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The Women of Explosive Ordnance Disposal: Cyborg, Techno-Bodies, Situated Knowledge, and Vibrant Materiality in Military Cultures

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THE WOMEN OF EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL:
CYBORG, TECHNO-BODIES, SITUATED KNOWLEDGE, AND VIBRANT
MATERIALITY IN MILITARY CULTURES

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ABSTRACT

THE WOMEN OF EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL: CYBORG, TECHNO-BODIES, SITUATED KNOWLEDGE, AND VIBRANT MATERIALITY IN MILITARY CULTURES

April Michelle Cobos
Old Dominion University, 2019
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Women's service in the U.S. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community began in the 1970s amidst policy changes that opened more active duty roles to women while maintaining restrictions on their access to combat. However, in the past two decades, the changing contexts of war brought the EOD community, and subsequently, these women to the forefront of combat preceding the 2016 policy repeal, positioning these women at a poignant, kairotic moment in history. The exigency of such a project in the field of rhetoric applies to more broadly analyzing the disparities between policy discourse and the lived experiences of individuals who these policies seek to regulate. Their positioning also sheds light on the challenges twenty-first century scholars face in analyzing shifting gender roles in the workplace, with policies advocating for gender equality, which often buries continued gendered ideologies and discourse.

Through the lenses of vibrant materiality, situated knowledge, and cyborg, techno-bodies (Bennett; Haraway; Balsamo), this project argues that in complex, dynamic rhetorical contexts, only analyzing human subjects and their agency and authority is limiting, and instead requires examining through the lens of an assemblage of agency of human and non-human actants that collectively impact rhetorical contexts negatively and positively. The project also theorizes agency and authority as shifting in institutional and cultural networks, existing in complementary and contradictory ways, exemplified through women in EOD articulating they feel authoritative,

constrained, and even unintentionally agentic in different rhetorical situations they encounter. While situated knowledge and cyborg, techno-bodies draw attention to disparities between policies and lived experiences and the conflation of material and discursive bodies, these lenses also exemplify how these disparities and the military's increasing demand for techno-bodies have aided in creating opportunities for women's increased institutional agency and authority.

The project undertakes a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative data from surveys, available government documents, and other cultural artifacts to create a more triangulated analysis. While this project is rooted in rhetorical, and feminist rhetorical, analyses, its dynamic nature demands using an interdisciplinary approach that pulls from discourse analysis, political, historical and military scholarship and other humanities based feminist scholarship.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family, the loves of my life, Steve, Izzy, Diego, Mom, and Dad. I could not have completed this without your constant love and support.

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NOMENCLATURE

ASVAB Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test

CDA Critical Discourse Analysis

CNAS Center for New American Security

DOD Department of Defense

EOD Explosive Ordnance Disposal

FitRep Fitness Report

FOB Forward Operating Base

GAO United States Government Accountability Office

IED Improvised Explosive Device

JERRV Joint EOD Rapid Response Vehicle

LOI Letter of Instruction

NECC Navy Expeditionary Combat Command

RAND Research and Development Corporation

SAPR Sexual Assault Prevention and Assault

SecDef Secretary of Defense

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CHAPTER 1
CYBORG, TECHNO-BODIES, SITUATED KNOWLEDGE, AND VIBRANT
MATERIALITY: AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S WORK IN EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE
DISPOSAL

Introduction

I first met Beth¹, pictured in Figure 1, at the U.S. Naval Dive and Salvage Training Center in Panama City, Florida in 2002. She was one of three women in a dive training class of thirty-five students, a required six month school to become an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technician for the United States Armed Forces. Beth's presence in EOD, and in related special operations communities, precedes her, as much for her career expertise as for her physical capabilities. Throughout her time in the community, she has proven herself to be a reliable, trustworthy EOD technician; so much that, recently, she served in a leadership position that assisted with the newly opened integration of women into the Navy SEAL community. However, she has proven her career expertise and even her physical abilities against the realities of being one of very few women in a masculine, male dominated workplace that specializes in combat related labor during a time in history when women's presence in such spaces was restricted and constrained because of related policies and institutional and cultural norms. As well, she did not begin her career in EOD with the intention of changing the gendered dominant discourse, and since she still struggles against gendered constraints that arise in new and differing rhetorical contexts, her agency and authority within the military institution is never fixed. Overall, however, her story is one of resilience and making the most of available opportunities in the rhetorical contexts she encounters, doing so alongside other human and non-

¹ Pseudonym. Personal Communication. November 2018.

² 3,600 personnel in 2002 with an increase to 6,200 by 2012 to accommodate the changes (GAO)

human agentic elements, or an assemblage of agency, working together within an appropriate kairotic moment (Bennett). In this case, Beth, and other women like her have been able to capitalize on the current rhetorical contexts and timing, specifically the changing contexts of war and combat, shifting perceptions of men's and women's roles in the larger civilian sectors of American society, and advancements in military technologies and scientific knowledge about women's bodies and their physical capabilities. These agentic elements, in conjunction, present the opportunity for women to become authoritative in an institution, and specifically a male dominated military community, which has historically excluded their presence because of material and discursive norms and ideologies about women's bodies and their professional and domestic roles. Women in EOD have been poignantly positioned in the midst of these changes and alongside these other agentic elements in a fascinating and, sometimes, contradictory way that warrants more carefully analyzing in a dissertation length project in the field of rhetoric.



Figure 1. Beth, On the Range, For Target Training. Personal Communication. November 2018. Photo contributed with permission.

In particular, this dissertation project offers a varied lens through which to theorize intentionality and agency, which is beneficial to the field of rhetoric, and to many related fields, and the current discussions in these fields about ways to better analyze and attend to issues of agency and authority. In the past, the field of rhetoric has often focused on the agency of human subjects with these subjects conceived as the central focus of intentionality and actions that actively grasp or claim agency and authority and that impact and constrain other human agents. However, this project instead highlights how it can be limiting to only focus on human agency, as there are often other non-human elements at work in the restriction and access of agency, power, and authority within a particular institution, workplace, or culture. In the twenty-first century, where rhetorical contexts are shifting institutional policy, related cultural and societal discourse, and norms in both the workplace and domestic sectors, but where backlash and resistance still occur, it is imperative for rhetorical scholars to capture the full breadth of these contexts in order to address and advocate for the implementation of change, and to be more adequately prepared for academic conversations about the full scope of the undercurrents that continue to push and pull against one another. The American military institution is an excellent example of these dynamic, shifting contexts, as the institution works to implement policy that attends to changes in domestic and workplace roles of men and women in the twenty-first century, but is still deeply embedded with ideologies and norms from the prior policies and related discourse that pushes up against the proposed changes in contrasting, and often contradictory, ways. As well, the ideologies and norms of this institution are connected, embedded, and related to many other institutions and cultural and societal norms and practices within American society that warrant its further analysis in order to aid in more holistically understanding the complex rhetorical gender and cultural shifts occurring in other sectors of

American life and beyond. This project also attends to concerns by rhetorical and feminist scholars to broaden the scope of methods used in rhetorical analysis, particularly keeping in mind these shifting contexts that require different points of examination.

What initially brought me to this dissertation project were my first hand encounters witnessing Beth's experiences managing the stress of working in a special forces community during a time in history where combat deployments were persistent and exhausting, while also navigating gendered doubt and critiques in an especially hyper masculine, male dominated, workplace. I know her personally and professionally because my spouse was in the same 2002 dive school training class, and since then they have worked together, off and on, throughout the years. During this time, I have engaged in many conversations with community members, spouses, and even civilians where her name came up: inquisitive about her career moves, her physical fitness capabilities, her dedication to the job, her on-the-job knowledge, and even her relationships in and outside of work. Beth, and women like her, are not the norm in this community, hence the often undesired attention and focus. She does not fit the stereotypical mold of the young, white males who make up the vast majority of EOD technicians in all four branches of the United States Armed Forces, approximately 77-81% of the roughly 6,200 EOD technicians, despite the community being open to women since the 1970s (Harrell, et. al; GAO).

While her story is just one example of a woman serving her country in this context, hers, and others like it, are important to analyze as the American military institution grapples with changing terminologies and rhetorical contexts of war and wartime labor, rapidly evolving scientific and technological advances and their impact on the overall workforce needs of the military institution, alongside recent shifts in ideologies of workplace gender norms in the civilian sector and in American politics that also inevitably impact the military institution. In this

respect, EOD provides an excellent point of examination, shedding insight into a military community that inadvertently placed women into combat roles because of swift changes in job description and wartime contexts ahead of policy changes that declared women could work in these roles. Prior to September 11, 2001, EOD was considered a support job, called out in extreme cases where a bomb threat occurred in a neighboring town, and for service on ships, usually salvaging old underwater mine or bomb threats from WWII, which explains the need for dive training. However, the changes in wartime strategies throughout the Middle East over the past twenty years, to include Improved Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other types of explosives, brought their expertise to the forefront of combat labor, and also changed the traditional dynamics of combat, thrusting EOD technicians into combat roles before Department of Defense (DOD) policies could catch up to the reality of their workplace circumstances (GAO). Because of this support label and the initial working conditions, in the 1970s, when the DOD ruled for more Armed Forces positions to be opened to women, EOD became an available job opportunity for them. There was no way to predict that in the future, EOD would become equated with a combat special operations community. Currently, EOD technicians train constantly to locate, render safe, and dispose of explosives that harm or kill local civilians or military personnel, usually in combat or hazardous zones near or surrounding Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). Because of this, they almost always lead in other military specialty teams, to include elite teams like Navy SEALs and Army Rangers, and must be trained in the same methods as these elite units (NECC). While the job description and the necessary training requirements frame this as a combat related position, such jobs were, on paper, restricted to women until 2016 when the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule was repealed by the Department of Defense.

This places women in EOD in a particularly poignant historic position: having situated, individual knowledge and experience of combat that were outside of the boundaries of the policies that regulated them because of gender. Specifically, in regards to women like Beth, her ability to serve in such a role, and her subsequent struggles as one of few women within this special forces community, reflects the historic gendering of the American military institution, but also more generally the gendering prevalent in American society, specifically its ideologies about appropriate gender roles in the workplace and in domestic life. As American society grapples with men's and women's shifting gender roles, this is also reflected in the changing discourse of the American military institution with terms arising like *gender equality* and *full integration* (DOD). However, what is often difficult to evidence when the explicit policy discourse changes is that the past discourse and deeply embedded ideologies still influence and impact and cannot quickly and easily be erased by a policy change, just as the prior policies could not fully encompass these women's embodied realities and their abilities to cross over the invisible boundaries of combat prior to the policy changes (Eisenhart & Johnstone). Examining gender and gender roles in the twenty-first century is complicated, particularly in American society, where gender norms in the workplace and in domestic roles have shifted enough that the complicated elements of gendering that remain are often invisible or difficult to evidence. This results in arguments about men and women's equality that are flawed; e.g. workplace policies assert that men and women have equal opportunities, therefore women no longer have constraints or struggles and there is no need to further examine the institutional and societal structures in place that previously constrained women. *Gender in the Twenty-First Century* speaks of this as the "stalled revolution," whereby critics of gender studies say that men and women in the United States are equal, and that men and women have the same opportunities and

experiences. These logics make examining gender in the twenty-first century particularly challenging, and makes this dissertation project even more relevant, in the face of another institution who now uses discourse like gender neutrality, which can bury the realities of prior discourse and cultural and societal norms and institutional processes that still hinder women's ability to equally and effectively work in these institutions.

Whether or not scholars have a vested interest in the military institution, understanding how authority and agency functions within any social or institutional context, how gender operates and how that operationalizing of gender changes because of an assemblage of human and non-human elements within a specific rhetorical context and time is beneficial to academic scholars in a variety of different projects and contexts. However, the American military institution should not simply be viewed from the vantage point of a separate institution that does not impact the civilian or academic sectors. While the military institution has its own culture, which contains its own "discourse system with its own rules and measure, its own system of power and knowledge," (Hables Gray 142), it is also persuasive and reflective of the ideologies of American society at large. Leo Braudy argues that while the military institution has often been conceived of as a separate enterprise, "considered in isolation from social reality and cultural context," it is, indeed, intricately intertwined with politics, power, and religion, and therefore, with the broader societal and cultural norms and discourse (xxiii). As can be seen throughout this dissertation project, the ideologies, norms, and actions of the American military institution are intertwined with the ideologies, norms, and actions of American society and politics and social and cultural ideologies on a more international level. Often institutional power and influence are invisible, as Michel Foucault argues, functioning in such a way that the rhetorical, persuasive nature and its ability to impact and infiltrate the daily lives of civilians and military service

members in the United States is unseen and marked as natural, which is precisely what makes this institution so difficult to analyze and critique. The way it influences society and politics, and the way it is influenced by prior and current politics and ideologies, provides more than sufficient exigency for examining this institution, its past and current language, discourse, and ideologies. While this project focuses particularly on the ideologies and discourses of gender within the American military institution because of the focus on changing policies that specifically highlight gender, this same type of analysis of the American military institution is imperative for future, intersectional scholarship more closely scrutinizing the ideologies and discourses on race, gender, and sexuality within the military institution and those impacts it has on the civilian sector and vice versa, which are discussed at greater length in the concluding chapter.

In terms of gender roles and institutional ideologies, since war is such an extreme case of human behavior, it also has the tendency to present the most deeply embedded ideologies about the binaries between men and women, both their physical bodies and their roles in society; it magnifies, and simplifies, these gender differences. Braudy argues “war has been central to the writing of history,” and central to that writing of history has been the discursive and material visions of men and male bodies fighting wars (xix). The antithesis to war, masculinity, and male bodies has been home, femininity, and female bodies. However, the contexts of war are changing, as are its related technologies and jobs, and have, thus, brought about an ideological crisis in terms of gender norms and gender binaries in the combat spaces. Women like Beth embody these struggles with gendered change in the military institution, and in society at large; the push and pull between the past gendered ideologies and policies and the current and future ideologies, contexts, and discourses, and the reality that with a changing policy or discourse,

abrupt changes of ideology do not occur. They are, on one hand, told by policy, and have been told by such policies that they are welcome to join EOD since the 1970s, although they have struggled to be accepted because of consistent, persistent gendered ideologies about this workplace that have only grown stronger as the work of the EOD technician has shifted more substantially to focus on wartime and combat labor. The EOD community provides an excellent example of this, as much of their work has also shifted as they use more advanced equipment like robots, protective gear and tanks, and other scientific and military related technologies. Despite the reality that women have already been doing the work of combat, and that the technological realities are allowing them to more readily move into these positions, debates about whether women have what it takes to participate in this kind of work before and after the 2016 policy repeal reinforce that society is still grappling with these deep ideological changes. Changes to prescriptive definitions, then, do not always speak to the embodied realities of individuals or marginalized groups, and do not necessarily equate to changed mentalities and ideologies.

A dissertation project about women's shifting agency and authority in the American military institution amidst changing policies and ideologies within and outside the institution requires pulling from several scholarly conversations in varied and interdisciplinary ways. The foundation of this project stems from the field of rhetoric, specifically rooted in broad elements and terms like persuasion, institutional powers, symbolic logic, agency and authority, and the rhetorical nature of definitions and policies, but it also pulls from the related field of feminist rhetoric, particularly because the project is focused on a broader institutional and societal analysis of gender roles and gendered bodies, intentionality, agency and authority within a masculine, male dominated workplace. However, because this project is also concerned with

how specific discourse, to include word choices, sentence structures, and even the way policies are structured or words are left unspoken, discourse analysis is an essential methodological tool, although Sean Zdenek & Barbara Johnstone argue that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not so much a set of tools or a methodology but a “complex cluster of practices and approaches at the crossroads of several disciplines” (27). Thus, CDA can be particularly beneficial in a rhetorical analysis project such as this because it explicitly draws on the links between discourse and ideology. Discourse analysis is interested in how the ways of talking, and writing, “produce and reproduce ways of thinking and ways of thinking can be manipulated via choices” (Johnstone & Eisenhart 54). These choices are linked back to the ideas and ideologies that circulate via recurring activities and practices. Analyzing these discursive practices and ideologies using rhetorical and discourse analysis can be aided by the work of feminist scholars in a range of humanities based disciplines, to include Donna Haraway, Anne Balsamo, Beverly Sauer, and Catherine Harnois, who have written about broadening feminist research methods and methodologies in order to more effectively analyze a wider scope of women’s roles and positions. Their discussions of methods and methodologies are especially beneficial in this dissertation project, which requires using multiple methods in order to present a more clear, well-rounded analysis of women in EOD’s experiences because of limitations on the availability of textual materials related to war and combat.

The limitations of available material for evidence might be partially responsible for the large research gap in the field of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics, but also in other disciplines, on the American military institution and its active duty service members in the field of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics. What is the most readily available to the general public are glimpses in newspaper articles, usually gathered from the limited information released by the institution

itself, or mostly quantitative data analysis from government organizations affiliated with the military, such as the RAND corporation, which reports on issues like personnel numbers, sexual assault and harassment, or military veterans. While these reports can be helpful, and will be used to some extent throughout the project, they do not fully represent the embodied realities of military members, and certainly not those of women in the EOD community. With this in mind, the dissertation project will rely on a mixed method approach to include the analysis of Department of Defense available and related documents and policies, surveys and interviews of female EOD technicians, and cultural materials like military technologies and equipment.

Using multiple methodologies and methods allows for a rich, multi-disciplinary examination of the dynamic, complicated nature of the American military institution and the operationalization of gender interests. While the secretive, sometimes sensitive nature of the related work makes it difficult to grasp a full picture of the institution, it is an institution whose influence is broad reaching, into the political sectors of American society, and into many other cultures. This includes everything from the politics of war and peacetime alliances to the deployment of service members to war zones, and demands being further analyzed in order to fully grasp the past, current, and future discourses and ideologies related to gender roles in society at large and the way those are reflected within, and outside, this institution. These broad reaching implications give exigency for analyzing how the discourse of the civilian world and the history of wartime have influenced the culture and institutional practices of the military, as well as how the practices and discourse of the military have influenced American society, and how intricately intertwined these are, and can be beneficial to a variety of future interdisciplinary projects.

Guiding Conversations and Themes

Throughout the remainder of dissertation project, there are three main guiding conversations: 1) the conflation of the material and discursive gendered body and the cyborg identity, 2) the situated, embodied knowledge and experiences of workers in contrast to the policy discourse that govern their working conditions, and 3) shifting agency, authority, and intentionality within a social or institutional network. These three themes will be addressed more extensively throughout the remainder of this chapter, but will also be threaded through the entire dissertation project, with one taking the primary focus in each following body chapter. Because the dissertation is so interdisciplinary and pulling from so many different fields at different times, each theme will include work from a variety of disciplines, as the nature of the project would make it difficult to create boundaries or barriers around the differing fields of scholarship.

Material and Discursive Gendered Bodies

The focus of war is on human bodies, specifically that it is the most valuable weapon of war and the most valuable loss during combat (Hables Gray). In terms of both of these, men's bodies have been historically conveyed as the best suited for combat labor because men's physiques are typically larger and more muscular, thus better utilized as weapons in hand-to-hand combat labor. The actual material, biological differences between male and female bodies, then, become the center of arguments about why men are better suited for combat labor, both in terms of physical, brute strength and abilities like running faster or doing more pull-ups or push-ups, but also because of the differences in the reproductive and sexual bodies. Women menstruate, which can be distracting or challenging to manage during combat field operations, they can be sexually assaulted by the enemy or by fellow service members, and their pregnant bodies are not suited for this kind of labor; all three are commonly used arguments against

women's bodies in combat (Maginnis; Mitchell). In *Discipline and Punishment* Foucault speaks to the mechanization of human bodies as individually and collectively disciplined as a machine of war, where ideally the bodies are as docile and uniform as possible (164). This perception of bodies in the military and at war as one machine helps explain arguments against women's bodies as disrupting the maximum effectiveness of the machine because of physical, biological differences visibly marked. Since physical fitness standards are such a large component of the entry and training requirements for positions in communities like EOD because of the desire for uniformity of the human mechanization of war, the material bodies are often recognized as valid reasons to limit women's presence in combat related communities.

In reality, however, it is not just the materiality of these physical bodies that hinder women's work in related fields, but their discursive bodies, as well, particularly historically constructed notions of femininity and masculinity that are inscribed on gendered bodies. Thus, even if women can show that their physical bodies are capable of competing alongside those of male bodies, and keeping the uniformity of the war machine, the social and cultural constructions are still infused with ideologies about how those bodies are supposed to act and what they are supposed to do. Bodies are rhetorical, and as Kelly Denton-Borhaug argues, in terms of combat related labor, they are infused with the discourse system of war (177). She argues there is a perceived boundary between the language we use to talk about the spaces of combat as a masculine place and the language we use to talk about the security of our nation, our motherland, as feminized. This language reflects perceptions of the bodies laden with symbols about war and society at large, and most especially that masculinity is deemed a characteristic of the male body and also represents toughness, aggressiveness, and hardness, while women's bodies represent weakness, passiveness, and the softness of the home and the domestic, and thus the vision of

their bodies at war are ideologically incompatible. In this case, ideologies have been crafted about men's labor in combat and masculinity and maleness being better for the sacrifices of war, and that women have been culturally and socially conceived as ideologically better suited for domestic labor or for more caring and nurturing roles, even in the military institution with substantially higher numbers of women being slotted for jobs in medical care or administrative work across all four branches into 2018 (Center 53).

However, Donna Haraway and Anne Balsamo caution against analyzing the body, particularly the female body, in a dualistic manner, as solely natural or discursive, as alone neither can adequately speak to its historic gendering and what has constrained women. In particular, Haraway argues that gender is at the heart of constructions and classifications of systems of difference, but that the "complex differentiation and merging of terms for 'sex' and 'gender' are part of the political history of the words" (*Simians* 136). She believes the repression of the construction of nature in recent postmodern studies has actually been used against feminist efforts to theorize women's agency and status, particularly, the failure of not relativizing sex and the "historical, epistemological roots of the logic of analysis implied in the sex/gender" distinction (*Simians* 136). Similarly, Balsamo argues that the construction of a boundary between nature and culture has served several ideological purposes, specifically providing a rhetorical framework for the establishment of a hierarchy of culture over nature, but that in reality the female body has always been constructed as a hybrid case, as both natural and discursive, and cannot be separated out. She argues that "gender, like the body, is a boundary concept. It is at once related to physiological sexual characteristics of the human body (the natural order of the body) and to the cultural context within which that body 'makes sense.'" (9). In this way, the female body can be mapped onto the cyborg identity and body, or a partially human and partially

machine figure, because of its lack of definitive boundaries as completely one or the other, and because of the confluences between the material and discursive constructions of gender. Using the reference to the cyborg body makes sense for analyses of women's bodies because "cyborg bodies, then, cannot be conceived as belonging wholly to either culture or nature; they are neither wholly technological nor completely organic" (Balsamo 33). By reasserting a material body, then, the cyborg rebukes the disappearance of the body within postmodernism. This image works well with understanding the materiality of the female body because "just as women never speak, write, or act outside of their bodies, cyborgs never leave the meat behind" (Balsamo 40). In returning to the example of Beth, and in using the survey and interview results, the realities are that women in EOD are constrained by their natural bodies, as can be seen with physical fitness tests that are counted as a large component of their jobs, and which privilege the male body. However, even when women effectively pass these physical exams and other intensely physical portions of the training for EOD, they are still confronted with discursive ideals of the body, whereby their presence as a woman with a female body also marks them as different, as representative of a domestic, reproductive, and sexual body. Thus, no matter what they are actually doing physically, they cannot shed their physical bodies or the cultural constructions of those bodies.

This case of hybridity for the female body, however, is also the site where disruption begins, where women can reclaim their boundary position, as these multiple constructions of the body mean they can never fully be written or contained in a particular way. In short, even though the female body is subordinated within "institutionalized systems of power and knowledge and crisscrossed by incompatible discourse," it is never fully determined by those systems of meaning (Balsamo 39). Chris Hables Gray argues, in order to overcome the limitations of

yesterday's soldiers, the military has recently pushed for an intense mechanization of war, which at once dehumanizes it, but also creates a coupling between humans and technology in these wartime roles. Since human bodies are still the main currency of war, the intention is now to fully integrate these bodies as cyborg-like figures, imbedded with technologies and machines. Most importantly, Hables Gray argues that the intense gender coding of war is impacted by this tendency towards cyborgs (166). While it was likely never intended to include female bodies in this shifting and transforming of war to a more highly mechanized machine of bodies, because women's bodies are already conceived of as hybrid cases, they can easily be mapped onto the form of the cyborg, techno-body in war. War technologies are built still conceiving of male bodies as the users because combat has been labeled as masculine space with male bodies, and even the technologies of war are masculine, but those same technologies have allowed for all soldiers, men and women alike, to appear more cyborgian, as the cyborg comes first, not the gendered body (Balsamo). This does not immediately remove all of the body politics and politics of gendered norms and constraints, but as Haraway argues, this blurs the line between the mind and the body and sex and gender and allows these women affordances they might not otherwise have had.

Truth and Objectivity: Situated, Embodied Knowledge versus Institutional Discourse

The changing rhetorical contexts of war and combat and the cyborg, techno body at war also lends itself to questions of knowledge claims, specifically in terms of the disparities between the situated knowledge and embodied experiences of women in EOD, and the constraints and affordances of their gendered bodies, versus the larger institutional discourse about their presence within these changing contexts and advancing technologies. Questions of truth and objectivity, such as this, have been at the center of this dissertation project for a variety of

intertwined and intersectional reasons. First, from a researcher's standpoint, there is an obvious concern over the most appropriate methodologies and methods to use in order to present the most accurate picture of women's working lives in the EOD community, but doing so with specific methods' constraints that quickly arose during the initial dissertation phase. First, there are strict limitations on the type of government documents publicly available to researchers because of operational security in the United States Armed Forces. This restricts a researcher's ability to objectively, comprehensively, and adequately access and analyze the institutional documentation related to gender and the military institution, and likely impacted prior researchers interested in the American military institution, which shows through the limited scholarship and partial perspectives available about this particular institution. Likewise, because of the limited number of women who have served within the EOD community, it is not plausible to write an entire dissertation solely on the personal narratives or survey results of the few women who are, and have been, working within the EOD community without encountering significant criticisms about methods and evidence, particularly the limited perspective. However, in combining these methods together with other related culturally based materials, in order to create a more well-rounded analysis and more thorough types of evidence, a concern over methodologies then emerges, particularly that merging together qualitative and quantitative methods in such a way does not lend itself to fitting well within a specific field of study, and whereby there are often conflicting theories on exactly which types of methods and methodologies will result in the most clear path to objectivity about women's working lives in the EOD community.

