senator Proxmire noted that combat positions would not necessarily have to be filled by men – and therefore recruitment efforts could be concentrated elsewhere as well – given that there was no law that said so. Though General Nelson admitted that “there is no law, but it is policy,” he argued that whether or not women should be allowed to qualify for those positions would depend on stress management test results, suggesting that men and women handle high stress situations differently because of biological differences. Despite women performing better in basic training as well as their first year in the military colleges, General Nelson did not view the integration of women into combat positions as a way to meet AVF recruiting numbers or as a way to increase the quality of the branch. When Senator Proxmire pointed out that the recruitment of women was also less costly in comparison to men, and that there was less lost time with female soldiers given alcohol, drug and other behavioral problems common in male soldiers, he pressed General Nelson on his personal views on women serving in the Army. General Nelson responded,

Well, of course, that is difficult to answer. I have never been in the position of, say, a commander in the field or as a soldier. Let me say this, and I think it is important, that the combat role is one in which an immense amount of stress is found. In the testing we are doing, we are looking at that stress. Up until very recently women were not given any combat training at all. They are now given 7 weeks basic training; the same basic combat training as men. This is being done because in today’s world even those people in the relatively far rear areas could come under attack. We think it is very important for everyone in the Army to know the basics so that they can defend their position and defend themselves if they have to. And I think that is important. That is a little bit different than carrying the primary responsibility of direct combat with the hopeful result that you will engage and kill the enemy. The defense is a little different. But we have

changed many things; for example, not long ago women were not allowed to throw a hand grenade. That is no longer true...I think that women not only handled themselves well, they did as well as the men (29).

This response too is suggestive of a context specific anxiety of women serving in certain roles in the Cold War era. Although General Nelson seemed to try to steer the conversation in that direction, Senator Proxmire remained adamant that biological differences did not exist between men and women in handling stress and that the Army could change its policy on women serving in combat positions overnight, if it so chose to, asserting, "I never heard of anybody making that contention, that women are less able to withstand stress than men...I think we ought to make the assumption, unless there is evidence that there is a difference, that some women can stand stress and some can't, some men can stand stress and some can't, there is no sex difference" (29). By the end of the exchange, General Nelson reframed the issue of women serving in combat into a question of acceptance by the general American society and instead of capability.

Whether or not American society at large would be accepting of women in combat played a direct role in how the military branches recruited – or rather, chose not to recruit – women for non-traditional positions. In testimony provided by the Air Force, for example, it also became apparent that the branch was deliberately not recruiting women for non-traditional roles that were open to them. As suggested by the Brookings Institute Study, "Women in the Military," between 1973 and 1977, the Air Force could have opened up an additional 450,000 enlisted roles to women interested in entering the Air Force without overstepping the combat exclusion policy. Though the branches continued to argue that women in combat was an issue up for debate with the American public, the study concluded that the Air Force's gender demographics were more

probably a result of the military branch's preference for maintaining a predominantly male institution.

### **The 1980's: The Leaky Body's Production of Time Lost**

The 1980's, Congress considered several bills designed to advance women's integration within the military. By the beginning of the decade, women comprised roughly eight percent of the armed forces and were projected to comprise 13% by 1983. In 1987, when women made up 10% of the overall armed forces, Senator William Dickinson (R-AL) introduced a bill to try to bring uniformity of interpretation of the definition of combat across the branches. In that same year, Senator Proxmire and Senator Cohen introduced a bill that pushed for opening all combat support positions within the Army, Navy and Air Force to women.<sup>17</sup> But confusion around the military's intention to become more gender inclusive became more prominent during this decade as both Congressional and Military officials argued the AVF had been a failure and questioned whether or not reinstating the draft should be considered.

Two main tropes were used to criticize the abandonment of the draft. Because the AVF tried to recruit enlistees with pay increases and improved benefits, some argued that the AVF was astronomically expensive compared to the conscription-based military. In

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<sup>17</sup> During hearings on the Department of Defense authorization for appropriations for fiscal years 1988 and 1989 before the Senate Committee on Armed Forces, Dr. David Armor, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and Acting Assistant Secretary, Force Management and Personnel, was asked about the DOD's position on the legislation. He argued that combat support positions were highly combat related and that if changes were to be made to the positions available to women they should be done by reviewing the combat exclusion policy within the statute. In essence, he argued that the proposed bill suggested "an abandonment of the principle [of keeping women out of combat] without addressing it". Reviewing the principle, he argued, should be taken up by Congress to consider, "Is it the will of the American people to allow women in combat positions? If it is, then I am sure the Congress will reflect that..." Ultimately, Dr. Armor suggested that the proposed legislative measure was unnecessary given the services' ability of "reviewing occupations" and "open[ing] all kinds of jobs up," an argument which further promotes the military's narrative of rational and deliberate incremental integration and justifies limiting women's opportunity for advancement in the military.

arguing that considerable money could be saved if the costs associated with the AVF were eliminated, the military again positioned itself as rational, fiscally responsible actor. That notion of the hyper expensive AVF, however, was dispelled, however, by the fact that expenditures for “the active forces of the AVF [had] been within 1.5% of the Congressionally authorized limits since 1974” (156). Opponents of the AVF also argued that the AVF was weaker than the draft armed forces despite the Department of Defense itself claiming in a 1978 report that the AVF was superior to the draft military. DOD cited fewer disciplinary problems and higher levels of education among the ranks. In the 1980 hearing before the House Committee on the Judiciary regarding Judiciary Implications of Draft Registration, NOW Executive Vice President, Judy Goldsmith argued that opponents of gender integrated forces offered arguments laden with sexist and racist bias. “Underneath the surface of these arguments are the racist and sexist attitudes, which pervade our society, coupled with undisguised economic exploitation” (Judiciary Implications of Draft Registration 1980, 156).

Myths also persisted surrounding women’s performance in the military and how a draft that excluded women would be effective. In particular, some suggested that women were not needed by the military. Moreover, they needed “protection” from the draft. Yet others suggested that equal citizenship depended on women’s military service. “Omission from the registration and draft ultimately robs women of the right to first class citizenship and paves the way to underpaying women all the remaining days of our lives” (157). Feminist groups argued that the masculinist justification of excluding women from service under a draft system had a larger implication, suggesting that it was acceptable to exclude them from decisions critical to the nation. Although women had been serving

ably in the military for decades, the focus on the combat ban rendered this service invisible and diverted attention away from the question of what women could do “with the same training, benefits and salary as men” (159).

Proponents of reinstating the draft could foresee that a draft would regender the male-dominant institution, once again curtailing women’s participation. It was well known that women served in much smaller proportions under the mandatory conscription model. For example, under the draft, women comprised only one percent of the Army, compared to the Army’s projection that women would constitute 13% by 1983 under a volunteer system. The military cited a range of reasons for the purported need for a registration system,<sup>18</sup> including “show[ing] the USSR that we mean business” (156), and increasing our mobilization capabilities. But these arguments were far from persuasive. As NOW VP Judy Goldsmith pointed out, a system of name gathering might “sound strong to Americans who want to show that we are serious, in reality it proves nothing to the USSR which appreciates fully how little names on a list actually mean” (Ibid). The military’s appeal to Cold War threats to national security offered a pretext for regendering the male-dominant institution, reversing gains in women’s integration. Whether or not the military explicitly sought to use the draft as a vehicle to limit women’s participation in the armed services, their pro-conscription narrative consistently drew attention away from potential negative implications of reinstating the draft on women’s presence, focusing instead on national security in the context of a deepening Cold War. If the concern was truly about the ability to mobilize the most qualified

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<sup>18</sup> Other commonly used arguments for reinstating the draft included the need for a draft if there would be a major war, a declining youth population would not be able to produce the necessary number of personnel for mobilization, a potential national youth training and work program would include military service in the program, and that considerable money could be saved in comparison to the costs associated with the AVF.

individuals as quickly as possible in the case of a war, the military should have instead removed the “sex discriminatory restrictions” (Ibid) from service in combat, which placed women as inferior, second class citizens within the military apparatus.

But parties in favor of keeping women out of combat intricately tied soldiering to manhood. The Presidential recommendations for Selective Service reform report submitted to the hearing by the Selective Service System argued that equality between men and women is not established when all can serve in all positions and in the same amounts, but rather “...achieved when both men and women are asked to serve in proportion to the ability of the Armed Forces to use them effectively” (217). This argument suggested that the boundary for acceptable service for women was up to the point that they served in support services which would allow more male soldiers to be available for combat duty.

Intimately tied to arguments against allowing women into combat, and against allowing them to be drafted was the issue of “time lost,” that is, leave taken by soldiers before their service contracts were up. For women, time lost was specifically framed in two contexts; one, in regards to their hormones and menstrual cycles; the other, in regards to pregnancies and motherhood. Women’s hormones were discussed in connection to women’s emotionalism and ability to make good decisions. Women’s debilitating menstrual cycles were discussed through essentialist assertions that viewed all women in the military as a monolithic group, assuming that all women menstruate on a monthly basis and that all women deal with menstruation similarly. The nuances around these tropes, however, varied slightly during different eras. In the 1980’s, panelists cited unsubstantiated generalities about women’s emotionalism, argued that women were more

likely to drop out of the military because of marriage, and cited menstruation as making women physically less able to complete tasks, suggesting that menstruation would cause female soldiers to lose more active time and mobilize more slowly than their male counterparts. This assertion marked women's bodies as leaky, incomplete, and a threat to the security of the sovereign nation.

Associating the hypothetical economic repercussions of potential time lost by female soldiers with menstruation, pregnancies, and motherhood, the military framed itself as *homo economicus*, the rational actor concerned solely with the financial interests of the nation. Yet, their particular claims reflected the mysogonist views of a hypermasculinized institution. These arguments suggested that major monies were spent and lost by having to invest in the recruitment of new soldiers to cover for women who took time off or left the forces. During a hearing on the performance of the military in Desert Storm, Air Force Chief of Staff, Tony McPeak categorized pregnant soldiers as “nondeployable” (Desert Storm Mystery Illness/Adequacy of Care 1994, 103). Studies conducted by the National Organization for Women, however, showed “...that there is little difference in the time lost by women and men and that, in fact, it appears that less time is lost by women. This is true even when pregnancy, the largest single factor in lost time for women, is included” (Judiciary Implications of Draft Registration 1980, 160).<sup>19</sup> By contrast, in the 1990's, testimonies provided at Congressional hearings tied pregnancies established during a woman's term of service in the military with “policies that subsidize and encourage single parenthood” (Assignment of Army and Marine Corps Women Under New Definition of Combat 1994, 64). As the endemic nature of sexual violence in the military became more apparent during the decade, military officials

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<sup>19</sup> Lost time accumulated by men is most usually associated with alcohol and drug usage.

argued that gender-integrated training increased the likelihood of sexual assault, and consequently pregnancies. Military officials often viewed this as a discrepancy in personnel policies, claiming “Sexual assault misconduct is supposedly wrong, but pregnancy policies provide generous benefits to unmarried servicewomen” (Gender-integrated Training and Related Matters 1997, 37). Ultimately, “high pregnancy rates,” forecast if gender-integrated training were permitted, positioned women as a national security threat that would detract from combat efficiency and readiness. Instead, the military encouraged women to serve in combat support positions, keeping the most prestigious roles for their male counterparts.

### **The 1990’s: Combat and the Marginalization of Military Sexual Assault**

The push to increase women’s full integration into the military was renewed in the 1990s as a result of feminist challenges of traditional gender assumptions, women’s more prominent service in Operation Desert Storm, as well as political pressure on Pentagon officials after the sexual assault of women and men at the Tailhook Convention came to light. As part of that push, legislation was enacted that called for the elimination of barriers that stopped women from serving on “combat aircraft and naval vessels” (Burrelli 2013, 3). Nonetheless, the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule Efforts identified six core reasons to maintain the combat exclusion policy. These included the suggestion that women lacked physical strength and stamina, problems related to living conditions, lack of support from both Congress and the American public on the issue of women in combat. Moreover, this Rule posited that including women would not contribute to and could well detract from the readiness and effectiveness of the units (6).

Reasoning which conflated combat service with sexual assault in the military took center stage during this period. Based on the Congressional hearings, arguments most prominent against increasing women's access to combat positions during the 1990's were made through biological narratives that allowed Congressional proponents of the ban to argue that women were at increased risk of being sexually assaulted in combat situations. By keeping women out of combat, the military was protecting them from their male counterparts. Framed in the shadows of the 1991 Tailhook Scandal, where Marines and Navy aviation officers sexually assaulted more than 80 women and several men during a military symposium in Las Vegas, many of the Congressional hearings directly tied the issue of women in combat<sup>20</sup> support roles to the Tailhook Sexual Assault Scandal. This framing allowed the military to argue that women's very livelihood and physical safety depended on keeping them out of combat. In an exchange during the question and answer portion of the hearing, Senators raised questions about an endemic culture of sexual violence in the military. Senators pressed military officials on whether any research had been conducted, data gathered and analyzed on sexual assault and what each branch planned to do about it in order to curtail it once women were officially allowed to serve in combat. In their response, military officials took an unexpected stance, suggesting that women's equality in the military would solve the problem of sexual harassment and assault. When women and men trained and served together, military men would treat women as equals. In this reversal, the military implied that it favored further integration

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<sup>20</sup> In some hearings, concerns surrounding women's treatment in the military branches along with increasing revelations of sexual assault were compared to the integration of African Americans in the 1970's. As retired Air Force Major General Jeanne Holm, explained during that same hearing "the purpose of harassment, whether in the military or civilian workplace, is always the same: to humiliate and degrade women, to make them feel they do not belong, and ultimately, to drive them out or to keep them out. It is most prevalent in communities that exclude women as in military combat fields" (13).

of women, while masking their own responsibility for the low numbers of women in the military, and conveniently sweeping a major gendered form of violence under the table.

When further evidence of systematic sexual assault in the military emerged, Congressional representatives continued to question whether allowing women into combat roles would only make matters worse. During a 1997 Congressional hearing on Gender Integrated Training before the Senate Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Forces, Subcommittee Chair Dirk Kempthorne [R-ID], argued that the 1996 Aberdeen Proving Ground sexual assault case in which groups of commissioned and non-commissioned officers sexually assaulted female trainees who were under their command may have occurred because “men and women were training together,” which may have “contributed to the violations and the leadership failures that we saw at Aberdeen” (2).

### **The 2000’s: Medical Treatment and Care of Female Soldiers**

U.S. participation in the war in Afghanistan and the war of Iraq in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks again raised the question of where to draw the line between combat and non-combat for the women deployed in those theaters of war. Between 2002 and 2013, Congress held 19 hearings concerning the kinds of injuries sustained by troops in these conflicts and the adequacy the military health care system, and 9 hearings on sexual assault in the military. The impact of women’s service in war settings, proximate to combat but not acknowledged as combat assignments surfaced in these hearings, which routinely framed women veterans as distinct and different from their male counterparts. Several hearings refer to “unique problems” (209) faced by women returning home after tours of duty in the wars. In some hearings, women service

members were described as “female warriors,” an honorific designation typically reserved for those who have served in combat and suffered severe wounds, including bodily maiming (as I discuss in chapter 4). By separating the discussion of the impact of war on women in the military, these hearings reinforced the perception that women’s performance must always be measured as distinct from but in comparison to the male “norm,” a subtle marginalization that removes women from the category of combatant. Discussions of post-deployment treatment programs for women create a double edged sword that acknowledges women’s service in combat theaters, while situating them in a peripheral space in need of separate study for conditions that deviate from those experienced by “ordinary” soldiers, who are presumed to be men.

But as MacKenzie (2015) suggests, in certain instances, categorizing women’s service in these wars as outside the boundaries of combat has a direct implication on services and treatments available to them as veterans. Despite the increased attention given to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the context of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, PTSD remains distinctly associated with “front-line combat,” the definitive, masculinized warrior space, which grounds accolades and warrants honors for participants. This border is, however, leaky. Women are asked to participate in combat missions (as I show in the following chapter with the case of the LIONESS group), but do not receive adequate training, or the necessary services and treatment post-deployment to deal with their physical and psychological wounds. The partially acknowledged participation of women within combat spaces has contradictory results. Rather than celebrate the valor of women troops, many in the military choose to refortify the boundaries of combat service, reaffirming the logic of masculine protection. In this way,

PTSD as a diagnosis (as well as physical disfigurements obtained through combat, as I argue in Chapter 5) is reserved for those who match the male warrior image that the military continues to project.

The 2013 Congressional hearings also examined strategies for implementing and the potential impact of the newly lifted ban on women in combat. In preparation for the end of the combat ban, the military rolled out new rhetoric, referring to “gender-neutral,” “gender-mixed,” “gender segregated,” “gender-separated,” “gender-integrated,” and “gender-restrictive” units. As the terminology in the hearings shifted to suggest a degendering of combat units, these new terms were off-set by the familiar gendered narratives that raised suspicion about the wisdom of rescinding of the exclusion policy. For example, as the military branches began to consider recommendations to limit women’s participations in certain roles, Major General Bennet Sacolick, head of the Special Operations Units, argued that those decisions would be based solely on the demands of unit cohesion, thereby conjuring up images that sustain the mythic stereotype of the Band of Brothers. To participate in special operations units, according to Sacolick, women would have to achieve a level of integration that would preserve “unit readiness, cohesion and morale”—thus holding women responsible for the attitudes of men in their units. To further stack the deck against women’s participation, the military insisted that they would have to deploy “in small self-contained teams for long periods of time in austere, geographically isolated locations...in very close quarters” with men (Women in Service Reviews 2013, 101). The deployment of equal numbers of women and men was never considered. Instead, United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM) suggested that likely social interactions within such gender-imbalanced units would have

to be considered closely. The potential for a lack of “social cohesion” between men and women was of particular concern: if units did not “feel emotionally bonded with each other,” task cohesion, referring to the mutual commitment among the individual team members in achieving the group objective” could suffer (102).

### **Conclusion**

The fanfare surrounding the 2013 announcement that the ban on women serving in combat positions would be lifted in 2016 suggested a step toward degendering the United States military. Beginning in 2016, the male monopoly of combat roles would end and women would gain access to positions that afford combatants the highest levels of accolade, honor, and respect. Troops serving in combat, facing possible bodily mutilation and death are the “tip of the spear” in the military, socially constructed as the “ultimate warriors” whose duty is to provide protection for the sovereign nation state. But discursive analysis of the gendered narratives developed by the military in preparation for this change, suggest a far more complicated situation.

This chapter analyzes recent military discourse in relation to a longer tradition, tracing the gendered nuances of narratives surrounding the combat exclusion policy since 1948, with particular attention to Congressional hearings since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force. As the military tried to recuperate from the Vietnam War, moving from conscription to a volunteer force, increasing the role of women was one means to meet recruitment targets. Yet more women in the military did not produce gender equality in military roles. As women joined the military in increasing numbers, they were excluded from serving in the most critical, dangerous, and prestigious positions.

Rather than devising mechanisms to integrate women in military operations, the military campaigned to exclude women from combat, offering Congressional testimony to justify exclusion. Privileging male concerns about working with, and fighting alongside women, the military legitimated homosocial bonding, and neglected evidence drawn from women's performance in the military. Focusing on fears about unit cohesion and speculations about "time lost" due to menstruation and pregnancy, military spokespersons diverted attention from the actual performance of increasing numbers of women in the military, who were taking on increasingly diverse roles. As the military cast itself as a rational actor, intent upon deliberate policy development and fiscal responsibility, they simultaneously deployed emotional arguments, riddled with misogynist claims about women's leaky bodies, framing hormones, menstruation, pregnancies, motherhood, and vulnerability to sexual assault as threats to the integrity of military units. In the next chapter, I continue to examine differential treatment of women in the military, comparing how wounds themselves become gendered as the military acknowledges and honors wounded male veterans, while ignoring violated bodies of women veterans.

## **CHAPTER 3: VIOLATED BODIES: COMBAT INJURIES AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY**

### **Introduction**

In 2008, the Rand Corporation's Center for Military Health Policy Research published a report entitled, "Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery." Between October of 2001, and the date of publication of the report, an approximate 1.64 million United States armed services members had deployed to Afghanistan and/or Iraq as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom respectively. Those deployments marked an unprecedented shift in the history of the All-Volunteer Force (Belasco 2007, Bruner 2006), not only in the proportion of troops deployed, but also in the length of deployments. Soldiers were being redeployed to combat multiple times, and breaks between deployments were becoming shorter or all together infrequent (Hosek, Kavanagh, and Miller 2006).

Perhaps surprisingly, and perhaps unrecognized by the public, both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom utilized smaller numbers of U.S. troops and produced lower numbers of casualty rates of U.S. military killed or wounded (RAND 2008, 2) than in other prolonged wars such as the Vietnam War and Korean War. As suggested by the Rand Corporation's study, these changes are associated with "advances in both medical technology and body armor," which have allowed soldiers to survive war experiences that would have otherwise caused death in previous conflicts. While conventionally understood modes of war wounding may be less frequent, unrecognized "invisible wounds" related to mental health conditions have been on the rise. Invisible

wounds often result in unemployment, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide among veterans as troops return to their homes and attempt to reintegrate into society.

In the course of these wars, the United States public has often been exposed to media coverage of courageous, decorated soldiers being awarded medals of distinction for acts of valor in combat, accolades which set them apart from the other members of their “band of brothers.” Images of soldiers being awarded the Purple Heart – the greatest distinction available to military personnel – are most often afforded to male service members for what is deemed courageous behavior during situations of combat in the war theater. As defined by the Military Order of the Purple Heart, soldiers who have received the prestigious medal are based on “wounds suffered in combat.” A particular concept of wound or wounding establishes the criteria of eligibility for the award, which is “...awarded to members of the armed forces of the U.S. who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy and posthumously to the next of kin in the name of those who are killed in action or die of wounds received in action. It is specifically a combat decoration.” Similarly, the Medal of Honor “is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force which can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States.” Soldiers awarded the medal are decorated by the President of the United States in highly covered media ceremonies, positioning recipients as the embodiment of the criteria for the award.