While the mixed methods and interdisciplinary methodologies approach can help to present more triangulated results in this project given its constraints and limitations, and while the goal as a researcher is to present my findings as objectively as possible, no matter what

methods and methodologies are chosen, Kenneth Burke's "terministic screens" still come into play and overshadow the concern for truth and objectivity (45). The ways in which researchers "direct the attention" by focusing on certain methods, which hones in on specific terms and definitions, or intentionally or unintentionally ignoring other terms and definitions. While decisions must be made in order for a project to be moved forward using the best possible methods and methodologies, those decisions will undoubtedly impact the findings and resulting discussions. Burke gives the example of an object photographed from different angles, and uses this to assert that something that we consider "factual" like a photograph can appear differently depending on the angle by which it is viewed (45). The same can be said about truth and objectivity in terms of any kind of academic analysis. He argues, "in brief, much that we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (46). Highlighting these terministic screens is imperative in a project such as this where the methods and evidence available often present conflicting realities or only partial perspectives; for example, the evidence derived from the mixed methods used in this project themselves have significant contradictions. The government documents on women's restrictions from combat roles were not repealed until 2016 although the survey and interview results, or the lived experiences of women in EOD, suggest otherwise, and point towards their work in combat occurring long before the 2016 repeal date. As well, there are now several policies in place through the Department of Defense that declare *gender neutrality* and the *full integration of women*, alongside additional policies that have arisen in the past 20 years that prohibit discrimination based on gender and sexual assault or harassment; however, the survey results from women in EOD, in combination, evidence continual gender constraints. Therefore, the prescriptive definitions, policies, and standards, meant to be truthful and objective, cannot

always speak to the embodied, situated realities and experiences of those working and living in particular contexts.

There are also several documents related to the daily working lives of those in special forces communities like EOD that are off limits to civilian researchers for a variety of reasons. As well, within the survey and interview results the responses about women's lived experiences varied widely and cannot be marked as one collective truth because not every woman in EOD who was active duty or recently retired answered the survey, therefore, the results of the survey have to take into consideration the limitations of not hearing from all of the perspectives of every woman who has ever served in the EOD forces of the United States military. The individual experiences of those who answered varied substantially from rhetorical context to rhetorical context. Their answers also reflected their professional and personal circumstances at the time of the survey response, and presented particular details in a more positive or negative light, or gave a perspective that has potentially changed because of additional experiences they have encountered since the survey.

With these conflicting versions of reality and the acknowledgement that no perspective is full and complete, whose perspective then becomes the measure of objectivity and whose is the most valued for this project? The work of feminist rhetorical scholars, and feminist scholarship more broadly, has heavily leaned towards the situated, embodied, or lived experiences of women and other marginalized rhetors, with the thought in mind that often the government documents and historical records will tell the dominant narrative, thus it is imperative to recover or rewrite women's histories through alternative methods like historiography. However, their methods have been critiqued by those outside of the field because of the lack of full access to historical documents and the lack of objectivity within the analyses, e.g. since women were not seen as

part of the public sphere, their words were not canonized, written down, and remembered in history, thus the process of recovery often requires piecing together the materials that are available about them from different methods and different perspectives and often the follow on analysis is considered to include “interpretation” (Gale). For example, in *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics*, Barbara Hebert summarizes a debate over research methods between rhetoricians, Xin Liu Gale and Cheryl Glenn, as well as Susan Jarratt, whereby Gale argues that some of the practices of feminist rhetorical researchers, particularly in postmodern theory are problematic because of concerns over “truth and method” and “the role of interpretation” (442). Gale reviews the works of Jarratt and Glenn on Aspasia and calls to question their methods and evidence of inquiry in using feminist historiography and postmodernism in their recovery of her. Gale is particularly concerned with the notions of historical truth and historical evidence, and notes that Glenn’s

Aspasia stories nonetheless reveal a deep contradiction in thinking: on the one hand, we are asked to accept the postmodern belief that we are never able to obtain objective truth in history; on the other hand, we are asked to consider the reconceived story of Aspasia as a ‘truer’ reality of women in history, a rediscovery of the obliterated ‘truth’ independent of the existing historical discourse of men. (447)

Glenn responds that her research methods are not doing away with the notion of truth but “instead, it attempts to think of truth outside of a mythical objectivity, or at the very least, to decouple the problematic link between objectivity and truth” (462). She argues that historiography’s central question is not true or false but questions of knowledge production and normalization alongside ethics, particularly what and whose practices are accountable, and who has privilege and power, and what practices might produce historic remembrances and what are those effects (463). This debate between objectivity and subjectivity lies at the heart of feminist research and, certainly, the skepticism surrounding the chosen methods and methodologies.

However, while Gale and Glenn's arguments are depicted in a binary manner, with subjectivity and objectivity oppositional to one another, more often than not, and as Glenn articulates, they are not antithetical to one another. Feminist researchers Abigail Stewart and Elizabeth Cole argue for dismantling this binary in their article "Narratives and Numbers: Feminist Multiple Methods Research." They note that some researchers subscribe to the belief that qualitative and quantitative methods cannot be mixed because of their "fundamentally different assumptions about epistemology and ontology," whereby qualitative methods are presented as "subjective, unsystematic, and inherently unreliable" and quantitative methods are held to be reliable, replicable, and generalizable (328). Instead, they are proponents of mixed methods feminist research and argue that the approach increases "our confidence in the robustness of a finding when the relationship appears to hold using a variety of research approaches," and that sometimes the "different methods suit different questions or aspects of questions" (328). They also argue that feminist researchers have been particular keen on using these mixed method approaches, because they often begin from a posture of critique of existing findings in dominant discourse and recognize that current research or documentation often leaves out certain phenomena, thus are much less inclined to believe a single method is the "royal road" to success (329). This means using several different methodologies, needing to read broadly across disciplines, which also means needing to persuade different, broader audiences with "different kinds of evidence-evidence that is familiar within 'their' paradigm and not someone else's" (330).

Despite, Stewart and Cole's positive assessment of feminist scholars using mixed methods research, my own experiences and research suggest that while these methods might be used more broadly in feminist research in other disciplines, in other humanities fields and in the

social sciences, feminist rhetorical scholarship still heavily leans on using historiographic and archival methods mentioned above, although conversations in the field have certainly abounded in the past decade (Royster & Kirsch). Catherine Harnois, in *Feminist Measures in Survey Research* notes that while feminist methodologists argue that feminist research can take a variety of legitimate forms, “the relationship between feminist theory and quantitative social science research remains uneasy” because of its association with positivism and its “pretense of objectivity,” and that while there is much talk and writing about these methods in feminist scholarship over the past decade there are still few robust examples of these kinds of integrated research projects (1). Harnois also argues for an important distinction about how feminist research is defined, stating that it is not “necessarily distinguished by the topic of research, nor the sex, gender, or political affiliation of the researchers involved. Rather, feminist research is distinguished “by *how* the research is done and, to some extent, by what is done with the research” (5). She argues this is where many feminist scholars become skeptical of survey methods, with the concern of seeing gender as a “stable property of individuals (she is female)” rather than a “principle of social organization” (6), but that quantitative methods like surveys can be beneficial if keeping in mind the concerns of feminist standpoint theories, like Sandra Harding, which critique describing any methods as truthful and objective because no perspective is value free, and is always produced from a particular standpoint and within a particular context, or with situated knowledge. Harding’s work heavily critiques claims of objectivity and truth in quantitative scientific methods, but also acknowledges that she is not attempting to “throw out the baby with the bathwater,” and calls for seeking an end to androcentrism but not to systematic inquiry (10).

Her work informs that of Donna Haraway and, more recently in rhetorical studies, Beverly Sauer, who both call for the importance of acknowledging and analyzing subjects and rhetorical contexts with situated, embodied knowledge in mind. Most recently, using rhetorical analysis, Sauer's book *The Rhetoric of Risk* analyzes the documentation, standards, and policies related to coal miners and the disparities between this documentation and the situated, embodied knowledge and experiences of the coal miners themselves. She speaks of this as "rhetorical uncertainty" of documentation because no single individual has access to all aspects of mining simultaneously, thus documents will represent different aspects of experience, and will sometimes privilege certain perspectives (136). Even when the document writers attempt to be objective, this is not possible because they have not experienced every angle, and often do not have the lived, embodied experiences of the workers themselves, or they privilege the perspective of management over those of individual workers. Sauer notes that when "writers privilege a single viewpoint, they may inadvertently silence the variety of viewpoints that constitute the collective history of an institution. If writers silence these viewpoints too soon in the process of analysis and decision making, their documentation might not help" (138). This also speaks to Haraway's belief that no knowledge claim is complete and whole, and instead refers to them as partial perspectives or specific positioning, and argues that "all readings are also mis-readings, re-readings, partial readings, imposed readings, and imagined readings" and while she is referring specifically to a text, this can also count for other sources of evidence, and for any methodology that is chosen for use in a project (124).

Given this, all angles of evidence will have different viewpoints and different ways that knowledge was created and made. Even partial perspectives and partial realities, when reviewed together, can provide a more complete picture of the realities of gendering in the EOD

community and in the military institution, but the reality is that this will still not equal 100% objectivity, as there are always shifting and changing elements and knowledges. For example, when the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule was created in 1994 to place limited restrictions on women's access only to combat roles, the contexts of war and combat had not yet been altered to the point where the definitions and terms were outdated, but this soon occurred, leaving the EOD community inaccurately defined in their job roles, as well as leaving the women who served in this community in a transitional state, whereby their lived work experiences were contradictory to the policies that stated they could not serve in combat roles. This also leaves leaders and administrators in a position to interpret the partial perspectives and contradictory policies in each rhetorical context and situation. Thus, no matter how thorough of a dissertation project is presented with multiple methods and methodologies considered, there are angles of knowledge production that cannot be accessed for one reason or another and will inform the results and conclusions of this project and the terministic screens by which women in EOD and the military institution are presented.

Shifting Agency and Authority and Vibrant Materiality

Haraway's understanding that all readings are partial and situated also aids in understanding women's intentionality and agency and authority within the EOD community. Particularly because women's presence in the EOD community, and the combat related nature of the work, has often caused misconceptions about whether or not women could work within this community prior to the Direct Combat repeal in 2016. This leads to sensationalizing their experiences with visions of them purposefully joining a male dominated special forces community, set out to change gendered norms within the military institution. From the evidence I have gathered throughout the dissertation process, however, it has become clear that women in

EOD do not label themselves as trailblazers, heroes, or feminist agents of change and most often do not want individual, or gendered, attention drawn to the work they do within these communities. Overall, their survey and interview results indicate they did not join the military and find their way to a tough, dangerous job like EOD because of a desire for an institutional or societal change, but simply because they thought it matched their personality and physical characteristics, or even that they thought the job sounded cool or challenging. Some women surveyed during the dissertation process resisted the idea of being aligned in a collective notion with other female EOD technicians, especially because they are so few and far between that they rarely, if ever, work together. Others even prescribed to ideals that seemed to reinscribe the patriarchal authority and dominant discourse of the American military institution and male dominated special forces communities like this one. As well, many women contradicted themselves in their own personal narratives and survey and interview results, at once saying they had to manage gendered constraints, but simultaneously saying they were capable of proving themselves as authoritative EOD technicians.

Throughout the project, I have grappled with this lack of intentionality and contradictory positionality, especially through the lens of rhetorical and discourse analysis studies, and more specifically feminist rhetorical studies. In particular, I have questioned how these fields could be beneficial for analyzing the working lives of female EOD technicians when they do not see themselves as intentional, purposeful rhetors, crafters of ethos, or agents of change, as are commonly the central focus for scholars in rhetorical and feminist rhetorical studies. However, I argue that hearing their voices and understanding their rhetorical actions, whether feminist or not, whether intentional and purposeful or not, can expand the field's understanding of agency and authority, institutional power, and marginalized rhetors' intentionality in a complex

institution. As feminist rhetorical studies has begun to address in the past decade, only studying women rhetors who are overtly feminist or purposefully radical can lead to creating false narratives or histories about women's roles and lives and the realities of the worlds they live in. Charlotte Hogg expands on this in her 2015 article "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics in an Ethics of 'Hope and Care,'" and argues:

As much as we celebrate our expansion of the rhetorical terrain, the remapping done by our field—even with its new methodological routes or travel through new landscapes—has often created well-worn grooves leading to the same destination: a showcase of how women are participating in a feminist rhetorical project in traditional or surprising ways. To employ the expansiveness Royster and Kirsch call for, we should also look toward women who may not seek to empower themselves or others yet hold rhetorical sway. While many studies in our field have featured women who don't expressly appear to forward a feminist agenda, our conclusions still tend toward analyzing how their rhetorical acts—intentionally, overtly, or subtly—find them doing just that. Along our research journeys, we must make sure that our dismantling of some binaries doesn't prevent us from seeing or creating additional ones. (397)

She argues that scholars in other related fields, such as religion, history, literature, and communication studies, have successfully broadened their studies to include such examinations and provide a model for feminist rhetorical scholarship to build from. Hogg also clarifies that by "conservative" she does not necessarily mean women who are politically conservative, but those "whose ideologies, practices, and identities are typically committed to upholding dominant and patriarchal cultural norms" (394). What is so compelling about women in EOD is that it would be difficult to define them as overwhelmingly upholding the dominant norms, but on the same note, they simply do not ascribe to being defined as feminist or as actants of change. And while they do hold rhetorical sway, as their mere presence and the recent policy changes mean gender norms in the military institution are shifting, they do not overtly identify as such, perhaps as a defense mechanism because they are a small minority in a male dominated community, or because they still experience gendered constraints since they are working within an institution

that is dominated by masculine, conservative ideals. Given this, it is difficult to completely surmise whether women in EOD are more conservative in their own ideals or are just more aware and comfortable with the realities and constraints of the institution in which they work.

From a researcher's standpoint, I have found myself trying to be especially careful about not labeling these women's work and intentionality as either feminist or anti-feminist, and to instead speak to the realities of their complex positioning, moving away from binary constructions, which perpetuate "the practices we strive to dismantle" and restricts "possibilities for meaning making" (Hogg 393). However, because of the way rhetorical studies theorizes agency, traditionally as an individual or collective group of human subjects who can grasp, hold, or craft ethos, and who are actively participating both in the ethos building and in the constraining process, my findings have been difficult to attend to with traditional rhetorical, and feminist rhetorical, methodologies. This has been especially challenging because, as Hogg points out, "the field of women's rhetorics has principally focused on women deemed feminist in a myriad of ways, including those we often take great care to show they were forwarding some kind of feminist endeavor whether or not they would call themselves feminists" (395). She argues that this is due, in part, to the field's focus on women in history, both recovering female rhetoricians and revising the rhetorical tradition with a gender lens. As the field has broadened out to incorporate examinations of additional women, to include women who are currently, actively living these experiences, requires shifting and reenvisioning the methodologies and methods by which feminist rhetorical scholarship studies their lives. Kathleen Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones' 2016 collection *Rethinking Ethos* makes some very important theoretical moves for understanding the contradictory positions of marginalized female rhetors such as this, particularly women in varied rhetorical contexts, and instead ask scholars to instead

consider “envisioning ethos to acknowledge the multiple, nonlinear relations operating among rhetors, audiences, things, and contexts (i.e. ideological, metaphorical, and geographical)” and to instead speak of women’s feminist ethos, as plural (*ethē*), as well as “fluid, evolving and negotiated rhetorical acts with worldly implications” (3). However, the collection still focuses on active verbs, specifically interrupting, advocating, and relating, which conceives of ethos and agency as something women do and have (14), and still does not resonate completely with the contradictory positionality of women, like those in EOD, and their lack of expressed intentionality.

Instead, Carl Herndl and Adela Licona’s recent theorization of agency and authority better attends to this contradictory social and institutional positioning and the lack of intentionality of women in EOD. In particular, they speak of this common problem in rhetorical studies with agency being an attribute of an individual, a thing that can be possessed, and instead sever the metonymic connection between agent and agency, no longer thinking of the agent as “having” agency (10). Instead of theorizing agency and authority as belonging to or gained by a particular person, they define rhetorical agency as “the conjunction of a set of social and subjective relations that constitute the possibility of action” (3), whereby the same social subject can occupy different and, sometimes, contradictory identities in the same social and institutional network (4). With this definition, they suggest “agency and authority are not always opposing forces within complex institutions,” and that “subjects move between identities and discursive functions” in shifting ways in different social spaces and practices (2). Kairos, or kairotic timing, is an important element of their theorization, whereby particular subjects recognize there is a possibility for action, but it is only temporarily possible that the subject or agent occupies these different agentive and authoritative spaces because the potential to seize opportunity for action is

never permanent or guaranteed. Their theorization removes this framing of agents as radical catalysts of action and social change, which are often presented as epideictic cases, or in their words “romantic voluntarism,” which certainly speaks to the way that women in EOD are often envisioned (Herndl & Licona 12). Theorizing subjects within the social or institutional networks at particular opportunistic rhetorical moments speaks more clearly to the contradictions women in EOD acknowledge in their workplace positions, sometimes feeling constrained by their gender, while at other times feeling as though they can assert authority, occupying both positions of authority and constrained agency in the same social spaces in differing rhetorical contexts, and when they can assert authority, not feeling as though this is done with a firm intention. It also clarifies that those in authoritative positions within the military institution are not always specific individuals or collective groups who are purposefully hindering the abilities of women to serve more readily in EOD and other related special forces communities, even if these particular groups are able to take advantage of their positionality in order to be conceived as more authoritative at times.

So if particular individuals within these institutions are not solely responsible for this hindrance of women within the community, then how has it historically been possible that women’s work within these communities has been restricted and that they still feel constrained because of their gender? It is still possible in this theorization that this institutional network has framed men as more authoritative, e.g. they have the right bodies, capabilities, and characteristics to be more readily conceived as trustworthy authorities in terms of EOD and combat related labor. However, there are also other non-human elements at work within this institutional network, and within other related social and cultural networks, which also have agentic power and have created and maintained these circumstances and even this framing of particular

authoritative figures. This is a departure from Licona and Herndl's theorizing of agency and authority, as they speak only of human subjects' positionality, whereas Jane Bennett instead argues in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* that non-human bodies, natural and cultural objects, are also affective (151). She refers to this as "the assemblage of agency," or a combination of human and non-human elements and actants that impact a particular social, institutional, or cultural network: "an actant never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces" (20). She, like Herndl and Licona, speaks of exigence related to context and timing, whereby the former regard this as *kairos*, she refers to this as "enchantment points" that come from two directions: "the first towards the humans who feel enchanted and whose agentic capacities may be thereby strengthened, and the second toward the agency of the things that produce (helpful, harmful) effects in human and other bodies" (151). However, she also makes two important defining points, referring to "distributive agency," as an assemblage of diverse elements impacting a rhetorical context, however, they are not always evenly distributed: "they have uneven topographies because some of the points at which the various affects and bodies cross paths are more heavily trafficked than others, and thus power is not distributed equally (23). As well, this assemblage is not governed by a head, no one material has sufficient competence to determine the trajectory or impact of the group. With this theorization of the distribution, she then argues that "human intentionality can emerge as agentic only by way of such a distribution" and that it is a safe bet to begin with the "presumption that the locus of political responsibility is a human-non-human assemblage" (36). Given this, she argues that power is not something that can be acquired, seized, or shared, but is something that can be exercised from innumerable points, "because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every

relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). However, like Herndl and Licona, she agrees that authority and power is not something that an individual or collective group can harness or hold permanently, and she theorizes that some of this power comes from outside human agents altogether.

In combination, Herndl and Licona’s theory of agency and authority and Bennett’s theory of vibrant materiality help better explain the place women in EOD find themselves, not identifying as actively seeking to establish ethos, agency, or intentionality, but nonetheless having the opportunity to be in this workplace and in this position as a human agent or actant because they are in a particular rhetorical context and time period, whereby other non-human elements are currently in play, to include shifting perceptions of men’s and women’s workplace and domestic roles, shifting contexts of war and combat, and advancements in technology and medical knowledge, which have strengthened their agentic capacities. This marks a significant shift in the way we envision women’s roles as marginalized rhetors, but one that can certainly help to better understand the dynamic nature of the twenty-first century context of gender roles in the workplace and in domestic life. Bennett notes it is more and more imperative to conceive of this assemblage of agency, especially as we move into a time period where human, viral, animal, and technological bodies have become more integrated and enmeshed (108). In conjunction with Herndl and Licona’s theorization that agency is not had and agents are not set, but instead shift depending on the context, this can better explain how women’s work within the community shifts the institutional and cultural norms and discourses.

This can also explain how it appears that men have gained agentic power and authority in the American military institution and, more specifically, in combat roles, because of other non-

human elements at work that have created the prior rhetorical contexts, historical norms, and cultural forms, and together have forged an institution whereby men are seen as having the bodies and characteristics to flourish in these authoritative roles. Bennett reminds readers, however, that “a theory of vibrant matter presents individuals as simply incapable of bearing full responsibility for their effects” (37). She gives the example of individuals moving into racially divided neighborhoods, often seen as a political act, even if in doing so they are simply “following a cultural trend and do not explicitly intend, endorse or even consider the impacts of their movements” (97). The same is true for those who have worked within the EOD community and other related combat communities, taking advantage of the opportunities and the assemblage of agency that has historically asserted male bodies and men are more suitable for this type of work, and which now still envision women as incapable or constrained within these communities. This is often viewed as an exclusively political act by specific human agents, but this is not the reality of what has both constrained and emboldened women in EOD. As Bennett reminds readers: “humans and their intentions participate, but they are not the sole or always the most profound actant in the assemblage” (37).

This also speaks to the stories of women in EOD, and the stories of women who have followed into special forces communities recently opened up behind them. It is often conceived of as a political act; they are acting on some kind of politics, a feminist agenda, and the same can often be said for how the military institution and the predominantly male individual and collective authoritative figures have constrained women. Their authority is often perceived as a deliberate attempt to keep women from participating in these communities, but the military institution and its related discourse are too complex to think of in these simplistic, binary terms. Non-human elements are involved as actants, as well, to include cultural forms, historically and

in the present, technologies changing and developing, and the changing contexts of war and combat. Thus, perhaps women in EOD already understand from their vantage point that it is not a particular individual or collective group of individuals who harness some authority and power that they do not have, but that it is more complicated. Perhaps they also recognize that they are within a large, complex, multidimensional institution that cannot simply be changed by them stating some form of intentionality. As will be discussed in the final body chapter, they seem to recognize that they have additional doubts because of their gender, but there is not one central locus from which this derives, but also not one specific way to garner, craft, or prove themselves capable. In the twenty-first century, they are at a particular kairotic moment, or an enchantment point, in history that is creating opportunities for women's increased agency and authority in the institution. However, there have also been other non-human elements, other 'cultural forms' that have changed which have come together at this exact timing. Had they come to the EOD community 100 years prior, the context would not have worked as the other non-human elements would not have been in the right places for these opportunities to occur. Considering all of these elements, as an assemblage of agency, is essential for theorizing the continued constraints and opportunities for institutional and societal change in this dissertation project.

Chapter Outlines

Each chapter attends more carefully to one of the three themes mentioned above, although it is impossible to separate them out with boundaries, as each theme informs and builds on one another. However, throughout the course of the dissertation project, it became clear that each theme more specifically spoke to a particular method of evidence, and thus the methods have been broken into separate body chapters for analysis.

Chapter Two, “Cyborg, Techno-bodies and the Shifting Rhetorical Contexts of War ” lays the groundwork for the historic gendering of the work of combat and war, both discursively and materially, and provides historical context of the roles women have been restricted from in the United States military, as well as historically how these gender roles and norms regarding women’s positions in combat came about and have been continually constrained. This includes a more thorough theorization of the symbolic language that has created gender antithesis in the public versus private sphere and in the gender roles conceived of as more natural for men and women in society, and in regards to the military institution, the nation state, and politics more broadly. The chapter will also cover the mechanization of war and combat, and the cyborg reading of the gendered body, and how they have come together in a way that has allowed women to take advantage of these changing contexts. In particular, how these technological and scientific advances have begun to disrupt the gendered order of combat with examples and evidence provided of the actual technologies that the EOD community uses and the way these rapid changes in technology, albeit still operationalizing of gender interest, have allowed for women’s agentic authority, coupled with these elements.

Chapter 3, “Situated Knowledge and the Rhetorical Uncertainty of Institutional Policies” analyzes recent government documents that have governed women’s access to direct combat roles in the United States military, starting with the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, which was enacted in 1994 in order to restrict the access of women in the military from “direct combat roles” and the more recent Full Implementation Guideline, which was written in 2016 after the repeal of the Direct Combat Rule. In particular, a CDA approach is used in this chapter to more closely examine the definitions, word choices, and phrases in these documents and compare them against the embodied, situated knowledge and experience of women in EOD.

CDA is beneficial in this chapter in order to better understand the way the discourse of the past informs and shapes the current and future experiences of these women, the related constraints, and their differing situated realities, which also inform the changing policies. As well, Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, and Beverly Sauer's theorizations of situated knowledges and partial perspectives, and theme of truth and objectivity in writing and research are an important part of the findings of this chapter, and the reality that no knowledge claims are impartial or completely objective.

Chapter 4, "Intentionality, Agency, and Authority in the Survey and Interview Responses of Women in EOD" analyzes the thirty one survey and two interview responses of women in all four branches of the EOD community collected between October 2015 and January 2016. The chapter focuses on the gendered constraints women indicated, specifically gendered doubts, the brotherhood metaphor, and the maternal and domestic body. Themes also emerged of the ways these women were able to move into authoritative and agentic positions, even temporarily, by providing various degrees of material and discursive proof, to include changes to the discursive, gendered brotherhood by claiming authority as sisters and pushing back to the material and discursive perceptions of the naturalized maternal and domestic body. The women's survey and interview results indicate they do not feel an agentic sense of individual or collective intentional effort, but nonetheless the current changing rhetorical contexts, alongside other non-human agentic elements, create an assemblage of agency, and make this context and timing ripe for institutional and societal change.