Soldiers awarded the Purple Heart and the Medal of Honor who also speak out on the psychological impact left by their tours of combat challenge the image of the typical award recipient. Staff Sergeant Ty Michael Carter, who was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Barak Obama in the summer of 2013 for “valor in battle” during an

insurgent attack on Outpost Keating in Afghanistan in 2009, spoke out openly about symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) he had experienced, as a direct result of the attack for which he was awarded the medal. But when President Obama spoke of Staff Sergeant Carter's courageous actions on those days – and the trauma he experienced as a result of it – he referred to his experience with post-traumatic stress as “his courage in the *other* battle he has fought” (emphasis added). By suggesting that post-traumatic stress involves an “other” battle fought, discourses such as these circumscribe invisible wounds, removing them from the theater of war, and marking them as unworthy of the same praise and public valorization as wounds that physically mark the bodies of soldiers and are visible to the naked eye.

As institutions such as the Veterans Administration (VA) begin to grapple with the inadequate handling of thousands of returning “wounded” veterans, and as media narratives begin to devote more attention to the psychological impact of war, attention is also being given to a different form of “invisible” military wounding – the effects of endemic sexual assault in the armed forces. The 2012 release of *The Invisible War*, a documentary film on sexual assault in the United States military, has received considerable attention since its release – both by the political and academic spheres – bringing public attention to the often unrecognized pervasiveness of sexual assault in the United States military. The film provides gripping depictions of soldiers – predominantly women, but also to a lesser extent, men – who have experienced sexual harassment and violence while serving in the military. The film has politicized the rape epidemic in the military and has been said to have produced a “greater influence on national policy, in a shorter amount of time, than nearly any other documentary in history” (Kooney 2013).

Traditionally, violence committed on the bodies of soldiers has been associated with combat and the injuries sustained through enemy fire in times of war. Injuries resulting from “friendly fire” are notoriously underreported. Heralded for their valor in warfare, returning wounded veterans set “the standard of soldiering” (Eichler 2013). Their heroic deeds are put on display for public consumption both in the media and through special commemoration ceremonies. As advances in war technologies curtail the visible maiming of soldiers’ bodies while escalating the incidence of traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorders, and depression, invisible injuries take on heightened significance. It is important to consider how the military as an institution is grappling with unconventional and previously unrecognized “invisible wounds,” processes of wounding such as sexual assault in the military, and proliferating mental health conditions associated with tours of war.

This chapter analyzes military discourses that sustain particular understandings of “military wounds” and actions associated with being “wounded in the military.” By comparing the violence inflicted on military bodies through combat (in the form of missing limbs or bodily mutilations for example) with violence sustained through sexual assault while serving in the military, I explore the military’s perception of injury, wounds, and its relation to ongoing perpetuations of masculinity as a necessary ideal for soldiering. Following Jutta Weldes (1999, 110), I will attempt to demonstrate how military representations of war wounds are “mutually constitutive and jointly productive of the meanings of the social world,” in this instance, meanings that accredit and discredit certain forms of gendered harm.

By investigating meanings and conceptualizations of “military wounding” embedded in the military’s self-representations as well as representations of war wounds advanced by outside groups that challenge the military, I will examine the discursive effects of these competing representations, analyzing their implications for gendered citizenship both in relation to military service and to contemporary U.S. culture more generally. My analysis will show that military discourses on war wounds conjure up specific gendered images of soldiering. Injuries sustained through sexual assault during military service – whether abroad or at home – are not considered military wounds. Challenging stock notions of military heroism intricately tied to a duty to “protect and defend,” wounds resulting from sexual assault by fellow soldiers or by commanding officers manifest gender trouble in the armed services and are characterized as extrinsic to war making or systematically silenced.

### **Studying Sexual Violence: Methodological Difficulties**

Although the utility of gendered violence (rape in particular) in international relations as a “tool to break down the enemy, to punish resistance to the military’s goals, and to assert the military’s strength and disciplinary power” (Nayak 2009, 153) has been well documented by feminist scholars over the past four decades,<sup>21</sup> less attention has been devoted to the endemic nature of rape within the militaries of sovereign nations. Complications with definitions and “measurements” of the phenomenon have limited scholars’ ability to subject the topic to systematic investigation despite sexual assault being “considered one of the most debilitating obstacles women have to face within

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<sup>21</sup> Rape as a tool of war, rape as a metaphor in foreign policy discourse, rape as language of defense intellectuals

organizational settings” (Carrerias 2013, 53). Despite the Department of Defense’s commitment to a zero-tolerance policy in the early 1980s, high-profile incidents such as the 1991 Tailhook Scandal and the 1996 sexual harassment incidents at the Army training facilities in Fort Leonard Wood, as well as the more recent occurrences of the 2003 sexual assault scandal at the U.S. Air Force Academy suggest an ongoing, institutional problem that has transcended decades of (supposed) gender inclusive policies designed to produce a less masculinist, misogynist culture. Far from being an instance of failed policy or inadequate intervention, Helena Carreiras (2006) suggests that persistent sexual violence in the military should be understood as a “tendency to reassert masculinity” (54). In response to modes of foreign policy and warfare that have been characterized as attempts to “feminize” the military, “the prevalence of sexual harassment may be seen as the effect of pressure to reassert the masculinity of service members, in a period where the main function of the military is shifting from warfare to “operations other than war” (OOTW) such as peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions” (Ibid).

Carreiras identifies two overarching categories of sexual violence documented in the “first and second generations” of scholarship on military sexual assaults (MSA).<sup>22</sup> Within these studies, scholars have sought to establish “prevalence rates, psychological and physical correlates of sexual assault, and factors that may increase sexual assault in the military” (Turchik and Wilson 2010, 267). Characterizing the prevalence of sexual assault in the military as an endemic problem, some studies note that attempted or completed sexual assault among military personnel is higher than national averages of rape among civilians. Scholarly investigations of sexual assault in the military, however, are far fewer than studies of sexual assault among civilians in various settings.

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<sup>22</sup> Carrerias 2013 – Explain difference between first generation and second generation literature.

While methodological issues haunt research conducted on sexual assault in the military, studies suggest that anywhere between 9.5% to 33% of women *report* some attempted or completed rapes during their tenure in the military (Bostock & Daley, 2007; Coyle et al., 1996; Murdoch et al., 2007; Sadler et al., 2000; Skinner et al., 2000; Surís et al., 2007). Data suggests that nearly half of all female service members who served in Afghanistan and Iraq experienced some form of sexual harassment. Moreover, it is thought that up to 40% of female soldiers – whether they report it or not – experience at least one incidence of attempted or completed rape while completing their service in the military (MacKenzie 2015). These numbers are slightly more concrete when sexual assault cases are considered separately in each branch of the military. In the Air Force, for example, a large scale study found that 9.5% of women had reported that their most recent experience of rape, (suggesting that these women had been raped numerous times, either in the military or in both the military and civilian sphere), occurred during their military service (Bostock and Daley 2007). In the Army, 10.5% of women reported rape while in military service (Murdoch et al. 2007). Among female veterans, 19.6% of women who have accessed Veterans’ medical services after completing their term(s) in the military have reported and sought assistance to cope with having been raped (Coyle et al. 1996).

Far less attention has been given to the prevalence of rape among male service members. Studies conducted in the 1990s and first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century estimate that between 1% and 12% of male soldiers have been raped (Kimerling et al. 2007; Krinsley et al. 2003; Martin et al. 1998; Murdoch et al. 2004; Murdoch et al. 2007; Smith et al. 1999). These studies are ambiguous as to whether these rapes occurred

during the individual's military service. Smith et al. (1999), for example, suggest a 12% lifetime prevalence rate (that is, sexual assault committed against the individual at some point prior to the study) for male combat veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome (sample size: 129). In 92% of these cases, sexual assault occurred prior to the individual's tour of combat, but it is unclear whether sexual assault occurred when the individual was a civilian or in the military.

Criticizing the literature on rape in the armed forces, Bostock and Daley (2007) note that studies of sexual assault in the military lack coherence and consistency, differing in methodologies, sample ranges and sizes, definitions of sexual assault, as well as the interview style and questions used to measure the degree of sexual assault. Thus, as Turchik and Wilson (2010) note, variation in prevalence may be due to variation in methodologies rather than to differences in incidence. Turchik and Wilson also emphasize that research on rape in the military poses challenges: the military is a "population [...] that researchers have a more difficult time accessing, there is less consistency in MSA measures, and MSA studies are less often prospective" (269). Typically, research on military sexual assault assumes women service members as the victims and male service members as the perpetrators of sexual assault. Very little data has been gathered about the gender of sexual assault perpetrators. The Department of Defense reported in 2002 and 2003, 99% of alleged perpetrators were male and 91% of alleged victims were women (DoD 2004).

Rather than focusing exclusively on questions of prevalence, Cynthia Enloe (1983) has suggested that rape within the military is integrally related to military policies

designed to regulate sexuality among the forces.<sup>23</sup> Through a historical investigation of militaries in the UK and the US, Enloe (1983) documented efforts of military leaders to provide male service members with opportunities to satisfy their supposed biologically-driven heterosexual urges in ways that would not threaten effective military operations. Assuming that rape and illicit sexual encounters would proliferate if service members were not given a controlled outlet for their sexual cravings, military organizations provided service members with prostitutes in sites adjacent to military bases. In some instances, prostitutes were made available on bases themselves. Enloe (1983) suggests that “it may be that there are aspects of the military institution and ideology, which greatly increase the pressure on militarized men to ‘perform’ sexually, whether they have a sexual ‘need’ or emotional feelings or not” (35) because they “are subjected to 24 hours a day to pressures to conform to the standards of ‘masculine’ behavior” (35). Through socialization processes and through peer pressure, men in the military may be cajoled to engage in bonding rituals that are sexual in nature, including gang raping prostitutes or other women available to them. Although the military remains quite tight-lipped about its practices to provide outlets for the sexual energies of heterosexual male troops, evidence of these practices surface in regulations concerning sanitary hygiene in and around military bases and in zoning ordinances negotiated with local officials. In response to sexual assault among members of the military, however, tight lips give way to prevarications that disappear the military victims of sexual assault and sometimes women in the military more generally.

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<sup>23</sup> Building on Cynthia Enloe’s observations in this area, a number of feminist scholars have investigated these issues in various empirical settings. For example, see Sandra Whitworth’s (2008) *Men, Militarism, and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, and Katherine HS Moon’s (1997) *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S. – Korea Relations*.

## **A Culture of Silence**

In her testimony to the 2013 Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on pending legislation regarding processes of prosecution against perpetrators of sexual assault in the military, Anu Bhagwati, Executive Director of Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), suggested that sexual assault has sweeping implications for the military as an institution. In addition to the often irreparable "pain and damage" to service members, sexual assault is thought to have a profound impact "on our military in terms of recruitment, readiness and retention..." While sexual assault in the military is nothing new, the institution's repeated failure to eradicate the epidemic "has caused troops to lose faith in their leadership and in the military's criminal justice system" (Bhagwati 2013). This has become most apparent in the low reporting rates of incidents of sexual assault in the military, which are thought to occur for two primary reasons: service members' fear of retaliation stemming from reporting, and a strong lack of confidence among service members in the military justice system to punish their perpetrators when they do come forward with reports of sexual assault.

The combination of these two factors has created what Bhagwati (2013, 1) calls "a culture of silence" both in the military proper, and in the service academies. This silencing culture precludes the dissemination of truths about the endemic nature of sexual assault in the military and limits victims' abilities to heal from their experiences.

Writing regarding Bangladeshi rape victims, Bina D'Costa (in Ackerly, Stern and True 2006) describes truth telling as "a necessary step for peace-building, promoting democracy, striving for social justice, and transforming society more broadly" (133). However, having individuals who have experienced sexual assault in the military speak

about their experiences can be particularly sensitive and dangerous. It has been suggested that very few soldiers who have been sexually assaulted step forward to report those cases for various reasons, which I detail below. As such, the military as an institution shapes what is considered to be the “truth” about sexual assault; it conspicuously controls what narratives are used in the representation the problem within its institution by creating an environment that dissuades victims from reporting. Similar to the exclusion of female Bangladeshi rape victims from the history of the nation, the U.S. military uses “the power of dominant groups to define and address the concerns and interests of marginalized groups, mak[ing] it impossible for those groups to put their own needs on the public agenda”(D’Costa in Ackerly, Stern and True 2006, 131).

In the U.S. military as in Bangladesh, the silencing of sexual assault victims creates and sustains an institutional environment in which victims are unwilling to report these incidents. The persistence of such “chilly climates” is “not an oversight, but rather the result of the exercise of power” (131). By engaging in systematic silencing, or what I call processes of conscious exclusion of victim narratives, the U.S. military maintains the power to define how the histories of soldiers experiencing sexual assault in the military are told and projected to the general public. As I show throughout this chapter, systematic silencing and manipulations of truth are an essential means to preserve the military as a masculinist institution. These gendered mechanisms of representation are part of long-established military routines.

These gendered processes of silencing are not unique to sexual assault in the military. They are also prevalent in how the military chooses to valorize certain soldiers for their service, particularly service that is completed in the war theater, while erasing

the service of others. Consider, for example, the 2008 documentary film, “*LIONESS*,” which tells the untold story of the first team of female combat support soldiers tied to a male Marine combat force during Operation Iraqi Freedom in Ramadi. Serving side by side with male counterparts in combat, but without the necessary combat training to do so, the *LIONESS* army team represents the first of many female combat support troops to return home to reintegrate into society. Precisely because women’s service in combat zones is routinely unrecognized, the documentary seeks to “make[...] public, for the first time, their hidden history” (movie production website).

The film showcases the culture of silence by recounting an episode during a reunion of the *LIONESS* group when several members of the team watch an independent documentary movie (named after this group of women) about the ambush in Ramadi aired on the History Channel. Although the *LIONESS* makes it clear that these female soldiers were integral to several military missions “outside of the wire,” the History Channel aired documentary depicts the combat fights in Ramadi as completed solely by male Marines. As one of the Lionesses exclaims in response to the film, “It’s basically early April when we were out on the Lioness mission with the Marines but we’re not mentioned in it at all.” Another Lioness chimes in, “In that video, it’s like they went out of their way to make sure that they didn’t mention us because all those events that took place in those videos, we were there!”

### **Discourses that Disappear Victims of Sexual Violence**

Despite the “central role that masculinity and violence play in the existence of the military” (Nayak 2009, 153), military discourses about sexual assault have a peculiar way of shifting the focus from the victims of sexual violence to the needs of the military.

Although feminist scholars have suggested that the military's organizational mission "relies on masculinist norms that perpetuate such violence" (Nayak 2009, 147), military spokespersons insist that sexual assault is an anomaly. Far from being endemic to military culture and practice, they characterize sexual violence as something foreign that invades the military from the outside. Indeed, adopting language drawn from securitization and medical discourses, the U.S. military positions sexual violence as a "threat" to military institutions themselves. When political pressure concerning sexual violence escalates dramatically necessitating an official response from the Pentagon, recourse to rhetoric that foregrounds a potent threat that must be contained enables the military to "not only [...] protect the image and representation of the military but also to allow the military to continue without interruption in its business of training people in warfare and potential attack on designated enemies" (161).

Increased media attention during 2013 and 2014 to the endemic nature of sexual violence in the U.S. military provides a powerful example of the military's turn to securitization discourses to preserve the integrity of their institutions. As Alison Howell (2014) has noted, "securitization theory seeks to understand the process by which threats are constructed. It studies how an issue gets elevated from 'normal politics' to a matter of security through the process of 'securitization,' or, the construction of an existential threat to a state or other referent object through securitizing speech acts. In the case of sexual violence within the ranks, the U.S. military shifts its normal securitization stance from a focus on securing the nation against external forces that threaten the national security of the homeland and population to a new register that requires securitizing efforts against threats internal to the institution that may limit its operational

effectiveness. It frames sexual assault as a source of “insecurity” for military institutions themselves and turns to medical discourses to illuminate the nature of the “threat.”

Statements made by branch generals to the Senate Armed Services Committee in the context of hearings on pending legislation regarding sexual assault portrayed sexual assault as a detriment to the institution’s integrity, reputation, and ability to fulfill its purpose. General Robert Papp, Chief of Staff of the Coast Guard’s opening statement before the Committee, provides a powerful example of this securitization narrative:

Sexual assault is a virulent crime that devastates its victim. It also destroys unit discipline, it erodes cohesiveness and degrades our readiness...To execute our missions, all Coast Guard personnel must be bound by trust and mutual respect for one another. The crime of sexual assault not only damages the victim, it undermines morale, degrades readiness and damages mission performance. It is a deliberate act that violates law, policy and our Core Values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty (Papp).

Responding to the Committee on behalf of the Army, General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, also emphasized that “the credibility of the Armed Forces and the credibility of the Army [is] at stake” in efforts to contain the threat of sexual violence (Amos). Similarly, during that same committee hearing, Navy Chief of Staff Admiral Jonathan Greenert suggested that sexual assault affected “the ability of the Navy to execute [its] mission. We must more effectively prevent and respond to sexual assault, or our readiness and credibility as a fighting force will suffer” (Greenert). Other statements made during these testimonials articulate a fear that sexual violence in the military will “chip away” the public’s faith in the institution.

Perhaps even more suggestively, military statements frequently depict sexual assault in medical terms, characterizing it as an “epidemic,” “cancer,” “disease,” or “plague” that threatens the military as an institution. The use of medical metaphors as

“shared language” (Howell 2014), not only highlights affinities between institutions of war and medicine, but also suggests, a “more deeply-rooted[...] ongoing shared strategic logic of warfare and medicine.” Although the intimate affinity between the two has most often played out externally on the battlefields of both inter and intrastate wars (See Howell 2013, 2014), in the context of sexual assault medical metaphors subtly position the military as an institution as the prime victim of sexual violence. As the violated bodies of raped women and men disappear, sexual assault is reframed as a “disease” that the military must “sanitize” itself against. Consider the following statements made by the various branch generals during the 2013 Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing:

“The violent crime of sexual assault *plagues* our society; it is unacceptable in any place. However in the military it is especially repugnant because it breaks the sacred bond of trust between service members that is vital to readiness and our nation’s security.” (Coastguard, emphasis added)

“Sexual assault and harassment are like *a cancer* within the force – a cancer that left untreated will destroy the fabric of our force.” (Army, emphasis added)

“Sexual assault is a crime against individual Marines that reverberates *within a unit like a cancer* undermining the most basic principle we hold dear -- taking care of Marines. (Marines, emphasis added)

Nothing saddens me more than knowing *this cancer exists in our ranks*, and that victimized *Airmen* (sic), on possibly the worst day of their lives, sometimes feel they cannot receive compassionate, capable support from our Air Force. (Airforce, emphasis added)

Comments such as these displace the angst of the women and men who have been assaulted while on duty and foreground the pain of the military institutions. The emphasis on the impact of sexual assault on the military unit or the military institution as a whole, substitutes a corporate body for an individual body as victim. This move both devalues the harms experienced by victims and survivors of sexual violence (Nayak 2009, 159), and transforms the nature of the violation from sexual and physical injury to

immaterial threat to the functioning of the military unit. Megahana Nayak has suggested that the failure to duly acknowledge the victims of sexual assault “highlight[s]... the hypocrisy of military ‘honor’ [and] severely delimits democratic possibilities of all people mattering” (159). But more than hypocrisy is at issue in this discursive shift. By referring to sexual assault as a “disease,” “plague,” or “cancer,” that threatens the military as an institution, the site of therapeutic intervention is also changed. Rather than seeking to heal the wounds of the individual victims of sexual violence, the military gives priority to securing the health of military institutions. At the 2013 Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing, this shift plays out in the military’s emphasis on strategies to cleanse the sullied institution of these contagious vectors of disease. Rather than addressing the concrete needs of rape victims, the military sought to preserve the health of its chain of command, actively resisting proposals to remove the power of military commanders to handle reports of sexual assault in their units, and insisting that existing complaint resolution mechanisms were essential to maintain good order and discipline within their ranks. In addition, the discursive construction of sexual assault as a disease that threatens military institutions and governance depoliticizes sexual violence within the military. Questions of gender power and the use of rape to keep women “in their place” and to punish men who fail to conform to particular standards of military masculinity disappear. The need to investigate how gendering functions to produce and sustain relations of domination and subordination within military culture is obviated. Positioned as an anomalous infection that must be contained, sexual assault is characterized as a foreign body that bears no relation to the norms of the institution, and requires no systematic change of normal operating procedures for its eradication.

### **Unique Aspects of Gendered Violence in the Military**

In adopting medical metaphors to characterize sexual assault, the military suggests that sexual violence within the ranks—whether at home or during tours abroad—bears no integral relation to military culture. As Nayak (2009) has shown multiple task forces established to investigate sexual violence in the U.S. military have denied that military culture fosters sexual violence, systematically downplaying higher rates of sexual assault within military populations than civilian populations. There is no question that there are certain commonalities in military and civilian treatment of rape and sexual assault in the United States. Difficulties in gathering evidence and establishing proof, doubts about the veracity of those file reports, victim blaming, reluctance to bring charges, low prosecution rates and even lower conviction rates are characteristic of the treatment of sexual assault in both spheres. Yet there are also important aspects of the treatment sexual violence in the military that are distinctive.

Three factors distinguish the treatment of sexual assault in the military from its treatment by civilian authorities. First, because the military services place such “emphasis on loyalty and community” (RAND report), military personnel who are sexually assaulted by their peers or their commanders experience different degrees of “shock and betrayal” (RAND report) that somewhat resembles familial incest. Second, although reporting rates are lower among men, because men constitute 85% of military personnel, more than half of all reports of sexual assault involve male victims, which raise important questions about rape as a mechanism of “feminization” and as a means of social control within the military. Third, when service members are assaulted by perpetrators within their own units or chain of command, they often remain vulnerable to

repeated attacks, retaliation for filing reports, or other forms of abuse because they are unable to escape the specific posting to which they are assigned. Within the military, the perpetrator of sexual assault is often the victim's supervisor and superior, which decreases the likelihood that service members will report cases of sexual violence. Quite rightly, victims fear retaliation that could adversely affect their military careers. As Jennifer Mathers has suggested, military personnel face critical obstacles when they choose to report sexual assault.