Chapter 5, "Genderquakes, Definitional Ruptures, and Backlashes: The Push and Pull of Gender Equality in the Twenty-First Century American Military Institution" revisits the themes that have been integrated throughout the dissertation, but connects these themes, as well, to the

current and future discourse and rhetorical contexts of the American military institution, specifically the recent opening of all military positions to women and the way examining women's past and current roles in the EOD community can help prepare other communities and other institutions in American society for the genderquakes, definitional ruptures, and subsequent backlashes, or the challenges of integrating into communities with a particularly masculine dominant discourse. The chapter also provides an overview of future implications for this research and potential opportunities for expanding this research in the military institution and into other institutional and cultural sectors.

Conclusion

The obstacles that have made this dissertation topic difficult to push forward with are the same obstacles that have made this an exigent, relevant, and timely project, specifically the challenges of analyzing these women's working conditions in the midst of changing rhetorical contexts, to include the policies related to the regulation of gender in their workplace, the rapidly evolving military technologies and scientific advancements both in the military and in regards to the human body, and shifting, morphing gender roles in the civilian sector in the workplace and in the domestic realm. With all of these shifts come uncertainties, partial perspectives, gender quakes, backlashes, and contradictory statements, but these same changing, morphing rhetorical contexts are the exact places where the most fruitful analysis of women's working lives in the American military institution, and in a special forces community, has occurred. These challenges have allowed for a more rich, mixed methods, interdisciplinary examination that can contribute to a more thorough understanding of the military institution's discursive influence on other sectors of American life, as well as a more broad reaching rhetorical analysis of women's changing workplace and domestic roles. This project also strives to continue expanding the

methods used in the study of rhetorical analysis in the field of rhetoric and in related feminist rhetorics, specifically in recognizing the importance of using varied, mixed methods, to produce a more well-rounded analysis, and to highlight that when there are limitations on the availability of traditional documents available through restrictions from institutions like the U.S. military that there are still fruitful, productive methods of analysis.

The remainder of the dissertation seeks to provide exigence for this project, particularly how it can add substantial value to the fields of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics, both in broadening the scope of the use of methods when limitations exist, and also in the theorization of agency, intentionality, and the disparities between situated knowledge and policy discourse. These theorizations are beneficial for a variety of projects outside of the military institution, as agency, intentionality, authority, and situated knowledge impact all cultural, societal, and institutional contexts. Analyzing these other contexts with an assemblage of agency asks those in the field of rhetoric to step back and examine institutions and their related discursive and material practices more holistically, and does so with the recognition that because so many complicated elements are involved in creating a rhetorical context, so many elements are also involved in changing and shifting a context. As well, the American military institution is often conceived as a separate institution, one that is sequestered off and does not necessarily impact the discursive values, ideologies, and practices of the rest of the country or the rest of the world, but this project highlights how examining this institution is imperative because of the ways in which it substantially influences and impacts many other workplace, domestic, and cultural sectors. Analyzing this institution's gendered practices and discourse and current changing rhetorical contexts can aid in better understanding those parallel changes occurring in other institutional or societal contexts.

CHAPTER 2

CYBORG, TECHNO BODIES AND THE SHIFTING RHETORICAL CONTEXTS OF WAR

Introduction

War has long been romanticized as a place where tough, patriotic men engage in hand to hand combat to fight for the honor of their country. Depictions of violence and toughness on the battlefield, from classic literature to modern day movie scenes, almost exclusively portray men in these roles. These visions illustrate societal and political assumptions that men, and male bodies, are more naturally fitting for combat work, and underpin what Sarah Hallenbeck and Michelle Smith call the “masculinized rhetoric of war and combat” (210). In the 21st century, as modern society has moved into a more equitable workforce, gender equality in the combat space has remained a point of contention. In the history of the United States military, many roles have been off limits to women; official positions for women were only granted on a limited basis beginning in the WWI era, when women were enrolled as yeomen (administrative positions) and Marine reservists to fill shortages as men moved forward to fight in the European theatre (Godson 56). Of course, the work of women volunteers began long before this, with all female relief committees gathering to assist with food and medical supplies dating back to the American Revolution and the Civil War in the United States (Godson 57). Women also moved into workplace positions outside of the home to fill labor force gaps, such as women’s factory work in WWII (Jack). Both service in the military and in filling workforce gaps were revoked upon men’s return from the second World War, whereby women were relegated back to domestic life. The reality is that women have always been part of American war efforts, but their labor has

often been framed as “supportive,” ensuring they still maintained the appropriate levels of domesticity and femininity, while also securing the safety of the homefront.

Between the 1920s and 1940s women advocated for more permanent, active duty positions after serving in WWI and WWII (Monahan & Greenlee), which was finally granted in 1948 with the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (Godson 167). However, there were still significant restrictions on the positions women could fill, regulations that denied women with children from serving, and restrictions on rank and officer positions (Matthews, Ender, Lawrence, & Rohal 242). Additional positions were open to women in 1978, and again in 1994, when the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule was established to grant women even more access to positions in different branches of the military than the 1978 changes allowed, specifically including access to combat support positions, such as fighter pilots. In essence, the 1994 rule was established to maintain minimal restrictions on women's roles in the U.S. military, specifically restricting women from “direct combat roles” (Department *Direct*). This rule was in place until the Secretary of Defense announced that beginning in 2016, the U.S. Armed Forces would eliminate all gender based restrictions (Department *Elimination*).

The removal of this barrier has been hailed the beginning of “gender neutrality” for the American military institution, with the Department of Defense using precisely those words in the December 2015 Implementation Guidelines for Women's Full Integration (Department *Implementation*). In spite of the removal of this final formal barrier, there have still been countless public reports debating whether or not women “have what it takes” to participate in combat, and much public scrutiny over women's current attempts to enter combat related positions (Hardison, Hosek, & Bird 169). Women's entrance has become a political matter in the United States with debates coming down to effectiveness and efficiency, according to Addis, et.

al. Those opposed to women's entrance argued that "effectiveness would be negatively influenced by the entrance of women for two fundamental reasons: their greater physical weakness with respect to men and their disrupting effect on 'male bonding'" (32). In regards to efficiency, the argument focuses on the costs and benefits and limited resources: "the training of women soldiers instead of men seems to imply superior cost" (Addis 32). While questions of efficiency and financial costs can be amended to successfully integrate women, and likely have been since opening all the ranks to women, Addis, et. al's definition of effectiveness is still at the root of the challenges women face with integration into combat roles in the United States Armed Forces after the repeal. However, Addis, et. al do not extend their discussion of the gendered body to the historical conflation between the military institution and politics in the United States, and the important role discourse and language have played in shaping politics as a public space for privileged, predominantly white males, while marginalized others, including women, have been relegated to the private, domestic sphere, and how linguistically framing women as belonging to the private, domestic sphere still resonates in modern American political and military cultures. In particular, the impact this historic, persistent gendered language and rhetoric has on the current body politics, and the symbolic way the body is tied to this gendered discourse, cannot be ignored in addressing the constraints of women's roles in military service in the past, present, or future. No matter how mentally tough and intelligent women are, and no matter how hard they work to build authority and agency, the differences in stature, strength, and even reproductive capabilities are used to discriminate against women serving in combat roles. As well, symbolic gendered language through metaphors like "the brotherhood," illustrate this bifurcated vision of men's and women's public and private roles and extends that bifurcation to the combat space. Overviewing the historic tie between language and discourse and embodied

rhetoric is beneficial in examining how this has led to the continued bifurcation of men and women in regards to these workplace roles, particularly the way discourse regarding the public and private spheres has been conceived and politicized, and how the conflation of politics with the nation state and national identity has sustained perceptions of women as incapable of performing combat related work.

Addressing the historic gendering, discursively and materially, can help explain the challenges women have faced in “fully integrating” into combat roles, but also provides the groundwork for recognizing the important role context and timing has played in women’s presence in combat roles in the 21st century, as technological and scientific advances have afforded women the opportunity to move past the boundaries of the embodied and the discursive. These technologies allow for reshaping visions of the gendered body and also begin to change the discursive language surrounding women’s movement into combat related positions; they do not instantaneously afford women acceptance, but begin to blur the gendered boundaries, albeit messy, between the previous antithesis perceived of women in combat work in the United States military. These technological advancements provide evidence that agency and authority are not attributes of an individual, but instead can shift depending on the rhetorical context, which explains how some individuals or groups of individuals can feel both constrained by authority and simultaneously authoritative and agentic in a social or institutional setting, differing in various rhetorical contexts (Herndl & Licona). As well, Jane Bennett’s definition of vibrant materiality helps explain that an assemblage of human and non-human elements work together to create changes within social and political institutions. Actants, then, are not only humans, but also make up non-human elements, such as technology changes and changing institutional policies, working together at these “enchantment points” to affect change, whether intentional or

not (Bennett 151). This definition of vibrant materiality recognizes that the technologies, or the women, cannot fully create intentionality or agency alone in propelling forward gendered changes to a long-standing masculinized institution, but in analyzing together the techno-body, made up of both human and non-human properties, in this case mechanized technologies and the human body at war, it becomes more clear how this assemblage can afford institutionalized changes to the material and discursive gendered body that were not possible before this specific time period.

Women in EOD provide an unusual example of these modifications beginning prior to the Direct Combat repeal in the American military institution, as they were originally allowed entrance in the mid-1970s because the community was defined as “combat support,” a term that deemed women were safely within the physical space of only working as supportive components to wartime labor. However, the community has been subjected to swift, intense changes due to the increasingly mechanized nature of warfare beginning with the Global War of Terrorism, placing these, and other, women front and center in combat even before the policies deemed it possible (United). It is exactly women’s roles in this extreme workplace that bring a lens to the agency of technology and scientific invention and the way these working in conjunction with the human body have begun to regender the norms of combat and war. The initially research question for this study inquired why there were persistently low numbers of women in the EOD community, despite their presence since the 1970s; however, it is imperative to remember that examining the regendering of a traditionally hypermasculine workplace over 40 years is not an extensive period of time when taking into consideration the history and timeline of war culture. In this broader scope, it becomes clear that changes have occurred fairly rapidly, with the agency of technologies that blur the boundaries between the body politics and women’s physical

limitations in combat roles. The technologies and scientific research date back to World War II, but the majority of technology has only begun to rapidly evolve in the past 20-30 years, accelerating in the last decade, and has provided opportunities for acknowledging women's embodied, situated agency as part of the "integrated circuit," as Donna Haraway would argue, overcoming the gendered constraints of the body politics with the aid of technological advancements (172). Technology is not a perfect solution, and certainly has its limitations and setbacks; as well, it cannot completely remove all gender discriminations against women, but it marks a significant shift in the gender norms and assumptions in combat work.

In the remainder of the chapter, the historic roots of gendered language and discourse of the public and private spheres will be reviewed, to follow with how this discourse overlaps into politics and the military in building the nation state, and how this accounts for the body politics of war and combat in modern society. The latter half of the chapter will examine how the mash-up of technology and scientific advancements and the human body have created the techno-body, and an assemblage of human and non-human agency. The EOD community, and women's roles in EOD, will provide an example of moving towards full human-machine integration in wartime labor, to aid in understanding how this has changed perceptions of the gendered body at war.

Symbolic Language, Gender Antithesis, and the Body Politics

The debate about women's abilities to serve in American military combat roles stems from a long, complicated history of symbolic language that has created embodied dualities between men and women, framing women in the private and men in the public sphere, whereby the impact can still be seen in men and women's workplace, societal, and political roles. While rhetorical theory and discourse analysis can aid in unpacking the symbolic value of language evidenced in regards to the debate over women's roles in combat, and in the related political and

military institutions, rhetoric and discourse also played a significant role in establishing and maintaining these symbolic values, as discourse is both “shaped and shapes its contexts;” in this case, the past and current rhetorical contexts and related discourse and ideologies are both persuasive and reflective (Eisenhart & Johnstone 10). However, determining exactly where and when such gendered norms were derived is especially complicated, as there are many long-standing, historic ideologies often so deeply embedded they seem perfectly natural and unquestionable.

Classical, medieval, and Renaissance philosophical and religious concepts underscore how deeply rooted these gendered ideologies truly are, and how challenging it is for modern society to move beyond them. Ian Maclean, in his book *A Renaissance Notion of Women*, notes that “In the earliest times, and in the most far-flung cultures the notion of female has in some sense been opposed to that of male, and aligned with other opposites” (2). Maclean is amongst many academic scholars who attribute, at least to some extent, these dualistic ideals of woman to Aristotle’s dualistic notions in roughly 300 BCE. In particular, he argues that Aristotle’s general tendency to produce dualities in which one element is superior and the other is inferior lead to the dualities between men and women; the influences of which are broad reaching for centuries to follow (8). Feminist rhetorical scholars like Krista Radcliffe, Risa Applegarth, and Cheryl Glenn, have also critiqued and problematized Aristotelian rhetoric in the past few decades, particularly that his use of the rhetorical appeals and the available means of persuasion does not speak to the ethos position of women rhetors. However, Aristotle alone cannot be to blame for such dualities present in the complete history of war and combat, although the constructions of masculinity in Ancient Greek society during his lifetime can certainly point towards how Aristotlean philosophies of the dualistic nature of men and women were derived, as well as the

derivation of concepts of masculine traits associated with wartime labor. Scott Rubarth argues that “Greek concepts of masculinity are intimately tied to the virtue of courage,” defined in Ancient Greece society as “excellent of bravery and valor, especially on the battlefield,” and since women in Greece society were excluded from participation in public life, including military training and activity, courage was seen as a male trait (24). Thus, while Aristotle is often pointed towards as the originator of such thoughts, it is more realistic to argue that his philosophies were both shaped by his rhetorical context, or his life experiences in Ancient Greece, but also that they continued to shape rhetorical contexts after his death. This includes the broader scope of his thoughts on dualities, which also helped embed other gendered notions, particularly of women’s mental, moral, and physical weakness and inferiority, into the very fabric of many other medieval, Renaissance, and contemporary societies, whereby the results are still visible in many complex, multifaceted, and nuanced ways in present day American society.

In particular, Aristotle’s public *polis*, a political, rhetorical space utilized by free men of a particular social standing, and in opposition, the private realm of the domestic world, where women, minorities, and those of a lesser social standing, helped shape the bifurcation of the public and private sphere that still impacts the political, social, and religious sectors of contemporary society. Jean Elshtain argues: “It is my contention that Aristotelian typologies still predominate in most discussions of public and private realms and of political personhood” (44). The public and private sphere have been theorized by rhetorical scholars as both a material and a discursive space, and in the context of this dissertation project, both theorizations are vital in recognizing the deeply rooted bifurcation (Mountford 41). Maclean and Elshtain both agree that Aristotle’s dualistic influences can be seen in later philosophers, religious figures, and political scientists like Thomas Aquinas and Niccolo Machiavelli, who introduced additional levels of

bifurcation not present in Aristotle's original thoughts in terms of the physical dualities and the immorality of the political sphere, respectively. The particularly dangerous use of discursive dualities became elevated in order to rationalize the "politically good or evil," as a means of exercising force and performing deeds that would otherwise be perceived as morally corrupt while maintaining standards of Christian morality (357). Anthony Grafton notes that while philosophers like Cicero insisted in "De officiis" that a virtuous man should gain his ends by communication and persuasion rather than by force or treachery, Machiavelli, by contrast, argued that the prince must sometimes act as the powerful, decisive lion, or sometimes the wily, elusive fox in order to ensure that the physical kingdom, and the beliefs of the kingdom, were secure. By doing so he underlined his conviction that the prince could not be constrained by the demands of normal morality if he hoped to do his job properly, instilling the notions into late medieval logic that "politics must have its own rules" and moralities (xxiii). Since this public, political "bad" was a necessary evil, there was also a necessity for elevating the domestic, private space as a place for virtue, morality, and innocence. This forced further bifurcation and symbolic association of men as participants of the public, political realm while women upheld those norms of innocence and the domestic values and virtues of the private world when men were ready to return to their familial, private lives. Elshtain argues that men could move between the public and private spheres, participating in the immoral public spaces of politics and the military, returning to the domestic, moral sphere in order to enjoy reprieve and to cleanse themselves of the immorality that occurred in the public, political realm (31). In this way, man established two statuses: as a public person and as a private person, subject to two disparate judgments in their capacities in both spheres, allowing them to participate in the immoralities of the public, political life, while also retaining their status as a good, loving, decent family man in the private. Women,

however, were totally immersed in the private, non-public realm, and became associated with upholding and maintaining the virtues of the home and domesticity, which can be seen in historic literary and rhetorical references to the “angel of the house,” and the “Cult of Domesticity,” whereby “women were thought to make their moral choices in the context of the household, a woman’s domain that Aristotle understood to be a non-public, lesser institution that served the polis” (Kerber 7). Because of this bifurcation, if a woman should ‘go public,’ or attempt to, she was, and still is, judged as a private person: “All that women were in private (kind, virtuous, loving, responsible), men could attempt to become with the aid and succor of women; but women could not ‘become’ what men were (responsible public persons) without forsaking their womanhood by definition” (Elshtain).

The struggles with women rhetors attempting to “go public” in the 18th and 19th centuries are well documented in the works of many feminist rhetoricians (Johnson, Glenn, Buchanan, Zaeske). However, in the 20th and 21st centuries, women’s attempts to “go public” have become more difficult to track and theorize, as women have increasingly become part of the public sphere in government, business, and military institutions, often creating the perception that these dualities are no longer problematic in American society. Present day debates and arguments over stay at home moms versus working moms, framed as the “mommy wars,” (Peskowitz; Steiner) and even recent feminist rhetorical scholarship debating the framing of choice rhetoric for women in regards to the challenges between the workplace and the domestic sphere reaffirm that these dualities are still present, and continue to complicate gendered relationships in regards to the workplace (McCarver; Hirschman; Slaughter). Sarah Hallenbeck and Michelle Smith’s 2016 article “Mapping Topoi in the Historical Gendering of Work” argues that historically the topoi of duty has operated “differently in relation to men’s work and

women's work;" with women's work typically centered around familial duties and with assumptions that men capable of working in a career outside of the home will do so. For men, it is just a matter of justifying the type of work they want to participate in, while for women "waged work has been consistently framed as temporary or as a response to national or family crisis" (207). These debates stem from the deeply rooted discursive association of women with the domestic, private sphere, and attempts to change what has been made to seem natural are always laden with backlashes or resistance.

This symbolic and embodied framing of men and women's labor and domestic roles has also influenced, and continues to influence, presumptions related to wartime labor, making it appear natural for men's participation in the public, political, and often hostile sphere of war, while women's participation has continually been framed in relation to the domestic, specifically as keepers of safety and morality on the homefront, or even as a safe place to return after the harrowing brutality of war. This framing is intricately linked to the conflation between the political and military worlds and the symbolic language of the nation state, which has complicated and constrained women's attempts at working in combat positions. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's analysis of the metaphor "nation as a family" can help to explain the modern day American political system and the way metaphors such as this are shaped by the past but also help to continue shaping the future, in returning to Eisenhart and Johnstone's argument that discourse shapes and is shaped by contexts. Lakoff and Johnson argue that the American political system is framed as a family with "the government as a parent, and the citizens as children," which creates a familial sense of duty and loyalty in protecting the nation-family and strengthens the bonds of the citizens (195). However, in their description of the "nation as a family," Lakoff and Johnson do not delve into the way the symbolic bifurcation of male and

female citizens also creates, sustains, and perpetuates perceptions of the exact ways male and female citizens should participate in this nation family. Specifically, previous ideals of bifurcated gendered roles of men and women and their appropriate participation as children of the nation are shaped by the discourse of the past and the current roles men and women play in regards to wartime labor, but they also continue to shape the discourse and the metaphor itself in the future. In extending Lakoff and Johnson's familial metaphor to gendered perceptions of wartime labor, the "brotherhood," is a common familial reference to those military service members who have served so closely together in war that they are bonded together as if they were siblings. This metaphor perfectly illustrates how discourse can both be shaped and continue to shape contexts: by naming a group of military soldiers who participate in war together "the brotherhood" or referencing those within the group as "brothers," it highlights that this type of labor has historically been done by men, and also continues to reinforce that men and male bodies are continually valued in wartime labor, and that women's presence disrupts this bonding. References to "the brotherhood" are not written down in official Department of Defense documents or military training manuals, however, the metaphor has been used in times of war through conversation and in action, and can even be seen in popular films and novels, whereby this mythical group of tough, masculine soldiers are forever bonded together and visions of women joining these ranks would physically and discursively break that bond. The metaphor is shaped by previous rhetorical contexts (men's historical participation in combat and war) but also continues to shape current and future discourse about the fundamental values of the military institution and perceptions of who is capable of participating in wartime labor (women's constraints when they attempt to infiltrate the brotherhood). It frames men as the warrior citizens of the nation, the brothers, who will go off to fight wars, and allows for persistent visions of

women, or the sister siblings, as domestic helpers, those who “keep the home fires burning,” which underscores the unease that still exists over women’s current entrance into combat roles. Addis, et. al argue that women have always been framed as helpers of combat and war, again, with respect to the roles of the domestic sphere: “The patriotic image of the wife and mother have historically been related to images of a mother prepared to bear sons and sacrifice them to the motherland, a housewife prepared to follow her husband to various shifts of location, supportive sister or fiancé, impartial Red Cross nurse” (xvi). The image of Florence Nightingale aiding injured soldiers in the Crimean war, as seen in Figure 1, clearly depicts these antithetical frames of women and men’s idealistic wartime labor. While the soldiers look disheveled and badly injured, they share in their commiserating over the horrors and brutality of war, while Nightingale is juxtaposed looking graceful, as a symbol of domesticity, femininity, and even as a savior.



Figure 2. “Florence Nightingale Tending to Wounded Soldiers.” *U.S. National Library of Medicine*. Reproduction no. 101407883. <http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/101407883>. Web. Accessed on November 18, 2018.

Although Nightingale was British, there is certainly a historic connection between American and British perceptions of wartime labors, tied through colonization, and could be conceived as cousins within this familial “nation as family.” The image clearly depicts common historic perceptions of men’s and women’s civic, patriotic roles in connection to wartime labor leading into modern times. Women were framed as a necessary component of the nation state identity, and the “nation as family” metaphor, but were there to help in maintaining good order, civility, and domesticity while men set off for important, deadly missions to secure the safety of the nation state. These are powerful images that have become associated with the culture of combat and war, and have persisted in perceptions of the American military institution over the past several centuries.

Nightingale’s visual also highlights the focus on the biological differences between the male and female body in wartime labor, which are powerful symbols of this social order; bodies are rhetorical in that they carry “cultural freight” and reinforce the belief systems within a specific community or culture (Selzer & Crowley 361). Thus, men’s bodies in terms of wartime labor are positioned as the ideal, the norm; centered on perceptions of masculinity, toughness, and courageousness, as can be seen with the depiction of toughness of the men, including their injuries, scars, and stern faces, and with women’s bodies centered on perceptions of femininity, fragility, or softness, only capable of performing reproductive, maternal or domestic physical labor, as can be seen with Nightingale’s poised nature, wearing a very feminine, clean dress and headscarf, remaining the essence of domesticity despite the chaos around her. Prior to the 19th century, misinformed philosophical and scientific notions aided in these dualistic perceptions of men’s and women’s bodies, with well-respected theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, speculating that nature would always wish to create the most perfect thing, and that while women

were not a “mistake,” per se, they were, by lack of a lower temperature or heat during their time in the womb, incapable of becoming perfect (Maclean 8-9). Other variations of such beliefs spring from theologians like Martin Luther, in the 1500s, who argued it was not because of insufficient heat that they have wide hips and narrow shoulders, but “rather a sign that they have little wisdom and should stay home” (Maclean 9). With scientific invention in the 18th and 19th centuries, perceptions of the bodily differences did not change to any great extent, and in fact, Thomas Lacquer argues this perception of a “two-sex model” of the male and female body ramped up in the 18th century, and continuing into the present, embroiling men’s and women’s bodies as part of the socially constructed order (26). Feminist rhetoricians have studied these 19th and 20th century perceptions and constraints of women’s bodies in regards to medical advice, the workplace, and even in extracurricular activities. Jordynn Jack’s examination of women in the factory during WWII argues: “Notions of women’s delicacy have shaped labor practices and protectionist laws since at least the start of the century, often limiting the kinds of work women could do, for how long, and in which kinds of workplaces” (290). Hallenbeck’s work, in particular, her chapter on “Women Bicyclists’ Embodied Medical Authority,” reiterates that even into the late 19th century, doctors, scientists, and other medical authorities still worried that women’s participation in such athletic, physical activities would “endanger their fitness for other biological and psychological activities, such as reproduction and parental nurturing” (132). These antithetical logics about the bodies have aided in sustaining the dualistic perceptions of men and women’s roles in the workplace.

However, as twentieth and twenty-first century workplaces have shifted away from physical labor with technology and scientific advancements into more white collar jobs or blue collar jobs that do not require extensive physical labor, norms of masculinity, and the conflation

of the masculine body in the workplace have also shifted. Yet, the commodity of war, the human body, has not changed, and thus continues to enforce a vision of the extreme masculine, tough body in combat related work (Braudy xiv). Leo Braudy argues that while twenty-first century definitions of masculinity and the masculine body have “shifted to prevailing social and cultural demands,” the mythical, idealistic vision of the manly soldier has remained consistent throughout history (xii). Because there are only a small number of human beings who are tasked to experience war and combat, this sets a particular precedent about wartime masculinity; there is a “more exacting and one-sided definition of what it means to be man” (Braudy xvii), and even creates a separation between the common man and the tough, patriotic man who would be willing to sacrifice his body for the greater good of the nation state. Thus, the male body has long served as a symbol of this cultural production of war, dating back to the previously mentioned Greek perceptions of masculinity and courage on the battlefield, and reinforces images of the toughness of the men who fight these wars to protect their nation state. Even as society has begun to move away from bifurcated gender norms in modern workplaces, in combat and war related work, the material bodies still play a heavy role in perpetuating gender norms. Arguments regarding women’s inability to effectively fight in combat include: sexual and reproductive differences (pregnancy, menstruation, the potential of being sexually assaulted, and reproductive system related urinary and bacterial infections); physical injuries that would affect women more than men because of their smaller or different physical frames; the inability to carry a particular load of gear or to help a fellow team member in harm’s way because of less physical strength; and men desiring to protect women’s bodies because of these historic assumptions that women represent the safety and security of the homeland and the domestic (Mitchell; Maginnis). Thus, these larger discursive practices and procedures, and even the policies that were put into place

regarding women's bodies, often silence the realities of these women's individual, situated knowledge and experiences. The changing nature of warfare and the changing definitions of the spaces of combat have blurred the separation between men's and women's bodies in wartime labor, even when the policy discourse does not acknowledge these realities immediately (Sauer 179).

However, since the Department of Defense announced the move towards "gender neutrality," that strives to align with the realities of these women's individual experiences in the combat space, the seemingly natural order of things feels threatened (Department *Implementation*). With this, the debate often returns to biological differences. The challenging component of conflating bodies with the social and political order is the reality that men's and women's bodies are physiologically different: men have broader shoulders and are traditionally more capable of upper body physical strength, their bodies are made up of less fat and more muscle, and men's and women's bodies do have different reproductive functions. This has allowed for the continued privileging of the male body in certain workplaces, particularly those that require intense physical labor, such as war and combat. One of the major constraints for women in EOD is the embodied differences, whereby these differences are visible and realized on the body, making it substantially more difficult to ever truly "win" a debate that women's bodies are as adequate as men's bodies in wartime labor. Thus, no matter how intelligent, well prepared, brave, tough, and mentally strong women are in facing training and combat related situations, they will still come up against the limitations of the differences of their bodies, particularly because the training and recruitment standards are set up with the male body in mind. Despite women's acceptance into the military via policy changes, these limitations and

challenges are still essential to keep in mind in understanding the challenges of women's continued entrance and acceptance combat communities.

Vibrant Materiality and the Cyborg, Techno-Body

Women's entrance and integration into EOD over the past 45 years provides a robust example of both the discursive and material gendering of the body and how their situated knowledge and experience often still differs from the larger discursive practices. However, their work can also help in analyzing the impacts technoscience has on gender identity in the military institution, particularly the opportunities for systematic change caused by the assemblage of human and non-human elements as actants capable of capitalizing on these opportunistic, changing rhetorical contexts. Women became part of the EOD community in the 1970s and have been present during swift technological advances and changes to the nature of warfare. They were allowed entrance prior to the Direct Combat repeal because military policy labeled the community "combat support," which meant that the Department of Defense did not anticipate EOD technicians would encounter direct combat; however, the changing nature of warfare and related technologies and tools, with a heavy use of explosives like IEDs over the past 15 years, has required increased participation of EOD technicians at the forefront of wartime labor, often working in conjunction with special forces units like Navy SEALs and Army Rangers. Thus, while military policies defined these women's roles outside of the boundaries of combat, the daily realities of war superseded those boundaries, placing women in EOD, and in many other related communities, in direct action. While the government documents and policies will be attended to more carefully in the following chapter, it is important to note here that until the Direct Combat rule was eliminated in 2016, language was still used that prescriptively defined "direct combat" as engaging in hand-to-hand fighting on the "battlefield," when such actual

physical spaces and boundaries had begun to collapse in Desert Storm in the 1990s (Department *Direct*), as war has become increasingly more technological to include the use of drones, various explosives, and more integrated and updated technologies and military science. This speaks to Chris Hables Gray's argument that high-technological warfare and the importance of increasingly skilled technicians has caused "the collapse of the front and rear," in terms of actual units of tough, masculine bodies lined up to maintain a formation waiting to march to war and fight their opponents in a specific battlefield space (151).

The mechanization of war, beginning in WWI and rapidly progressing in the last century, has had a profound impact on Western culture, with the most significant changes occurring since the first Iraqi War in the 1990s (Hables Gray 148). Despite these changes, Hables Gray notes that human bodies, particularly male bodies, have been, and still are, the "basic currency of war," although they have always been "integrated," to some extent, with weaponry and military technology (144). Today's warfare technologies require that the soldier is not just influenced by these technology tools and weaponry, but that the human body is reprogrammed to fit "integrally into the weapons system" (144). The military institution has moved towards full human/machine integration in order to manage the fact that the human body has been the "weakest link" in previous wars, so the body becomes the site of such modifications (Hables Gray 148).

The work of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) is a poignant example of this human/machine integration: a military community significantly impacted by the swift changes and progressions in military technologies and sciences in the past several decades. The work of EOD positions human bodies against powerful technologies like explosives, whereby the humans are often not fighting other humans, but are instead combating a mechanized technology or tool. Their reality is increasingly integrated, as machines and technology are capable of various

degrees of damage to the human body. While the warfare methods itself have changed, bodies are still the common currency of war, creating a need to modify the EOD technician's body in order to better prepare for technologized warfare. The community itself did not begin until WWII, in response to underwater mines and bombs left after the war, and has significantly shifted and morphed into the twenty-first century, often with government policies regarding the community's mission lagging behind the embodied, situated experiences happening in real-time, deployed, combat spaces (United; Sauer 180).

These advancements in military technoscience have also brought about a crisis that requires new definitions in regards to the relationship between warfare and the human body, as the human body becomes increasingly more integrated with the military technologies and sciences. Donna Haraway's 1990s call in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* to better understand the partial identities that arise in the mash-up of technologies and bodies can help in theorizing the changing nature of warfare, the work of EOD, women's roles in the community, and in other related combat military communities. She seemingly anticipated this historic shift and the struggles that occur in trying to maintain an old discursive framework with changing technologies, and argues that these changing technologies are "crucial tools" for redrafting our bodies (164). In short, she argues that a boundary figure, or cyborg imagery, can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which bodies have previously been socially and culturally constructed; however, these changes do not come easily and are not without their own limitations and complicating factors (181). Anne Balsamo builds on Haraway's theorization, defining the "cyborg body" as a shorthand reference for "a cybernetic organism," which can be read two ways: either as a coupling between a human being and an electronic or mechanical apparatus or as the identity of organisms embedded in a cybernetic system; asking readers to picture a

continuum, which has at one end the characteristics associated with machines and technology and at the other characteristics of humans and organic society (11). She takes up the theoretical debate of the human body conceived as solely discursive/cultural or material/natural, arguing that cyborg bodies cannot be conceived as belonging wholly to culture or nature, but instead as a hybrid techno-body: “a boundary figure that belongs to two systems simultaneously “organic/natural” and “technological/cultural” (4). She challenges feminists to use this cyborg imagery in order to search for ways to study the body both as a cultural construction and a material fact of life: “because the body is culturally, not naturally, constructed means the body is not solely a matter of materiality, but it also cannot simply be reduced to a matter of discourse” (33). In short, Balsamo argues that the cyborg is transgressive of the dominant cultural order, not simply because of its constructed nature, but instead because of the “indeterminacy” of the hybrid design, and because of its ability to help theorists witness the “struggle between systems of social order” (34).

Balsamo and Haraway both also point towards the rhetorical nature of the cyborg body, particularly that every rhetorical situation and context will call for varying degrees of using the continuum of human and machine coupling. For example, in regards to EOD work, the historic image still persists from the 1970s titled “The Long Walk” of an EOD technician walking alone towards an explosive threat covered in a thinly veiled bomb suit, reinforcing that the human body was the essential tool, as well as the currency of war, emphasized by the ironic phrase “Prepare to Meet Thy God” (Rare Historic Photos). While the use of the bomb suit is still a reality, as technoscience has advanced it has also become more durable, more resistant to actual fragmentation, heat, and potential injury from an explosive, and now even comes equipped with remote control cooling devices to keep technicians from overheating in the extreme heat of the

Middle East or Africa. As well, some of the prior work of EOD technicians that called for the direct, hands on approach of a tough, masculine body willing and able to walk towards an explosive threat in the bomb suit can now be aided by various sized and shaped robots, controlled by the EOD technician from a distance, or can be more closely approached by an entire team of EOD technicians in the relative safety of a Joint Explosive Rapid Response Vehicle (JERRV), a military vehicle more durable than a standard tank, which was not a technological reality until the last 15 years.

The technology tools do not always work perfectly, however, as sometimes the robots malfunction or cannot fit into a tight space in order to remove the threat without the intervention of a human, the bomb suit can be cumbersome when attempting to find a wire in a narrow or confined, booby trapped house, as it is bulky and limits movement and the ability to see well, and the JERRV cannot scan for potential explosives it might accidentally run over. Thus, each situation calls for a different level of engagement with the techno-body, and different ratios of human to machine labor on the continuum. As well, the potential loss of human life, the sacrifice of the body, is still the main currency of war, as machines and technology can be replaced, while human lives cannot. This example can help visualize Balsamo's analysis that the discursive and material body are working together; simultaneously, the technology aids are allowing for changes to the definitions of the material, physical bodies necessary for the work of EOD; however, despite these changes, the machines cannot function alone, thus the discursive reality still exists that when conceiving of this dangerous wartime labor, masculine, male bodies are still envisioned as being the most capable of accomplishing the physical tasks at hand. This brings about a crisis in terms of definitions of bodies at war, often with the material and discursive

creating friction and contrast, but it also provides an opportunity for expanding old frameworks and definitions.

A component of this crisis includes increasing rates of women's active participation in war and combat, particularly that the embodied realities of these female soldiers is often different from historic perceptions of women as supporters or helpers with feminine bodies inadequate for wartime labor. The disparities caused by the rapid changes of warfare, and the more extensive use of machines and technology in place of the soldier's body, can explain how gendered bodies at war have been redefined and re-envisioned as the techno, cyborg body. While these technologies were not adapted for the female body, women can take advantage of their availability to position themselves, even temporarily, as agentic in order to begin affecting change to perceptions of the discursive, feminine body. This also for re-envisioning them as hybrid, techno-bodies. Inevitably, these technological developments have an impact on the cultural narratives of gender and wartime labor, as their increased use, such as robots or the JEERV, require more mental knowledge and awareness, rather than the perceived need for brute physical strength to fight another body in hand-to-hand combat in the "battlefield." Balsamo argues that the gendered body in this boundary setting process is significant because it serves as the site where anxieties about the "proper order of things" erupt and are eventually managed ideologically (10). Likewise, Hables Gray argues that technology has allowed for the transformation of the traditional masculine heroic coding for war to a postmodern coding that have made "women central actors" in present day warfare (151). Women in EOD are an excellent example of the changes to this masculine heroic coding of warfare, as they have been part of a community that became caught up in the midst of these drastic changes and have been integrated into the hybrid techno body, working in and near the increasingly blurred boundaries

of “the combat space.” They are a clear example of difficult these physical and discursive boundaries are to maintain with the substantial shifts in technology and scientific knowledge in the twenty-first century.

However, Balsamo cautions against only acknowledging the positive impacts and changes technology and the cyborg body have on gender identity, as they often are still intended to reinscribe the female body as natural and material, and the male body as the norm, particularly in combat related labor. It cannot be ignored that many of these technologies are shaped with the intention of maintaining the previous gender norms and the dominant institutionalized systems, even if subconsciously (39). In regards to the human-technology coupling, machines are conceived as rational, artificial, and durable, in the likeness of male bodies, while humans are emotional, organic, and mortal, in the likeness of female bodies, often reflecting the binary between men’s and women’s culturally constructed identities and bodies. Balsamo’s aim in *Technobodies* is to better understand how certain technologies are ideologically shaped by the operation of gender interests and, consequently, how they serve to reinforce traditional gendered patterns of power and authority. Her work can help in realizing that the military institution and the military sciences and technologies are not attempting to shift to accommodate the female body; however, the technoscience advancements have allowed for leakiness, or messiness, and have created gender related changes not anticipated in trying to better the war culture. In creating better tools and technologies for war, and to enhance the human body, it has also allowed for women to use these tools in unexpected and multi-layered ways. The complicating factor with women’s entrance into EOD, which often creates friction, is that the work of EOD is ideologically conceived as a masculine domain rhetorically reserved for men, but that this same hybridity of the techno-body allows for the female body to no longer be fully determined by

those systems of meaning and for understanding the ways technology has begun to disrupt those binaries. There is a clash, then, between the ideological and the reality as more women participate in this domain, causing tensions, and often there are very real contradictions present in women's discussions of their work in these communities.

Disrupting gendered dualities, especially in a highly masculinized workspace does not occur easily and without resistance, as is often the case when new technologies and tools become prevalent in a society. Gender was discursively constructed around sexual, bodily differences, but technoscience has brought about a crisis in these discourse realms. Judy Wajcman argues that new technologies are invested with cultural significance that augment dominant cultural narratives, whether this is the original intention or not; thus, it has begun to change the gendered norms of military communities like EOD, but backlash in public and political debates over women's roles in related combat communities, occur because of threats to the previous social order. In particular, those boundaries and dualities were in place in regards to combat and war for centuries, and as Wajcman argues, some boundaries are more vigilantly guarded than others with gender being one of those heavily guarded borders despite the reality that these "new technologized ways" are rewriting the physical body (9). Wajcman also reminds readers that throughout history women have already participated in technological pursuits both as consumers and producers, but that often those contributions have been underestimated or entirely ignored, or that history excludes the kinds of technology women are more likely to access, as a reminder that women will continually face this kind of technological erasure or backlash even as they increasingly participate (as quoted in Koerber 64). However, the rapid state of technological changes are making it more difficult to ignore, becoming more disruptive to the previous

gendered social order. The disruptiveness in terms of gendered dualities is best described by Sadie Plant as a “genderquake,” starting in the 1990s in Western cultures:

suddenly struck by an extraordinary sense of volatility in all matters sexual: differences, relations, identities, definitions, roles, attributes, means, and ends. . . . This was neither a revolutionary break, nor an evolutionary reform, but something running on far more subtle, wide-ranging, and profound fault lines. Nothing takes the final credit-or the blame-for this shift. (38)

She also argues that men have found themselves the most disrupted by these shifts, while women benefited from the shifts, meaning an enormous resistance to these changes when they occurred, or are occurring, as patriarchal systems become uprooted. Those who argue against women’s roles in combat, and women’s involvement in war, often have the old frames and boundaries in mind, whereby the historic perceptions of war have not quite caught up yet with the new realities of “women in the integrated circuit” of wartime labor and the technobody (Haraway 172).

These changes to the well-worn socially constructed hierarchies and gendered norms are difficult to process, as are the swift pace of technological advancements; both can create anxieties and a desire to return to the “old fashioned” way of doing things, as Haraway, Wajcman, and Plant all acknowledge. However, the current rhetorical context and timing makes moving backwards impossible, particularly in considering the significant mechanized technology changes spurred by the industrial revolution and the substantial impact it has had on combat and war. The momentum has continued into the twenty-first century, bringing together several factors in a powerful way to create exigency and context ripe for institutional, systematic changes not possible even 50 years ago. While rhetorical scholars often define this as *kairos*, a moment in society ripe for discussion and the use of rhetoric to present alternatives to a problem or concern (Donawerth 25), this sophistic conception of *kairos* typically also places the speaker or performer at the center of the rhetorical situation, with an individual rhetor or agent, or a

collective group of human agents, as the sole active agents for this agency or ethos building. However, this definition of *kairos* does not truly speak to the realities of the rhetorical situation, which would depict women in EOD acting as independent, individual agents, or as a collective group of actants or agents, who have set out to change the systematic gendered order of the military institution with a purposeful intentionality. Carl Herndl and Adela Licona instead speak of *kairos*, or the kairoic moment, and agency as an opportunistic moment in time and space whereby a particular subject can take advantage of the timing and context to affect change, rather than agency being an attribute of a particular human subject. In this way, they conceptualize both agency and authority not as belonging to an individual, but as temporary and shifting in a kairoic moment, shifting between rhetorical contexts, sometimes within the same institutional or social network at differing times. This speaks to the contradictory position women in EOD find themselves in within this military community, at times feeling constrained by the authority of others within the community, but at other times expressing their ability to be active agents of changing, sometimes with intention, but often without. In regards to their physical bodies and capitalizing on the changing, adapting technologies, Amy Koerber's argument in "Toward a Feminist Rhetoric of Technology" helps in establishing that *kairos*, in regards to the rhetoric of technology and science operates through "opportunity for opportunity" and "opportunity for belief," respectively, with agents using and modifying the advances in technology and science to make their daily working lives easier, and to make it easier to accomplish the tasks at hand, even if explicitly or subconsciously they are aware that these tools can and do begin to disrupt gender binaries.

However, this interconnectedness of the cyborg, techno body and shifting rhetorical contexts requires more carefully considering both human and non-human agency as actants

together, keeping in mind Bruno Latour's definition of actants as "a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman; it is that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events" with a spectrum of potential agency coming from the human or the technology depending on the more specific rhetorical context (237). Jane Bennett's work *Vibrant Matter* uses Latour's definition of actants to argue for the vitality of nonhuman bodies, or "thing power," material powers that have the ability to aid or destroy, enrich or enable, ennoble or degrade, and how theorists should more carefully consider the way this has the capacity to "impede or block the will and design of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own," defining this as "vibrant materiality" running alongside and inside humans (82), and recognizing that this assemblage of human and non-human agency more precisely speaks to the integration of the techno-body. This also removes the pretense that women in EOD are operating alone as feminist agents of gender change within this larger force of the military institution; however, their daily rhetorical choices and situations, in conjunction with the thing-power that is now possible because of the technological and scientific advancements, provides exigency for institutional and political change. Their discursive bodies can be rewritten because of the assemblage of human and non-human agency working interconnectedly, which touches on Michel de Certeau's notion of the body's hidden, individualized tactics (as quoted in Hallenbeck 37), or ad hoc modifications to established or institutionalized strategies or ways of doing things that demonstrate both the limits of disciplinary power and the possibilities for individual agency, as it is not one or the other, but a mash-up of technologies and human bodies working together as agents that create change.

Military Technologies and Scientific Advancements

Providing examples of the gendered cyborg body and the changes occurring can help to illustrate this mash-up between human and non-human agency, and the way the cyborg body has begun to allow for undoing the binaries of gender identity historically present in the military institution. These examples are provided with the reminder that the majority of military and scientific research on combat and war are still intended with the male body in mind; however, women in EOD have been able to adapt these technologies to their needs, although there are still significant limitations, as well as obvious drawbacks. One limitation is the knowledge and research available regarding women's adaptations of military science and technology, as women's roles in combat are relatively new. Diane Wardell & Barbara Czerwinski argue that the majority of military science and technology research focusing on women's bodies, or even including a mixed discussion of men's and women's bodies as soldiers are relatively new within the past 20 years, and are extremely limited due to the prior restrictions on women's abilities to serve in combat roles (188). Little, if any, such research about women in the EOD community exists. Thus, it will take additional time for these technologies and scientific research to catch up to the current roles women are serving in, and to better understand their full capability as technobodies in combat related roles.

The assemblage of human and non-human agency present because of bodily integration with military tools and technologies in the military institution, and specifically in the EOD community, can be thought of in two different categories: physical and knowledge tools and technologies. While these are broken into two categories to aid with clearly applying them to the examples below, given the prior discussions of the overlapping of the discursive and material body, these definitions are presented with an understanding that the boundaries between them are

often blurred, and often operate in multiple, complicated ways on the cyborg, techno body. Both are also offered with an understanding of the intertwining of agency between the tools or technologies and the humans who use and adapt them.

Physical Tools: The technologies and machines as tools that transform the gendered body. The majority of these physical tools were not intended for the female body, but in creating better advancements for the military have allowed for women's increased adaptation, usage, and agency. To include: body armor/helmets/uniforms, driving/safety equipment, robots, dive gear.

Knowledge Tools: The technology tools that afford women greater awareness of the agency of their bodies, to include scientific advancements regarding women's physical fitness abilities and research and inventions regarding women's reproductive bodies.

Physical Tools

Body Armor and Uniforms

The combat protective gear, or body armor, is designed to protect the body from penetrative attacks by weapons. The majority of combat forces, EOD included, use a hard plated reinforced body armor. Prior to the Global War on Terrorism, American military combat uniforms and protective gear were still designed with the male physique in mind, meaning the chest plate and body armor were often ill fitting for women, not accommodating the differences in a woman's physique (breasts, a smaller chest girth, smaller shoulders), as well as uniforms with issues like knee and elbow pads not in the right location (USA Today). The disparities presented practical safety concerns, as ill-fitting protective gear could leave a female EOD technician of a smaller stature more vulnerable to a bullet to the chest or a wardrobe malfunction during a combat mission.

Very recent technological advancements have allowed for women's physiques to be readily integrated with the equipment, to include more lightweight body armor, variations in combat uniforms, and other personal protective gear. Most recently, uniform components and protective body armor have been made of Kevlar, which was only invented in 1965, and used commercially in the 1970s (DuPont). The current body armor is offered in various designs that can more readily fit a range of physiques, and with a significant reduction in its overall weight (DuPont). As well, the U.S. Army recently announced they will roll out even more uniform options in 2019, expanding on the Army Combat Uniform-Alternate (ACU-A), which was introduced in 2013, made for "other body types," but specifically conceived for the variations in the female frame (Jahner). This will include a variety of additional options for women's body sizes, and the first ever female armored plate sizes (Army Times). Technology that affords women uniform and personal body protection certainly begins to change the perceptions of only one type of male body fitting into combat gear. Once women are outfitted with proper uniform and personal protection, they are more capable of focusing on-the-job and task at hand.

Helmets

Technology improvements due to scientific invention, particularly of Kevlar and Carbon Fiber, have aided in substantially improving combat helmet protection over the past 30 years, with the rapid revolution shown on the National Center for Biotechnology's website. Starting with the M1, a one size fits all helmet, used towards the end of WWII continuing into 1985 when it was replaced with the PASGT (Personal Armor System for Ground Troops) Kevlar Helmet, available in five different sizes from XS to XL, but still included some limitations regarding size and appropriate fit, as well a total weight of between 4-6 pounds (NCBI). Carbon fiber helmets are the most recent technological advancement, within the past decade, weighing between 1.5

and 1.75 pounds and available in two different expandable and retractable head sizes, and with more available features for attaching headlamps or night vision goggles. These improvements to the protective headgear, intended to improve the comfortability and experience of the soldier, has specifically afforded women more available sizes that fit the variations of their body sizes and physiques.

EOD Robots

The use of robots for EOD work are relatively new inventions, with the first EOD robot, the Wheelbarrow, invented by a British EOD technician in 1972 (Allison). However, even then, the technology was terribly cumbersome, often requiring the use of a first responder vehicle in order to transport them, and at least 2-3 EOD technicians to lift and carry them to the desired location. One of the early EOD robots, the TALON, a man-portable robot, meaning it requires the use of human bodies to move it. Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism in 2001, the size, variety, and advantages of EOD robots have improved significantly. One of the two major classes of robots currently in use are a series of iRobots, or Pac-bots, from the same maker as the robot vacuum Rumba, with the smallest, the FirstLook, created in 2011 and put into use in 2012. It weighs only 5 pounds and is capable of being thrown into a window and fitting into a backpack (Army Technology). The size differences, as well as the capability of the smaller, more versatile robots, better aid EOD technicians in completing missions in various locations. The functionality and lightweight features of the robot technologies allow for it to be more accessible to a variety of different body types, and begins to erode the requirement for brute physical strength in order to lift such a significant sized robot, or for a human body to take the “Long Walk” towards a bomb threat.

Diving Equipment

An often overlooked component of the job for Navy EOD technicians is the requirement to be trained to diffuse underwater mines and explosives, demanding extensive dive training; hence the swimming component of the recruitment physical fitness test. Used up until 1984 by the US Navy, the diving suit was called the Mark V, made out of non-buoyant spun brass; the helmet alone weighs fifty-five pounds, each boot weighs nearly 18 pounds, with an additional 20 pounds of weight around the waist, as well as the required oxygen tanks, which could total carrying roughly one hundred and twenty pounds of gear while being required to deep sea dive, making a tough, strong body an essential component (Divers Institute). However, a new dive suit, the Mark 21, was invented and used throughout the 1980s and 1990s, which allowed more lightweight options and a variety of different body sizes to participate in deep sea diving. The recent invention of the KM-37, a dive helmet made out of fiberglass and carbon fiber, weighing between thirty-two and thirty-seven pounds, and most importantly being buoyant in the water, has been a significant technology improvement for changing the gendered body of the diver. Divers no longer need heavy waist belts and heavy boots, as a diving wetsuit has taken its place, so the majority of weight comes from the helmet (Divers Institute).

Knowledge Tools

Physical Fitness Abilities

The past 100 years have seen significant changes to women's participation in athletics and intensive exercise programs, such as bodybuilding, CrossFit, long distance running, Olympics and triathlons. Scientific and medical knowledge that believed women's participation in these activities was dangerous began to change in the early twentieth century and have continually advanced over the past 20-30 years. This knowledge has also been used to improve

the fitness standards of women in EOD, as the physical fitness tests are a required component of the recruitment process for the community. A large majority of the female EOD technicians surveyed and interviewed also mentioned rigorous high school, and sometimes college athletics, as well as continual participation in long distance running and swimming, CrossFit, bodybuilding, and triathlons to keep themselves in shape in preparation for recruitment and during their daily working lives.

Medical and sports medicine related research regarding women's bodies as athletes and combat soldiers are all relatively new, and while they show promise for better understanding the capabilities of the female athletic body, the newness of the research means there are some limitations. Current research regarding soldiers still indicates that women get injured at higher rates than men, but the difficult factor to assess in these studies is that they have only recently begun to research women's bodies in the combat environment, whereas there are years of prior research to accommodate the problems that men's bodies have encountered in the combat space to include diarrhea, fungus growth in the genitalia, athlete's foot and other physical fitness injuries. Wardell and Czerwinski wrote a US Army funded research article post Desert Storm about the military challenges of managing feminine and personal hygiene and argued that the institutional norm of the male body has led to dismissing research about the impacts the field has on women's bodies. However, they also argue that there is now an increased awareness of the need for more medical and scientific research regarding women's bodies in this area. Scientific studies have become fairly commonplace since their research occurred, especially after the announcement of the repeal of the Direct Combat rule. In particular, Roy et. al found that musculoskeletal injuries are the highest in the US military of all injuries and impact a greater number of women (1435). The study also offers suggestions for how these women can train

better to avoid such injuries. Wood, Grant, de Toit, and Fletcher suggest significantly more personal fitness training and more unit running could reduce the risk of injury for both men and women, and that although physical differences still exist between men and women, they can be reduced through proper training (e1777). However the results of such differences in training will not be realized until women's participation grows and there is a larger pool of potential candidates for studying. Right now, women in EOD, and other women in combat related communities are in the midst of fully understanding how technology, scientific and medical advancements can help more effectively integrate their techno-bodies into the combat space.