But military women also face additional pressures specific to the armed forces. The military environment, with its strict hierarchies and chain of command, can make it more difficult for a woman to file a complaint and get the medical and psychological help that she needs because she has few other avenues to pursue if her superiors refuse to take her accusations seriously (or indeed if it was her commanding officer who assaulted her). Women who do report abuse are often pressured by other soldiers to withdraw the accusation to avoid damaging the reputation and career of "a good soldier," while those who persist in filing a complaint are likely to find themselves ostracized by their colleagues and passed up for promotion, and that their careers are effectively over (in Cohn 2012, 143).

As Mathers' reference to the "good soldier" narrative makes clear, the career accomplishments valorized by the military particularly in the form of combat medals, are often deployed to silence rape victims. According to the military's value scheme, sexual assault is a minor infraction that ought not be allowed to sully a "good soldier's" reputation. By invoking the good soldier narrative, military personnel often allow perpetrators of sexual assault – almost exclusively male – to go unpunished. In addition to being used to pressure victims not to file charges, the narrative "allows a defendant to cite unrelated, subjective factors during trial, such as military record as a defense against

sexual assault charges” (Tsongas and Turner 2014, 8),<sup>24</sup> and is often particularly relevant during sentencing deliberations.

### **‘Victims’ versus ‘Survivors’: Contextualizing Gendered Military Violence**

Within feminist studies, scholars concerned with strategies to enable women to recover from sexual violence have introduced important distinctions between the rhetoric of victimization and survivor discourses (D’Costa year?, 140). In military contexts, the distinction between victim and survivor discourses takes on additional meaning. At issue is not only how the individuals who have experienced sexual violence in the military view or define themselves, but also how the military defines and represents them, inside and outside of the military apparatus. Within the military, the terms “victim” and “survivor” are used differently in the context of sexual assault and combat, discursively producing specific kinds of bodies, bodies that are gendered quite independently of military formations, and bodies that are further gendered through military training, deployment, and representation. Consider, for example, the markedly different valence of depicting an African American woman soldier as a victim of sexual assault in comparison to a white, heterosexual male soldier who is designated a survivor after experiencing bodily maiming caused by an IED explosion on a tour of duty. For members of groups who are marginalized within a particular institution or culture, being defined as a victim instead of a survivor can mean the difference between having their wounds acknowledged or ignored, and the difference between receiving or being denied necessary resources for rehabilitation after the experienced episode(s) of violence.

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<sup>24</sup> The proposed FAIR Military Act would limit the use of the “good soldier” narrative or defense during the trial of perpetrators of military sexual assault, but the bill has not progressed past introduction since it’s initiation in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2013-2014)  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2014/0616/What-it-will-take-to-end-sexual-assault-in-the-military>.

According to Bina D'Costa (year, page?), women often “do not think of themselves as survivors and do not see their own agency.” Even when women do understand themselves as survivors, they risk re-victimization depending on how others within key institutions view them.

Through its treatment of troops who experience sexual assault, the military plays a powerful role in controlling the agency of sexual assault victims within the institution. Far from manifesting concern with the well-being of those who have been sexually violated, the military seems more concerned with discursive strategies “essential to the construction of a coherent national identity, the one created through privileged voices” (D'Costa 142). While “neither victim nor survivor is a simple construct,” the military consciously attaches these concepts to some bodies and not to others in ways that silence sexually assaulted soldiers and glorify soldiers wounded in combat, thereby shoring up militarized masculine identities and perpetuating gender inequities.

To illuminate how silences are produced by the U.S. military through its past and current policies on sexual assault, I turn to testimonials of rape survivors documented in the highly acclaimed 2012 film, *The Invisible War*. By analyzing the testimonies of women and men who have attempted to report sexual assault, I trace how the military contains the “threat” of sexual violence, by trying to make the problem disappear. I show how the chain of command uses doubt to impose a near insuperable burden of proof on those who report rape; how they force victims to shift from the harm of sexual violence itself to claims about collateral physical damage that is visible; how they engage in victim blaming, suggesting that victims are responsible for bringing sexual assault upon themselves; and how they refuse to recognize the wounds produced through sexual

assault as war wounds, thereby making it more difficult for victims to heal and gain access to needed medical and psychological treatment. Through these various techniques, the military makes sexual violence within its ranks invisible, not only to the victims who experience sexual assault, but to the general public.

### **Prove it or you're Wrong: The Establishment of Military Wounds**

One purpose of the production of *The Invisible War* is to document how the military as an institution handles reported cases of sexual assault. Through multiple testimonials, the film shows how women and men who have been sexually assaulted and attempt to file complaints are ignored. A key to the recurrent dismissal of rape allegations turns on questions of evidence. As forms of intimate violence that pits the word of the victim against the word of the assailant(s), rape and other forms of sexual assault are notoriously hard to “prove.” In the words of one soldier: “I reported it two different times to my squad leader and he told me that there was nothing he could do about it because I didn’t have any proof.” The documentary suggests that in a calculated, systematic fashion, military investigators are told to ask female soldiers who make rape claims – and the alleged perpetrators– what the raped soldier was wearing at the time of the alleged assault and whether or not she has a (male) significant other, insinuating that the woman may have provoked her attack, or worse, was using sex as a means to ensnare a man in a relationship.

Testimonies provided in *The Invisible War* note that rape cases are systematically assigned to male investigators because the military is concerned that female investigators might provide overly sympathetic assessments. In addition to shoring up old myths about male objectivity and female sentimentality, this gendered practice also requires that

women complainants discuss intimate, embarrassing, and painful details of their cases with male investigators who have been primed to manifest cold indifference. In an institution that prizes physical strength, women troops are forced to acknowledge their inability to fight off their assailant, thereby reinscribing their physical “inferiority.” When soldiers report abuse, they are met with suspicion and with accusations of their untruthfulness. In the case of Rebecca Catagnus (US Marine Corps), for example, higher ranking officials told her that, “I could choose to report it, if I wasn’t, if you know, if they found out I that what I was saying wasn’t to be truthful, then I would be reduced in rank.” By confronting complainants with disbelief and with threats of punishment, military investigators allow an old misogynist myth—that women are prone to file false rape accusations—to masquerade as objectivity. When reporting sexual violence, women are positioned as deviant subjects who are likely to report rape falsely. As Captain Debra Dickerson (US Air Force) notes in the film, for military investigators, the presumption always favors the assailant, “If a man gets accused of rape, it’s a set up. The woman is lying.”

Within the military, sexual assault needs to be proven, but the kind of proof deemed compelling has nothing to do with the victim’s word about nonconsent, and little to do with the harms of sexual violence per se. For an institution prone to privilege combat as the criterion for establishing a body in pain, and accrediting only war wounds, visibly manifested in blood, gore, and mutilation, invisible wounds pose a unique challenge. Military investigators prefer visible evidence as proof of a real wound. In the absence of such brutal visuals, the military tends not to perceive any injury at all. As Christina Jones, who served in the U.S. Army, noted: “Even with the rape kit and

everything and, and the person – my friend catching him raping me – they still don't believe me.”

Even in cases where physical evidence is visible, the military has means to make it disappear. Hannah Sewell reported that she had been raped and went to the hospital to be treated for a range of injuries sustained during the sexual assault. Yet her case was closed without any charges brought against her assailant because her rape kit “went missing.” Closing cases without bringing charges appears to be quite routine procedure for military investigators. Lack of evidence is repeatedly cited as the reason. As Elle Helmer (US Marine Corps) was told, “Nobody knows what happened in that room except for you and him and he's not talking.”

### **You Did This to Yourself: the Creation of Illegitimate, Self-Inflicted Wounds**

The suggestion that sexual assault may be welcomed or self-inflicted is a pervasive narrative throughout *The Invisible War*. Women sexual assault victims are told by military investigators that “were asking for it” by wearing clothing other than those regulated by the military, or by flirting with soldiers, or by committing adultery. When victims are told that the act of sexual assault was their own fault, it is somewhat akin to declaring a wound self-inflicted, a status totally devoid of honor by military standards.

The victim blaming that women military personnel experience when they try to report sexual assault echoes messages sent by military authorities in response to other sex scandals. In 1991 during a national aviators' conference, women returning to their hotel rooms after an evening of convention partying were subjected to a “gauntlet.” As they walked down a corridor where men positioned themselves against both walls, the women were man-handled, groped, mauled, taunted, and some were subjected to rape by an

individual, others to gang rape. When Lieutenant Paula Coughlin (US Navy) tried to report the incident to her superior, her report was summarily dismissed. As she recounts: “The next morning, I met with my boss for breakfast and I said, you know “what happened here?” and he said “well that’s what you get for walking down a hallway full of drunk aviators.”

Returning women veterans assigned to the prestigious Marines Barracks in Washington, D.C. encountered similar harassment and similar victim blaming when she reported the harassment. After serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2009-2010, Ariana Klay (Lieutenant, US Marine Corps) received a completely non-supportive response to her experience of escalating sexual harassment.

One of the first things I was told when I checked in was “don’t wear any makeup because the Marines will think that they, that you want to sleep with them.” And I thought that’s just ridiculous...It got progressively worse and worse. They determined that I had welcomed the sexual harassment by wearing my regulation length uniform skirt and running in running shorts.

In addition to being told that they had brought acts of sexual violence upon themselves, some women military personnel experience retaliation when they reported incidents of sexual assault. Instead of bringing charges against the assailant, the military brought charges against the victim for infraction of military protocols. As Elle Helmer (US Marine Corps) reported:

The Colonel at one point said, “You know, Lieutenant Helmer boys, girls and alcohol just don’t mix. We’ll never really know what happened inside that office, only you and the Major know, and he’s not talking. So, at this point, the investigation is closed for lack of evidence and we have reopened a new investigation against you for conduct unbecoming an officer and public intoxication.

By turning rape into a matter of “she said, he said” altogether beyond the scope of any rational investigation, alleging that victims invited their attacks, blaming victims for

being in the wrong place at the wrong time and as such responsible for putting themselves in danger, and insisting on forms of evidence that belie the nature of sexual violence, the military removes the injuries incurred in rape beyond the category of intelligible wound. For the military, wounds are sustained by soldiers in combat, who are fighting for a greater good, for the annihilation of an enemy. Wounds are incurred through actions in keeping with the mission of the armed forces—to protect and defend. As such, the wounds of combat soldiers are wounds in which the nation can take pride. Injuries resulting from sexual violence fall below the threshold of military intelligibility. They threaten rather than sustain the military mission. They lack the graphic visuals associated with combat violence. And they reflect behavior altogether unbecoming military personnel, whether that be the violent behavior of the attacker, or the reporting behavior of the violated. Little surprise then that the military is invested in making the problem of sexual violence in the ranks disappear.

### **Rape and Sexual Assault as a Physical Wound**

Keenly aware of the military's reluctance to accept evidence of sexual violence, many veterans interviewed in *The Invisible War* devote intensive energy to documenting the physical injuries they sustained through sexual assault—injuries that are visible. Kori Cioca, who served in the Coastguard, described in detail her frequent harassment by her supervisor in Michigan. For example, she was often called by her supervisor at three o'clock in the morning to be picked up from a local bar and then subjected to verbal harassment on the return journey to base. When Kori first attempted to report the harassment, she is told: "Just because I didn't like somebody they weren't going to switch me away from this guy." Sexual harassment, an illegal form of sex discrimination

according to US law, was thus transformed into a matter of personal taste, an issue of personality conflict. In the absence of any appropriate response from the chain of command, the harassment escalated from verbal harassment to physical violence to rape:

It was in the evening around taps, and he'd unlocked the door, and he'd come in, and he had an erection, and he tried to get me to touch him. And I took my right hand and I pushed him in the chest and started to yell for the other guys to kind of hear me to "hey, hey, hey!" Umm, he hit me across the left side of my face. I remember holding the closet thinking, "What just happened?" and my face hurt so bad. And when we went to the Command about it – me and this petty officer who saw my face – they just, they let it wait because they didn't want any kind of problems going on. A couple of weeks later, I needed the key to do my cleanup so I knocked on his door and he said "Yeah okay, come on in here, it's in here," and I said, "No, no, no, I'm going to wait out here," and he screamed at me and he made me come in and he grabbed my arm (long pause) and he raped me in his berthing area (Cioca)

Kori's jaw was broken during the first physical assault. Left untreated because her commanding officers wanted "no trouble," she endured intensive physical pain for months after the attack, forcing her to eventually consult a dentist.

I was having the most horrible pain in my face that I went to the dentist 'cause I thought it was my teeth, or something was wrong. The doctor came in after the x-rays and asked me if I had been in a car accident. When he hit me in my face he dislocated my jaw and sent both of my disks forward in my face so I don't have any disks where my, where they should be in my face. They told me I would probably need a partial bone replacement for where my bone had been laying on my nerve for so long it's starting to actually disintegrate.

Although the dentist's diagnosis and the x-rays corroborated the validity of Kori's initial complaint and proved the existence of a physical wound, her injuries still remained below the military threshold of intelligibility. Indeed, when Cioca went to the Veterans Administration to get official x-rays to demonstrate that her jaw was injured during a sexual assault while on military duty, the VA ordered a back x-ray instead of a facial x-ray. Kori's conversation with her husband after the appointment captures her frustration and disbelief when confronting such shabby treatment.

Kori's Husband: "How'd it go? What they say?"

Kori: "It went good. They, of course, they, they ordered the...they ordered a back x-ray instead of a face x-ray, but...they should have, they should know, should know what's wrong with me! Like, read my stuff and you'll see that it's my face. It's not my back, it's not my legs, my arms, it's my face!

Kori's Husband: "So, the people who need the proof don't even know what your case is about."

Kori: "Like, I don't even know why we wasted the gas money, the trip, anything. It was completely a waste of time."

Hannah Sewell (US Navy) also sustained severe physical injuries during her assault. A military hospital documented that the "main nerve in my spine was pinched in three places and my hips were rotated. I could barely walk. I had collapsed due to muscle spasms in my back because my back was injured during the rape." Yet the hospital chose to focus on the physical injuries, largely ignoring that they were the product of rape.

*The Invisible War* illuminates the intricate techniques used by the military to disappear sexual assault within its ranks. By impugning victims' testimony, threatening dire effects of lodging complaints, deploying doubt to undermine evidence of sexual assault, and blaming victims for their violation, military authorities press complainants toward silence or toward the production of physical evidence. But those who manifest visible physical injury are subjected to a new sleight of hand: their physical injuries are treated as self-generating and once again the rape disappears. Military investigative logic requires complainants to invest their efforts in documenting visible physical harms accruing from sexual violence, yet it affords no space for articulation of the nature of harm involved in the sexual violation itself. Soldiers' accounts of psychological pain, and their discussions of the harms associated with sexual penetration against their will, with the loss of physical integrity and autonomy are disappeared from the realm of relevant data for investigative officers.

Survivors of sexual assault often report that their treatment at the hands of investigative officers is akin to a “second rape.” The authority of their experience and their veracity are questioned; they are subjected to brutal interrogation techniques and forced to recount their experiences of sexual degradation, humiliation, and terror. In the military, investigative tactics replicate many of these dehumanizing dimensions, but they also add an additional menace. In today’s military, women must constantly prove that they are equal to their male counterparts and that they can meet standards derived from male bodies and male experiences. When women complain of sexual violence at the hands of their fellow service members, they are “feminized.” Placed in the position of the victim, forced to emphasize the physical nature of their injuries, they are required to document their own “weakness,” and their inability to protect themselves. Thus they are doubly disadvantaged, condemned to suffer the effects of sexual violence without any support from the military, and required to document their own physical deficiencies, providing evidence to a hostile military establishment that they do not belong in the military to begin with. Far from receiving recognition of the serious harm they have suffered at the hands of fellow members of the armed services, those who report sexual assault are perceived as a threat to the military institution itself.

### **The Permanency of Wounds: Processes of (Selective) Recognition**

As well documented in medical literature on military sexual assault, the most commonly cited lasting impact of sexual assault is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Soldiers returning from combat missions in war zones are also treated for PTSD in high numbers. Yet women who are raped while serving in the military experience PTSD at a higher rate than men who have served in combat (The Invisible War 2012).

In depicting how sexual assault victims are systematically silenced, *The Invisible War* also raises questions about how military protocols for handling complaints of sexual assault work against the successful recovery of those who have been violated. Whether through threats of retaliation, demotion in rank, or frustrating interactions with the Veterans Administration about appropriate medical treatment, the military ensures that sexual assault victims' physical and psychological injuries go ignored and are institutionally unrecognized. This lack of recognition by the military, or worse, the reclassification of the harm as self-inflicted, makes the process of healing nearly impossible. For how can one heal a wound that the military declares nonexistent? In the words of Amando Javier (US Marine Corps), one of three male veterans who testify in the documentary, "It's really, really hard to forget. You know, up until now, I still...they live in my head, you know. I can hear them laugh, I can see their faces, I can see what they're doing to me." By refusing to acknowledge these acts of violence, the military simultaneously produces a sense of permanency to the wounds sustained by victims.

### **Other Invisible Wounds and the Effects of Non-treatment**

In the case of sexual assault, military investigative techniques that disappear the harms of sexual violence ensure that perpetrators are not punished or brought to justice for their crimes. By consigning wounds incurred in sexual assault below the threshold of military visibility, these investigative techniques also ensure that the wounds fester in the absence of any serious therapeutic intervention. But rape is not the only invisible wound that has been escalating during recent military deployments. In the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, PTSD itself has been on the rise, as has the incidence of traumatic brain injuries.

The Frontline documentary, *the Wounded Platoon*, provides insight into the consequences of the military's failure to take invisible wounds seriously. Focusing on a unit of soldiers stationed in Fort Carson, a military base on the outskirts of Colorado Springs, Colorado, *the Wounded Platoon* documents the unprecedented increase in levels of crime in the city as a direct result of actions by soldiers who are unable to reintegrate into society upon their return from combat assignments. The documentary also showcases the strong stigma associated with combat soldiers – focusing exclusively on men – who request psychological assistance to deal with the traumatic events of their tours. Returning soldiers experience depression, anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations once being taken out of the war theater. In the case of Fort Carson, soldiers who sought help with these matters received hostile treatment. In the words of one soldier: “It just seemed like if you came forward at Fort Carson, you were going to take it up the ass. It was very easy to convince people that I didn't need help. Like all I had to do was come in and say ‘you know, ah I'm fine, and I just need to move on.’ And they seemed to accept that and say, ‘okay, you're good to go, see you later.’” The failure to take psychological harms seriously is emblematic of a masculinized warrior narrative that correlates mental health injuries with weakness.

As a result of this intensive stigmatization, almost all soldiers of 3<sup>rd</sup> unit platoon told doctors they did not need help. Instead, they engaged in dangerous behavior including the consumption of drugs, attempts at suicide, and sleeping with guns and knives in their beds in order to mitigate a heightened sense of paranoia upon their return. By the end of their first tour, four members of Platoon were kicked out for failing drug

tests, one was sent to jail for driving under the influence and fleeing, five were medically discharged, and five left Fort Carson because they chose not to reenlist.

Lieutenant Craig was sent back to Iraq for a second tour which lasted 15 months instead of twelve. During his second deployment, he witnessed a traumatic road-side bombing that obliterated a fellow platoon soldier. “The images of it – you know what I mean – the guy in the back seat was...basically just a black vest with boots in the floorboard of the HUMVEE. There was nothing, I could tell, of him left.” After witnessing this incident, he began to behave irrationally for his environment. Craig began to go out on patrol with an unloaded weapon. When he realized that his actions had become a danger to his fellow platoon members, he decided to report his behavior and seek help from a military psychologist on base. “I came clean, and I told that guy that, ‘hey, I’m not loading my weapon anymore. I’m also having this problem, I’m also having this problem.’ I wanted them to recognize that I had a problem and to say “he can’t go outside the wire anymore.” Instead, the military psychiatrist treating Craig declared him fit for patrol duties. “And then it was like, alright, after your hour session, go back. Put your boots on, let’s go...you know what I mean? It blew my fucking mind. I shouldn’t have been allowed to go outside of the wire.”

When members of third Platoon return home after their second, lengthened tour in Iraq induced by President George W. Bush’s surge tactic, many found it extremely difficult to reintegrate into life on base. Several decided to leave the military rather than reenlist. Many attempted to “self-medicate,” turning to drugs and alcohol to deal with the side effects of chronic post-traumatic stress disorder. It is during this reintegration period after their second tour of duty in Iraq that an extensive number of crimes and deaths start

to occur in Colorado Springs, many of them caused by former members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. As documented by the film, “Since the Iraq war began, a total of eighteen soldiers from Fort Carson have been charged with murder, manslaughter or attempted murder committed at home in the United States, and thirty-six have committed suicide.” Three of eighteen charged with murder, manslaughter or attempted murder have been convicted.

Lieutenant Barco is one of the three men convicted from the Platoon. He was charged with two counts of manslaughter for a drive-by shooting in which he narrowly missed one person, and shot a pregnant woman in the leg. In his trial in front of a civilian court, Barco’s lawyers argued emphatically that his actions were emblematic of poor decision making resulting from the invisible wounds he had sustained from his tours in Iraq, wounds in the form of PTSD and a traumatic brain injury for which he never received adequate treatment. In asking for a minimum sentence, Barco’s lawyers requested that the judge consider “the situation that Mr. Barco has with his medical condition, mental health, and his service to this country. It is important to know he has a diagnosis of PTSD, he also has some traumatic brain injury from the numerous explosions that he was subject to during his combat service in Iraq.”

In Barco’s case, the judge was not impressed by the PTSD diagnosis or by the fact that he had served his country in multiple deployments in Iraq. Barco was sentenced to two consecutive sentences of 30 and 22 years in prison. As the judge noted during his sentencing, “This was a stupid, angry, impulsive act. I expect young gang members who are at war with each other to do drive by shootings, somebody who’s been in Iraq and who’s a military veteran, I wouldn’t expect that type of behavior from them. In fact it

brings considerable discredit upon the uniform that you wore to be engaged in that type of activity.”