Reproduction

Additional knowledge tools of the techno-body that aid women's roles in combat and warfare roles include those related to the reproductive body, which have rapidly increased and developed over the past 50 years. There was not a surge of reliable, viable birth control methods derived from industrial technologies until the 1800s, and most notably into the 1900s; with the invention and FDA approval of the birth control pill in 1960 in the United States, vasectomies as a means of birth control for men in 1970, IUDs in 1976, the sponge in 1983, and the female condom in 1994 (Knowles 1). The swift advancement of these technologies have had a significant impact on the changing cultural constructs of women's techno-bodies in combat roles. However, while these advancements have worked in conjunction with other elements to aid in providing opportunities for agency and authority to women in combat roles, there are also specific limitations that cannot be overlooked. Most notably, while many feminists recognized the early liberating potential of these reproductive technologies, they are now also seeing signs of reproductive technologies becoming increasingly institutionalized and controlled by the authorities of medical institutions, which can be problematic in discussions of the mash-up of

women's agency and the non-human agency in regards to their use (Koerber 68). Recognizing these limitations can help scholars avoid creating oversimplified arguments that such technologies will allow for limitless possibilities; rather, as mentioned above, they are still very much impacted, and often hindered, by institutional power and authority in differing rhetorical contexts.

However, arguments against women's military combat service has always hinged on their reproductive bodies, particularly that their bodies were capable of pregnancy or menstruation, which could interrupt the ability to serve in combat spaces. Several studies have been done since 2001, interviewing female soldiers about the difficulties of managing menstruation during field operations. With this, several medical experts have suggested the suppression of menses during deployments through the use of appropriate birth control tools, which would not have been possible even 20-30 years prior (Powell-Dunford, et. al). The suggestions to suppress women's menstruation during deployments addresses some of the arguments made against the bodily differences, as well as the difficulties in obtaining menstruation supplies in a combat situation during menstruation. At the same time, the medication used for menstruation suppression also serves as a birth control, which addresses another potential limiting factor (pregnancy) for women in regards to the bodily differences.

Conclusion

The illustrated technologies and scientific advancements point towards the possibilities for the cyborg, techno-body in the rapidly changing nature of mechanized military warfare, whereby the physical boundaries of combat have begun to shift, as have the boundaries of those whose bodies are capable of serving. The challenge in theorizing such changes is that they are still in the midst of morphing, and will likely remain this way for quite some time, thus it is

impossible to speculate the full impact technology and scientific advancements will have on the techno-body of combat. Wajcman argues that technology is more than a set of physical objects or artifacts but that it “fundamentally embodies a culture or set of social relations made up of certain sorts of knowledge, beliefs, desires, and practices” (10). Thus technologies do much more than just afford women ethos or agency and allow them the opportunity to serve in roles they previously could not, but these advancements also have agency themselves, which can begin to reshape the social and political gender norms and roles that were once perceived as normal. This takes time, and even an understanding of the backslide and backlash involved in the process.

The following chapters will further investigate these shifting boundaries, and the struggles with trying to define the old boundaries with new technologies in mind, and new ways of thinking about the assemblage of human and non-human agency, as can be seen in the government documents by the Department of Defense. Often, the old definitions of warfare and combat, and the old dualities, are still in place in trying to regulate the bodies of war, the work of the soldiers, and the clashes of the rhetoric versus the reality, and the government documents display how difficult these technological changes are to process and integrate into a government institution that has long thrived off of such order and discipline and organized hierarchy. As well, the survey and interview results of women in EOD speak to these traversed boundaries and their messiness, as many women expressed feeling like they were first EOD technicians rather than gendered bodies, often aided by these new technology empowerments that helped them recognize the soldier’s body was not male or female, but instead a techno-body; however, the old dualistic frames of the male soldier’s body still crept up into the work they performed, whereby they would struggle against other community members or leaders arguing that they did not belong because of their gender, or doubting their ability to perform physically or mentally

because of these old frames. Examining more deeply the impacts the technologies and scientific advancements have on this particular community of women can help in better assessing how the institution itself, and women entering into other combat related positions, can move forward with the new gendered frames of the techno-body and its capability to help scholars better understand the possibilities of vibrant materiality and the assemblage of human and non-human agency working together for institutional change.

CHAPTER 3
SITUATED KNOWLEDGE AND THE RHETORICAL UNCERTAINTY OF
INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the Department of Defense (DOD) policy documents related to women's restrictions and, subsequent, access to U.S. military combat positions, specifically highlighting the disparities between the discourse of the documents and the lived experiences of women in service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Throughout the history of the United States military, combat positions were restricted to women through a number of DOD policies with the most recent being the 1994 Direct Combat Assignment and Definition Rule. In 2013, the Secretary of Defense announced via a memorandum titled the "Elimination of the 1994 Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule" that beginning in January 2016, this policy would be repealed and all military positions would be open to women. More details about how women would be integrated were outlined in the DOD's December 2015 "Implementation Guideline for the Full Integration of Women into the Armed Forces." However, the work of certain communities in the military that were open to women before 2016, such as Explosive Ordnance Disposal, provide evidence that women had already been working in combat related positions prior to the 2016 repeal and highlight the inconsistencies between policy discourse and the situated knowledge and experiences of the women the policies were intended to restrict. Those same policies, though, have aided in establishing ideologies about gender differences between men and women in relation to combat labor. These ideologies continue to persist despite the removal of the policy barriers, challenging and constraining women's roles in combat labor.

Women initially gained entrance into all four branches of EOD in the 1970s because the work was not defined by the Department of Defense (DOD) as combat related, but instead as an auxiliary, “combat support” position; for example, on mine-sweeping ships, in case the ship encountered leftover WWII underwater mines, or on standby for the rare instance of a bomb threat in a local community (GAO 5). However, with shifting wartime conditions, in particular with the Global War on Terrorism, and the extensive use of explosives as the weapon of choice for combatants in the Middle East, the need for specialists like EOD technicians on the front lines intensified, so the community’s training shifted to include combat preparation before the policies could catch up to the changing realities of their working roles (GAO 5). As well, and as indicated in the prior chapter, the contexts of war and combat had begun to shift with these new technologies and methods of warfare, which have blurred the lines of where combat begins and ends and which communities of military personnel are, and are not, participating in wartime labor. Thus, despite the policy restrictions to women’s presence in combat labor, women in EOD worked in combat zones. In fact, the 2015 Implementation Guidance recognized that women began crossing these boundaries of combat long before the policy was repealed: “In fact, thousands of women have served alongside men in Iraq and Afghanistan, and like men, have been exposed to hostile enemy action in these countries” (Department *Implementation*).

While this acknowledgement speaks to the disparities that often exist between the standards and policies in place and the practices of users for whom the policies are intended, or the situated knowledges and lived experiences, simply changing the policies does not immediately evaporate the gendered ideologies that put the policies in place to begin with. The written changes, while an important step in addressing the prior gendered discourse, often neatly bury continued gendered constraints. Instead, written policies and communication within an

institution or culture have many layers of symbolic meaning, and are persuasive and reflective of the prior, current, and future ideologies related to those institutions and contexts. Christopher Eisenhart and Barbara Johnstone argue that discourse both shapes and is shaped by its contexts, as well that “discourse is shaped by prior discourse, and discourse shapes the possibility for future discourse” (10). The prior discourse and the restrictions on women’s access to combat labor and spaces shaped the gendered antithesis related to women serving in combat roles. This same discourse shapes women’s future attempts at entering into and serving in these communities, specifically that they are still coming up against ideologies that men’s bodies and characteristics are more natural for this kind of work even when the policy restrictions are not there. This creates the disparity between what the policies say, women are full integrated and accepted, and the embodied realities of their individual experiences, ideologically women are not valued the same way with this type of work. For example, in a 2013 official U.S. Department of the Navy recruiting video, intended to highlight that EOD is a community open to women, the text in the recruiting video outlines the necessary physical requirements for the job and follows this by stating that “You Don’t Have to Be a Man to Do This Work. You Just Have to Be One Tough Piece of Work” (U.S. Navy). Despite women being allowed to work in this community for more than 35 years at the time the video was made, the discourse in the video still suggests operationalizing of gender interests; gendered bodies are still thought of in terms of male versus female in regards to divisions of labor, and in terms of men as more fitting and natural for this type of work.

These same gaps and invisibilities between the policy discourse and situated experiences, both in terms of their movement into combat spaces before the 2016 policy repeals and their continued constraints after the policies were removed, can also be viewed as agentic,

alongside other human and non-human elements, creating space for women to become more readily accepted as authoritative EOD technicians and in regards to combat labor (Herndl & Licona; Bennett). Marginalized users, in this case women in combat related positions, and more specifically women in EOD, can use these gaps as opportunities to garner authority and agency. The inconsistencies created from trying to establish prescriptive, restrictive definitions against women's roles in these spaces and trying to maintain binaries also affords women agency, even more so in conjunction with the non-human agency of technological and scientific advancements, the changing contexts of warfare, and ideologies of men's and women's roles in the civilian workplace. Women in EOD serve as a poignant example of this, working in a military community that allowed for their entrance because the labor was defined as fitting for women, but also having the opportunity to evidence that they could perform combat labor as the situated realities emerged and changed before the policies. Because policies related to combat did not include women, but women were, in fact, working within those spaces, they often had to invent their own practices in how to handle working and living in those circumstances, which in turn often reinforced that they were capable of performing in these roles. However, they still exist in a transgressive boundary position, as discussed more thoroughly in the previous chapter, continuing to grapple with bifurcated visions of men's and women's roles in combat, while also establishing they are capable of working there. This positioning highlights the way the gendered discourse, prior and current, are both reflective and persuasive, as prior written policy documents were impacted by ideologies of gender bifurcation, and those same repealed policies still impact ideologies related to the institution, and more specifically to women's current and future roles in combat.

This chapter uses rhetorical and discourse analysis to analyze the government documents related to restricting women's past and current work in combat, focusing on women in EOD as an example, in order to argue that: 1) inconsistencies of prescriptive definitions and policies, most especially because of dynamic, changing rhetorical contexts and individual experiences cannot always be accounted for within policies and procedures, 2) prior, current, and future discourse is both reflective and persuasive of ideologies, cultural values and ways of thinking, although the related discourse is not always directly, explicitly persuasive, which can make it challenging to uncover and adequately address, 3) inconsistencies in the policy discourse is a place where marginalized rhetors can more readily access agency and authority in this institutional network, in conjunction with other human and non-human agentic elements. However, as noted in the Introductory chapter, there is limited access to DOD government documents because of operational security concerns. While this limitation of methods might seem to limit the capability for a thorough rhetorical and discourse analysis, specifically one related to gendering in the military institution, it actually speaks to the exact concerns for the inconsistencies between the policies in place and these women's situated knowledge and experience. In particular, the 1994 policy restriction and the two documents from 2013 and 2015 that highlight the policy repeal are reviewed for specific definitions and phrases that attempted to create, restrict, or eliminate, in a very prescriptive, binary manner, gender related rules, and are often done so by focusing on material bodies and spaces. A qualitative analysis of specific word and phrase choices related to gender, both restrictions and permissions, can elicit that these prescriptive definitions do not cover all angles of the situated, embodied knowledges and experiences of the users the policies are intended towards, particularly because the dynamic environment and changing contexts of wartime labor, mean that the policies do not account for

“the variability and unreliability of human performance” and the “uncertainty in social structures and organizations,” which add up to a “rhetorical incompleteness of any perspective” (Sauer 103). Thus a written instruction can never, ever fully cover all of these angles to include both restrictions and repeals of restrictions based on gender (Sauer 103).

Using the lived experiences of women in EOD, this chapter will then argue that those binary definitions of gender in the military are impossible to maintain, relying on Beverly Sauer and Donna Haraway’s theorizations of situated knowledges to solidify this argument. The remainder of the chapter will provide an overview of theories related to the persuasive, rhetorical, and political nature of definitions and standards to better explain how the discourse of the policies themselves have been influenced by past gendered ideologies and norms and how those policies will continue to influence the current institutional and cultural contexts of women’s roles in combat. As well, additional explanation of situated, embodied knowledge is helpful in understanding the differences between the embodied experiences of individual workers and the policies in place, and the way the gendered techno-body begins to traverse these boundaries, existing outside or on the boundary of these attempts at objectivity and prescriptiveness. From here, the chapter will assess several definitions and terms that come from the prior and current policies on women’s roles in combat in contrast to women’s situated experiences in EOD in order to evidence the inconsistencies between them.

Definitions and Standards as Persuasive and Reflective

Definitions, standards, policies, and guidance in any institution have persuasive, rhetorical meaning. While on the surface they can appear to be simple, procedural discourse in maintaining good order in that workplace or institution, these written documents are also laden with symbolic meaning, underscoring the most important values of a workplace or institutional

culture, telling users and related audiences the priorities of that particular institution or culture. Edward Schiappa argues that “definitions are traditionally regarding as involving strictly factual propositions,” or objective reality, but he argues definitions, instead, are often political, socially constructed, and “rhetorically induced,” calling to mind the persuasive process (*Language* 26). Schiappa reminds readers that analyzing definitions are essential in investigating “how people persuade other people to adopt and use certain definitions to the exclusion of others,” often mirroring society at large and the way different communities and cultures have created boundaries and barriers through such symbolic language (*Language* 4). The mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it is to be singled out in a particular way, thus even if it is not reality that women were not working or have not worked within combat related situation, creating a policy and related definitions that named them as incapable or restricted their access impacts the ideologies about their abilities to work within these spaces.

Even more so than in civilian workplace cultures, policies and procedures play a particularly significant role in the military institution with the intent of disciplining service members as part of the collective institutional mindset with very explicit policies that police everything from hair length and style and correctly wearing a uniform, to larger matters, such as conduct towards other service members depending on rank and position. Failure to comply with large or small regulations could result in written letters of instruction (LOIs), which will eventually determine if the service members get promoted or removed from the military. Compliance also shows up with various other kinds of written documents, to include submissions for awards and medals and Fitness Reports (FitReps) that serve a similar function as civilian workplace evaluations, but are much more heavily weighted in regards to future job position and ranking, and will stay in a service member’s permanent record for the life of their career. These

written documents indoctrinate soldiers, creating a break between the military and civilian worlds, but also a break from their individual identities; no longer are the service members individual, independent citizens, but instead these specific policies and procedures attempt to discipline them as uniform members of a military culture (Foucault). The extent of the rituals, rites of passage, hierarchy, and discipline are intended to shape an entire being; an identity that circulates around the principles and values of the military institution rather than civilian life, separating service members from their civilian counterparts, further articulating in-group characteristics and traits, while securing a commitment to the military institution (Wadham 224). The overall objective is to ensure that those who want to become part of the military institution are willing and able to follow rules, regulations, and procedures to prevent the loss of life, top secret information from being shared, or serious accidents from happening. In essence, military officials need to be able to trust that their large range of employees will do what is right in a life or death situation and with potentially secretive information.

However, while the intention of the regulations and policies for the military institution are to determine who is capable and incapable of effectively working within certain jobs or spaces, the prior policy restrictions on only women's roles make visible the asymmetrical gender roles that have persisted, and highlight and sustain socially ingrained ideologies that women do not belong in the combat space, are not trusted as authority figures in this workplace, and are not physically capable of fulfilling the job obligations. Lifting these policy restrictions do mark an important move towards gender equality, but the many years of prior policy restrictions that both shaped and were shaped by the values of men's and women's bifurcated roles will continue to persist and continue to cause difficulties for women's movement into combat forces. For instance, despite the changing policy rhetoric to one of "gender neutrality" the linguistic

metaphor of the “brotherhood” still lingers in the daily practices of service members of combat units, expressed as such by the female EOD technicians who were surveyed and interviewed (which will be examined more closely in the following chapter). This metaphor, while not written into policy documents, still exists in other discursive ways, preserving the masculine values of the culture, and often creating conflicts in the values of the brotherhood versus gender neutrality, and continues placing women in a boundary setting where they can now be accepted by definition, but not by value, practice, and even community metaphor. Erin Solaro writes about these disparities between military policy and military culture arguing that some institutional changes are a matter of policy, while others require significant changes within the culture and its symbolic values in order for change to really occur. Thus, even if the policies are changed, nothing changes until the culture of that institution changes (Solaro 291).

The disparities between the cultural and institutional changes also highlights the subjectivity that cannot be completely removed from the standardization process, and still requires taking into account individual service members’ experiences, individual leaders and recruiters, and even specific communities and duty station locations, whereby these disparities cannot be anticipated and accounted for uniformly. For instance, one commander of a unit might willingly overlook the regulations on hair by an inch or two because the leader does not recognize it as being out of regulations, or problematic to the job role, while another leader might counsel a service member for the same hairstyle, giving them a written LOI, which will impact the service member’s future career. Beverly Sauer’s book *The Rhetoric of Risk* on the disparities between written documents and policies and the realities of individual coal miners can be used to assess similar disparities in the military institution; in particular that the system is always dependent upon the collective knowledge of many individual viewpoints that must be coordinated and

reconciled so that policy and document writers can make sense of the whole. She argues these varied viewpoints bring to bear “rhetorical uncertainty of documentation” because no single individual has access to all of the same experiences, thus even if writers examine many different kinds of documents from their employees before creating a policy or definition, they will still not be able to fully standardize, or account, for all individual experiences and agency (136).

For example, in the military institution, typically the policy documents come from the Department of Defense (DOD) and its related organizations for each branch of the military (The Department of the Navy, The Department of the Army, etc.), which are part of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government, directly reporting to the U.S. President. Many of the administrators writing and creating policies for those in “boots on the grounds” positions have never had embodied experiences within active duty combat roles themselves. It is not a requirement that the DOD Director (the Secretary of Defense) have current or prior military experience at all, let alone experience in wartime labor. Even though the DOD seeks the advice of military leaders from each of the branches and related agencies, such as the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, often those leaders have been far removed, or have had very different service experiences than the embodied knowledge of those currently in combat service. And while these agencies will undoubtedly take into account a variety of different individual and collective reports and written documents while assessing the need for policy updates, as Sauer notes, there is still the question of subjectivity and individual situated, embodied experiences create disparities between policy and reality. As well, leaders and administrators in powerful positions in the chains of command and administrative agency will always have more persuasive capabilities than those enlisted or lower ranking officers currently serving, thus, often the privileged perspectives become the point of context for writing and

applying policy standards, whether this is purposeful or not. In the EOD community, then, the disparity for women is even more significant, with the majority of leaders in officer positions being men, which also continues the privileging of male voices and opinions, which speaks to the subjective nature and the bias of the policies and procedures operationalizing certain gendered interests, even if unconsciously.

As well, there is the issue of timing between the reporting and the changing of policies, which also creates inconsistencies. With technologies changing the methods of warfare so drastically, even if a military leader or policy writer were to have operated in a similar combat position as a young service member, these changes will often make implementing policy that truly resonates with the current embodied experiences of wartime service members nearly impossible. For instance, in the EOD communities across the U.S. Armed Forces, post-blast reports are required after any type of explosive incident to help guide writing and revising current and future policies and procedures (GAO); however, there is a time lag between these incidents being compiled and reported to the larger administrators, changing necessary combat related deployment policies and training school policies so that new EOD technicians are aware of the relevant technology and warfare method changes, and implementing those policies in both the training schools and in the field. Often this means EOD technicians train on-the-job, as new types of explosives and wartime tactics arise, using and manipulating the changing rhetorical contexts and technologies as they work. The United States Government Accountability Office wrote an extensive report to the Congressional Committee in 2013 regarding these exact problems in the EOD communities across all four branches, concluding that while the “DOD has relied heavily on the critical skills and capabilities of EOD forces to counter the threat from improvised explosive devices on the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan” there was still

substantially lacking data regarding their missions and funds, as well as the need for joint EOD doctrine amongst all four branches in order to plan and clarify the “operational roles and responsibilities” of the communities (GAO 2). However, this report was only put together and recognized as a need for change in policy in 2013, despite the Global War on Terrorism beginning in 2001. This example speaks to the lag-time between the way technologies have changed the methods of warfare, but also how policy and procedures that address these changes often significantly lag behind those embodied experiences.

This also speaks to the discrepancies between women’s changing roles in combat and the lagging policy changes of the Direct Combat Assignment Rule. In December 2013, in the DOD memorandum rescinding the rule, the Secretary of Defense noted that women had already served alongside men in Iraq and Afghanistan and “like men, have been exposed to hostile enemy action in those countries” (Department *Elimination*). Despite this public articulation of repealing the rule at the end of 2013, the closed off combat related communities would not officially be open to women until 2016 with a note that these communities would need time to prepare and adjust to the changes, which seemingly contradicts the original acknowledgement in the 2013 memorandum that women had already traversed the boundaries of direct combat serving on the ground in hostile enemy action. As such, the institution would not legally allow for them to be in this space for two more years; a clear example of the disparity between written policy documents and the situated knowledge and embodied experiences of women in combat. These examples illustrate how women have been put into a position as boundary crossers with partial identities, as Donna Haraway argues, highlighting that the conflicts between the discursive and material realities set them on the border of not belonging and belonging as rightful members of the communities they are intended to be a part of in the midst of these policy changes. The work of

women in EOD serves as a beneficial example of these partial, boundary identities created by the discrepancies between policies and individual experiences, as the restrictions for women serving in these “combat support” roles were lifted in the 1970s; however, as the EOD community began to drastically morph and change with the technology and mechanized nature of warfare in the past 20 years, working with combat and special forces teams, there were still restrictions on women in EOD’s abilities to work with these other teams.

Examining women’s boundary positions, between their situated, embodied knowledge and experience and the discourse and government documents, related to a wartime context can help uncover the operationalizing of gendered interests, whereby these deeply imbedded gender ideologies seem to materialize in this extreme case of a military culture related to combat and warfare. However, the very essence of the prescriptiveness of the definitions and discourse have also given rise to definitional ruptures, as Schiappa argues, occurring with rhetorical situations in which a novel, new or varying, definition is set against the dominant definitions recognized by a discourse community (*Confronting* 69). When the older cultural norms, definitions, and policies clash with the new material and discursive realities, this creates sites of fracture and definitional rupture. This returns to the previous chapter’s discussion of the changing technologies and their impact on the transgressed boundaries, and women’s abilities to move into combat related roles. Women have been able to use these opportunities for agentic moments, as part of this assemblage of agency, or this vibrant materiality of human and non-human agentic forces, arising from the inconsistencies of the policies and documents, whereby gaps exist that create enchantment points. The remainder of the chapter will analyze phrases, definitions, and word choices from the three documents related to women’s restriction and access to combat to show where the ruptures between the policies and women’s situated knowledge exist.

Defining War, Combat, and Gendered Bodies

Direct Combat and the Battlefield

The previously defined law regarding women in combat, the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, was in place from 1994 until 2016 with modifications made in 2012, which opened 14,000 additional “combat support” jobs to women before the policy was rescinded altogether (Department *Elimination*). Prior to this rule, women were restricted from combat by the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, the Act that initially allowed women’s regular active duty service after WWII. The Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule was initiated in 1994 to impose minimal restrictions on women’s positions, most notably access to combat roles. It stated:

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, as defined below. (OPNAV1300.12D)

The DOD expanded on the definition of direct ground combat in the same memorandum:

Direct ground combat is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile forces’ 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. (OPNAV1300.12D)

While no longer in place, revisiting this newly rescinded policy is intended to highlight the contradictions within the definition because of its prescriptiveness that does not adequately speak to the disparities between the embodied experiences of service members, particularly because of the significantly changing nature of warfare. As well, reviewing this policy helps to highlight how such definitions continue to sustain bifurcated visions of men’s and women’s roles in combat. Also, these same definitions can point towards ways women began to traverse and blur

the physical, material boundaries while they were still discursively constrained by the written documents.

Analyzing three important key terms together “direct physical contact,” “battlefield,” and “personnel” can help better understand these contradictions and traversed boundaries. Modern warfare has drastically changed from the historic model of soldiers lined up on a battlefield across from their enemies, engaged in hand to hand combat, as one would envision with the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, where battlefield lines could clearly be physically marked. New technological methods of warfare like drones and explosives blur the boundaries of where the battlefield begins and ends, making it challenging, if not impossible, to dictate where women’s work in these spaces should begin and end. For example, while women could work in the EOD community before the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule ended, prior to 2016 there were restrictions about what type of work they could participate in; the policy stated they could not go on deployments or missions (short duration exercises or activities within a deployment time period) with military units who still restricted women’s roles, such as Navy SEALs, Army Rangers, or Marine Infantry units. Thus, if an EOD team with a female technician were deployed together to a base in Iraq and military leaders ordered for them to assist a team of Navy SEALs on a mission, the protocol required that the female team member be left behind at the base in spite of having all of the exact same elite special forces trainings prior to the deployment. The policy made an attempt to specifically outline exactly where women’s bodies could and could not physically be present in wartime labor, but again, the vagueness of the policy highlights how complicated such attempts at regulating these spaces, and women’s bodies in this space, can be:

Women may be assigned TEMDU or TEMADD [temporary duty orders] to units closed to the assignment of women due to direct ground combat exclusion that are not expected to conduct a combat mission during the period of TEMDU. If women are so assigned to a unit that is closed and the unit is subsequently assigned a combat mission, every

reasonable effort will be made to remove the women prior to execution of such mission. (OPNAV 1300 12.D, 3)

Per the policy, women were allowed to be co-located and assigned to units closed to women, as long as the unit thought they would not be conducting combat missions, but if the unit should then be assigned a combat mission in the midst of having a woman on the team, a “reasonable effort” would have been necessary to remove her. The policy does not firmly insist that a woman must be removed, or to what location she should or should not go, nor does it provide a clear articulation of a “combat mission” to guide a commanding officer in making such decisions. “Reasonable effort” is also left open to interpretation and does not explicitly state it is forbidden for a woman to be part of the mission despite the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule in place. The vagueness within the policy itself speaks to its subjective nature, leaving room for interpretation by the individual making decisions in that moment.