Drive-by shootings, domestic violence, attempted murders, and suicide are gendered crimes, particularly associated with men. *The Wounded Platoon* has the virtue of showing the very high costs of the military’s failure to take invisible wounds seriously. But like the military itself, the film foregrounds male behavior, associates wounds only with combat, and asks no questions about the gendered nature of these untreated wounds or their effects. The lingering effects of sexual assault in the military remain unstudied.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter has sought to provide a conceptual mapping of how the military as an organization conceptualizes “wounds” and “wounding.” Through a discourse analysis which juxtaposes wounding sustained through tours of combat in the war theater, versus wounding experienced through soldier-on-soldier sexual assault, I have argued that both physical and psychological effects of sexual assault do not constitute and are not heralded as military wounds. Not only are they not given acknowledgement, but sexual assault within the organization is indeed tolerated. To not tolerate it would suggest a direct challenge to the reification of masculinity in the military during times of gender trouble.

The organizational toleration for sexual assault is established through a combination of securitization and medicalization discourses. Presented as an anomaly, sexual assault within the ranks is characterized as a threat to the institution rather than a violation of individual bodies. Borrowing language from securitization theory, sexual violence is constructed as an external force that threatens the existence of the institution. This threat is described in medical terms as an “epidemic,” “cancer,” “disease,” and a

“plague.” Through medicalized securitization rhetoric, the military transforms gendered violence into containment tactics designed to protect military institutions.

Focusing on this medicalized discourse sheds particular light on how sexual assault in the military can be differentiated in important and marked ways from sexual assault in the civilian sphere. While many of the narratives that emerge from my analysis of the documentary *The Invisible War* may be comparable to dominant narratives of gendered violence in general, (the physical nature of sexual assault, sexual assault needing to be proven through physical wounds in order to be believed, victims bringing attacks upon themselves through items of clothing), the institutional identity which continuously attempts to maintain itself as a masculinist culture provides a very different context for sexual assault. First, by focusing on the impact of sexual assault on the branch or overall institution, the military’s representation of its public position on the topic produces a “devaluation of sexual violence victims and survivors” (Nayak 2009,159). By referring to sexual assault as a “disease,” “plague,” or “cancer,” not only are the experiences of victims silenced, but focus shifts to eradicating the disease. Second, statements which link sexual assault to a medical disease that threatens the existence of the military moves to depoliticize the problem; it removes responsibility and disassociates the systematic nature of the crime as being one that is specifically caused, tied to and permitted by military culture.

And while sexual assault sustained through military service is not acknowledged/privileged as a military wound, my analysis also suggests that not all combat wounds are equal either. Soldiers struggling with the “invisible wounds” of war, that is psychological and physiological symptoms which do not necessarily mark their

bodies visibly as a missing limb or other bodily maiming would, are represented through feminized discourses in which their experienced wounds are seen by the institution as a weakness which limits its ability to complete missions and continue with assigned foreign policy tactics. Discourses such as the “Good Soldier” narrative are accordingly used very differently depending on the situation; in the context of sexual assault, soldiers who are accused of committing rape against fellow soldiers often receive no punishment because they are otherwise argued to be good, valuable members of the organization. In the context of crimes that are committed by soldiers who are psychologically wounded but were never diagnosed or never received proper treatment for PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, their acts of crime are seen as a disgraceful sully of the honor of the uniform they wear and the country they serve.

But if military technology continues to allow more and more soldiers to survive what were previously deemed as being fatal injuries, and more common injuring moves towards these “invisible wounds,” who are the soldiers that the military organization markets through display and asks the public to valorize? I consider this question in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 4: SEMIOTIC READINGS OF THE USS MIDWAY MUSEUM: DISAPPEARING WOMEN IN THE MILITARY<sup>25</sup>**

### **Introduction**

In June of 2004, the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier, one of the longest serving in the history of the United States Navy, became the USS Midway Museum and opened its doors to the public as it permanently docked in the San Diego bay after being decommissioned in 1992. By 2009, the museum had boasted its 4,000,000<sup>th</sup> visitor, and has since become “the most-visited floating ship museum in the world” (USS Midway Website 2013). In addition to acting as an educational resource for the public on the history of the aircraft carrier, the USS Midway also acts as the backdrop for various military ceremonies, giving visitors the opportunity to “watch a young man or woman re-enlist on the flight deck or see an authentic change-of-command or inspirational retirement ceremony...illustrat[ing] America’s values of strength, freedom, and peace for the entire family” (USS Midway Website 2013). Through the exhibits, tours and ceremonies held on the ship, the core of the USS Midway Museum’s mission is officially characterized as “preserving and honoring the 225,000 young men and women who served aboard the USS Midway – and by extension all those who serve in uniform” (USS

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<sup>25</sup> A version of this chapter was published in the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. See Sztanyi, S. 2015. “Semiotic Readings of the USS Midway Museum,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17 (2): 253-270.

Website until March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

Despite the explicit reference to honoring men and women in uniform, in April 2012, when I visited the museum, images of women were markedly absent from the USS Midway Museum and from an honoring ceremony of veterans held on the aircraft carrier that day. The gender inclusive narrative established by the museum's website coexists with a plethora of tributes to men, and a lacuna for women. Although women have been included in certain combat-related and combat-support positions within the U.S. military for more than a century (and officially allowed to perform in combat roles as of February 2013), many messages about military service, explicit and symbolic, routinely consumed by the general public continue to leave women out of the picture. Through the erasure of women's performance in the armed services, war museums and memorials help ensure that war and the military remain male preserves in the public imagination. The USS Midway Museum illuminates this process of erasure.

As the most recent Naval ship to be turned into a public memorial and museum, the USS Midway assumes a role greater than documenting the history of this specific aircraft carrier, where no women served on active duty.<sup>26</sup> As the mission statement notes the museum seeks to honor 'all those who serve in uniform,' as such it assumes a representational responsibility to depict men's and women's roles within the Navy,

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<sup>26</sup> USS Midway Exhibits and Curatorial Historian Karl Zingheim revealed to me in an interview that no women sailors served on the vessel. During sick leave and while stationed in ports, the USS Midway did however accommodate 'female entertainers' onboard. Women were also onboard in 1975 when the USS Midway transported over 3,000 men, women and children evacuated out of Saigon. As noted here, despite the fact that women did not serve on the ship as sailors, official materials including the USS Midway Museum's website proclaimed the purpose of the exhibit to honors *both the men and women* who served their country. Following my interview with Karl Zingheim, the language on the website of the USS Midway Museum was changed on March 7, 2013. In email correspondence, Exhibits and Curatorial Director Duke Windsor apologized to me for the 'typo.' The revised website now states 'The USS Midway Museum is dedicated to preserving and honoring the 200,000 young men who served aboard the USS Midway – and by extension all those who serve in uniform' (USS Midway Website as of March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013). As the following argument suggests, the stakes in military memorialization are larger than documenting the lives of those who serve on any particular vessel.

capturing their crucial contributions to war efforts. By claiming to represent men and women in uniform while eliding women in the military, the USS Midway Museum contributes to a politics of erasure, a partitioning of the sensible that relegates women below the threshold of visibility.<sup>27</sup> Claiming to note women's presence through displays in which women are manifestly absent constitutes a form of memorialization that replicates a long history of gendering practices in relation to the military. My project in this paper is to illuminate those gendered dynamics, situating them in the context of the politics of social memory and showing how they help reproduce gendered hierarchies of citizenship.

### **Militarization Sans Violence**

Charles Tilly (1985) has noted that democracies such as the United States are often born of war. As a violent, highly militarized process, the very birth of the nation sets stories in motion that tend to hide the violence by which laws are created, constitutions written, and subjects fixed within gender, racial and class structures. Stories of valor under fire, courage through adversity, and sacrifice even of one's life for the sake of the nation are the hallmark of military memorialization. These narratives sedimented in monuments, images, and museums shape "social memory" (Mills 2007) in ways that require interrogation, particularly when the exhibits are deliberately designed and spatially configured by the military for representation of itself.<sup>28</sup>

As Michael Shapiro (1997) has pointed out, social memory is intimately tied to "institutionalized forgetfulness" (22). As his cartographic investigation of the culture of wars makes clear, more is at stake in particular memorializations than whether the

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<sup>27</sup> The phrase, partitioning of the sensible, is borrowed from Jacques Rancière (2010, 140).

<sup>28</sup> Mills suggests that social memory is concretized in every day products and venues such as textbooks, ceremonies, statues, official holidays, as well as parks and monuments.

information presented is accurate. In creating a space of military remembrance, museum designers have the power to decide what counts as fact and what does not, which information will be consumed and which will be forgotten. Thus Shapiro suggests that “in order to situate the narrativized forms of forgetfulness in the present...one has to return to their points of emergence, to the presuppositions...”(22). Perhaps one of the most fundamental presuppositions of military memorials is that they are male spaces, commemorations of men’s willingness to defend, fight, and die for their countries. Yet this gendered spatiality masks the role of the state in creating the military as a male domain. Carole Pateman (1998) traces the means by which liberal democratic states constructed (white) “male independence” as the criterion for public citizenship, while simultaneously making it impossible for women to meet that criterion. States created “three elements of ‘independence’ ...related to the masculine capacity for self-protection: the capacity to bear arms, the capacity to own property and the capacity for self-government” (248). States used mandatory male military service, conscription, and militia duty as means to construct men as ‘bearers of arms.’ Women, on the other hand, were ‘unilaterally disarmed,’ barred from military service and from combat duty, as men were assigned responsibility for the ‘protection of women and children.’ Memorials that naturalize men’s role as defenders of hearth and home cover over the political work required to exclude women from national defense.

Military memorials that focus exclusively on male valor perpetuate gendered exclusions enacted by the state, while also figuring death in ways that mask the brutal violence of war. By naturalizing male military service and constructing narratives of a good death, a death worth having for one’s country, war memorials contribute to the

“management of memory” (Mills 2007, 28) in ways that support militarization. To probe the intricate ties between war memorials, social memory, and militarization, I turn to semiotics, an interpretive technique uniquely suited to “call into question the prior legitimacy claims of the dominant narratives” (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999, xvi). By contesting the “hegemonic stories,” put forth in military commemorations a semiotic interpretation enables “stories more critical of established power to be told” (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999, xvi).<sup>29</sup>

Well established within museology, semiotic interpretations view museums and their exhibits as systems of signs that transmit messages through their contents. While exhibits are given primary attention in the analysis of meaning communicated by museums, my analysis of the USS Midway is grounded in a social semiotic approach that focuses on the overall environment and experience of the ship. Social semiotics suggests that museums communicate meaning to their audiences, not just in their exhibits, but through their catalogues, books, recreational simulators, cafés and even gift shops. “Artifacts do not exist in a space of their own, transmitting meaning to the spectator, but on the contrary, are susceptible to a multiform construction of meaning, which is dependent on the design, the context of other objects, the visual and historical representation, the whole environment” (Smith 1989, 19). As museums orient their exhibits toward the interests of target audiences, a shift occurs away from exclusive focus on design of individual exhibits to providing visitors with a certain kind of experience that requires consideration of all aspects of the museum. As visitors interact with the

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<sup>29</sup> As an analytic strategy, semiotics has been championed by philosophers such as Charles Peirce (1977) and literary critics such as Roland Barthes (1957). My approach draws on their formative works, as well as feminist semiotics advanced by Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull (1999).

various aspects of the museum, they engage in what Alfred Pang Kah Meng (2004, 31) calls a “multimodal social semiotic[s],” which necessitates a consideration of visual, audial, spatial, and written modalities.

A semiotic interpretation of the USS Midway Museum challenges mainstream conceptualizations of militarization and provides a more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of how militarism becomes embedded in societal level institutions. It should be noted that scholars in the field of security studies have developed numerous definitions of militarization. Attending to the political and social dimensions and processes of militarization, Michael Mann (1987) defined militarization as the process in which “preparation for war is regarded as normal social activity, and is often considered a *desirable* (emphasis added) social activity at its height” (35). Beyond war preparedness, Yagil Levy (1997) emphasized that militarization can be measured by the “extent to which the preparation of war and military spending is considered routine and is reflected in the ascendancy of military thought over civilian political thought” (7). In explicating what it means for military thinking to gain ascendancy, Cynthia Enloe (2002) has suggested that militarization involves “a step by step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas. The more militarization transforms an individual and society, the more that individual or society comes to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal” (3). As Enloe points out many dimensions of everyday life are involved if military needs and concerns are to be accredited as legitimate. Ascendancy of military thinking saturates popular culture through film,

fashion, and HUMVEEs as consumption items, as well as through myths of national founding and narratives of national belonging. As Catherine Lutz (2002) has noted,

Militarization is simultaneously a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them. Militarization is intimately connected not only to the obvious increase in the size of armies and resurgence of militant nationalisms and militant fundamentalisms but also the less visible deformation of human potentials into the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality (723).

Militarization then permeates existence well beyond the boundaries of military bases. It is *found in and flows through* social structures that influence even those who are not part of the official military apparatuses, particularly ordinary citizens. The continuous flow of military images, narratives, values, and programs through the manifold dimensions of social life and social memory allows increasing militarization to go unnoticed and unquestioned. In the following sections, I trace these intricate processes through military memorials of the Civil War, World War II, and of the contemporary era.

### **The Semiotics of Spatial Configurations: Gendering Memories of War**

Known as a theory or science of signs, semiotics explores how meaning is communicated, not only through various groupings of texts, but also in verbal and non-verbal communications, theater and drama, and in various forms of aesthetic communications such as music, photography and architecture (Noth 1995). To read a space is to reject the idea that space is ‘an empty container devoid of social history and relations’ (Turnbull and Ferguson 1999: 111-112). Semiotic readings of spatial configurations offer a unique means to excavate structures of meaning within military cemeteries, museums, and memorials - spaces created to communicate certain meanings, but which also convey less explicit lessons. Military memorials offer specific narratives

for consumption, while silencing other narratives and histories. In exploring how the military represents itself and how others represent the military, semiotics can also call attention to certain omissions, exclusions, and silences. By questioning what is hidden or systematically removed from certain histories, semiotics “locate the particular representational elements that both conceal and reveal the military’s presence and power; illuminate the functions of these elements of representation as rituals of power; and expand discursive space so that other voices can be heard” (Turnbull and Ferguson 1999: xx).

In memorializing those who fight to defend their nation, war museums contribute to discourses on citizenship, which are established through social constructions of memory “embedded in complex class, gender, and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end” (Gillis 1994, 3). By defining what counts as national service and who is allowed to perform it, “militarized practices of citizenship that define and administer bodies – social, physical, and environmental – occlude alternative notions of citizenship and embodiment” (Turnbull and Ferguson 1999, xx). Beyond honoring particular feats as daring, narratives of valor contribute to understandings of national belonging, linking membership to service in wars, subtly encoding citizenship as a male terrain.

In her epic work, *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Drew Faust (2008) traces both how gender structures the meaning of national service in war time and how memorialization is used to anaesthetize grief over such massive war losses. Faust suggests that soldiers “turned to the resources of their culture, codes of masculinity, patriotism, and religion to prepare them” (5) for military adventures as likely

to end in death as to provide them with glory and feelings of heroism. In a context in which preparation for war was simultaneously preparation for death, conceptions of a 'Good Death' subtly shifted from religious norms concerning life in service to one's God to life given in service to one's country. Condolence letters that military units sent home to loved ones of the deceased began to serve as testimonials of valiant military performance, patriotism, and manliness (24). Narratives of soldiers who "died a glorious death in defense of his Country" (24) became a marker of having lived "bravely and manfully" (25), blending "patriotism and piety... in what was at once a newly religious conception of the nation and a newly worldly understanding of faith" (26).

The creation of national cemeteries anaesthetized the brutalities of war. During the Civil War, the first national cemetery was created with the aim of accounting for and honoring all soldiers who had perished in battle. Created after the Battle of Gettysburg, the Soldier's National Cemetery was consecrated by Abraham Lincoln, whose *Gettysburg Address* "signaled the beginning of a new significance for the dead in public life" (Faust 2008, 100). In so doing, the national soldier's cemetery made the death of the soldier a public affair. More than a private loss to his family, the death of each soldier was a loss to the whole nation. It was no longer the responsibility of families to bury their military dead. Instead, a grateful nation assumed the responsibility to care for the mortal remains of those who died to defend it. In assuming the responsibility to account for and bury the dead, the nation-state created a dramatic shift in how those who died in combat would be remembered, creating a new index of equal citizenship. According to Faust, the physical configuration of the graves in the cemetery—the rows of aesthetically uniform tombs—framed the deaths of Union soldiers as of equal importance to the nation.

Regardless of a fallen soldier's rank, location of origin, site of war service, or personal misdemeanors, each warrior was equal in the eyes of the state (101).

The work of recording the deaths of Civil War soldiers and securing their burial often devolved upon women. Clara Barton was the first to make the case that in return for giving their lives to a cause that benefitted the nation, the nation should be responsible for identifying all unknown soldiers and providing a record of death for all soldiers who had died from the processes of war (Faust 2008, 101). Barton also suggested that women who undertook the national duty of accounting for and burying the dead performed an important service for their country. In calling attention to this service, Barton sought to establish an unprecedented contract between *women* and the state. As Faust notes, by having the state recognize women's labor in the war effort, Barton believed that women could "claim new rights of personhood and citizenship that derived from their wartime sacrifice" (230). Nevertheless, Barton understood that the state's recognition of women's wartime service would not entail equal citizenship. Dead soldiers, all of whom were men, would be valorized to the highest degree because of their ultimate sacrifice (Faust 2008, 230). Claims made to the state by others would never carry as much force.

As a new form of war memorialization, the national soldiers' cemetery established both equality (among the brave war dead) and inequality (differentiating between those who died in service of their nation and those who did not). This hierarchical citizenship was both legitimated through narratives celebrating the virtues of military sacrifice for the nation and rendered invisible as focus on the graves of fallen men eclipsed all recognition of the war service and sacrifices of women.

If memorialization of the massive losses in the American Civil War forged a new meaning of equal citizenship that helped to erase persistent gender and race inequalities that suffused the nation, World War II memorials helped normalize militarization in peace time. As Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull (1999) have pointed out militarization shores up particular aspects of state power, “not simply through the perceptible presence of military objects and events, but through the social and economic insinuation of the military into other institutions, and the cultural imbrication of military codes, symbols, and values into daily life. These latter processes flag not the military per se but militarization as a dynamic, contested process of constituting a particular kind of order, naturalizing and legitimating the order, while simultaneously undermining competing possibilities for order” (2).

Analyzing the historical narratives of sacrifice inscribed on memorial sites in Hawaii, Ferguson and Turnbull note that the “facts” constructed by the military in war museums and military cemeteries silence many other stories. For example, Punchbowl National Cemetery in Hawaii is “a site for the production of the stories the state tells about why young men die in war” (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999, 109). Within the cemetery, two spaces are produced: the burial space, which is created “with neat symmetrical rows of graves’ and the memorial, ‘with its texts, maps, inscriptions, illustrations, instructions, and prayers” (109). The spatial configuration of graves and the memorial in relation to one another and in relation to other national cemeteries “constructs a barrier between violent death and heroic sacrifice, a symbolic barrier that pacifies death, sanitizes war, and enables future wars to be fought” (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999, 108-109). As codified space, Punchbowl National Cemetery silences

egregious violence by carefully controlling the content of the narratives of violence crafted by the memorials' creators. According to Ferguson and Turnball, codified spaces are constructed to be "monoglossic, unidirectional, and generally self-referential; it is an order that can be written on the land without reference to any other logic" (114-115). Although thousands of individuals lie within the cemetery, the space has only one narrative to tell and does not have room for other, individual narratives to emerge. Gender and racial diversity are eclipsed as the patriotic narrative subsumes all the military dead under one monolithic, heroic subject. The cemetery envisions honor established through service and death as uniformly applicable. Like formal equality, military honor incorporates each individual death within a larger conception of the collective good—a conception that has no space for gender, racial, ethnic, class, or sexual specificity. As militarization seeps into social memory, critical consciousness is also occluded. The state determines which campaigns constitute a collective good worth dying for as the "noble" causes of "the great wars" bleed into imperial expeditions, "humanitarian" interventions, and "coalitions of the willing."

### **A Ship of Honor: The USS Midway and the Gendering of Social Memory**

An aircraft carrier of the United States Navy, the USS Midway was commissioned immediately after the end of World War II, named in honor of the Pacific Battle of the Midway between Japan and the United States. Construction on the ship commenced in October in 1943 and was completed by March of 1945 (USS Midway Website). The sheer magnitude of the 972 foot long warship made it the largest ship in the world prior to 1955 (USS Midway Website). While in commission, the USS Midway was most well-known for its participation in missions during the Vietnam War, as well as

its role in evacuating South Vietnamese during the final days of the conflict, its presence in the Arabian Sea during the Iran Hostage Crisis, as well as its participation in Operation Desert Storm. The Midway was finally decommissioned in April 1992 and opened to the public as a Naval museum on June 7, 2004 (USS Midway Website).

Although the military is not typically understood as either a producer of consumer goods or a generator of popular narratives, war museums and memorials produce gendered discourses that are consumed by all who visit these sites. When visiting military museums, military cemeteries, and military ceremonies open to the public, citizens consume images and narratives produced by multiple branches of the military, as well as civilians employed by them. Through the placement of objects, textual interpretations, visual imagery, and the content of exhibits and ceremonies, particular forms of military service celebrate specific kinds of masculinity, while simultaneously disappearing women.

In the case of war museums such as the USS Midway, 'the process of the inscription of meaning was/is not a simple ink-on-paper act that is accomplished with a single swift stroke. Rather, it happens as a series of new normalizing processes take over and are both contested and entrenched' (Ferguson and Turnbull 1997, 2). Through spatial configurations, narratives of particular military feats, (as well as critical omissions from those narratives), war museums produce a particular image of the military to be consumed by the citizens who visit them. The USS Midway Museum's exhibit and various activities on the ship such as the 'Segs4Vets Veterans Honoring Ceremony' provide a powerful example of the inscription of gendered meaning. Through the pervasive depictions of maleness and masculinity and the blatant absence of depictions of

women, the USS Midway Museum teaches visitors several lessons: by disappearing women from active duty in all ship exhibits, the museum represents Naval service and service on aircraft carriers as a male-only field. By celebrating the valor of men wounded in war, it valorizes and normalizes notions that male citizens deserve more respect because of the unique role they perform in the military.

### *Aboard the USS Midway*

The sheer size of the USS Midway makes it difficult to miss if one is anywhere near the San Diego Bay park promenade. On approach to the ship, guests are greeted by banners that read “Live the Adventure, Honor the Legend” and “Battle Tested, Kid Approved” as they walk towards the ticket booths. While waiting for the ticket booths to open, visitors who stand in line converse with male veterans who work or volunteer as docents on the ship. They speak of service, sacrifice and battle as they prepare visitors for the experience they are about to take part in.

On entering the Midway, visitors are greeted in the main hangar where they are given the option of picking up audio headsets. A fanfare of patriotic music is played over loud speakers to accompany visitors as they walk through the hall where they find various flight simulators they can ride in the fashion of an amusement park. Behind glass casings, guests can examine the original designs for the ship in its various phases of construction. All the while, missiles and bombs of various eras with names of “Dambusters” and “Eyes of the Corps” hang from the walls as militarist decoration.

While the flow of the exhibit does not require visitors to explore the ship in any particular order, the flight deck is given prominence: signs throughout the main hall instruct visitors on how to proceed to reach it. The flight deck is the most popular portion

of the USS Midway's exhibit, attracting children and adults alike who observe and often explore the insides of historic military airplanes and helicopters from numerous eras of military history. Boasting names of "hornet," "phantom," "panther," "cougar," "skywarrior," "skyhawk," and "viking," the flight deck is perhaps the most gendered portion of the exhibit. It blatantly projects notions of masculinity through its presentation of military strength, which is encapsulated in machinery and weapons that are further associated or conflated with animals or warriors, portrayed as powerful and deadly. The description of each airplane or helicopter on the flight deck provides a visitor with a narrative of the life the machine lived, and its unquestionable (masculine) force. The F9F Panther, for example, is described as "...the first carrier jet to see combat when the Korean War broke out in 1950. *Swift and packing a punch with bombs, underwing rockets, and 20mm cannons, the Panther flew hazardous missions attacking targets deep in enemy territory* or in direct support of United Nations troops on the front line" (emphasis added). Moreover, many of the airplanes on display have life-size cut-outs of fighter jet aviators - all male - who "stand guard" in front of the aircraft and greet visitors as they pass by their airplanes. These cardboard service members are often used by visitors for photo opportunities as they pose beside them, using gestures that mimic the stature and socially recognized symbols of military service. Aircraft and helicopters on display are brought back to life through the placement of manikins in key positions in the aircraft to demonstrate how it operated. The uniformed male manikins depicting the usage of the military machinery further normalize the masculine narrative that is initially established through words in the aircraft carrier's description.

After viewing the flight deck, visitors are directed to a tour guided by male-veteran docents. The tour includes the helm of the ship, where the Captain and his staff steered the boat, the Captain's sleeping quarters, and a display of decorated uniforms worn by Captains while stationed on the USS Midway. In another room, an automated manikin in Captain's uniform greets visitors and speaks of the importance of service and sacrifice as he sits behind a desk writing letters to his loved ones back at home reinforcing gendered divisions of heroic service and familial sacrifice.

Following the guided portion of the tour, visitors are left on their own to wander the lower levels of the ship, where exhibits depict the lives of average sailors. Meandering through a maze of corridors and halls, visitors observe sailors' living quarters, the mess hall (cafeteria), doctors' and dentists' offices, emergency and operating rooms. In corridors, visitors find cardboard cut-outs of male service members from the Navy or Marines dressed in pristinely pressed uniforms with medals emblazing their chests. The figures portrayed in various duty assignments on the USS Midway include African American, Asian American, Latinos and Caucasians, suggesting a multi-ethnic band of brothers, united in service of their nation. The design of the exhibit implies that the traumas of racism and ethnocentrism that haunt the nation's streets are benignly transcended through military service in general, and through service on all-male Naval aircraft carriers in particular.

Forthcoming exhibits at the Midway Museum pledge to maintain the gendered norms of military masculinity. To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the museum, the USS Midway Museum is constructing a state-of-the-art theater aboard the aircraft carrier in order to present a documentary film on the Battle of Midway, a decisive

battle in the Pacific during World War II during which the United States gained an impressive victory over Japan. Advertised on the museum's website, the film promises to bring the Battle of Midway "to life in a gripping, emotional presentation!" (USS Midway website 2013). The preview video on the website links memorialization to future military duty by linking social memory not only to honoring those who have served the country, but to the duty to undertake military service:

2012 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Midway, a battle whose legacy must be preserved for future generations of Americans. We must pass the baton of service and responsibility to our children and our grandchildren. We must instill a respect for service and sacrifice for America. These are the greatest ideals of the American spirit. Soon, 1 million USS Midway Museum visitors a year will relive the Battle of Midway... A holographic cast of actors will carry every guest into the Battle of Midway, a heart pounding blend of contemporary entertainment technology and timeless drama will inspire young and old alike. Every movie goer will walk in the footsteps of those who fought and sacrificed far from home. You will become part of a harrowing and inspirational odyssey that begins with the USS Yorktown at the bottom of the sea, rises into the battle, and meets the battle's sailors, aviators, and even their worried and heartbroken families back home. This new visitor's experience represents an opportunity to cherish the American spirit of duty and devotion, an opportunity to strengthen the USS Midway Museum's mission to honor the legacy of those who serve our nation. You will serve America by educating and inspiring more than 1 million visitors a year for years to come. Together, we can keep the greatest generation's legacy alive by recognizing that the freedoms we enjoy today are built on a solid foundation, one that has been forged by those who have sacrificed for our nation in the past...the battle's legacy will stand as a beacon of education and inspiration for generations to come (USS Midway Website Coming Attractions).

The preview video puts several narratives of militarized masculinity in play. The words, 'sacrifice' and 'duty,' are voiced as photos of male military service members or male veterans are shown. As the narrator mentions worried families back home, images are presented of a middle-aged, white woman with desperate tears in her eyes, as she worries about the well-being of her deployed service member son. The preview reasserts and naturalizes women's roles as soldier mothers and caretakers, and men's responsibility to

enter the military, serve in combat and heroically lose his life, if necessary, for the greater cause. Passing the 'batons of service to our children and grandchildren' is visualized with an image of a male service member cradling a child, suggesting that military service promotes patriotism, nationalism and even good, old-fashioned parenting. The preview urges visitors to share their experience at the museum, educating others about the critical link between male valor, military service, and a social order founded on freedom, an order that requires vigilant defense and as such makes militarization a rational and responsible policy.

#### *Segs4Vets – Mobilizing America's Heroes*

To further the overall mission of honoring the men and women who serve in uniform, the USS Midway flight deck also frequently acts as a venue for citizenship, re-enlistment, and retirement ceremonies. One organization that uses the physical space of the USS Midway, The Segs4Vets Veterans organization, holds annual honoring ceremonies for veterans. In these ceremonies, the organization dedicates Segway bikes to returning soldiers who have been disabled in combat. According to its website, Segs4Vets is "an unprecedented grass-roots effort sustained and administered by volunteers representing grateful Americans, who passionately believe that when those serving our nation are sent into harm's way and suffer serious injury and permanent disability, they must have every resource and tool available to them, which will allow them to fulfill their dreams and live the highest quality of life possible" (Segs4Vets Website 2013).

By providing veterans with segway bikes, the organization claims to "not draw attention to their disability, [but] provide a more healthful and psychological and

physiological quality of life” (Segs4Vets Website). In the advertising material for the most recent honoring ceremony on the flight deck of the USS Midway, which took place on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2013, Segs4Vets encourages the general public to “meet the Warriors” and “honor the sacrifices of these wonderful Men *and Women*, who have paid a great price, in their service to our country” (emphasis added, Segs4Vets Website).

Like the USS Midway Museum’s webpage, the Segs4Vets website attempts to establish a gender-inclusive narrative in which both men and women are seen as “warriors” – a title earned directly through military service and sacrifice for the protection of the nation. Eerily similar to the absence of women in the USS Midway Museum exhibits, the veterans’ honoring ceremony, which I attended, honored 15 *male* veterans from various ethnic and racial backgrounds who had become disabled through serving in recent US military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. The spatial configuration of the event helps illuminate how gendered hierarchies of citizenship are preserved and promoted. The ceremony took place at the end of the aircraft carrier in a high traffic area that all visitors are required to pass through. Precise rows of pristinely sanitized white chairs were set up, awaiting attendees to honor these former combatants. As bodies fill these chairs, they constitute the essential witnesses to acknowledge and valorize the service member’s value, manifestly established through physical dismemberment in combat. In recognizing the courage of veterans, whose wounds so prominently mark their bodies, average citizens participate in what Susan Jeffords (1989, 9) describes as “the spectacle” of war. Drawing on the experience of the Vietnam War, Jeffords suggests that spectacular narratives created about the elements of warfare are “separated from [their] ostensible function” and “described only as their own display,

their own theater” (9). Like any spectacle, war requires a “performer and audience” relationship (7). While news coverage brought the “performance” of soldiers on the battlefield into the living rooms of average citizens during the Vietnam era, contemporary veteran’s ceremonies provide a medium through which to applaud, honor and valorize soldiers for their performances in war. As heroic symbols of service and sacrifice, veterans are put on display for popular consumption.

In the Segs4Vets Ceremony, the fragmentation of body parts through violence inflicted on the physical corpus of the veteran is put on display for the audience members as part of the spectacle. Missing limbs are simultaneously made visible and erased through the mobility provided by the Segway bike. The technology of the Segway bike compensates the injured, feminized veterans for their physical injuries, while the adulation of the audience makes the veteran whole, contributing to the reassembling and regeneration of masculinity. The damage inflicted by the “war machine” is erased as the male warrior re-emerges. Through such displays of the bodies of male soldiers, women are “effectively eliminated from the masculine narration of war and the society of which it is an emblem” (Jeffords 1989, 185-186). Masculinity becomes the dominant narrative through a careful construction of discourses of difference appropriate to military service. As the honored male veterans transcend differences grounded in rank, race, ethnicity, class and (very recently) sexual orientation, war is constructed as an impermeable male terrain. Masculinity becomes the common denominator that connects veterans into a cohesive collective of the living and the dead who have served their nation in battle. The absence of women from these honoring ceremonies is not mere oversight, it is a symbolic erasure that preserves the U.S. military as male terrain.

Audience members are not silent participants in these veteran's ceremonies. On the contrary, their affirmation of wounded male warriors contributes not only to the consolidation of military masculinities, but also to the perpetuation of hierarchies of citizenship. For example, the Segs4Vets Ceremony begins with recitation of the "pledge of allegiance" and the performance of the national anthem. In the chairs provided for the public, visible modes of demarcation arise as the audience recites the pledge of allegiance. As average citizens place their hands on their hearts, those in uniform--veterans, sailors currently serving in the Navy, as well as members of the San Diego Police Department--salute the flag with fingertips at their temples. This simple, quotidian, unquestioned difference of gesture replicates a gendered division among the members of the collective that privileges head over heart. With the salute reserved for those whose relation to the state is established through military service, this small automated act feminizes non-service members and positions them as the heart-felt admirers who enhance the stature of those in uniform.

The hierarchy of citizenship that emerges in the context of the honoring ceremonies places dismembered veterans at the pinnacle: the 'ultimate citizen' is established through a narrative that celebrates heroism, sacrifice, and military power. All other groups of individuals are then placed lower in the hierarchy with rank established through specific relations to the disabled veterans. For example, families attending the ceremony constitute the ground on which the hierarchy is based, for it is to protect them that warriors engage in combat. Former soldiers of various eras are elevated in the hierarchy as military personnel who served their nation. Current enlisted personnel rise to the call of duty, carrying on the tradition of service and facing the same possibility of

sacrifice of life and limb. Carrying weapons and dressed in their own uniforms, San Diego police stand together with the soldiers being honored as those who protect families within the homeland from internal threats, just as the soldiers protect the homeland from external enemies.

The hierarchy among citizens is established through the spatial arrangement of the ceremonial space. First and foremost, a deliberate physical division is created between audience and honorees. The rows of white chairs face an elevated stage set with a podium and microphone, and bounded by the standing flag of the United States, and the respective flags of the various divisions of the military. Audience members are further divided from the valorized veterans through a row of aesthetic missiles that establishes a fence in front of the veterans. The missiles provide an unmistakable reminder of both the technologies and tragedies of war. Missiles are the tools through which the active military force protects the citizenry in the homeland, and they are the weapons that dismember and kill. The row of missiles stands as a barrier between military and civilian life, establishing a special realm for the disabled veterans who are honored because they bear the marks of war on their bodies. Their missing limbs are the spectacle that attests to the sacrifice required for one citizen to protect another. Their sacrifice legitimates the hierarchy among citizens of a democratic polity. And the exclusive place accorded male veterans shores up the notion that only men protect and defend, risking the ultimate sacrifice for their nation.

### **Conclusion: Implications of Feminist Understandings of Militarization**

As this chapter has demonstrated, semiotics provides feminist scholars with an additional tool to investigate how militarization permeates the daily lives of average

citizens who live at great remove from what is ordinarily understood as the power of the military. Tracing the construction of social memory that validates certain forms of violence committed to defend the nation, while rendering other modes of violence invisible, my analysis suggests that the political potency of the militarized discourse lies not “in the accuracy or inaccuracy of its facts, but in its constitution of the ground on which to decide what counts as fact and what modes of comprehension to activate in understanding these facts” (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999, 45). Whether considering how the creation of the first national military cemeteries secured the connection of male military service to full (white) citizenship or how Punchbowl National Cemetery creates a fiction of racial harmony among U.S. men in arms, while erasing the military service and death of women during WWII, semiotics provides alternatives to the military’s self-representation. As my interpretation of the USS Midway demonstrates, narratives that simultaneously include and erase women in the military sustain a gendered order of citizenship, shoring up traditional notions of male service while rendering comparable service by women invisible.

Like military memorials more generally, the spatial configuration of the USS Midway Museum claims to assert a simple truth: those who serve the nation deserve equal honor; those who sacrifice for their country deserve to live on in social memory. But careful attention to the imagery, metaphors, figures of speech, and symbolism that undergirds these memorials reveals much more complicated social relations. Equal honor in death coexists with stark hierarchy in military life, and rigid prescriptions for gender hierarchy in the social order. Women’s military service is not just elided in the Midway exhibits and the Segs4Vets Ceremony; women are positioned as witnesses to the

spectacle of male valor and as traditional caregivers who passively await news of the fate of their male protectors and defenders. Visitors who accept the truths presented in these fictive histories are invited to commit to a social order that privileges men, falsifies the historical record of both men and women, and celebrates willingness to die for a nation regardless of the moral merits of its cause.

The USS Midway exhibits and the veterans' honoring ceremony envision specific citizen subjects and citizen practices, weaving together notions of responsibility and honorable behavior, relationships between civilians, military personnel and veterans, and defining military service and sacrifice as the pinnacle in a legitimate hierarchy of citizenship. Those who accept this militarized view of the world uncritically are condemned to a version of collective life in which the freedom of women is denuded and the lives of men and women are put at risk without adequate public debate about specific military practices or interventions.

Informed by Drew Faust's analysis of the Civil War cemeteries and Ferguson and Turnball's insightful reading of Hawaii's World War II memorials, my semiotic interpretation of the USS Midway Museum draws attention to the production of social memory as a site of subject production/formation. The USS Midway Museum accredits a particular kind of citizen, replete with an overriding sense of duty to country, ready to bear arms unquestioningly for its defense, and prepared to sacrifice life and limb for its preservation. As the exhibits and the honoring ceremony make patently clear, they accredit a male citizen-soldier who earns his gender privilege through valiant military service. The USS Midway Museum endorses a version of 21<sup>st</sup>- century citizenship in the national security state, in which civilians and those who refuse military service are rightly

subordinated to the privileges bestowed by a grateful nation upon those who engage in combat. My semiotic reading challenges the validity of the museum's account of military service, noting the critical erasure of women in uniform. It interrogates the meaning of equality grounded in military hierarchy; and questions the profound costs of militarization, costs which justifies death and physical dismemberment in pursuit of the nation's causes without any attention to their (im)moral aims. As gendered policies regarding women's participation in militaries change, it is worth considering whether stories that are told about women in the military change with them. I investigate this question in the following Chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MILITARY RECRUITMENT: DEPICTIONS OF GENDER SINCE THE LIFTING OF THE COMBAT BAN**

### **Introduction**

In November of 2013, Politico ran an article written by Kate Brannen titled, “Army PR Push: ‘Average-Looking Women.’” The story uncovered Army internal communications between Colonel Lynette Arnhart and a group of analysts tasked with studying how to market women’s integration into combat positions previously closed to them. The email communication, sent by Arnhart, asserted that the Army, moving forward, use “average-looking women” in public material depicting women’s service in the branch. She argued, “In general, ugly women are perceived as competent while pretty women are perceived as having used their looks to get ahead” (Arnhart in Brannen 2013, 3). According to Politico, the email was meant to provide Army spokespeople with guidance on how to frame women’s integration into Army combat positions to external communities, namely the U.S. general public. The unearthing of the communication was argued to be “proof that today’s Army culture has a long way to go before women will be treated as equals” (8). Arnhart resigned from her position as Deputy Director of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command’s Analysis Center in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas three days after the article was published.

In some ways, the announcement of the lifting of the ban on women in combat served as the culmination of a forty year-long battle towards gender equality in the U.S. armed forces. Since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force, the military has been heavily criticized by politicians and interest groups alike for keeping women away from the (masculinized) bastion of honor that is represented by service in combat roles. In

other ways, the moment was overshadowed by a hypermasculinized past in which the military integrated women into its ranks through a gradual process that was defined as “deliberate,” and which, more contemporarily, refused to publicly acknowledge women’s participation in combat roles and missions during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many questioned whether the announcement would mean anything tangible for gender equality in the armed forces. Does the announcement suggest that female soldiers are now on equal footing with their male counterparts? Does allowing women to serve in combat positions mean that the quest for gender equality in the U.S. military has ended? Has the U.S. military undergone a degendering as an institution?

This chapter investigates forms of militarized masculinities and femininities depicted in military recruitment material since the Pentagon’s announcement of lifting the ban on women in January of 2013. Specifically, the chapter builds on Melissa T. Brown’s (2013) seminal study of military recruitment in *Enlisting Masculinity: the Construction of Gender in US Military Recruiting Advertising during the All-Volunteer Force*. Through print materials of military advertisement campaigns between 1971 and 2007, Brown’s study uses an “interpretive textual approach, which seeks to make explicit the meanings encoded in the published words and images” (12). This method allows her to provide an analysis of overarching narratives and meanings that emerge from the military branches’ individual recruitment campaigns over a period of almost 50 years. While Brown’s study provides a comprehensive analysis of how depictions of gender have (and often, have not) changed in military advertisements over time, Brown’s study does not include online media through which the military branches now spend

considerable time recruiting, nor does it extend in time to include the lifting of the combat ban.

This chapter explores online military advertising images – specifically in the form of Facebook posts – conducting a content analysis of more than 1000 posts between January 2013 and October 2015. Distinct from the discourse analysis I presented in Chapter 2, this content analysis provides a quantitative analysis of images and texts to “categorize the discrete elements of the data” by using a coding scheme initially developed by Brown (2013). I coded both verbal and visual materials to note the appearance of actors, activities performed by individuals depicted, uniforms worn, depictions of military hardware, and how individuals are grouped together in the advertising samples. By enumerating the frequencies of certain categories across the posts of various armed services, I can then identify overarching narratives that military branches deploy to shape public perceptions of military service through these virtual spaces.

In conducting the content analysis, I also engage in a thick description approach to highlighting some key trends that emerge in the individual military branches’ recruitment and marketing campaigns. I have selected posts that highlight these trends and have visually incorporated them into the chapter. For each of these posts, I provide a detailed description of not just what can be seen in the visual portions of the posts, but how the visual coupled with the textual depictions and descriptions create specific gendered narratives about who the branches see as worthy recruits for their organizations. I chose to focus on Facebook rather than other social media platforms (including Twitter and Instagram) because each of the military branches had the largest number of

followers on this social media platform. As a platform for communication and consumption alike, Facebook's influence, both domestically and internationally, is undeniable. According to Statista (2015), as of October of 2015, Facebook had 1.59 billion active monthly users. As of January 2015, there were 156.5 million users in the United States, specifically; 27 million of them representing the military's target age group of 18-24. Military Facebook posts – whether text-based only, including still photos or moving images in the form of videos – are dynamic conveyors of information about how the military branches view themselves and how they want potential recruits and the general public to view them. My content analysis quantifies depictions of gender – and, perhaps more importantly, how gender is represented in specific contexts. The dates of the study were chosen to investigate whether there were changes in the representation of women after the announcement that the ban on women in combat would be lifted. I am particularly interested in whether the online recruitment efforts increased the depictions of women in combat missions or surrounded by military hardware. Chapter 2 identified key representations of women in military discourses during four decades of AVF recruitment while the combat ban was in force, severing women from the honor and prestige associated with (acknowledged) combat service. This chapter analyzes the most recent recruitment strategies to see if there has been noticeable change.

My analysis has been shaped by the path breaking work of Beth Bailey (2009) in *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, and by Melissa T. Brown's (2013) discussion of more contemporary versions of militarized masculinities and femininities in *Enlisting Masculinity: the Construction of Gender in US Military Recruiting Advertising during the All-Volunteer Force*.