Therefore, if the commanding officer deemed it impossible to remove a woman from the scenario, for example if the team was already in a forward operating location, considered the combat zone, whereby returning the woman to base would reveal their position to the enemy, or would have left the team with only five members making a dangerous situation because not every team member would have someone to pair with, the policy did not explicitly forbid such a subjective decision of the commanding officer. In the 2012 updates to the Direct Combat Assignment Rule, additional changes were made to this co-location policy in an attempt to clarify where women could or could not be, but David Burrelli, author of the 2012 Congressional Report on women’s roles in combat, noted about this specific policy that the “DOD has been in tacit violation of its own policies regarding co-location for some time,” giving an example in his footnote of a female Colonel responding to the 2012 changes of the co-location policy: “We all laughed at it...they are just letting us do what we’ve been doing for years. It hasn’t really

changed anything” (as quoted in Burrelli 10). Her comment points towards the traversed boundaries many women have straddled for years prior to the 2016 elimination of the restriction on women in combat. The main point of contention here is the inability to draw a line around the battlefield space, around the actual, physical “combat space” that would have firmly keep women out of direct combat for years prior. This speaks to the disparities between these women’s individual embodied experiences and the policy discourse in place, because as Haraway argues, boundaries are tricky and shift from within (217). In this case, they shift from within the physical spaces of warfare, despite the discursive attempts to maintain those boundaries.

This also points towards how it was, and still is, increasingly challenging to define “direct physical contact” with the hostile force’s “personnel,” which is illustrated through the work of EOD technicians over the past 20 years. Women were allowed into the EOD community prior to the repeal of the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule because government policy deemed the work of EOD “combat support” rather than “direct ground combat.” However, the changing nature of warfare required that EOD technicians were no longer just on standby in case of a random explosive incident in a neighboring town, or on ships in case of a underwater mine, but swiftly became some of the most important combat related service members in this changing warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan, often pairing up with special forces teams and going on combat missions with them, in order to clear the route of explosives before the team ventured any further. Since 9/11 alone, a total of 135 EOD technicians have died across all four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces with a large majority dying from Improvised Explosive attacks (EOD Warrior Foundation). Hundreds more were critically injured from similar attacks, losing limbs, sustaining brain injuries, or other physical trauma, which is a disproportionately high number of

this very small community of service members². Returning to the previous chapter's discussion of the assemblage of agency of human and non-human things and the changing methods of warfare due to the changing technologies of war, while another human was responsible for constructing and placing an IED or a booby trap, there was no other human present at the time of attack, there was no true battlefield space upon which to move in and out in order to avoid an attack or physical harm, and there was no direct physical contact with another human being, another military personnel. Instead, they only had physical contact with a mechanism, a deadly mechanism in an unpredictable physical location, which has agency, or is an actant with the capability to change the course of life for a human being or even to take a life (Latour 237). In Bruno Latour's definition of an actant, agency is not only possessed by human beings, but any source of action that can "make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events" (238). In this case, the IED itself works as an actant, certainly functioning in conjunction with an assemblage of other agentic elements, as Bennett argues, in this case, the human who originally created the explosive and the other contexts, such as the shifting available technologies and the rationales for the wartime conditions, to include political and religious ideologies. But, certainly, the IED functions as an actant to cause harm and change the course of a human life in a way that mimics the battlefield without the human actually having to be directly involved in the life taking process, or the physical combat itself, as the policy indicates. In fact, the original creator of the explosive may never even know if or when his creation caused harm or death. Despite this tremendous loss of life for the EOD communities since 2001, however, the written documents also did not truly consider them to be in "direct combat" until 2012, lagging far behind their daily, embodied realities of EOD technicians (GAO). It would be counter intuitive to suggest that the service members experiencing the most death and battle wounds in the Global War on

² 3,600 personnel in 2002 with an increase to 6,200 by 2012 to accommodate the changes (GAO)

Terrorism were not in direct combat because they were not in direct contact with another human being, per the policy definition. This speaks to the substantially changing definition and understanding of traditional battlefields, direct contact, warfare, and what and who has agency in combat, and how difficult it would be to assign that agency fully and completely to humans alone. There are many elements, both human and non-human, involved that are far too complicated to restrict to prescriptive definitions, particularly in the current contexts of warfare.

The battlefield itself had shifted and blurred and the mechanized tools of warfare have changed to the point where the notion of direct physical contact with another human being is no longer relevant; however, the outdated policies remained for many years, and still do in some cases. Jeffrey Trumbore reported in the *National Defense* journal in 2013 that “Much of EOD’s success in these complex battlefields came from learning on the fly and not from the application of existing doctrine” (20). He speaks to the constantly changing technology and methods of warfare that make defining the work of an EOD technician so challenging in the 21st century. The rapid changes to the concepts of warfare and combat make it difficult to keep up with identifying types of explosives used by the enemy and also bring EOD technicians across the boundaries and barriers of the line of “direct combat support” in which an EOD technician was supposed to remain. DOD doctrine has recently begun to change “battlefield” to the word “battlespace” instead, in order to underscore the complications with pinning down an actual physical area, but in a February 2016 Army document intended to define such terms, the authors acknowledged that “battlespace” is still elusive and confusing: “battlespace was (is) the single most misused term in the lexicon” (U.S. Army). The confusion and messiness of military and government officials trying to agree on what constitutes the battlefield and direct combat spaces underscores the impossibility of defining such as space.

These new methods of warfare also challenge prescriptive definitions of women in direct combat positions. It points towards the assemblage of agency women inadvertently make use of, to include the rapidly changing technologies, methods of warfare, blurred boundaries of the battlefield spaces, and the gaps in policies. However, despite the physical changes to the battlefield spaces and the demands of the bodies within those spaces, and even the discursive changes made through policy updates, some deeply embedded ideologies of men's and women's roles in combat will not change simply because a new policy is written. All of the doctrine highlights that the administration understood years prior to the remove of the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule that there was no possible way to draw a physical boundary or parameter around the battlefield space and who belongs and does not belong, yet still maintained the policy until 2016, reinforcing that the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, in part, sustained institutional and political ideals, rather than brute facts (Schiappa xii). Those imaginary lines around the combat space were shaped by long-standing historic associations about men's and women's capabilities and roles in wartime labor, but also helped to reinforce the gendered rhetoric that deemed this a place where men work, where men have the bodies and the characteristics to participate in war related work and to effectively perform these tasks. In Roxanne Mountford's work in *The Gendered Pulpit*, she argues for the importance of understanding cultural and material spaces in conjunction and how they inform one another. Thus, the "material space and the social imaginary work in tandem; material spaces can trigger the social imaginary because of the historical and cultural freight attached to the space" (24). The battlefield space, whether real or not, has been marked with a culture and tradition of masculinity and with men's bodies dominating these spaces. This signifies to community members, and to the general public, that men belong there. Even after the policy is removed, then, the material

spaces continue to inform these cultural rhetorics of space, perpetuating the norm that men and men's bodies are naturally positioned for the work of EOD, while women's bodies "are not anticipated by the tradition; indeed, for centuries, their bodies have been explicitly excluded" from the spaces (Mountford 3).

Gender Neutrality

Replacing the definitions and documents mentioned above that attempted to restrict women's bodies in the physical spaces of combat with new terms like "gender neutrality" and "full integration" has the intention of creating swift cultural and institutional changes. While this is certainly a significant move in the right direction towards both material and discursive cultural changes, these long-standing bifurcated visions of men's and women's wartime roles cannot be eradicated immediately. Reviewing the new and old terminologies and meanings overlapping in the current rhetorical context of wartime labor can help to explain the transgressed boundaries and complications between the embodied experiences of these women and the discourse in the policy documents, specifically analyzing how the prior material and discursive rhetoric shaped and will continue to shape the current and future contexts of women's service in combat roles, as "prior discourse and categories of prior discourse are evoked and created as we interact" in the present and the future (Johnstone 162). In other words, as Barbara Johnstone argues, one of the ways discourse is shaped has to do with "what people expect to hear, write or see in a given context and how they expect it to sound or look" (162), thus the prior terms and definitions that restricted women's access to combat still shape the current rhetoric context and the new terminology of gender neutrality and full integration, or the expectation of male bodies in combat. In this way, these terms, the discourse itself, has its own agency, shaping and being

shaped by the rhetorical contexts upon which it occurs, as well as shaping the agency of those involved and impacted by the definitions.

In the Secretary of Defense's 2015 memorandum titled "Implementation Guidance for the Full Integration of Women in the Armed Forces" meant to highlight objectives to ensure the smooth integration of women into all areas of the U.S. Armed Forces after dismantling the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, it reads:

Anyone who can meet operationally relevant and gender neutral standards, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to serve in any position.

Using terms like gender neutrality and full integration are persuasive and simultaneously problematic when compared to the prior definitions in the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule and within the accompanying discourse in related policy documents.

Particularly for the case of opening combat related communities to women, men and women are not starting from the same point of entrance, as men were already fully integrated, and are the dominant majority in this workforce, with the deeply rooted gendered discourse and their prior work in the community reassuring their privileged position and beliefs about their physical capabilities and their bodies in this type of wartime labor. Women, on the other hand, are attempting to enter into, and establish a presence, in military communities where the bifurcated rhetoric about men's and women's physical and mental abilities still linger. The expectation of the written documents state the barrier for women has been removed, thus they have all the same opportunities and affordances as their male teammates and co-workers. If they fail, then, the discourse often reinforces the bifurcation, deeming women's physical inadequacies or lack or desire to try to be part of these communities as the problem, erasing the realities of the embodied experiences of these women, and the way prior discourse and gendered norms continue to shape the military institution and women's continued constraints.

Examining the language use in the Implementation Guidance reinforces that whether purposeful or not, these policies function in a very similar way as the emerging technologies discussed in the previous chapter, “ideologically shaped by the operation of gender interests and, consequently,” reinforcing traditional gendered patterns of power and authority (Balsamo 10). For instance, the Implementation Guidance continues onto state that it will require transparent standards: “objective standards for all career fields to ensure that leaders assign tasks and career fields throughout the force based on ability, not gender.” Additionally, the guidance states:

Equal opportunity may not always equate to equal participation by men and women. Small numbers of women in demanding career fields pose challenges that will vary by occupation and Services and will impact the entire Joint Force.

Following a statement that declares the military institution will now be gender neutral and fully integrated with statements that reinforce differences in ability level and unequal opportunity for participation is political, rhetorical, and persuasive. The vague wording allows for various interpretations and subjectivity, but most especially for sustaining arguments and beliefs that men and women truly have different sets of capabilities based on gender, both physical and mental, which continues to privilege masculinity and male bodies, already established and physically present, in these communities.

The Navy Personnel’s “Explosive Ordnance Disposal Rating” publication, highlights these contradictions and the subjective nature of the selection process. In the guidance, there is a substantial list of requirements that must be met in order for a person to qualify and be selected for entrance into the EOD community to include the following entry requirements: age, schooling, motivation, time in service, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test, medical requirements, nonjudicial punishment, hyperbaric chamber test, security clearance, and physical fitness standards test, as mentioned above, and a Commanding Officer’s

recommendation. The rating publication also notes that the required tests and clearances will be performed by “Approved Screening Personnel: A qualified EOD officer or Master Technician (E-6 or above)” and in an “Approved Screening Activity: Only commands with adequate facility for screening applicants will conduct screenings.” In short, after receiving a Commanding Officer’s recommendation, an entire package with these details will go in front of a board of approved screening personnel, who will collectively determine the recruit’s potential for success in the community and whether this individual should be accepted to attend the follow on Dive school and Explosive Ordnance Disposal school trainings. The many different entry requirements and the collective nature of the selection board are intended to standardize and objectify the selection process, making it fair and equal across the board; however, what gets overlooked by those creating the written policy standards is the subjectivity in the actual embodied process. Returning to the conversation earlier in the chapter, subjectivity is introduced through varying leaders, for instance, there is significant variation in a “commanding officer’s recommendation” or “a qualified EOD officer or Master Technician” and the desired traits he or she is looking for when evaluating a potential EOD technician being screened, and certainly includes his or her prior situated knowledge and experience. When the entry standard reads that the recruit must have “motivation” defined as “strong motivation, interest in the rating [job], and willingness to work diligently in the academic and training phases is required,” there is a great deal of subjectivity from the individual leaders depending on their prior experiences and what kinds of knowledge and expertise they believe an EOD recruit should have upon entering into the community. For example, if a particular screener has spent the majority of his career serving with other special forces teams in combat situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, he will be looking for motivation and skills that will aid those types of rhetorical contexts, whereas a screener who

has spent the majority of his career on a mine-sweeper ship or working in staff related jobs (behind a desk at the Pentagon or other headquarters rather than out operating in wartime contexts) other motivations and skills may seem far more important, such as communication capabilities, high ratings on academic tests, and willingness to follow regulations and rules in office procedures. Both Beverly Sauer and Donna Haraway speak to these complications between subjectivity and objectivity, particularly the different forms of knowledge claims that are privileged over others, and the way these “standards blur the distinctions between ‘expert’ science and lay understanding (Sauer 37). Thus, while it would appear a straightforward process to select those recruits who rank the highest in all of these categories of entry requirements, the reality is that the process cannot be fully objective, particularly when those entry requirements contain variable factors like motivation in combination with data driven requirements like ASVAB scores (the academic requirements) and physical fitness test results.

The entry standards for EOD technicians also returns to the problem with women’s participation in combat forces and the contradictions of the terminology of gender neutrality: the physical differences between the male and female bodies. The term “gender neutral physical standards” is one that is commonly used and contested within the U.S. Armed Forces. In particular, whether or not the U.S. Armed Forces should have “gender specific” physical fitness standards, meaning scaled to the differing physiques of men and women or “gender neutral” physical fitness standards, defined by Hardison, Hosek, and Bird as “the same for men and women, and should not differentially screen out a higher proportion of members of one gender who are, in fact, able to perform the job” (vii). However, even the term “gender neutral” physical fitness standards are difficult to adequately define, as Burrelli notes:

A plain reading of the term suggests that men and women would be required to meet the same physical standards in order to be similarly assigned. However, in the past, the

Services have used this and similar terms to suggest that men and women must exert the same amount of energy in a particular task, regardless of the work that is actually accomplished by either. Hypothetically speaking, if a female soldier carries 70 pounds of equipment five miles and exerts the same effort as a male carrying 100 pounds of equipment the same distance, the differing standards could be viewed as ‘gender-neutral’ because both exerted the same amount of effort, with differing loads. (10)

While it does vary for other branches of EOD, in the Navy EOD community, as long as the community has been open to women, there has only ever been a gender neutral physical standard, without exception for differing loads. Given the potential physical demands of the job, the Navy EOD community set the minimum requirement for all enlisted and officer men and women as running 1.5 miles in less than 12:30 minutes, swimming 500 meters in less than 12:30 minutes, doing 6 pull-ups with no time restriction, 50 push-ups in less than 2 minutes and 50 sit-ups in less than 2 minutes (Navy EOD Community). However, there is a substantial disparity between the written policy and the embodied realities and experiences of those attempting entrance into the community. Training for the minimum standard does not secure a place in the community, as the document language implies; in fact, women or men who trained towards the minimum standards would likely not make it into the community at all. Because there are “typically more people who meet the minimum standards than there are available spaces in training” (Hardison, Hosek, and Bird 65), Navy EOD leaders and recruiters can be “more selective in whom they select to send to training” (Hardison, Hosek, and Bird 65) and can choose from the higher median scores. In the 2015 recruiting year, the Navy community manager stated that those officer candidates actually accepted to start EOD training had much more competitive median scores, as shown in Table 1.

Minimum Standards	Median Scores
1.5 mile run, 12:30 or less	1.5 mile run, 9:30
500 m swim, 12:30 or less	500m swim, 8:37
50 push-ups in 2 minutes or less	103 push-ups
50 sit-ups in 2 minutes or less	95 sit-ups
6 pull-ups	16 pull-ups

Table 1. Minimum Versus Actual 2015 Navy EOD Officer Candidate Physical Fitness Scores. *Navy Community Manager*. Personal Communication. April 2016.

The minimum versus the actual scores draw attention to the continued privileging of the male body in this space, and that despite the changing dynamics of warfare not including hand to hand combat or an actual battlefield whereby an EOD technician is likely to often engage with a hostile enemy in the same way, deeming it necessary for brute physical strength, these physical standards will, realistically, preclude a large portion of women's participation. Women are still bound by the discourse of the policy, despite its gender neutral declaration, as arguments for changing the physical fitness requirements because they no longer reflect the on-the-job physical demands also lead to arguments that standards would be lowered to accommodate women's weaker bodies, thus leading to a less prepared working force (Mitchell), even when related research shows that it is the mental and intellectual characteristics that are true indicators of success in these highly technical, fast paced, dangerous jobs rather than physical, brute strength (Hogan & Hogan).

This also returns to the prior conversation about the blurriness between the objectivity and the subjectivity of those making assessments about which recruits to select for the community and, as Balsamo argues, the ideological shaping of gender interests, even if not intentional. Because these screening personnel are undoubtedly impacted by their own personal

experiences and prior knowledge, which includes visions of those who have previously served as stereotypically having a masculine, male physique and a particular set of personality traits, and even those who would fit ideologically into the brotherhood, it is likely those individuals will continue to resonate as more well suited for the recruiting process. In the “Implementation Standard,” the Secretary of Defense mentions the physical demands and physiological differences on numerous occasions, reinforcing that those differences are a reality for those screening and being screened for future positions:

the challenge of maintaining viable career paths for women in fields where physical performance is not only a baseline entry requirement but also a differentiating factor in promoting leaders. Recruiting, retaining, and advancing talented women in highly physical fields will demand careful consideration-but adherence to a merit-based system must continue to be paramount.

These discrepancies are mentioned again under a sub-heading titled “Physical Demand and Physiological Differences:”

Both the Army and Marine Corps studies found that women participating in ground combat training sustained injuries at higher rates than men, particularly in occupational fields requiring load-bearing. These studies also revealed concrete ways to help mitigate this injury rate and the impact to individuals and the teams in which they operate.

In returning to the previous chapter’s discussion about scientific studies regarding women’s bodies in combat roles, making this kind of assessment seems contradictory in a government policy document that just declared gender neutrality and full integration. Per the policy, women were only allowed entrance into “combat forces” after this memorandum was dated in 2015, thus the extent to which there are thorough enough studies to assess women’s performance would not be sufficient. Despite the recognition that women had traversed the boundaries of combat prior to the memorandum, the numbers of men serving in combat roles are substantially skewed to those of women at the time of this memorandum, thus the rates and ratio are going to be difficult to correctly assess, as argued by Wardell and Czerwinski in researching women’s bodily concerns

in the combat space. Thus while the DOD's intention in this statement was again to maintain standards and objectivity through the use of data and research, it actually speaks to the blurred boundaries between objectivity and subjectivity that Haraway is concerned with: "official ideologies about objectivity and scientific method are particularly bad guides to how scientific knowledge is actually made. Just as for the rest of us, what scientists believe or say they do and what they really do have a very loose fit" (186). In reality, these standards and implementation guidance actually point towards the continued shaping of gender, and gendered bodies, in regards to combat roles through both material and discursive means by securing, or even highlighting, antithesis between men's and women's bodies, at once proclaiming gender neutrality, while simultaneously acknowledging the impossibility of such a reality. This continues to place women in the role of the boundary figure, given both opportunities as agents to transgress boundaries because of the slipperiness of the policy definitions and standards and the subjectivity of the standardization process, yet still contending with the gendered cultural and material norms in place.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

The prior section highlights the inconsistencies through policies regarding the physical differences between men's and women's bodies in terms of physical strength, running faster, or carrying heavier loads, but they can also be seen through the policies regarding the sexual and reproductive body, with concerns of sexual assault and harassment of female service members, also addressed in the "Implementation Guidance" memorandum, whereby the Department of Defense acknowledges the prior conduct and culture of the all-male units, specifically that "The integration of women may require a culture shift in previously all-male career fields" and continuing onto note that: "Sexual assault or harassment, hazing, and unprofessional behaviors

are never acceptable.” The specific mention of these concerns in regards to women’s entrance into combat forces, undergirds the social and material construction of the differences between men’s and women’s bodies, and the previously constructed social and cultural differences, whereby women’s bodies materially and discursively represent the sacred home, the domestic, and the pure, and even the maternal and reproductive, who must be protected from violence, while men are positioned as tough and masculine, incapable of being victims of violence, particularly of sexual assault or harassment. Prior to women’s entrance into combat units there was no mention of this problematic environment of sexual assault and harassment between male service members. The need to reinforce the differences between men’s and women’s bodies creates and sustains the antithesis, and underscores Balsamo’s argument that women’s bodies are coded as material and physical, and that the new technologies, as well as the policies in place, are still shaped by the ideological gender bifurcation. As Balsamo argues, despite the technological possibilities of body reconstruction, “the female body is persistently coded as the cultural sign of the natural, the sexual, and the reproductive, so that the womb, for example, continues to signify female gender in a way that reinforces an essentialist identity for the female body as the maternal body” (9). These discursive constructions of women’s bodies as the maternal and sexual continue to introduce antithesis even as the policies simultaneously insist on gender neutrality.

While the United States Armed Forces has existed since 1775, the Department of Defense only created the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Office in 2004, and in October 2005 implemented the Sexual Assault and Response Policy (DOD Directive 6495.01), which clearly indicates as the numbers of women in the Armed Forces has risen, the perceived need to address this problem has also heightened. The office is intended to ensure that military service members and leaders are given proper education on what constitutes sexual harassment and

assault, as well as how to safely report incidents as an administrator or military service member. In 2014, SAPR, in conjunction with the Department of Defense, called for the RAND corporation to conduct a military wide investigation of rates of sexual assault and harassment in the military. The report used *sexual assault* and *sexual harassment* as umbrella terms to overview the types of cases they found in the military, further breaking down these definitions into three sub-categories for each. The authors define *sexual assault* as penetrative, non-penetrative, and attempted penetrative, estimating that in 2014 5% of female service members and 1% of male service members reported being sexually assaulted. The percentages are significantly higher under the *sexual harassment* definition, broken into the categories of sexually hostile work environment (sexual language, gestures, images, or behaviors that offend or anger service members); sexual quid pro quo (the use of power in order to coerce someone into sexual behavior); and gender discrimination (derogatory gender-related comments or being mistreated on the basis of his or her gender) (Morral & Gore 33-34). The authors indicate that 26% of female active duty service members and 7% of male active duty service members reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in 2014. In regards to the second findings, the researchers make direct correlations to the “misuse of power” with a significant portion of offenders being of higher rank than the victim (Morral & Gore 47).

Working to bring to light problems of sexual assault and harassment in any institution is beneficial; however, the timing in regards to these new policies sends the message that the problem occurs when integrating women into traditionally all-male workforces, and perpetuates beliefs that women’s increased participation means sexual assault and harassment are more of a problem with women’s presence and bodies. The RAND study points towards the way scientific data and knowledge claims are often coded as objective, but how they still can be subjective in

nature, in this case operationalizing gendered interests and reinforcing the materiality of women's bodies; the ways in which women's bodies are framed as sexual and weaker than men's bodies. The study only includes voluntary responses, and notes in the introduction that they reached out to all of the female members of the Armed Forces while only reaching out to a small portion of the male service members (with the thought in mind that there are substantially more men in the Armed Forces than women). With this, the study asserts that a substantially higher portion of female service members are sexually assaulted or abused than male service members, which aids in supporting claims that women's bodies are more vulnerable in the U.S. military, particularly in predominantly male environments like combat forces. What gets overlooked is the low numbers of male victims because of the highly charged masculine environment of "the brotherhood" for a variety of reasons including beliefs expressed by prior male, military sexual assault victims "that strong 'warriors' are perceived as not physically vulnerable; therefore, they cannot be raped or they should be able to fight off an attacker," that only gay men are perpetrators or victims, which again leads to silencing of men, and that male victims often brushed off incidents as locker room talk or hazing as part of the initiation into the community or that speaking out means they would be ostracized from the group if they were to report the incident (Ashley, et. al). Since women are already positioned as outsiders, or boundary figures, reporting incidents of sexual assault and harassment maybe easier, as they do not have the same fear of losing their brotherhood status or of being condemned for not being able to secure their masculinity, as male service members must contend with.

However, in contradiction to the 2014 RAND report, DOD and SAPR released a 2016 report titled "Department of Defense Plan to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Assault of Military Men," whereby they note that "women who are sexually assaulted are more likely to report than

their male counterparts,” estimating that while 38 percent of women service members report, only 10 percent of male service members report these incidents (3). The report continues onto state that “information about male sexual assault in both the military and civilian sectors is limited because of the small numbers of men who indicate experiencing and reporting the crime” (5). Highlighting these disparities between men’s and women’s report rates is not intended to lessen the experiences of women who have been sexually assaulted or harassed in the U.S. Armed Forces, but is intended to highlight that this is not a gender specific crime, whereby it only requires writing into policy once women enter into the workforce, as is made to appear in the Implementation Guidance. Instead, this is a crime about power and privilege, and was problematic in the military institution, an institution that thrives on structure, hierarchy, and strong perceptions of masculinity long before various communities were opened up to women; however, the focus on the problem once women arrives serves as an example of the way the differences between the physical bodies are sustained; antithetical logics that women are the weaker sex, more capable of being harmed and assaulted. While the implementation of these policies and offices has certainly aided in bringing attention to the military cultural problem with sexual assault and harassment, creating policies that reiterate the differences between men and women’s bodies fails to address the underpinning ideologies, such as the brotherhood and ideals of hypermasculinity that continue to perpetuate systemic problems.

Conclusion

While the written policies, definitions, and guidance have now changed in the United States military in order to embrace *gender neutrality* and the *full integration of women*, the reality is that such swift changes will not immediately occur and cannot instantaneously change the symbolic connection to the old policies or deeply embedded cultural values within the

military institution and its related political and social systems. As mentioned in the example of women in EOD above, in 2015 they were not considered capable enough to go on combat missions with their teammates, but a written document change in 2016 now deems them capable. Their situated knowledge and embodied realities tell a different perspective, however, in particular that these prior policies still create division and doubt from their teammates, leaders, and recruiters. The beliefs about men's and women's bifurcated, naturalized roles in war and combat still exist and can be seen far and wide in debates over whether women are capable of participating in combat related units and whether or not women's physical differences will hinder the progress of the entire U.S. Armed Forces. This is, in part, due to the prior policy restrictions of women's roles in the military, and particularly in combat, in the United States military for the past several centuries, where the contexts have helped to shape symbolic values and continue to shape them even after written rules and laws change. While the restrictive policies have now been rescinded, evaluating the way its discourse was shaped by the previous historic gendering of the military and the way it helps to continue shaping these norms despite its removal, is essential in moving forward with current and future institutional discourse, as well as examining the individual and collective experiences of women in EOD and in other combat forces, the transgressed boundaries, the complications of where they fit in and how they continue to experience gendering in the military institution.

This chapter examines the public government documents in relation to women's work in combat, using the example of women in EOD for context, but it is imperative to remember that the prior and current discourse does not only impact women in this community who have previously, or are currently, serving. Before and after the policy repeal in 2016, women's admittance into these communities has been publicly scrutinized. Because there are only

currently two years of history from which to scrutinize these women's challenges and limitations with moving forward into newly opened communities, using the experiences of women in EOD, their situated knowledge and the ways in which the policy discourse, both past and current have impacted them can help to assess and forecast the constraints and affordances these women will also experience. However, while the military culture, and particularly communities related to combat provide a unique, extreme case of a circumstances where gendering is bifurcated in a particular way for the specific cause of warfare, this examination goes much deeper than the military institution itself. It also provides explanation for why and how institutional discourse has, and will continue, to impact the ideologies related to women's work in a variety of other male dominated institutions and workplace, and the way these institutions are impacted by gender ideologies and the disparities between the definitions, standards, and policies in place, often purporting gender neutrality or equality and the situated and lived experiences of the users and agents it speaks to contain. Specifically in the twenty-first century, as society in general seeks to move towards more equal gender roles in the workplace and in domestic life, using policies and regulations to assert those changes, these continued discursive disparities often get overlooked. It is imperative that they are continually examined and addressed in order to more thoroughly understand the implications of these changes.

While analyzing the policy documents are an important step in providing evidence of the inconsistencies between the embodied experiences and situated knowledges of women in EOD, it is imperative to also evidence those situated experiences. Thus, the next chapter will analyze the surveys and interviews of women in EOD in the hopes of filling in those gaps that the government documents have left, or in better understanding the constraints and affordances they have experienced because of this written discourse and the underlying ideologies. The intent is to

help more clearly articulate their struggles and the disparities between the policy documentation and their lived experiences, but also the ways in which the changing nature of warfare and the current changing documentation is part of their assemblage of agency, propelling them forward into roles in the military institution that would not have been possible in another rhetorical context or time.

CHAPTER 4
INTENTIONALITY, AGENCY, AND AUTHORITY IN THE
SURVEY RESPONSES OF WOMEN IN EOD

Introduction

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on assessing the thirty-one survey responses and two interviews of women in EOD, purposely following the chapter that analyzes the inconsistencies between the government documents and women's lived experiences, with the intention of moving from an assessment of the documents themselves to women's actual lived experiences in order to present a more well-rounded set of evidence in regards to women's roles in the EOD community. Major findings of the survey and interview will be shared and discussed in order to further understand the situated knowledge and embodied experiences of women in EOD and the ways they often vary from the policy discourse, as analyzed in the prior chapter. In particular, this chapter assesses the challenges women in EOD face in working in a male dominated military combat community, and the ways in which they manage these challenges through an assemblage of agency in training schools, during deployments, and in their daily working lives. Initially, upon sending out the surveys in a snowball mixed method approach, the focus of the dissertation project was to uncover gendered constraints women faced, as well as to highlight ways in which they crafted professional ethos in the face of these constraints. Thus, the survey questions (see Appendix C) specifically ask about the challenges they felt they faced at different stages of their career (training, combat, daily work). The findings that emerged reinforced there were three major themes related to gendered constraints that traversed the various stages of their careers, to

include gendered doubt, the brotherhood metaphor, and the maternal and domestic body. However, not every woman felt she faced these same constraints in the same career stages or rhetorical contexts, which brought about contradictions in understanding the way authority and power functions in an institutional context with marginalized rhetors, as has been discussed throughout the dissertation project. Following the questions that asked about these challenges were questions asking how women felt they managed, coped, or handled them, but instead of finding ways in which women crafted professional ethos, the data surprisingly uncovered complications with attempting to fit their intentionality, agency, and authority into such a strict definition, as can be seen in women's varied and, sometimes, contradictory responses. Instead, three themes emerged about ways these women were able to claim authority and agency in connection to the gendered constraints they encountered, but also in conjunction with an assemblage of other agentic elements and in considering the kairotic timing; by providing various degrees of material and discursive proof, to include changes to the discursive, gendered brotherhood by claiming authority as sisters and pushing back to the material and discursive perceptions of the naturalized maternal and domestic body. The women's survey and interview responses, then, help explain how this research project came to understand that these women's themes of agency, authority, and intentionality are not an individual or collective effort of ethos building on the part of women in EOD, but a blending of rhetorical contexts and an assemblage of agency that makes this moment ripe for institutional and societal change including their daily interactions in the workplace, alongside technology, policies, and changing notions of gendered norms in the workplace and in wartime labor. The remainder of the chapter will focus on these three challenges and the opportunities for institutional and discursive change, analyzing their

survey responses through a blending of Critical Discourse Analysis and more traditional rhetorical, and feminist rhetorical, scholarship.

Survey Data

Between October 2015 and January 2016 a survey with 34 total questions, 22 quantitative and 12 qualitative questions (see Appendix B) was deployed through Google Forms in a snowball mixed method approach to female EOD technicians currently serving or recently retired (within the past 2 years) from the U.S. Armed Forces military. In total, the survey received thirty-one responses from female EOD technicians in all four branches, as can be seen in Table 2, divided into responses by branch and officer or enlisted components.

Branch	Air Force	Navy	Army	Marines	Total
Officer	0	6	1	0	7
Enlisted	17	3	3	1	24
Total	17	9	4	1	31

Table 2. Female EOD Survey Respondents By Branch and Rank

This is a well-rounded representation of the number of women serving in each branch per the National Defense Research Institute's 2012 study on the "Active Duty Component of Women in the Services," with Air Force (19%), Navy (16%), Army (13%), and Marine Corps (7%), and with nearly identical percentages in the officer and enlisted ranks (Miller, et al. 22). However, the numbers of women currently serving in EOD communities are substantially lower than the general population of the military with Air Force (4%), Army (3%), Navy (2%), and Marines

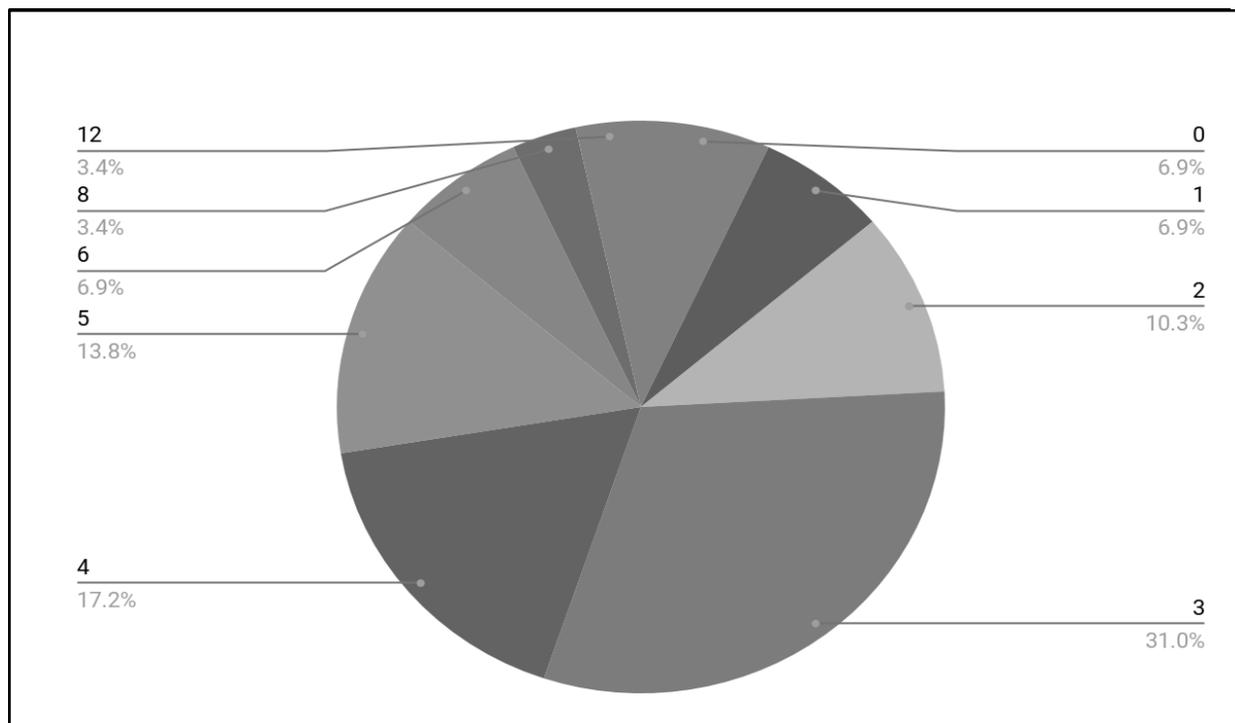
(1%) (Brunswick; EOD Final). Table 3 shows the numbers of active duty and retired respondents at the survey time.

Branch	Air Force	Navy	Army	Marines	Total
Active Duty	15	5	2	1	23
Retired	2	4	2	0	8
Total	17	9	4	1	31

Table 3. Active Duty and Retired Respondents

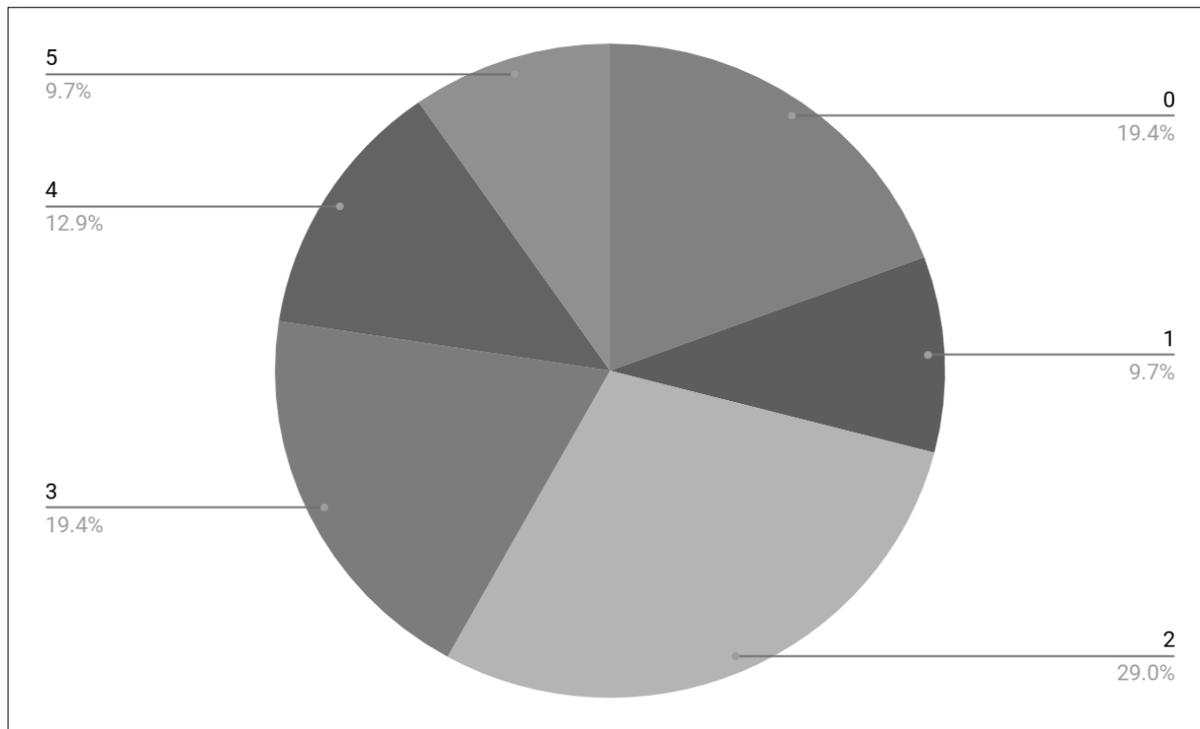
Of the eight retired female EOD technicians, all wrote in their own rationale for retirement, with four stating family as a reason for leaving the services, two stating they were ready for a new career, one was medically retired, and one because of high tenure review. Although the final respondent did not expand on this entry, high tenure review references the capability for the individual to promote past a certain rank, similar to the process in the university, academic system.

The survey also asked the number of deployments during their time in service with the results broken down in Graph 1.



Graph 1. Survey Respondents Number of Total Deployments

The highest number was nine respondents selecting three deployments, followed by five respondents selecting four deployments. “More than 12” was written in by one respondent. The two respondents who chose zero deployments also noted that they had just finished the training schools necessary to be an EOD technician and had not been given the opportunity to deploy yet. A follow on question asked respondents about the number of combat related deployments (see Graph 2), which can be defined in various ways depending on the branch of service and the individual answering the question; however, is typically defined as being deployed to a forward operating base in a conflict zone. During their time of service, it would mostly include locations like Iraq and Afghanistan for the Global War on Terrorism.



Graph 2. Survey Respondents Number of Combat Deployments

Of the six respondents who stated they had not been on a combat related deployment, two were the same individuals who had just finished the EOD training school, while two others stated that they had only completed one deployment in total, one stated that she had only been on shipboard deployments, common for the U.S. Navy, and the final respondent did not provide rationale. Despite the survey being completed before the January 2016 repeal of the Direct Combat Rule, 25 of the 31 women indicated that they had been on at least one, but up to five combat related deployments.

During their time in service, twenty-two of thirty-one survey respondents were married; however, 8 also divorced during this time. While the rates of divorce are slightly higher in the United States military than in the civilian sector of the United States, and rose from 2.6% in 2001

to 3.7% in 2011, according to the RAND corporation's 2013 study published in the *Journal of Population Economics*, specifically citing long deployments and the hardships of those deployments as reasons, the small sample size of this survey shows 25.8% of female EOD technicians divorced during their time in service, a much larger portion than in the general population of the U.S. military. Of course, part of this can point towards the substantial reliance by the United States Armed Forces on the EOD community in general with frequent back to back deployments during the height of the Global War on Terrorism. Unfortunately, there is no data available to compare against male EOD community members during this time period.

Of the thirty-one respondents, nine indicated they were pregnant during their time of service, whereby two of those nine respondents separated from the service while they were pregnant. Neither of the women who indicated that they separated from service because of their pregnancies selected "family" as a reason for retiring, which highlights the discrepancies in the survey process, as pregnancy would seem to fall under family concerns. Eight of thirty-one women indicated that they had children during the time of service, which corresponds with the seven remaining women noted above who were pregnant during their time of service, as one respondent had a child before joining the military. Three respondents had two children and five respondents had one child.

After the survey was complete, two personal interviews were conducted between June 2016 and November 2016 with one retired enlisted Army technician and one active duty Navy officer. The first interview was held in person and recorded through voice memo, while the second interview was conducted over the phone and shorthand notes were used to capture the main details. The interviews will be used to supplement the findings of the surveys, but were not

found to be substantially more beneficial since the surveys included enough paragraph length qualitative feedback to provide adequate assessments of the women's themes as a whole.

Survey Methods and Methodologies: Limitations and Affordances

Addressing women's challenges in the EOD community is difficult because discursive constraints are not easily exemplified and articulated. Especially in the face of changing institutional structures and policies of the workplace that articulate gender equality, this can often lead to false binaries that any gender inequities have been confronted and overcome, as highlighted in the previous chapter, whereby the language and discourse of government policies and documents expressing gender neutrality often conceal the realities at play in the institutional culture and in women's embodied experiences. In particular, providing sufficient enough examples as evidence of women's continued constraints can be challenging, as they are often intangible, discursive, and subjective, without sufficient quantitative data for proof. This resonates with the surveys and interviews of women in EOD, as a certain percentage agreeing or disagreeing to a quantitative question about discrimination or gender challenges does not concretely prove or disprove that combat forces are not accepting of women or that change has, or has not, occurred to the institutional culture during their time in service. Feminist scholars like Anne Balsamo have long argued that cultural practices and the gendered body are intertwined with the cultural practices often marking the body and vice versa (4). The subjective nature of these cultural, discursive practices and the individual, embodied rhetorical contexts women have experienced, and the ways in which they have impacted an individual woman's service or career, often hinders the process of providing sufficient evidence.

As well, women's survey responses, and the follow-on interviews, are often contradictory in nature regarding gender and their work in combat related roles in a male dominated military

community. The results can, on one hand, provide evidence of their abilities to gain agency because of the changing societal beliefs about women's roles and physical bodies in the workplace, the changing nature of warfare, the changing policies, and the changing technologies, while simultaneously speaking to the historic, bifurcated gendered norms by reiterating the challenges they have face as women in a male dominated workplace. Of course, the responses of thirty-one EOD technicians cannot account for the full circumstances currently occurring in the United States military institution in regards to women's roles in combat, however, they provide a lens into the continued antithesis of gender roles in combat work and the operationalizing of gendered interests in new technologies and policies. At the same time, their presence is evidence of the ways in which the current rhetorical contexts have created space for changes, albeit slowly. Analyzing their responses can exemplify how the newly emerging, cyborg, techno-body, functioning on the boundaries, creates rhetorical contexts ripe for the assemblage of agency that achieves, or attempts to achieve, institutional and societal change.

Another challenge to the survey and interview process is that feminist rhetorical scholars have maintained analysis of women's agency and ethos primarily through more traditional written texts and methods like archival research and methodologies, such as historiography, making it difficult to find suitable examples of scholarship to build from. However, a growing number of feminist and rhetorical scholars have deemed the importance of expanding methods and methodologies of inquiry, such as Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch's call for feminist rhetoricians to "let go of our dependence on traditional texts and research materials" and to push for new types of evidence in order to understand a different perception of how people have learned and deployed rhetoric (16). As well, in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch call for using Critical Imagination, accounting "for what we 'know' by

gathering whatever evidence can be gathered and ordering it in a configuration that is reasonable and justifiable in accord with basic scholarly methodologies,” which would certainly include using surveys and interviews in order to gather such available evidence from women in the workplace where government related documents are not accessible (71). In spite of these calls for expanding the methods and methodologies of feminist rhetorical scholarship, however, there are still few feminist rhetorical scholars moving forward with survey and interview methods in publication. Catherine Harnois’ 2013 book argues that despite feminist research coming in many legitimate forms, “the relationship between feminist theory and quantitative social science research remains uneasy” as many feminist scholars see quantitative research as too objective, assuming this type of research cannot tend to their concerns (1). However, Enoch & Glenn and Royster & Kirsch’s calls for expanding the methods of feminist rhetorical scholarship provides a space for this dissertation project to continue re-envisioning the boundaries of feminist rhetorical methods and analysis. Although there are not ample examples of other prominent feminist rhetorical scholars in which to follow or expand from, feminist scholars in other interdisciplinary fields, such as Catherine Harnois and her research on survey methods, can help bridge the gap.

As well, other rhetorical scholars have begun to use varied methods in their scholarship, as well as methodologies not traditionally used in the field of rhetoric, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Scholars like Thomas Huckin, Jennifer Andrus, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon argue that “We are seeing changes in the types of texts and contexts being studied that require new methods of data collection and analysis” (117), and to varying methodologies, such as future collaborations between CDA and rhetoric and composition. CDA “uses rigorous, empirical methods that are sensitive to both context and theory, making it ideal for the demands of a range of projects being developed in our field,” and for enabling researchers to move beyond

traditional analytic modes of interpretation and criticism (Huckin, Andrus & Clary-Lemon 107). This project, and particularly this chapter, is well suited for blending together these expanding methods and methodologies in both feminist rhetorical scholarship and in the broader scope of rhetorical scholarship, most specifically because within the military institution many traditional, textual documents are not available to scholars for research and analysis. In turn, using the personal experiences of women in the form of survey and interview responses in order to uncover gender inequity and methods of developing agency can help to bridge the gap that has long existed in military scholarship because of the lack of access to written documents.

Thus, this chapter will rely on methodologies of CDA in conjunction with rhetorical analysis in an effort to better understand how “discourse and ideology are intertwined” (Eisenhart & Johnstone 10). Chris Eisenhart and Barbara Johnstone argue that CDA seeks to uncover how the ways of talking produce and reproduce ways of thinking and how ways of thinking can be manipulated through word choice. These word choices help to shape the ideologies of a culture, but are also shaped by the previous and current cultural ideologies. In regards to women’s work in a male dominated military institution, it can help uncover how the system has, and continues to, make it appear natural and normal for men to work in combat labor through discourse and the related actions despite these changes in policy that publicly state women are welcome and equal within the community. At the same time, CDA can help explain how women’s presence in the institution changes these ways of thinking as new word choices and new discourse are needed in order to address their daily presence in the workplace.

Theorizing Agency and Authority in Social, Institutional Networks

Aside from challenges to methods and methodologies, it is also problematic to theorize the intentionality and agency of women in EOD through the lens of previous rhetorical scholars, who often conceive of their subjects as being active agents, as this would position women in EOD purposefully pushing towards more roles in wartime labor in this particular male dominated military community. The reality, however, is not so clear cut; not one survey or interview respondent noted feeling as if she were intentionally or purposefully creating ethos, serving a feminist cause, or attempting to bolster the perceptions of women's labor in the EOD community. Even more so, thirteen of the thirty-one women expressed not feeling particularly aligned with their fellow female EOD technicians, because there are so few in the communities that they rarely, if ever, worked together. A few responses went as far as articulating that a connection with other women was a hindrance: "I saw other female EOD techs as weak and a liability in a lot of cases" (Army Enlisted 3). As well, only one mentioned having a female mentor to guide her because of the lack of representation of women throughout this community and because of the continually male dominated nature of the job (Navy Enlisted 2). Although none of the respondents expressed this rationale explicitly, their responses point towards understanding that stating a feminist intentionality or joining together with other women to create an alliance could ostracize themselves even further from their male colleagues and leaders and create additional barriers.

These statements can appear contradictory since their actions of volunteering for a highly visible, traditionally masculine workplace already positions them transgressively because of their material, bodily differences, as well as the perceived differences in men's and women's appropriate social and workplace roles. Thus, in spite of their lack of intentional individual or

collective agency, their responses are significant in understanding the complex rhetorical contexts of the changing United States military institution, ideologies of wartime more universally, and perceptions of women's changing gender roles in the workplace and the home. They are well positioned in a poignant time in history as a group of women serving in a combat-related specialty in the midst of a substantial reshaping landscape of warfare, the technologies and policies of warfare, and women's gender roles in the workplace in an extreme circumstance. Thus their work and personal responses can help in further assessing how the language and discourse used in the past, currently, and in future contexts can both afford and constrain, and how this discourse needs to be carefully attended to as changes occur in the military institution, specifically in policy language that declares gender neutrality and full integration of women, while culturally maintaining gendered discourse. Their work in the EOD community can help exemplify how treacherous changes can be and the backlash that often occurs with change, particularly in regards to gender roles.

It is also challenging to assign meaning to the institutional power and authority that often constrains these women, whereby there is not one individual, or even a collective group of authoritative individuals, intentionally holding back these women from career opportunities, and often these constraints vary significantly from rhetorical context to rhetorical context and in each individual's embodied experiences. Thus, Carl Herndl and Adela Licona's understanding that both agency and authority are entrenched in a network of social relations, whereby authority and agency can often be complementary is important in analyzing these surveys and interviews, as is Jane Bennett's explanation of authority: "power is impersonal, an affect intrinsic to forms that cannot be imagined (even ideally) as persons" (151). Herndl and Licona point towards Michel Foucault's notions of power and authority, recognizing that power is not a transcendent thing,

and like agency, cannot be held by a group of people, but instead people and groups are positioned differently within a network of social relations. Understanding this helps in acknowledging that it is not one rhetorical context whereby one individual leader, groups of leaders, or fellow male colleagues are consciously, forcibly doubting these women's presence, or pushing them out of these particular roles in combat, but because of their positionality within the institutional context, they have the authority to constrain women's agency. This is where discrepancy and contradiction often occurs in women's responses, as their individual, embodied experiences differ from the larger institutional discourse, or even the implied discourse that differs from the explicit policy rhetoric. As well, their constrained agency and their ability to create authority shifts with different rhetorical contexts and with difference audiences.

Alongside the challenges of providing evidence of what constrains these women in a male dominated social or political institution, their surveys also highlight how many elements are often working together to effect social change. Jane Bennett argues that humans cannot fully create institutional or societal change alone, but in combining human agency with the agency of thing-power, or both human and non-human properties, can work in conjunction, as an assemblage. Bennett states that the catalyst itself for institutional and society change is often nonhuman bodies, which works well in collaboration with Herndl and Licona's argument that "the same person is sometimes an agent of change, sometimes a figure of established authority, and sometimes an ambiguous, even contradictory, combination of both social functions" (4). This is an important distinction to the way many rhetorical scholars, particularly feminist rhetorical scholars, have come to think about women's work as marginalized rhetors, typically theorized as individual or collective activists or active agents of change; as a transitive verb, whereby these women seize, assume, or claim ethos (Herndl and Licona 4). Even in Kathleen

Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones' compelling 2016 compilation *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, which asks feminist scholars to rethink ethos, and which touches nicely on the ecological, interactional operation of ethos, as fluid, evolving, and negotiated and renegotiated in every rhetorical situation and within shifting power dynamics, the onus is still put on a transitive verb, whereby they argue that the collection "explores particular rhetorical maneuvers women use to try to construct new ethe" (11). The use of the term 'construct' reiterates Herndl and Licona's concern, as well as the concerns with initially analyzing the surveys and interviews of this group of women in EOD; their lack of intentionality or claiming of any type of agency or ethos construction in creating social change. Instead, their positionality is best expressed as Herndl and Licona would argue, agency as "the conjunction of a set of social and subjective relations that constitute the possibility of action" (3). Their decisions to join the EOD community and to continue working in the community despite the gendered constraints they have faced, and in spite of the male dominated nature of the workplace, constitutes the possibility for action and change, but this is only possible in conjunction with other non-human properties that are simultaneously changing, which cannot be separated out from one another.