## Research Method

The U.S. military branches have multiple Facebook pages with which to deliver content to various segments of their constituency. My content analysis focused on the official recruitment websites for each of the military branches (i.e., [www.airforce.com](http://www.airforce.com), [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com), [www.marines.com](http://www.marines.com), and [www.navy.com/joining](http://www.navy.com/joining)) viewing each post between January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015. In total, I coded 1079 Facebook posts across the main Facebook page used for recruitment by the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. I was particularly interested in tracing how many times women were depicted in posts, whether alone, with other women, or with male counterparts. I was also interested in investigating how women were framed in those posts. A straightforward question guided my research: did the various branches of the military offer more gender-inclusive images of military performance after the announcement that the combat ban would be lifted. Accordingly, I coded each post for posting date, posting format (text, photo, or video), context (institution, mission, recruitment, position, personnel feature, technology), whether or not military personnel were depicted in the post (yes or no), number of military personnel depicted, gender (male, female, not discernable), race (white, not-white, not discernable), type of activity performed in photos and videos (personnel recruiting, bootcamp, training, technical, medical, ceremony, standing in formation, religious, leisure, demonstration of skill), type of uniform worn in the post (civilian clothing, sports gear, training, combat, work, ceremonial), display of military hardware<sup>30</sup> (yes or no), whether or not civilians were depicted in the post (yes or no), number and gender of civilians depicted (male, female, not discernable), race (white,

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<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of this study, “military hardware” included any machinery associated with military service, including rifles, tanks, missiles, ships, submarines and aircraft.

not-white, not discernible), and type of activity performed by civilian(s) in photos or videos. In the final column of the coding sheet, I included notes about distinctive elements associated with each of the posts.

Online content, particularly those provided by social media platforms, is extensive and poses certain challenges for social science research. Megan MacKenzie (2015), for example, points out that online content is “unstable, instant, and edited” (166). Indeed, in contrast to print media, social media is often continuously edited. Facebook posts, in particular, can be posted, then edited, or even removed for whatever reason the site administrator deems necessary, often unbeknownst to the viewer of the page. Comments posted by page followers in response to the entries put up by the military branches may also be deleted. The constant availability of editing and removing of content from these pages allows the military to (re)shape and (re)mold its self-representation to the public continuously. In the context of a study designed to track change in gendered representations, however, I view MacKenzie’s caution that “the content represents an unstable, edited, and potentially altered discourse” (166) less as a problem than an opportunity. Each editing offers the possibility of introducing changes in the depiction of women in the military.

Any analysis of textual and visual representations must also grapple with ambiguity. My coding cannot capture how subjects depicted in the posts identify themselves. Battle fatigues can make it particularly difficult to identify the gender of military personnel. “Race” itself is a contested social construct and cannot be imputed solely on the basis of skin tone. My categorization of subjects’ gender and race, then, conforms to social conventions in the contemporary United States—as complicated and

flawed as those may be. Nonetheless, the military carefully constructs its social media posts to communicate with the general public, using well-honed advertising techniques to convey specific messages about military service. Quantification of the images in these posts provides one measure of key elements in the recruitment messages that the military has been circulating to the general public over a two-year period following the announcement of an end to the combat ban on women.

### **Models of Advertising: Gendered Depictions of the All-Volunteer Soldier**

Prior to World War II, militaries were conventionally sustained through conscription. Mass armies maintained large reserve forces which stood ready for military activities as needed. Since then, militaries, including the United States military, maintain smaller number of reserve forces and rely on the recruitment of troops through voluntary service. The switch towards smaller standing militaries has at least partially produced by changing technological and strategic situations in warfare. Socio-cultural changes have also been identified as a factor in moving towards all-volunteer armed forces (Sandhoff, Segal M. and Segal R. 2010).

The switch from conscription to all-volunteer forces has also been examined in relation to women's historical participation in various nations' militaries. Scholars have worked towards outlining "a theory of variables that affect the degree and nature of women's participation in the armed forces throughout history and across nations" (Segal 1995, 758). More specifically, empirical studies have found that ending conscription produces both positive and negative impacts on women's military participation. Karl Haltiner (2003), for example, finds that ending conscription in national militaries produces an increase in the number of women serving and the roles in which they may

participate. Ending conscription has also forced national militaries to reconsider policies related to women's service. Guiseppi Caforio (2007) for example found that in the case of Italy, ending conscription caused military officials to anticipate a shortage of qualified recruits in advance, prompting them to reconsider the number and types of roles available to women. In the United States, Mady Wechsler Segal (1995) argues that the establishment of the volunteer army at the time of the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment suggests that women's representation in militaries increase under volunteer systems "as well as when social change is in the direction of greater gender equality" (765).

Segal's study (1995) of factors which influence women's military participation include armed forces, social structure and cultural variables. Iskra et al.'s (2002) expanded version of the model also incorporates culture as a variable. In a cross national study which integrates both models, Michelle Sandhoff, Mady Wechsler Segal and David R. Segal (2008) find that the transition to an all-volunteer force is a driving factor of increases in women's participation in militaries, both in types of roles and in overall numbers. They also argue that for nations which moved from conscripted to volunteer forces earliest among their sample, the process of integrating women at all or further has occurred gradually over time, often in a series of steps. Though the study suggests that all-volunteer forces provide more opportunities for women's participation in militaries, it does not explain why women's integration is completed in a gradual, step by step process in some countries, and not in others. It also does not suggest how this gradual integration occurs and what public debates and cultural narratives on stereotypical gender roles surround the process.

As established in earlier chapters of this dissertation, the number of women serving in the United States military did increase after the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force. Moreover, Chapter 2 highlighted the narrative of “incremental and deliberate” integration in the armed forces since the creation of the AVF and up until the lifting of the ban on women in combat. However, recruitment strategies used by the military to enable the (supposed) move towards gender integration of its forces that is often thought to have been established by the creation of the All-Volunteer Force has not yet been considered. Similarly, it has not considered how the lifting of the combat ban on women – an arguably similar moment of rupture in the military’s policy on gender integration – has changed, if at all, the image of soldierhood the military projects to the general public.

Studies on military recruitment and advertising have focused on different periods of time in the history of the United States military, and have particularly focused on how to recruit the necessary number of people since the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force. Bailey’s (2009) exhaustive archival research and historical analysis of advertising strategies and recruitment tactics in the Army at the inception of the All-Volunteer Force shows that while ground breaking social market research had been conducted on new conceptualizations of masculinity, conceptualizations which had changed in-light of the war in Vietnam, and which also shed light on notions of femininity, this research was primarily conducted on men. How to depict women in recruiting campaigns for the AVF very much stemmed from the believed necessity of men being the primary recruiting targets, allowing for the very clear binary distinction between masculinity and femininity in these campaigns. In particular, Bailey argues that women were depicted in initial

marketing materials for the AVF in two ways; one, as potential soldiers, and two, as attractions with which to lure men to join.

In the case of advertisement that meant to assist in attracting women to the AVF, campaigns featuring women heavily played up feminine attributes that were thought to be of relevance to women, while simultaneously focusing on a narrative of equal opportunities between the genders in specific military roles. When women were depicted for the sake of attracting men to sign up for service, the Army, for example, utilized the eroticization of seemingly foreign national females to try to attract men through international tours of service. These campaigns were particularly critical for the military to try to attract recruits for combat positions, positions the military expected would be difficult to fill in light of poor public opinion of the Vietnam War. In advertisements which only depicted potential male recruits, framings focused on conveying messages of individuality, freedom and adventure. They also sought to sexualize service and play off of male sexuality towards military professions claiming, “we’ll make you an expert at whatever turns you on” (in Bailey 2007, 79).

Inequalities in military roles and careers were depicted in advertisements that include both men and women simultaneously. For example, the initial 1971 roll out of the “Today’s Army Wants to Join You” recruiting campaign, one advertisement with a charging headline of “We’ve got 300 good, steady jobs,” presented rows of Army personnel dressed in various uniforms to suggest to possible recruits what kinds of jobs they may choose if they joined. Among the visible rows in the photo were four women, scattered in two different uniforms. Two of the four women wore a white uniform which stood out markedly from the crowd of otherwise dark camouflage uniforms of various

shades. The white uniforms referenced careers available to women as “medical aides” but in its placement in the photo, stands out so markedly that the other two women who are wearing camouflage uniforms are barely noticeable. Coupled with a sprinkling of gender-specific job titles, e.g., “Jobs for photographers, printers, truck drivers, teachers, typists, TV cameraman and repairman. Cooks, electricians, medical aides, meteorologists. Motor and missile maintenance men,” the ad suggests a gendered division of labor, assigning specific roles to men and others to women who join the Army. The attribution of “missile maintenance” to “men” makes it particularly clear that combat-related positions are in no way open to women.

Similarly, in a study of military recruitment campaigns across the four branches of the military over several decades, Brown (2013) found that masculinity remained a critical recruitment tool in military advertisement campaigns. According to Brown, each branch recruits from the general public, and advertises in the public sphere based on their own internal branch culture, and their needs for personnel at any point in time. In so doing, Brown argues that the military branches decide which conceptualizations and models of masculinity they deploy in their marketing campaigns dependent on versions of masculinity circulating in public culture (181). In historical periods when traditional conceptions of masculinity were challenged – such as after the Vietnam War and during the creation of the All-Volunteer Force – “the result was not the neutering of military service in recruiting appeals but the alteration of military masculinity” (178). Brown’s study emphasizes that military institutions engage in continuous self-reflection in relation to societal changes, deploying changing articulations of masculinity to remain relevant to recruits.

Brown's study also notes that the depictions of masculinity in military advertising campaigns differ from one branch to the next. For example, she finds that between 1970 and 2007, the Marine Corps used traditional notions of masculinity that tied soldiering to a particular conception of the male warrior, "hard young men portrayed in martial contexts, either in a combat situation or on ceremonial display" (179). The other branches, according to Brown, appealed to economic incentives, traditional masculinized virtues such as courage, or training opportunities. The Air Force, Army and Navy sought to attract recruits through narratives emphasizing economic incentives. These ads frame economic benefits of service "in masculine terms...or contain other visual or textual elements that reinforce the masculinity of recruits" (179). In addition to economic incentives, Brown argues that the Army's recruitment strategy regularly deploys narratives of "character development and personal transformation" that are linked to personal qualities like courage and strength and are visually depicted through "weaponry and other martial visual markers" (179). By these means, the Army perpetuates traditional, masculinized notions of warriorhood and soldierhood that are accessible to unaggressive "regular guys" (179), a critical tactic for the branch tasked with recruiting the largest number of people. For the Navy, noneconomic pitches have routinely included the excitement of living on the sea, and challenges that are coupled with that environment that allow recruits to prove themselves in unique ways. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, however, a "layering a warrior masculinity on top of other kinds of appeals" became visible in recruiting campaigns resurrecting the well-established image of the ultimate warrior, "reaffirming the Navy's commitment to a strong form of masculinity" (179). The Air Force has not traditionally depicted service through martial imagery of masculinity. In

addition to economic advantages available to young men through service, the Air Force “has offered, by association with the world’s most advanced technology, the masculine advantages of mastery, dominance, and control” (180). More recently, unlike the other branches that often focus on “direct physical excitement” (180), the Air Force has enticed recruits through the excitement of technology, creating a video game-like environment that involved the conduct of missions from behind a joystick. This approach to recruiting for the Air Force is likely to continue as drone warfare begins to be more widely used.

### **Gendered Dynamics in Virtual Recruitment**

Since the last year included in Brown’s study, all four of the military branches have placed a heavier focus on the use of social media platforms to meet their annual new personnel recruitment targets. According to the Department of Defense, all active components of the military branches have “met or exceeded their accession goals” since fiscal year 2010 (Department of Defense, 2015). Anxieties over whether the military would continue to be able to meet recruitment and retention quotas increased from 2008 onward in light of the large number of soldiers dying in the war in Iraq, as President Bush’s surge strategy escalated the number of U.S. troops deployed to the region. As public opinion began to favor a reduction or complete end to the U.S.’s involvement, military officials began to worry that they might have another “Vietnam” on their hands that could negatively affect the public’s view of their institution.

In 2011, The New York Times reported that the Army was “working hard to increase [their] social media” in addition to continuing to push advertising campaigns through television commercials, because they “fully recognize[d] that young people TiVo over commercials or are multitasking on their smartphones when the commercials are on”

(Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley quoted in *The New York Times* 2011, 5). Part of the push towards social media was also enabled by a modernized approach to data-driven recruitment. In 2007, for example, the Marines started using big data analyses gathered from Censuses to assess demographic shifts that would allow them to target specific population segments through paid Facebook advertisements. Below, I provide details about the number of followers each branch of the military had on its Facebook page, before providing thick descriptions of posts emblematic of certain themes that carry throughout individual branches. I then compare gendered themes across the four military branches.

| <i>Military Branch</i> | <i>Context</i>          |                    |                 |                    |                           |                   | <i>Gender</i>     |                 |                      | <i>Gender and Combat</i>    |                           |   |                              |                                 |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                        | <b>Total # of Posts</b> | <b>Institution</b> | <b>Position</b> | <b>Recruitment</b> | <b>Specific Personnel</b> | <b>Technology</b> | <b>Women only</b> | <b>Men Only</b> | <b>Women and Men</b> | <b>Women only in Combat</b> | <b>Men Only in Combat</b> | <b>Women only and Military Hardware</b> | <b>Men only and Hardware</b> | <b>Women and Men and Combat</b> | <b>Women and Men Hardware</b> |
| <b>Air Force</b>       | 205 (100%)              | 29 (14.1%)         | 52 (25.4%)      | 81 (39.5%)         | 14 (6.8%)                 | 27 (13.2%)        | 12 (5.6%)         | 79 (38.5%)      | 20 (9.8%)            | 0(0%)                       | 21 (10.2%)                | 4 (2.0%)                                | 60 (29.3%)                   | 3 (1.5%)                        | 18 (8.8%)                     |
| <b>Army</b>            | 301 (100%)              | 103 (34.2%)        | 52 (17.3%)      | 12 (4.0%)          | 23 (7.6%)                 | 35 (11.6%)        | 17 (5.65%)        | 90 (29.9%)      | 24 (8.0%)            | 1 (0.3%)                    | 25 (8.3%)                 | 4 (1.3%)                                | 45 (15.0%)                   | 3 (0.9%)                        | 14 (4.7%)                     |
| <b>Marines Corps</b>   | 296 (100%)              | 112 (37.8%)        | 23 (7.8%)       | 114 (38.5%)        | 21 (7.1%)                 | 19 (6.4%)         | 20 (6.8%)         | 184 (62.2%)     | 46 (15.6%)           | 1 (0.3%)                    | 20 (6.8%)                 | 7 (2.4%)                                | 75 (25.3%)                   | 1 (0.3%)                        | 21 (7.1%)                     |
| <b>Navy</b>            | 277 (100%)              | 112 (40.4%)        | 38 (13.1%)      | 58 (20.1%)         | 19 (6.65)                 | 14 (5.1%)         | 28 (10.1%)        | 65 (23.5%)      | 27 (9.7%)            | 1 (0.4%)                    | 2 (0.7%)                  | 3 (1.1%)                                | 16 (5.8%)                    | 1 (0.4%)                        | 4 (1.4%)                      |

Image 1.1: U.S. Military Recruitment on Facebook, Jan. 2013 - October 2015

*Air Force*

As of November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the U.S. Air Force Recruitment Facebook page had 767,051 likes,<sup>31</sup> or followers. The page is described as the “Official U.S. Air Force Recruiting Facebook Page” (Air Force Facebook Page 2015). The page was created on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011. For the period covered in this study, I coded 205 posts from the Air Force’s Facebook page. Of the 205 posts, 151 were posts that included still images/photos, and 53 were videos. One post was text based only.

Content wise, 29 posts conveyed messages about the Air Force as an institution, 52 posts about certain positions recruits can choose from when joining the Air Force, while 81 posts related to recruitment for the Air Force or general information on recruitment criteria. 14 posts featured specific members of the Air Force. 27 posts reflected technology the Air Force is currently using or developing. There were a total of 12 posts that depicted women only, 10 of which depicted a single woman, and two which depicted two or more women. Women were portrayed with men in 20 posts. However, one man or multiple men were depicted without women in 79 posts. Seven Air Force Posts were coded as not discernable for gender.

In posts in which women were depicted – whether alone, or with other women – not one post depicted women in the context of combat. Only four posts depicted women with military hardware. When portrayed along with men, three posts showed women with men engaging in some form of combat, but 18 posts that include both men and women

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<sup>31</sup> “Likes” referred to here are the number of likes, or followers of the actually branch’s Facebook page, not a specific post. Once an individual has “liked” a page, any posts that are made to that page appear in the individual’s newsfeed as a way to “follow” content that is provided on the page. Individuals, who have chosen to “like” or, in other words, follow a military branch’s Facebook page may choose to “unlike,” or unfollow the page at any point in time.

depicted military hardware. When only men were included, 21 posts contained context related to combat, and 60 included military hardware.

As mentioned above, the content of a large number of the Air Force posts focused on specific positions in the branch, or conveyed information specific to recruiting individuals to join the Air Force. Image 1.2 below, for example, provides potential recruits with information on Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) specialist positions.



Image 1.2: U.S. Air Force Recruiting, 2015

The text tells viewers of the post that these specialists “teach aircrew members everything they need to know...to be able to survive on their own in any environment under any conditions should their aircraft go down” (U.S. Air Force Facebook, 2015). The photos provided depict Caucasian males engaging in various activities in regards to this role, in the first one, a male Airman stands facing the camera, with three others with their back towards the camera and packs on their back, with a helicopter in the far background. Looking at the images coupled with the text suggests that the male facing the camera is the SERE specialist. In the second image, the hatch of that helicopter is depicted open with the ground seen far below it, followed by an image of those men who the specialist was speaking to (assumably) jumping from the helicopter with parachute packs on their backs. This depiction tells several different gendered stories about women’s roles, on the individual level, branch level, and the overall military level. First, it suggests that men, not women, are Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Specialists. Second, by only depicting male soldiers in these images, and by suggesting through the text that accompanies these photos that “every single member of an aircrew” must have the skills necessary to survive if their air craft goes down, the Air Force suggests that women are not pilots, and further erases participation women have had – either historically, or contemporarily – in any duties or activities that require them to fly on military aircraft, images which would usually evoke connections to combat. Alternatively, this may also be read to suggest that although women do fly in military aircraft, female lives are not as important as their male counterparts, and therefore, it is less critical that they obtain the necessary training to ensure their survival. Finally, by having the sentences of the post say, “Every single member of an aircrew in every military branch must be able to survive

on their own...should their aircraft go down” moves to produce this erasure not only in the context of the Air Force, specifically, but throughout all branches of the military.

Many of the Air Force posts included in this study focused on providing visual representations of the military hardware used in the branch. For the Air Force, this appeared most often in the form of various aircraft. Image 1.3 below provides an example of these posts.



Image 1.3: U.S. Air Force Recruiting, 2014

In this case, the post is a collage of several images of various aircraft, and includes pictures of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). No individuals are depicted in the images, All of them, however, convey messages of assault, conflict, and combat. The post's textual reference to "collection of aviation technology" however erases the damage inflicted in foreign nations by the aircraft and the people who operate them, whether that is done in-person or remotely.

The aircraft, grey in color and often depicted against the backdrop of a blue sky, appear smooth, seamless, clean and sanitized, quite the opposed of the blood sullied grounds they often produce through their missions. The presentation of the aircraft plays to elongate its smooth spears, and is sexualized as phallic objects. Carol Cohn's seminal study "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals" argues that missiles and other war-making devices are often sexualized (1987). Sexualized discourses that describe these technologies as "deep penetrating" (as Cohn shows is often done among military officials and defense "intellectuals") masculinize weaponry directly in relation to the male biological body. Doing so connotes specific messages of which genders are meant to "play" with these weapons, and which are not, designating appropriate roles for their service in the Air Force.

In some cases, Air Force posts also conveyed messages about the institution through narratives of community recruits may experience once having successfully joined the branch. Image 1.3 below is a collage picture with four different images that were added to the U.S. Air Force Recruiting Facebook page's "Life on Base" photo album on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.



Image 1.4: U.S. Air Force Recruiting, 2013

In the first, large image, a Caucasian airman is seen in the foreground with several other Caucasian airmen standing in line behind him, out of focus. They are looking toward the camera, saluting. In the second, smaller picture, a young boy has his back towards the camera and is bowling, while in the third and fourth pictures, air craft are seen outside, as well as in a hangar.

By having the main, large photo of the post be that of a Caucasian airman, the “Life on Base” depiction suggests that men such as the one featured in the images of the post is the demographic norm of personnel in the Air Force. Indeed, only 22 of all of the Air Force posts examined in this study contained at least one person of color in the

images used. Moreover, by having the text of the post say, “When you’re in the Air Force, you’re part of a community that’s a lot like the communities you’ll find around the country, the post not only disregards all other demographic groups that are not male and Caucasian from the military branch, but also from wider American society. The post reifies hierarchies of citizenship through the depiction of the image of the white, male soldier.

### *Army*

As of November 16<sup>th</sup> 2015, the GoArmy.com Facebook page had 1,042, 634 likes, or followers. The page is described as, “The Official Fan Page for <http://www.goarmy.com>. Learn more about the career opportunities available in the U.S. Army”. The page was created on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009. For the period covered in this study, I coded 301 posts from the GoArmy.com Facebook page. Of the 301, 162 were posts that included still images/photos, and 136 were videos. Three posts were text based only.

Content wise, 103 posts conveyed messages about the Army as an institution, 52 posts about certain positions recruits can choose in the Army, and 12 posts related to recruitment for the Army or general information on recruitment criteria. 23 posts featured specific members of the Army, while 35 posts related to technology the Army is developing or currently using. There were a total of 17 posts that depicted women specifically, 9 of which depicted one woman, and 8 which depicted two or more women. Women were portrayed with men in 24 posts. However, one man or multiple men were depicted without women in 90 posts. 16 Army posts were coded as not discernable.

In posts in which women were depicted – whether alone, with other women, or with men – four posts depicted women in combat. Those same four posts also depicted women with military hardware. When depicted along with men, three depicted women with men engaging in some form of combat, and fourteen posts that include both men and women depicted military hardware. When only men were included, 25 posts contained context related to combat, and 45 included military hardware. Two posts that included both men and women depicted combat scenarios, but in which women were depicted in either medical or scientific roles, while men were depicted on the frontlines of a mission.

One of the main recruiting strategies discernable from a review of the GoArmy.com Facebook posts is the showcase of activities the branch is involved in outside of the military apparatus. These include activities at high schools, the Army National Hot Rod Association car races, Tough Mudder obstacle courses, and national leadership conferences. The Army's presence at these and similar venues not only showcases the multitude of ways in which it "sells" the institution to prospective recruits, but provides examples of how the institution interacts with civilians and becomes embedded in the larger general society. The post below shows a montage of four photos of Army soldiers participating in an event off base.



Image 1.5: GoArmy.com Facebook Page, 2014

In the first photo, a Caucasian, male Army soldier is standing next to two African American young men, and one African American young woman before a “U.S. Army” backdrop. In the second photo, a Caucasian, male Army soldier is standing on a stage in front of an audience of African American youth giving a talk. In the third photo, another Army soldier is standing in a classroom among a group of African American adults dressed in business attire and is giving a presentation during a roundtable discussion. Finally, in the fourth picture, a group of five African American Army soldiers stand beside one African American civilian as signage “U.S. Army – Army Strong” is seen behind them. The text of the post contextualizes the activities in the photo, notifying

viewers that they are taking place at “HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and University) Atlanta Classic events” where members of the Army who are depicted in the photos are “speakers and youth mentors – engaging students, parents, community influencers, and educators on career and educational opportunities available in the Army and U.S. Army Reserve” (GoArmy.com, 2015). While the post is an example of the military recruiting specifically among a minority group, in this case, African American students who may be convinced to join the Army or Army Reserves, white male soldiers continue to represent over 71% of the total armed forces.

Increasingly, the Army has also used sponsorship opportunities at Tough Mudder 5K races to recruit for specific positions in the Army Reserves. These races, designed as extreme obstacle courses, are built to mimic military styled training courses to include “running through fire, steep inclines, ice water, mud and up to a dozen other military-style obstacles...” (Agoglia 2013, 1). As visible in the post below, during these races, the Army sets up a kiosk or booth area, where race participants can stop by before or after the race and pose in front of a U.S. Army logoed map of the obstacle course.



Image 1.6: GoArmy.com Facebook Page, 2014

In some cases, racers choose poses that are meant to reflect physical strength, for example, by flexing muscles and showing “toughness.” The military inspired nature of these obstacle course races glorifies the physicality of military training. And through the “Army Strong?” marketing campaign, the Army sponsorship of the races suggests that completing the race may be a good indication of being strong enough for serving in the Army by testing “their mental, emotional, and physical strength” (2) through the race. However, in juxtaposition to the above post, only Caucasian individuals are depicted in

these photos suggesting that African American and other minority bodies do not showcase “toughness” and are not seen as “Army Strong?”

The use of gendered and raced bodies in specific contexts creates narratives that can be utilized at specific times, depending on messages the institution seeks to send. This is augmented through posts that the military institutions publish on national holidays, especially when those holidays are framed within the context of personal freedoms and the protection of the homeland. Image 1.7 below showcases an example of an Army Facebook post uploaded for the 2014 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration.



Image 1.7: GoArmy.com Facebook Page, 2014

In the photo, a group of close to 30 soldiers wearing combat gear hold up a large American flag. The soldiers all appear to be men, and are Caucasian. In the background, barren mountains are seen, suggesting that the soldiers are deployed to a foreign country. Above the photo, the text reads “Today we celebrate freedom and the Soldiers who protect it” (GoArmy.com Facebook Page, 2014). Below the soldiers, superimposed on the image is the U.S. Army’s logo, along with “Happy Independence Day 4 July 2014” in which the words “Independence Day” are placed in a yellow color that makes them stand out. By depicting male, Caucasian soldiers only within the context of a post that depicts messages of protection through combat service, the photo enables hierarchies of citizenship produced by the military to persist. The white, male is hypermilitarized not only through being depicted in combat gear, standing in front of mountains that convey messages of deployment, but also through the text used in the post in which the right and honor to protect is given to these individuals specifically. All other groups of people are seen as lower on the ladder of hierarchy, whether that be other soldiers who are not afforded the caliber of honor linked to combat service, or average citizens who are reminded of the need to have their freedoms protected during holidays such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

### *Marine Corps*

As of November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Marine Corps Recruiting Facebook page had 4,267,897 likes, or followers. The page is described as the “The official Facebook page of Marine Corps Recruiting”. The page was created on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008. For the period covered in this study, I coded 296 posts from the Marines Corps’ Facebook page. Of the

296 posts, 199 were posts that included still images/photos, and 96 were videos. One post was text based only.

Content wise, 112 posts conveyed messages about the Marines as an institution, 23 posts about certain positions recruits can choose in the Marines, 114 posts related to recruitment for the Marines or general information on recruitment criteria or text/images that are meant to encourage people to join. 21 posts featured specific members of the Marines Corps. Six posts depicted Marines participating in specific missions, and 19 posts reflected technology the Marines are developing or currently using. There were a total of 20 posts that depicted women only, 14 of which depicted one woman, and six which depicted two or more women. Somewhat more often, women were depicted in images and videos alongside men, amounting to 46 posts. A large majority of the posts – 184 – depicted men only. The remaining 21 posts were coded as not discernable.

In posts in which women were depicted – whether alone, or with other women, only 1 post depicted women in combat. Seven posts depicted women with military hardware. When depicted along with men, only one post depicted women with men engaging in some form of combat, but 21 posts that includes both men and women depicted military hardware. When only men were included, 20 posts contained context related to combat, and 75 included military hardware.

Scenes of training exercises and boot camp initiations often appear in the Marines Facebook posts. Conventionally referred to as Basic Training among the other branches, the Marine Corps refers to portions of its basic training program as Basic Warrior Training, suggesting that recruits who make it through the Marine Corps basic training program epitomize the warrior persona often sold to recruits by the military.

Image 1.8 below exemplifies how this narrative is particularly linked to malehood.



Image 1.8: Marine Corps Recruiting Facebook Page, 2014

Here, we see a drill sergeant standing with hands on hips on top of a wooden planked fence which appears to act as an obstacle on a training course. The drill sergeant appears to be male. Below him, we see four individuals on their stomachs, seemingly crawling on the course as they are dressed in full Marine combat gear and carry rifles in front of them. The individuals appear to be male, with one of the four appearing to be African American. Super imposed on the photo are the words “Basic Warrior Training” in the lower right hand corner of the image. The text of the post, which appears above the image, notifies the viewer that “During the ninth week of recruit training, recruits

undergo Basic Warrior Training where they learn basic field and combat skills” (Marine Corps Recruiting, 2014). The image, coupled with the text which appears above it, produces three layers of gendered contextualization. First, by only including men in the picture, it establishes that Marine recruits are more likely to be male. Second, it suggests that only male recruits are likely to engage in field duties and combat roles, and therefore, are privy to this training. Third, it suggests that only male recruits have the ability to become warriors by excluding the depiction of women in the photo, and finally, specifically links warriorhood to combat related service. Looking through a feminist lens, the post signals to potential female recruits that the branch does not recognize women’s service in combat, and, therefore, will never view them as ultimate warriors who otherwise would receive the highest of acclaim and honor for their service.

As detailed above, 20 out of nearly 300 posts depicted women only, whether only one woman, or multiple. In image 1.9 below, we see a woman in Marine Corps training apparel kneel on one leg as she carries a weighted bar across her shoulders.



Image 1.9: Marine Corps Recruiting Facebook Page, 2015

In the background, we see several other women out of focus stand in rows behind her, staggered, engaging in the same activity. They are all wearing the same apparel. The activity takes place outside, as a dawning or dusking sky is visible. The text above the image informs viewers that the women depicted are engaging in basic training as they undergo a “transformation.” The sentence reads, “To complete this transformation, recruits must have the desire and the ability to develop the mind and the body” (Marine Corps Recruiting, 2015).

The coupling of the image with the text tells a specific story about female Marine recruits’ bodies. Though the term “recruits” in the text could refer to the gender of any recruit, the usage of a photo that only depicts women, suggests that the context of the

words used in the text above the photo is specific to the Marines' view of female recruits. By using the word "transformation", and referring to developing "the mind and the body", the branch is arguably suggesting that women's minds and bodies are not up to par with Marine Corps standards before starting basic training. Unlike the above post, basic training is framed as a "transformation", instead of "training", one which does not result in conferring skills that allows (female) recruits to engage in combat or attain warrior status.

But for the Marine Corps, combat is not only linked to warriorhood, it is also seen as a critical element of leadership. As mentioned above, over half of all of the posts reviewed for this study depicted men in visual representations. Image 1.10 below shows a group of seven male Marines in combat uniforms carrying combat gear in their hands and on their bodies.



Image 1.10: Marine Corps Recruiting Facebook Page, 2015

As they walk towards the direction of the camera, more Marines can be seen in the background, along with the top of a military helicopter. It appears from the photo that they have just disembarked from the helicopter.

Above the photo, the text reads, “Marines are imbued with 14 leadership traits that prepare them for battle. What are your leadership traits?” (Marine Corps Recruiting, 2015). The text contextualizes the photo to have viewers believe that the Marines depicted have just arrived for a combat related deployment in a foreign nation in which they are likely to see battle. For potential recruits viewing the post, leadership qualities are argued to be necessary for preparation for battle. By including only male Marines in the photo, however, the post suggests that only men are able to embody the necessary leadership traits, and are, therefore, the only to be prepared to succeed in combat. Through this association, the post quietly reaffirms military concerns over women serving in combat that echo those analyzed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation that position women in combat as a liability instead of an asset.

### *Navy*

As of November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the U.S. Navy Life Facebook page had 383,036 likes, or followers. The page is described as “What’s life like as a member of America’s Navy? See the everyday challenges, duties and achievements of those who serve.” The page was created on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010. For the period covered in this study, I coded 277 posts from the Navy life Facebook page. Of the 277, 242 were posts that included still images/photos, and 29 were videos. Six posts were text based only.

Content wise, 112 posts conveyed messages about the Navy as an institution, 36 posts were about Aircraft Carriers, Submarines, or other Navy Ships, 38 posts about

certain positions recruits can choose in the Navy, and 58 posts related to recruitment for the Navy or general information on recruitment criteria. 19 posts featured specific members of the Navy, while the remaining posts related to technology the Navy is developing or currently using. There were a total of 28 posts that depicted women specifically, 18 of which depicted one woman, and 10 which depicted two or more women. Women were portrayed with men in 27 posts. However, one man or multiple men were depicted without women in 65 posts. 35 Air Force Posts were coded as not discernable.

In posts in which women were depicted – whether alone or with other women – one post depicted women in combat. Only three posts depicted women with military hardware. When depicted along with men, one post depicted women with men engaging in some form of combat, and four posts that include both men and women depicted military hardware. When only men were included, two posts contained context related to combat, and 16 included military hardware.

The Navy's recruitment strategy focuses on depictions of adventure and travel. In image 1.11 below, the Navy provides information on a specific role or position in the branch, in this specific case, the position of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technician.



Image 1.11: US Navy Life Facebook Page, 2014

These individuals defuse all explosive devices including chemical, nuclear, biological, and improvised weapons. In the post below, the role of the Explosive ordnance disposal technician is coupled with adventure in which the person depicted hangs from a helicopter high above aircraft carrier with the ocean below them. The picture combined with the text above it tells potential recruits about the possible activities they may engage in as EOD technicians, depicting it as an adrenaline rush inducing role. Having the EOD technician hang above an aircraft carrier while being “out on the open seas” also furthers the notion of travel and adventure while being in the Navy. While the gender of the individual in the photo of the post is not discernable, Brown’s study confirms that narratives of adventure have traditionally been linked to specific conceptualizations of masculinity.

In the second post, Image 1.12 depicts five sailors from behind as they stand aboard a Navy ship that is out at sea.



Image 1.12: US Navy Life Facebook Page, 2014

They are seemingly conversing as the sun is either rising or setting in the distance. All five of the sailors depicted are male. The text of the post notifies us that the deck of the ship they are standing on is an amphibious assault ship. As in the photo above, by depicting the ship on open waters, the post conveys notions of adventure and travel. In this case, that narrative is specifically linked to masculinity through the depiction of male sailors only.

The photo coupled with the text notifies viewers of the post that individuals such as the men on the assault ship are protectors of ordinary citizens, working to protect them

and the homeland as they sleep. By depicting only men in this context suggests that the Navy views male sailors specifically as the protectors, and all other individuals as those who need protection. Moreover, by referring to the “rest of the world” and saying “Good night, everybody!” the post suggests that the Navy not only sees its male sailors as protectors of all other citizens of the United Nations, but as protectors of all other citizens worldwide.

In the final post, viewers see two female sailors engaging in a game of soccer with several children on a sand and gravel pavement.



Image 1.13: US Navy Life Facebook Page, 2014

The sailors are caucasian and wear Navy uniform pants with casual sports shirts. The children are darker skinned and almost all wear what appears to be a school uniform. In

the background, green trees and a few small buildings are seen. The text of the post notifies us that the scene depicted took place in Indonesia. The picture and text is posted in the context of a series of posts placed on the Facebook page by the Navy called “Around the World Wednesday.” Each post depicts a picture of sailors engaging in activities in a nation abroad. As observed above in the first two posts, the narrative of adventure and travel is continued. However, in this case, the usage of gender rewrites the narrative to suggest that male sailors and female sailors engage in different activities while abroad with the Navy. While above, male sailors are deployed abroad in order to be the protectors of the world, female sailors fulfill nurturing roles for children in foreign lands. In notifying viewers that the sailors depicting in the photo are in Indonesia “in support of Pacific Partnership 2014...the largest annual multilateral humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness missions conducted in the Asia-Pacific region”, the specific depiction of female sailors instead of male sailors, combined with the textual description of why the Navy is in Indonesia, attempts to diminish potential colonial paradigms that make be evoked through this image. In this way, we see another example of how female bodies are used by the military through specific means for specific ends.

### **Regendering of the Military or Degendering of Women**

In considering the over 1000 Facebook posts as an aggregate, several trends are apparent. First, similar to Brown’s findings, each military branch deploys different narratives to market itself despite being part of one overall institution. Each branch views itself as an individual and autonomous entity with its own culture and identity that must be conveyed to potential recruits. Where some of the branches draw attention to soldiers

deployed on missions (e.g., Army), others emphasize current or future technology and the training opportunities that military service will provide (Air Force).

### *Depictions of Combat*

Perhaps not surprisingly, depictions of combat were most frequently seen on the Army's and the Marine Corps' Facebook sites. Unlike these two branches, the Air Force's Facebook posts focused more on current technological capabilities being used and also developed by its personnel. The Navy, on the other hand, posted text and photos regarding travel and overall lifestyle experiences recruits could engage in by joining the Navy, romanticizing the international exposure component of possible combat deployments. 118 of the Navy posts did not show any images of Navy personnel; instead they showed pictures of various Navy ships or submarines in the waters or docked in a foreign country.

The combat related posts provided by both the Army and the Marines were thoroughly gendered, sending a clear message about who was suitable to recruit to these highly coveted roles. Of the 39 combat related posts on the Army's Facebook page, 30 posts contained exclusively male images, shoring up the notion that only men should engage in combat activities. Consider for example, this post: "U.S. Army Soldiers outperform under pressure because of their integrity, mental adaptability and personal courage," which ties the ability to serve in combat to depictions of physical strength, and exertion. These bodily abilities, which are framed as being specific to the biologically male body, are in turn tied to personal integrity. Of these 30 posts, nearly half (14) contained images that depicted only white males. Of the 24 combat specific posts on the

Marines' Facebook page, 16 posts contained exclusively male images. Of the 16 posts, 6 contained images of only white males.

*Representations of Women: Post-Combat Ban Gender Binaries*

Of the four branches of the military, only the Army made any mention of Leon Panetta's announcement of the combat ban being lifted on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013 or in subsequent days. The Army's mention, posted on the day of the announcement read, "ARMY TIMES: Senior Defense Officials say Pentagon Chief Leon Panetta is removing the military's ban on women serving in combat" (GoArmy.com Facebook Page, 2013). This text was coupled with a photo of white female soldiers seemingly on a foreign deployment talking to a group of male foreign teenagers. While the female soldiers are holding rifles in the photo, they are not depicted in the same way as male soldiers in combat. Those posts often show male soldiers actively using their weapons, driving tanks on patrol, or going on building raids. Although the combat ban has been lifted, representations of women such as this continue to reify the hypermasculinized binary that establishes suitable roles for men and women in the military.

As Brown found, the four branches of the military vary in their depictions of masculinity and in the roles they assign to women in their online recruitment materials.. The Air Force frequently depicts women as medics. The Army displays women in ceremonies and ceremonial formations. Women soldiers and women marines are shown helping civilians while on missions. The Navy showed female sailors playing with children. In the posts that include both women and men, sex segregation in military roles remains the norm. In the Air Force posts, for example, men were shown in combat roles

or as pilots, while women were portrayed as medics or behind desks providing staff support.

*Depictions of Military Families: Reifying Heteronormativity*

Compared to the other branches of the military, the Navy provided the largest number of posts referring to, or depicting scenes of military families. Some of these posts refer to the meeting of loved ones post deployment, while others refer to scenes of community in depicting what life would be like for people who sign up to serve. These images are highly gendered, demonstrating that military conceptualizations of the “family” remain highly traditional with respect to sexual orientation.

In a comparative study of military family recruitment in Canada and the U.S., Eichler, Carrieras, and Szitanyi (2015) found that heteronormativity permeated recruitment and resource materials in both nations.<sup>32</sup> Both Canadian and U.S. materials used gender-neutral language when referring to military families and spouses, acknowledging that the gender of the military personnel deploying and the military spouse expected to provide the support was not fixed. Nonetheless, the gender-neutral language was illustrated with heterosexual couples, suggesting that marriage remains an affair between one man and one woman.

My content analysis also found a consistent pattern of gender-neutral language coupled with heterosexual partners in the Facebook posts depicting scenes of post-

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<sup>32</sup> It should be noted, that in the case of the United States, materials given to military families and/or spouses is not uniform across bases or branches of the military. While the Military One Source website produced by the Department of Defense acts as a general resource on all matters related to military and family support programs for all members of the military across all branches, based on the research conducted for this paper, we also found that each branch of the U.S. military has material specific to that branch. Moreover, the research also found material that was produced by individual bases. In summary, producing material across different levels of the military institution - material produced by the Department of Defense, each branch of the military, or individual bases within branches - may or may not produce consistent depictions and messages of what constitutes a “military family” or “military spouse.”

deployment reunion celebrations. Consider the following texts coupled with their corresponding images:

“Welcome home, Sailor! Who will be waiting for you at your homecoming? Tag them in the comments!”



Image 1.14: U.S. Navy Life Facebook Post, 2014

“There's nothing quite like a welcome home photo. #USNavy.”

 **US Navy Life** with Adeleye Oluwatosin. October 15, 2013 · \* ▼

There's nothing quite like a welcome home photo. #USNavy



 ▼

 Like    Comment    Share

1,790 people like this. Top Comments ▼

Image 1.15: U.S. Navy Life Facebook Post, 2015

“It’s beautiful to see Sailors reconnect with their loved ones.”

 **US Navy Life** with Dieye Ndeye Tabaski and Diéye Tidiane.  
March 16, 2013 · ✨

It's beautiful to see Sailors reconnect with their loved ones.





 Like    Comment    Share

1,639 people like this.

Image 1.16: U.S. Navy Life Facebook Post, 2014

“Tomorrow is World Kiss Day!"Like" this photo to send a virtual kiss to your favorite Sailor.”



Image 1.17: U.S. Navy Life Facebook Post, 2013

“Family support is so important, especially to a Sailor. On Military Spouse Appreciation Day, we salute the spouses and families who support the Sailors of America's Navy.”



Image 1.18: U.S. Navy Life Facebook Post, 2014

The use of the term “Sailor” in these posts is applicable to both women and men serving in the Navy. In each of these instances, however, the military personnel depicted in the image accompanying the text is a male. Moreover, there is at least one perceived civilian in the photo as well. In each of these instances, the civilian is a female spouse or female child. It is also noteworthy that in each of these examples, both the military male, and the

civilian female are white. This suggests that the Navy not only views the military family as heterosexual, but as gender traditional--the male serves in the military, and the female is the military spouse—and “white.”

It should be noted that the Navy website had several Facebook pages.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the Navy Life Facebook page, the Navy is the only branch that maintains a separate Facebook page for women, titled “Navy Women Redefined.” According to the Navy, “Being a woman in today’s Navy is as challenging as it is empowering. Unite with other female Sailors who have raised the bar and redefined what it means to be a woman in the Navy” (Navy.com 2015). Dedicated specifically to women in the Navy, this Facebook page provides some interesting language for visitors:

What’s it like being a woman in today’s Navy? Challenging. Exciting. Rewarding. But above all, it’s incredibly empowering. That’s because the responsibilities are significant, the respect is well-earned and the lifestyle is liberating. Moreover, the chance to push limits personally and professionally is an equal opportunity for women and men alike (Navy.com 2015).

The idea that certain jobs are better suited for men and men alone is redefined in the Navy. Stereotypes are overridden by determination, by proven capabilities, and by a shared appreciation for work that’s driven by hands-on skills and adrenaline. Here, women are definitely in on the action. And women who seek to pursue what some may consider male-dominated roles are not only welcome, they’re wanted – in any of dozens of dynamic fields (Navy.com 2015).

This language frames Navy women as subjects who redefine femininity, albeit the Navy’s conceptualization of femininity. Indeed, the Navy invokes standard stereotypes about women to demonstrate the appeal of the Navy, casting naval service as a means to “override” traditional femininity by cultivating determination, proven capabilities, hands-on skills and adrenaline – characteristics stereotypically associated with men. In other

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<sup>33</sup> This list includes US Navy Life, US Navy Chaplain Corps, US Navy Civil Engineer Corps, US Navy Health Care, US Navy Jag Corps, US Navy Nuclear Propulsion, Women Redefined, US Navy Cryptology and Technology, US Navy EOD, US Navy Air Rescue Swimmers, US Navy Diver, US Navy Athletes, NROTC, US Navy Reserve, US Navy Latinos, US Navy Events, and US Navy STEM.

words, the Navy sells potential female recruits the possibility of “degendering,” acquiring the accredited traits associated with “masculine” competence. Yet it offers women a version of equality and empowerment that requires assimilation to a male norm—a norm that remains elusive for women precisely because it privileges men. Far from “regendering” the military, women’s participation simply reinforces male norms as definitive of military service.

*The Future of Combat: Technology Induced Drone Warfare*

Of all the branches, the Air Force Facebook page spent the most time posting information directly related to recruitment of personnel: 81 of the 205 posts involved pictures that foreground planes as emblematic of the Air Force mission. Indeed, the Facebook page refers viewers to Flickr: “For more Air Force Photos, check out the U.S. Air Force on Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usairforce/>.” These 81 posts included 8 that specifically provide a sample test question that recruits are likely to see on the ASVAB entrance exam. Similar to Brown’s finding of a lack of focus on martial masculinity, Facebook posts by the Air Force emphasized the opportunity to work with some of the greatest technology in the world. One post, for example, stated “The U.S. Air Force is home to the world’s most amazing collection of aviation technology. For more photos, video and stats on each aircraft download the new Tech Hangar app available for iPhone and Android.” These posts particularly highlight technological future of warfare. Recruits are encouraged to believe they might fly remotely piloted aircraft, or pilot “autonomous robots [that] will one day be able to enter dangerous environments without putting Airmen at risk” (U.S. Air Force Recruiting, 2014). This technocentric message ties masculinity to warfare conducted from afar, which carries the prestige of

techno-culture without the risk of loss of limbs or bodily mutilation from serving in combat.

In several instances, Air Force Facebook posts portrayed women in technical positions, and engaging in technical activities. These included posts mentioned the importance of “learning basic electronics [as] the ground work for numerous Air Force careers,” being an air traffic controller, working in Aerospace maintenance, and the Air Force’s Technical Training program. Nevertheless, posts related to piloting, calling in airstrikes on targets, combat air traffic controlling, and positions such as Special Missions Aviator, Air Force Special Operations Command, Combat Rescue Officer remained the domain of male recruits. These posts refer to specific skills and capabilities that are needed to fulfill these roles. As an example,

Taking control of one of the most advanced aircraft in the world — and pushing its performance to the limit — requires extraordinary skill and precision, and Air Force pilots make it look easy. While successfully completing their missions is paramount, the role of pilots as leaders and character models is just as important since they train and command crews in addition to flying. Air Force pilots deploy around the world to wherever there's a need as fighters, trainers, bombers, advisers and more (U.S. Air Force Facebook, 2014).

Although “pilot” is a gender-neutral term, the posts couple texts such as this with photo images of airmen, thereby suggesting that these positions are exclusively for men. By indirection, the visual cues suggest that women lack of the “extraordinary skill and precision” needed to excel. Moreover, including only men in piloting photos, and describing pilots as “leaders and character models” erases women’s 30 year (official) history as pilots in the Air Force.

## **Conclusion**

Since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force, the recruitment of military personnel from the general public has been paramount. Scholars have studied how shifts away from conscription to volunteer-based models of service have impacted militaries worldwide. They have also studied how these shifts affect the recruitment and participation of certain segments of society in militaries, namely women. Undoubtedly, the shift to the All-Volunteer Force in the case of the United States has forced the military branches to ask themselves, “who do we want to have serve, and how do we get them to sign up?” The materials developed to recruit newcomers are inherently gendered. Although the United States military has been actively debating when and under what conditions to regender its forces, contemporary recruitment efforts reinscribe male dominance within these institutions and endorse male norms as appropriate and unassailable.

My content analysis of recruitment messages since the announcement of an end to the combat ban on women in January 2013 indicate that little has changed in the depiction of women. Women still remain marginalized in online recruitment materials, frequently depicted in stereotypical roles or settings. While the four military branches vary in their textual and visual representations of women, the selling point for each remains an overarching form of militarized masculinity, embodied in the image of a white male.<sup>34</sup> For the Army and the Marine Corps, in particular, the achievement of this form of masculinity is directly linked to combat service. For the Navy, international deployments, which may or may not result in combat, provide honor that is later

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<sup>34</sup> Based on the Department of Defense demographics report for 2013, white Active Duty and Selected Reserve service members represented 71.5% (1,575,594) of the overall military force, with Black or African American Active Duty and Selected Reserve service members represented 16.5% (363,732). Female service members totaled 16.2% (358,156) and male service members 83.8% (1,846,680) of the overall military force.

recognized through homecoming ceremonies and reunions with families—envisioned as heterosexual and traditional—featuring a male as the member of the military. And in the Air Force, militarized masculinity is intimately connected to technology, where recruits are lured through a new concept of combat, one which offers them the honor and prestige of fighting wars from behind a joystick. As Brown suggested, the military's continuous reshaping of its cultures of masculinity in this era of technologically-sophisticated weaponry, characterized by usage of drone warfare, may make the lifting of the combat ban on women irrelevant. Gender equality in combat positions may involve a degendering of women more than a regendering of the military institution.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION - THE FUTURE OF WARFARE: WOMEN'S SYSTEMIC ERASURE FROM THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY**

Changes to policies between 2011 and 2015 have been heralded as a move towards gender inclusivity, and the resolving of “gender trouble” in the history of the United States military. During this period, President Barack Obama repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and military officials testified in front of Congress to placate concerns about the sexual assault epidemic in the military. Additionally, on December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced that as of January 1, 2016, all combat roles in all branches of the military would be open to women, including elite special operations units the Navy SEALs and the Army Delta Force. For many, the announcement has signaled a cause for celebration for women’s long fight for gender equality in the United States armed forces. For others, it is a stark reminder that women had already served in combat roles for many, many years, without ever having been acknowledged as having done so by the very institution they served.

Undeniably, this policy change occurred not only during a period of gendered policy shifts in the United States military, but also during an era of change in the manner in which warfare itself is conducted. Since 2013, “manned” and “unmanned” drones have been used with increasing frequency for military pursuits. Drone operators – usually located thousands of miles away from the physical combat zone – target sites and individuals of interest from behind a joystick with which they launch attacks. Through the drones’ live feeds, operators are visually placed in the very environment in which life or death is determined for targeted individuals, but from which they are far removed (physically) and do not face any bodily harm. Despite this spatial divide, drone operators

have increasingly stepped forward to discuss their experiences and to bring attention to the psychological impact of their roles, impact which the military has largely ignored. In some cases, drone operators who have attempted to seek help for mental trauma associated with their job responsibilities have been threatened to have their security clearances revoked if they did. The complex nature of drone warfare raises several interesting questions surrounding shifting understandings of “combat,” and which feminist scholars should consider in their research; should launching a drone be considered a combat mission? Are drone operators combat soldiers? Are drone operators eligible for the same honor, valor and respect as front line ground combat troops? If so, what does the lifting of the ban on women in combat really mean for gender equality in the military and how will this play out among average citizens? Developments in drone warfare are likely to shape the future of military operations. In certain ways, it is also likely to determine how the general public views the future nature of warfare, and thereby, the (in)significance of the lifting of the combat ban on women.

For feminist scholarship interested in the military as a gendered institution, questions surrounding societal implications of militarism and processes of militarization have been paramount (Belkin 2012; Brown 2012; Burke 2002; Cohn 1987a, 1987b, 2000; Enloe 1983, 1990, 2000, 2002; Ferguson and Turnbull 1999; Francke 1997; Goldstein 2001; Hooper 2001; Kronsell 2012; Levy 1997; Lutz 2000). These investigations have argued that processes of militarization serve as systems of power that are felt widely by citizens of communities otherwise thought to be far removed from the military apparatus itself. Similarly, a core purpose of this dissertation has been an investigation of how the military’s changing gender representations have been promoted within the general public

in order to advance feminist scholarship on militarization. Acker's (1992) understanding of gendered institutions has been particularly useful to this end, in which she sees gender as "present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (567). It is a more nuanced understanding of the "distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (567) of the gendered practices of the United States military that this dissertation has been particularly interested in.

A main contribution made by this project is to showcase the utility of a various feminist qualitative methods for investigating the military as a gendered institution. In her discussions of feminist methodologies, J. Ann Tickner (2006) suggests that "what makes feminist research unique...is a distinctive methodological perspective or framework which fundamentally challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all the disciplines" (20). Challenging mainstream International Relations' understanding of militarization is undoubtedly one of feminist IR scholarship's greatest contributions to the field. Feminist understandings of militarization have allowed scholars to draw attention to phenomena that affect societies beyond the immediate apparatuses associated with the military, revealing that militarization's ultimate power becomes most apparent when it is no longer visible at all – when citizens validate militaristic ideals without recognition, realization or question. Feminist studies of militarization have involved "reading against the grain." Purely descriptive accounts of the military as an institution cannot suffice, if the objective is to understand how military purposes and ideals are normalized and placed beyond question.

I have argued that multiple interpretive methods ranging from historical analysis, discourse analysis, thick description, and semiotics to first-person observations facilitate innovative analysis of the US military. I have deployed these diverse methods in analyzing Congressional hearings, documentary films, museum and memorial sites, recruitment marketing campaigns and social media platforms – all materials that are accessible and created for public consumption. Rather than interviewing military officials or conducting ethnographic work at active military sites such as military bases or combat units, I have used interpretive strategies to understand how the military presents itself to the general public, interrogating the messages circulated to elected officials and to average citizens who have no affiliation and little familiarity with the military itself.

By analyzing shifting gender regimes manifest in diverse military discourses, this dissertation provides a more nuanced understanding of how the military shapes, molds, and manipulates narratives of gender during periods of supposed change. By producing many kinds of messages for the general public (advertising campaigns, social media, war memorials), the military creates and maintains an intimate relationship with American citizens, not just those who decide to serve in the military. This relationship has in large part been necessitated by the shift from a draft-based personnel structure to the All-Volunteer Force. To recruit sufficient personnel to meet its needs, the military has continuously altered its self-representations, sometimes subtly and sometimes blatantly changing the messaging that fuels its recruitment campaigns. Recruitment incentives have changed over the last 50 years, and as Chapter 5 documents, these changes have varied across the different branches of the military, but have consistently shored up gendered hierarchies and practices of citizenship in the contemporary United States. The

military has crafted very specific narratives around policy changes, which it communicates to the American citizenry through multiple media. These narratives are deeply gendered, telling specific stories about who the military views as its most important recruits, soldiers, and veterans, while exuding information about whom the state values and how it genders citizens. These military messages offer important insights into militarism and militarization. While average citizens may feel that they are far removed from the military apparatus, the consumption of messages that tacitly affirm hierarchies of citizenship can shape the quality of political life in the contemporary United States.

In the different branches of the United States military, gendered and raced hierarchies of citizenship are anchored by the norm—the white, heteromasculine, male soldier. Intimately connected to the establishment of this normative soldier is an institutional obsession with the putative strength of the male body, made manifest in the form of military boot camp training regimens, pack-load weight standards, regulations pertaining to naval service on combat ships and submarines, and worries about how women will deal with menstruation in remote combat environments. Within this heteromasculine frame, women's bodies are constructed as inferior through multiple nuanced articulations. These constructions operate as “mechanisms of exclusion” to mask—and sometimes erase completely—women's participation in the military. Despite the policy changes explicitly designed to open opportunities to women and gay service members, heteromascularity remains the bastion of military service, shoring up a privileged category of citizenship.

Chapter 2 traced the gendered nuances in five decades of narratives presented in Congressional Hearings about the combat exclusion policy from the inception of the All-Volunteer Force in the 1970s through 2015. The hearings present a progress narrative of women's increasing inclusion in the military through an "incremental and deliberate" process, culminating in the lifting of the combat ban. This narrative places a positive spin on the consistently small number of women (in comparison to men) who serve in the military, while diverting attention away from the nearly fifty-year struggle to secure equal opportunity for women to serve in combat, and from the increasing roles women they have performed in the military during this struggle.

The Congressional Hearings demonstrate that military officials justified women's exclusion from combat by positioning the military as a rational actor, concerned with efficient operation of the nation's defense. Yet the carefully crafted image of *homo economicus* circulated during the first decade after the creation of the AVF gave way to misogynist arguments that imagined women to be "leaky bodies" that threatened the operations of the institution. In the 1980's, anxieties surrounding "time-lost" by women generated exaggerated claims about negative effects of "hormones," menstruation, pregnancies, and motherhood. In the 1990's, grounds for continued exclusion included fears concerning sexual assault when women served side by side men in combat. In the early twenty-first century, the military generated worries about the different treatment women's bodies would require when returning from combat zones. The chapter traces how the military has manipulated discourses about women's bodies, foregrounding fertility and fragility to justify the continuance of the combat ban even as women in the armed services performed valiantly in a multiple deployments on the front lines.

Narratives surrounding soldiers' bodies and their "appropriate" usage are also central to military memorials, which depict bodies worthy of honor and accolade privileging those which sustain maiming and mutilation through tours of combat. But in according honors, the military depictions exceed issues pertaining to physical injury associated with service. In its representations of war wounds, the military prefers some bodies over others, accrediting some wounds while also creating a systemic grouping of "invisible wounds." These wounds—associated with sexual assault and psychological trauma—lack visibility on the corpus itself and are pressed into invisibility by silencing and shaming victims. In failing to address sexual violence within its ranks and in moving to deny psychological services to veterans, the military has done far more than mask certain gendered injuries, as the increasing incidence of suicide among combat veterans attests.

Chapter 3 tackles the contemporary attention given to sexual assault in the military, commonly characterized as an "epidemic." In particular, it frames the issue of military sexual assault through a comparison with other forms of bodily harm soldiers sustain in service. My analysis suggests that the military's treatment of gendered wounds plays a crucial role in perpetuating hetero-masculinity as the normative ideal across the armed services. Although sexual assault is easily understood as gendered, the chapter explores how many modes of injury and bodily harm are gendered and considers how the gendering of wounds affects which wounds are acknowledged by the military and which are ignored, which wounds are expressed and which are silenced, and which wounds are heralded to the public and which are erased from public view.

The military engages in a systematic masking of victims' wounds through a combination of securitization and medicalization discourses. Public testimony provided to Congressional committees by military officials demonstrates how sexual assault in the military is markedly different from sexual assault in the civilian sector. Shifting attention from the individual women and men who have experienced sexual assault by their fellow service members, the military has used securitization and medicalization discourses to position itself as the victim of the "sexual assault epidemic." Military officials engage in an extraordinary sleight of hand when they characterize sexual assault in the military as a "plague" or "cancer" that threatens the very survival of the organization. Diverting the focus of congressional investigations from the physical and psychological horrors of the individuals who have been attacked, the military refocuses attention on the defense institutions as a whole, eliding critical questions about whether perpetrators of sexual violence are brought to justice by the military. Wounding sustained from tours of combat that do not visibly mark the bodies of soldiers through noticeable maiming or missing limbs are also feminized through military narratives about deficiencies or inadequacies. In cases of crimes committed by veterans grappling with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, the military depicts the acts of crime as a disgraceful sully of the honor of the uniform they wear and the country they serve.

Dishonor associated with certain groups who have served in the military has, in certain instances, been established through their removal from military histories disseminated to the public. Chapter 4 sought to uncover these silenced histories through a semiotic investigation of the USS Midway Museum. Military museums, memorials, and ceremonies are fruitful sites for analyzing the military's ability to manipulate specific

stories that are told and not told about the military. Museum curators and exhibit directors who make deliberate decisions regarding the design and spatial configurations of exhibits, hold the power to determine which histories are broadcasted and which are silenced. Though the structure of their displays, they carefully direct visitors' attention to dimensions of military life and service that the armed forces wish to celebrate and commemorate.

In the case of the USS Midway, women did not serve aboard the ship at any point in the history of the aircraft carrier. But as one of the most recent war ships to be turned into a museum, and as a site that boasts over 1 million visitors per year, military sites carry a responsibility to acknowledge women's service, and to provide accurate depictions of women's military history (in the Navy specifically, in this case). Instead, the USS Midway exhibit erased women from military history, choosing to make no mention of a century of women's contributions to the armed forces. In this way, war museums and memorials also help ensure that war remains a male preserve in the public imagination.

Chapter 5 presented a content analysis of online recruitment materials, examining Facebook posts for the four branches since the initial announcement of the rescission of the combat exclusion policy in 2013 through October 2015. With the exception of one post made on the Army's Facebook recruitment page, none of the branches made mention of the repeal of the combat ban on women, and their depictions of women during this period were few in number. When women were depicted (whether alone, with other females, or with male counterparts), less than 1% of the images posted by all four of the branches depicted women in combat roles or scenarios. Thus my research confirms

earlier work on print military advertisements from 1970 to 2007, which indicates that various forms of masculinity remain the hallmark of recruitment materials. For the Air Force, service is tied to techno-masculinity; for the Army and Marines, service is tied to warrior masculinity established through front-line combat roles; and for the Navy, service is tied to adventurous masculinity often established through travel opportunities available with the branch.

In contrast to popular assumptions that recent changes in military policies pertaining to gays and women in uniform represent a significant degendering of the military, this dissertation suggests a far less sanguine view. To degender the military involves far more than including formerly excluded groups. For the U.S. military, degendering would require viewing all subjects and their lives equally, and dissolving hierarchies of citizenship established at the intersections of gender, race, class, sexual orientation. It would interrogate the societal implications of militarism that have allowed a culture of violence to thread throughout layers of society and become “natural.” Degendering would require eliminating the tenets of masculinity upon which the institution was built. It would entail erasing standards of performance that were once predicated upon the abilities of the male corpus, and re-envisioning the manifold modalities of military operation. In short, a degendering of the United States military would be a reimagining of how wars are conducted, along with the very foreign policy tools at the disposal of nation states.

## APPENDIX

### CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS FOR CHAPTER 2 (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

*Final report to the Congress of Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird before the House Armed Services Committee : Hearing Before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 1, (1973).*

*To Provide Recognition to the Women's Air Force Service Pilots for Their Service During World War II by Deeming Such Service to Have Been Active Duty in the Armed Forces of the United States for Purposes of Laws Administered by the Veterans Administration: Hearing Before a Select Subcommittee of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (1977).*

*Military Medical Health and Research: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (1978). , second session, July 26 and 27, 1978.*

*Selective Service System Plans Officer Personnel Management: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 96<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (1979).*

*Judiciary Implications of Draft Registration--1980: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, 96<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (1980).*

*Drug Abuse in the Military--1981: Hearing before the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, House of Representatives, 97<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (1981).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1984: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (1983).*

*Department of Defense Authorization and Oversight: Hearings on H.R. 5167, Department of Defense Authorization of Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1985, and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programs before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (1984).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1985: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (1984).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1987: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 99<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (1986).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 100 Cong. 1 (1987).*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 100<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (1987).*

*Department of Defense Appropriations for 1990: Hearings before the Department of Defense Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, 101<sup>st</sup> Cong. 1 (1989).*

*Merchant Mariners Fairness and Memorial Acts: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Merchant Marine of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, House of Representatives, 101<sup>st</sup> Cong. 1, (1989).*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 101<sup>st</sup> Cong. 1, (1989).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1991: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 101 Cong. 2, (1990).*

*The Impact of the Persian Gulf War and the Decline of the Soviet Union on how the United States does its Defense Business: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 1, (1991).*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 1, (1991).*

*Gender Discrimination in the Military: Hearings before the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee and the Defense Policy Panel of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 2, (1992).*

*Implementation of the Repeal of the Combat Exclusion on Female Aviators : Hearing before the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 2, (1992).*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 2, (1992).*

*Women in the Military: the Tailhook Affair and the Problem of Sexual Harassment: Report of the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee and Defense Policy Panel of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 102 Cong. 2, (1992).*

*Assessment of the Plan to Lift the Ban on Homosexuals in the Military: Hearings before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 1, (1993).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1994 and the Future Years Defense Program: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 1 (1993).*

*Hearings on National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1994--H.R. 2401 and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programs before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 1, (1993).*

*Hearings on National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, H.R. 2401 and Oversight of Previously authorized Programs: Hearings before Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee Hearings on Personnel Authorizations of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 1, (1993).*

*Policy Concerning Homosexuality in the Armed Forces: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 2, (1993).*

*Policy Implications of Lifting the Ban on Homosexuals in the Military: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 1, (1993).*

*Assignment of Army and Marine Corps women under the new definition of ground combat: Hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 2, (1994).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1995 and the Future Years Defense Program: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 2, (1994).*

*Morale, Welfare, and Recreation and Commissary Issues: Hearings before the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Panel of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 2, (1994).*

*Sexual Harassment of Military Women and Improving the Military Complaint System: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 2, (1994).*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (1995).*

*Department of Defense Appropriations for 1997: Hearings before a Subcommittee of National Security of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (1996).*

*Extremist Activity in the Military / Committee on National Security, House of Representatives, 104 Cong. 2, (1996).*

*Army Sexual Harassment Incidents at Aberdeen Proving Ground and Sexual Harassment Policies within the Department of Defense: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (1997).*

*Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1998: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (1997).*

*Gender-integrated Training and Related Matters : Hearing before the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (1997).*

*Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1999 and the Future Years Defense Program: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (1998).*

*Hearings on National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999--H.R. 3616 and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programs, before the Committee on National Security, House of Representatives, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (1998).*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (1998).*

*Veterans' Employment Regarding Civilian Credentialing Requirements for Military Job Skills: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (1999).*

*Issues Affecting Families of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (2003).*

*Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal year 2005: Hearings before the Defense Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (2004).*

*Policies and Programs for Preventing and Responding to Incidents of Sexual Assault in the Armed Services: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (2004).*

*Status of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps in Fighting the Global War on Terrorism: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (2005).*

*Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal year 2006 : Hearings before the Defense Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (2006).*

*Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007: Hearing before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1, (2006.)*

*Nominations before the Armed Services Committee, United States Senate, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (2006).*

*Sexual Assault and Violence Against Women in the Military and at the Academies: Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations of the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (2006).*

*Don't Ask, Don't Tell Review: Hearing before the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2 (2008).*

*Sexual Assault in the Military: Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2, (2008).*

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