As well, this is possible because of the current timing, or kairotic moment, as all of these non-human elements have come together at a particular time period in history. Thus, context and timing factor into their experiences and the potential for institutional and cultural change. Both Herndl and Licona and Bennett's work argue for considering context and timing, although the former regard this as kairos, with subjects realizing the possibility for action, while Bennett instead references this timing as enchantment points: "the first towards the humans who feel enchanted and whose agentic capacities may be thereby strengthened, and the second toward the

agency of the things that produce (helpful, harmful) effects in human and other bodies; organic and inorganic bodies, natural and cultural objects all are affective” (Bennett 151). Women’s roles in combat, their embodied agency in conjunction with wartime technologies, changing methods of warfare, the changing notions of women’s roles in the workplace, as well as the changing government policies, are all part of this assemblage of agency, or network of social relations, which has afforded women opportunities to more readily move into combat roles and, more specifically, begin changing the long standing bifurcated gender roles in combat. This reinforces Haraway’s belief that one can consider anybody a cyborg body that is both its own agent and the subject to the power of other agencies, even if this intentionality is not purposefully or consciously known to the cyborg in the midst of the rhetorical context. Jennifer Gonzalez refers to this as cyborg consciousness, or an invisible force driving production, using Foucault’s term “positive unconsciousness” (59). Thus, these women’s daily embodied experiences are a reminder that even if they cannot articulate a purposeful intentionality, and are not setting out on a daily basis to change the gendered military institution, their presence and their work in assemblage with other non-human agents becomes part of a larger rhetorical context upon which these changes occur.

Discussion Section: Survey and Interview Themes

Analyzing women’s survey responses through a lens of CDA, rhetorical theory, and feminist rhetorical methodologies, three clear themes emerged about gender challenges they face working within a male dominated military institution: gendered doubt, the brotherhood metaphor as a symbolic barrier for community acceptance, and domesticity and the maternal body. These themes arose in various stages of their careers, depending on their own embodied experiences and the varied rhetorical contexts they encountered; however, the repetition of word choices and

phrases allowed for patterns to emerge across their experiences and careers. While the themes will be broken into separate headings for analysis, in reality it is impossible to separate them in discussions of women's constrained agency and authority. They often overlap in various ways, speaking to both the material and discursive gendering that simultaneously occurs. As Anne Balsamo reminds readers, "gender, like the body, is a boundary concept. It is at once related to physiological sexual characteristics of the human body (the natural order of the body) and to the cultural context within which that body 'makes sense'" (9). The three themes all provide evidence that both women's physiological bodies and the cultural, institutional constructs create barriers for women's entrance into the community and related combat communities.

What has also emerged in response to the three themes of constraint are themes of providing proof in order to position themselves as authoritative in the institutional network, exemplifying how the assemblage of agency has worked to create cultural and institutional shifts. Again, however, these women often find it difficult to articulate exactly how they become authoritative, especially because of their varied individual experiences and the changing rhetorical contexts. Despite this, the survey responses highlight various types of rhetorical proof to push against the gendered constraints, with an overarching theme of proof both physically and discursively, and more specifically as a discursive shift to the brotherhood metaphor by using *sister* or other familial language, and creating authority in their position as an EOD technician through shifting societal and institutional perceptions of maternal and domestic roles. These themes all run together in women's responses at different places, reinforcing the challenges of separating physical and material constructions of gender.

Gendered Doubt: Conflating of the Physical and Cultural Body

The physical differences of men and women often become the focus of arguments against women's entrance and acceptance into combat related positions because they are so visible in terms of physical fitness, reproduction, and sexual bodies, followed by arguments that it is nature, not culture that keeps these women from properly doing their jobs in male dominated workplaces like EOD (Maginnis; Mitchell). However, feminist scholars like Anne Balsamo and Donna Haraway argue that it is impossible to construct a boundary between nature and culture, thus the gendered body is also representative of the ideologies of a community or institution. Likewise, this boundary position is often the place where anxieties about the natural order of things are managed ideologically (Balsamo 10). This adequately describes the struggles women in EOD face in attempting to articulate in their responses whether the constraints they have experienced are bodily or cultural. Their responses make it clear that both simultaneously occur and cannot easily be separated from one another. If a woman faces and overcomes challenges related to her physical body with exceptional fitness training in one rhetorical context she could still encounter ideological, cultural perceptions that she is less mentally prepared, intelligent, brave, and capable than her male colleagues in the same, or differing, context.

Given the focus on the physical, natural body in arguments against women's roles in combat, it would seem the most plausible that survey responses indicated struggles with their physical bodies during the training and combat portions of their career. However, only one respondent articulated physical challenges during the training school and only two respondents noted having physical challenges during combat related deployments, with feedback such as:

When training to compete with males, females have to train more consistently just because they don't typically start at the same strength level as guys (Navy Officer 4)

Not expressing struggles with the physical body is likely because it is also easiest for these women to make physical modifications or use the changing technologies and scientific advancements, in order to position their bodies as more authoritative, specifically illustrated in the first body chapter, in terms of the gear that does not fit them, managing their own bodily issues, or the physical spaces around them. This can be seen in some of the respondents who made statements like managing menstruation and restroom concerns in various creative ways while on a mission. In regards to gear and equipment, one respondent noted that *“it is very possible to train while wearing items that are too big for you”* (Navy Enlisted 3). Air Force Enlisted 1 more specifically focused on being the only woman on a combat deployment and how she managed these problems both in terms of the physical, personal space and in going on missions and needing to have physical strength:

The logistical issues were handled by putting locks on doors or putting up some sort of physical barrier in the sleeping quarters. The issues regarding my physical capabilities sorted themselves out once I went on a few missions and proved that I could do my job. I never had any issues after that.

All of the respondents who directly mentioned any kind of physical problems also noted that they were able to handle them fairly easily because of the aid of non-human properties in this assemblage of agency.

In place of direct references to challenges or problems because of physiological differences, in questions related to the training schools, combat deployments, and daily working lives, the responses instead show the conflation of culture and nature, with the repeated theme of a general sense of doubt from colleagues, leaders, and those outside the community because they are women. However, they struggle to clearly articulate if the doubt relates to their physical or mental capabilities and varies significantly depending on the rhetorical context, the individual female EOD technician, and the audience. For example, in regards to Question 20: “Did you find

any challenges to forward deploying as a female in a special forces platoon?” and Question 21 asking for written details about the specific challenges, Air Force Enlisted 3 responded:

Same as in training. Initial doubt in my abilities based on gender, until I proved myself. It took time to gain the respect of the units (based on success, competence [sic], and merit).

Responses such as this emphasize the conflation between the cultural and material constructions of gender, specifically that the differences in their bodies show up in perceptions of their character; they are incapable, untrustworthy, or not given chances to perform tasks or to be seen as viable, full members of the community. Their responses and choices of words like *doubt*, *respect*, *success*, *competence*, and *merit* demonstrate they are keenly aware of their constrained agency and its relationship to authoritative practices within a given institution; in this case, the military institution, and more specifically their status as a respected member of a male dominated, special forces military community. The key terms they use in these statements can be understood with Foucault’s theorization in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* of the ways in which authoritative practices legitimize speakers and “explains how non-dominant subjects are all too often excluded from the public sphere because they are not authorized to speak and represent” (224). In short, he argue that there are “a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it [authority], thus denying access to everyone else. This amounts to a rarefaction among speaking subjects: none may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so” (224-225). Women’s recognition of the doubt they experience exemplifies their awareness of not being sanctioned to perform as authority figures, as reliable and knowledge EOD technicians. They also demonstrate there is a clear connection to their gender and this constraint.

In asking more generally about the challenges of their daily working lives in Question 23, a similar sense of doubt was the most common response. This question was asked with multiple choice answers and respondents were given the option to select more than one answer. “Doubting or challenging colleagues” received fifteen of thirty-one responses, “comments regarding my gender” received seven responses, and ten respondents provided additional information in the “other” text box section with four stating “all of the above” at some point in their career. Navy Enlisted 1 pointed towards the pre-2016 government policies and berthing restrictions: “*Big Navy restrictions on my ability to integrate and lead my PLT [platoon] WRT [with regard to] berthing situations out of the control of the PLT.*” This touches on the way policies limited women’s access to certain physical spaces, but also shapes prior and future discourse and beliefs, creating and sustaining doubts about their abilities to effectively work within these jobs and spaces, with doubts lingering even once the policies are removed. Air Force Enlisted 14 noted “*jealous wives and rumors,*” which speaks to the physical, sexual constructions of the body alongside shaping cultural assumptions, doubting women’s reasons for volunteering to work in all-male workplaces, questioning their socially and culturally appropriate positioning within the social network, as if women who would volunteer to work surrounded by men would have sexual intentions rather than career aspirations related to the field. Marine Enlisted 1 spoke more specifically to doubts that highlight the conflation between the physical and material constructions of gender:

comments about women in general, comments about why I kept getting promoted or sent to a school or a deployment, etc., the disturbing frequency of males being either partially or fully unclothed in public work areas or restroom doors being left open, the pressure to “fit in” since I don’t really drink and am not stupid enough to attend some of their “social events”, the never ending comments about my sexual orientation since I do not date EOD techs (for many reasons) and then the comments about the males that I did date, putting up with the dual standard in the Marines with regard to physical

expectations usually in regard to a female Marine (not EOD) who could keep up, looked fat in uniform, or happened (like me) to score better than they did.

Her statement speaks to the allusiveness and subjectivity of gendered doubts, as some of her examples are related to the physical body, such as the perception that it would only be men in the work space, thus appropriate for them to be partially or fully unclothed, as well as comments questioning her physical fitness capabilities or even the way other women looked in uniform. However, there are other statements related to the perceived ideological differences between men and women, such as the assumptions that she was only being promoted because of her gender and policies that promote gender neutrality rather than a promotion based on her capabilities or merit, and the double standard of the outside of work social bonding that is deemed less appropriate for her participation. She refers to not being “stupid enough” to attend, and although she does not provide explicit rationale, she is likely speaking of her personal reputation that would be doubted or framed as her being a particular type of woman, as can be seen above with the comment of jealous wives and girlfriends, if she attended social events as the only woman, in a way that her male colleagues do not have to concern themselves with.

Her examples also speak to the challenges of trying to analyze women in EOD’s positionality in traditional terms of agency and authority, as it does not fully capture the situation to describe the gendered doubts coming from a singular authoritative figure or individual situation constraining them, whereby they must actively construct one type of ethos in order to overcome that problem or to earn the respect of a particular audience in one rhetorical context. Some women remarked that doubt “*almost always came from outside my career field*” (Air Force Enlisted 6) while others remarked that it was their colleagues who doubted them: “*Many classmates implied that I simply could not be a good tech due to my gender*” (Army Enlisted 3). Yet another woman pointed specifically towards a more widespread institutional culture amongst

instructors and male students: “*there was definitely a culture amongst both instructors and fellow students that women needed to prove their right to be in [EOD] school. I would hear comments about female candidates being poor leaders or only getting in via quota*” (Navy Officer 5). They cannot always point to exactly who doubted them, but they certainly recognize that they are judged differently than their male colleagues in these rhetorical contexts because of assumptions that they do not belong in this workplace, both physically and culturally, which impinges their abilities to be positioned as knowledgeable, reliable authority figures within this cultural, institutional context. Herndl and Licona’s acknowledgement that both agency and authority are social locations that are reproduced by a set of relational practices can help in recognizing that for the EOD community, just as agency lies outside the subject, so does authority, and that both are “complicatedly situated within structures that, at least in part, define the context in which they participate in the author function and/or the agent function” (15). This is an important distinction in defining what and who constrains women within the EOD community and in other related workplaces. While there are women who felt constrained by a particular group of classmates or an instructor, those classmates or instructors were only able to claim authority because of their position in the social, rhetorical context that deemed them reliable, knowledgeable agents. In part, this comes from the institutional structure and discourse in place in the military for years that have deemed men’s labor in this workplace natural and appropriate, as well as an institution that relies on a hierarchical structure, whereby there are those that, based on rank and years in a particular community are deemed more authoritative, and helps repeat and reinforce the discourse that men’s labor in this community is more naturalized and preferred.

The Brotherhood Metaphor and Community Acceptance

The hierarchical structure of the military, however, does not answer the question of why these women feel doubted or mistrusted by peers, classmates, and colleagues of the same or lesser rank, although the brotherhood metaphor and its related practices can explain how doubt is created in the EOD community across social, institutional networks despite it being open to women since the 1970s. An individual or group of men in the community are typically not overtly, deliberately seeking to constrain women's agency, but in spite of this deliberate action, men are still positioned as having authority, constructing agency as those who more naturally fit as EOD technicians because of the perceived ideals of the natural, masculine body needed for combat labor. As well, the long standing institutional support and the social structure of the brotherhood in place both reflect "the cultural and relational practices that constitute value and power" (Herndl & Licona 15). The idea of a group of men who are accepted within the brotherhood is allusive, often not easily defined. Within community groups such as this it is typically easier to define the outlier, or the boundary figure, who does not fit. For both physical and discursive reasons, then, these women's responses provide evidence that they are boundary figures, as they do not have the naturalized masculine bodies and the right masculine characteristics for this kind of labor. Not fitting in with the group occurs in many different rhetorical contexts for women in EOD, to include training schools, workplace commands, and deployments.

This is most visible in women in EOD's responses using word choices like *alone*, *isolated*, or the *only woman*. For example, "*Often I felt isolated, a lot of places I went I was the only female feeling alone or like the only woman*" (Army Enlisted 1). She is not truly alone, working by herself, but instead feels like she is separated ideologically from the rest of the

group, who more readily fit within the brotherhood. Alongside this sense of feeling isolated or alone, female EOD technicians used words such as *exclude* or *belong* that reiterate this cultural constraint more readily, as if they cannot fit in, not just because of physical differences between men and women but because of the discursive differences and boundaries. For example “*They exclude women in most of the bonding*” (Air Force Enlisted 8) and then again “*There are still quite a few men in the career field that feel as though females don't belong*” (Air Force Enlisted 1). Most do not overtly point towards the brotherhood metaphor and its ideologies that tell men they are more well suited and more naturally belonging together, but one respondent, did speak quite poignantly about being an outlier, a boundary figure, incapable of infiltrating the brotherhood in various rhetorical contexts when asked, in Questions 25 and 26, if she felt she could embody the concept of the EOD warrior (see EOD creed, Appendix A):

I never felt I could fully participate in the EOD brotherhood because I am a female. Because I represent everything that male EOD techs sometimes use EOD to escape from, the nagging wife, the pregnant girlfriend, the ex wife who took everything, I will never be considered a brother. If I don't represent one of the above females, then I'm thought of as someone to have sex with later. There is no brotherhood. (Air Force Enlisted 2)

By stating “*there is no brotherhood,*” she almost certainly means that for herself, as a woman, there is no possible way to become part of the brotherhood, either physically or culturally. She is constrained by the brotherhood because her physical body is different than that of her male colleagues, as a sexual body, someone to have sex with, a reproductive body, the pregnant girlfriend, or domestic body, the nagging wife, but also as a representation of perceptions of women’s natural characteristics as being so different from men, and something that male colleagues struggle to shift ideologies about, and, in turn, keeps women on the boundary of acceptance into the brotherhood.

It terms of her statement regarding the brotherhood, it is important to note that this kind of language is not overtly used in government approved EOD community materials, or even the EOD creed, where the reference to Questions 25 and 26 derive from, and thus proves challenges to evidence. This particular respondent made the connection herself based on her experiences within the community. The creed reinforces the ways the physical and material constructions are conflated, suggesting that a “warrior” within the EOD community has particular qualities, and while it does not explicitly make gendered statements, a connection to the group mentality is reinforced in three different places throughout the creed with very strong language; “I follow in the wake of those who have served before me with uncommon valor,” “I will never disgrace the Navy EOD warriors of the past and will uphold their honor and memory, both on and off the battlefield,” and “I will trust my teammates and my country.” All of these statements are intended to strengthen the community bond, helping the members of the community trust one another, which aids in explaining why Army Enlisted 2 made the connection herself to the brotherhood from this survey question. Despite an overt reference to gender here, the historic norms of men’s labor in combat in conjunction with these strong references to teamwork and women’s responses to feeling isolated, alone, and not belonging illustrate how women are mistrusted, doubted, and evaluated as outsiders, which presents a different set of constraints than their male colleagues in maneuvering their agency and authority within the workplace.

Domesticity and the Maternal Body

The different parameters for assessment of women in EOD seems to heighten and become the most problematic when, and if, women’s private selves come into contact with this very dynamic, masculine workplace. In particular, since women are often conceived domestically, they are constrained by a separate set of expectations regarding their

responsibilities and the ideologies if and when they become wives, and most poignantly, if and when they become mothers. Long-standing assumptions regarding men's public selves and men's roles in wartime history, whereby their exit from the private, family life in order to serve and sacrifice their physical bodies for the needs of the country is still considered socially and politically acceptable, and allows them to stereotypically be hailed as heroes for sacrificing a normal, domestic life for the greater needs of the larger, nation family. Of course, the reality is not this clean cut even for men, if delving further into issues of PTSD, TBI, and other physical and mental injuries, or even the invisible nature of their injuries and sacrifice; however, the stereotypes regarding men in combat roles still stand, whereby many women in EOD, in contrast, responded that they struggled with these gendered stereotypes in regards to domestic, maternal bodies that instead judged them negatively if they chose their work in combat over their roles in the domestic realm. As well, they expressed a lack of institutional, systemic, and systematic support in place to allow them to continue with this path of combat work once marriage and family entered into the equation. This is especially problematic in the military institution, in a combat related field, on a heavy rotation of deployments and trainings during a long period of wartime efforts in the Middle East and Africa, whereby any semblance of a normal schedule could not be put into place. Thus, women's choices do not just include sacrificing the traditional visions of womanhood for a career that goes against the images of what should be natural for women, but also includes potentially sacrificing her physical, domestic, and maternal body for war, which is in stark contrast to the ideologies regarding the right choices a wife and mother should make.

The family and work life balance is problematic in both the civilian and military workplaces in the United States, with perceptions in American society of the ideal worker's

capabilities to be available whenever necessary, often leading to perceptions of the ideal workers (Williams; Crittenden). Ann Crittenden's book *The Price of Motherhood* speaks to this ideology of the ideal worker, and notes that women who earned as much as men fell into a very small category: those between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-three who have never had children (87). This constitutes a small period of time in women's early careers when marriage and family have not become a concern yet or when they have made the choice to hold off on marriage and family in order to get ahead with their careers. Crittenden uses examples of women leaving substantial careers in law, science, and engineering to show how they make the "choice" to take alternative jobs after marriage and children not because they really desire those choices but because of gendered norms and institutional systems in place that do not accommodate any different schedules or different bodies and needs of the laborers. Williams adds to this, noting the problematic nature of the ideology that American society is comprised of a "republic of choice;" a vision of autonomous individuals with rights, making choices in pursuit of their own self-interest, but also reinforces that this theme is inherently gendered (1559). She specifically juxtaposes domesticity, which gets associated with femininity, motherhood, and "maternal selflessness," with ambitiousness, which is aligned with being power hungry, selfish, and insensitive. In essence, domesticity is an "internal critique of capitalism" (1571). This sustains gendered ideologies in regards to the workplace that positions women as caretakers and nurturers, and in direct opposition to being the ideal worker; women cannot be both at the same time. Linda Hirschman refers to this as "choice rhetoric." (28). While women are told they are free to make choices, in reality, a woman must make the right sacrifices or choices to be considered under the umbrella of a good woman, wife or mother in society in general. This is exacerbated even more so within a military, combat related workplace, whereby the demands of

the job are all-encompassing for both personal and professional lives, often blurring the boundaries of where one ends and the other begins. For example, of the twenty-two of thirty-one women who were married in total, thirteen stated that being married during their time of service negatively impacted their marriages with eight of those stating they ended in divorce. They specifically touch on their partners struggling with the cultural, gender ideologies of their combat related job: *“It made it very difficult because he couldn't handle my being in a cooler/more masculine job. So it ended”* (Air Force enlisted 15). As well, they specifically mention struggling to manage home life schedules and ideologies of domesticity: *“My marriage did not last through EOD school. My husband could not tolerate my prolonged absence and gave me an ultimatum [sic]. Quit EOD or a divorce. I gave him a divorce”* (Army enlisted 2).

Her mention of the prolonged absences also points towards the lack of institutional, structural changes made in the U.S. Armed Forces despite the push towards gender neutrality and full integration. The message becomes clear for women: if they want to make the choice, they are welcome to join combat forces, but the institution itself will not bend extensively to the women's required, ideological roles in society. Offering alternatives to fit the different needs of families would mean putting the warfighting efforts behind the private lives of families. The selflessness required of a service member in these roles often conflicts with the maternal selflessness that society at large still sees as women's primary function. Thus, once again, when women decide that the sacrifices of their career are too much, the antithetical rhetoric often returns to women's inability to make it work, rather than facing the reality of an unbending institutional culture that needs to change more. This is further exemplified in the small number of women from the survey who were pregnant or had children during their time of service, with only nine of thirty-one women being pregnant and the same number having children. As indicated in the survey results

section, two of nine women who were pregnant during their time of service also separated during their pregnancies, both acknowledging the unbending schedules as a primary reason:

I separated from the service because of my pregnancy. My husband was also EOD and with our crazy deployment schedules, I wanted to ensure one of us would always be available for our child. I separated while I had the option while pregnant, though I wish I had been able to continue in EOD. (Air Force Enlisted 6)

Aside from reflecting the unbending institutional schedule, her response also highlights her constrained agency, as she uses the singular “I” to reference the choice as her own, instead of a choice between two parents who both work within the same career field, and speaks to the reality that it is more socially, culturally acceptable for the male parent to remain working or deployed while the female parent often feels the obligation to put her maternal self first.

This same narrative is repeated by other women who had children and/or were pregnant during their time of service. In Question 27 asking whether or not gender impacted women’s abilities to remain successful in a long-term career, eight of the fourteen who said “no” followed this with a statement specifically related to family, acceptance from male spouses, or concerns over having children. For example:

No matter what people say, having children "takes you out of the game." When some people already doubt your ability to succeed because of your gender, you will not succeed/make rank/be respected when you start your family to the same degree that your male counterparts will be. (Navy Officer 1)

In responses to their personal lives, such as this, choice rhetoric often arises, or the need to justify decisions in order to stay in or leave the EOD community, specifically in relation to marriage, family, and children. However, there is also an institutional component to the choice rhetoric, as Hirschman argues, which enables institutions to sidestep difficulties of making the personal political. This returns to the previous chapter regarding politics where the language and discourse of the policies does exactly this: it gives women the choice to be included through

language like “gender neutral” and “full integration” but it also does not insist on being too radical, and in turn, still sanctions the discursive and physical differences between men and women. Hence, the institution itself will not change its standards for the entrance of women into combat forces, nor will it change the systems in place for that labor, but if women should make the choice to give up their private selves, to be judged openly and publicly against different standards than their male colleagues, they can potentially find a place. Thus, women will have to make difficult choices about their ability to serve in these roles and when they cannot fulfill both obligations readily, it often creates a backlash that women are not fully capable of participating in war and combat in the same way as men.

Themes of Agency, Authority, and Institutional Change

In response to the three constraining themes exemplified above, the theme of proving themselves, specifically proving that they belong, or proving that their physical, maternal bodies or the ideologies of domesticity did not prohibit them from doing the work of an EOD technician arose consistently in the survey data. There are a variety of different dictionary definitions of the term proof to include: “demonstrating the truth or existence of (something) by evidence or argument,” (Oxford) or “demonstrating one's abilities or courage” (Merriam-Webster) and “showing after a time or by experience that something or someone has a particular quality” (Collins). These definitions touch on the rhetorical nature of the contexts women in EOD are in, persuading an audience that doubts them for various discursive and material reasons. Just as with doubt, the proof comes in various forms including needing to establish themselves as a reliable, authoritative character, needing to bond with the other predominantly male community members to garner in-group acceptance, and needing to present rational evidence that refutes the physical and mental gendered stereotypes they experience. Rhetorical proofs have long been discussed as

important elements of the persuasive process, dating back to classical rhetoricians, like Aristotle calling “proof” one of the three modes of persuasion and arguing “every one who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples: there is no other way” (Rhetoric, Book I 1362). Ulrike Hahn and Mike Oaksford in “The Burden of Proof and Its Role in Argumentation” argue that the way proof has been historically discussed in relation to persuasion and argumentation equates it to a binary, as in someone either wins or loses the argument. However, when viewed in conjunction to action and performance rather than a singular speech act, theorizing proof on a continuum makes more sense. In essence the perceived costs and benefits associated with action and inaction, or a subjective degree of belief (44). Essentially, can the audience members be convinced enough to change their beliefs or feel a certain emotion enough to act or change their behavior. This also requires considering how much time and energy the audience want to invest in that action, as well as the amount of time the rhetor wants to invest in the persuasive process. In terms of convincing someone enough to change their beliefs or ideologies, this does not necessarily equate to one hundred percent acceptance of a differing, or outside, status or opinion. For example, Hahn and Oaksford argue that one cannot vote for a political party at eighty-five percent, so voters will pick the outcome with the highest probability or the party whose issues align the most with their values (44). With this in mind, there is never a finite moment where women in EOD are holistically, as collective, boundary figures accepted one hundred percent without question, where they will stop coming up against gendered constraints. In terms of the burden of proof, this is also, as Hahn and Oaksford note, where the rhetor makes the determine of how much action and effort they want to put into persisting with the persuasive process. Some women in EOD find the burden worth the sacrifices, and the rhetorical situations they come up against worth the persuasive effort, but

other women, at certain points decide that the burden is too great or that the constraints they individually experience outweigh the benefits of remaining within this workplace community. Beverly Sauer's concerns over subjectivity and the individual embodied experience arise here, as well, as the vagueness of the term "proof," and the multiple ways in which it is used speak to a variety of differing types of persuasive efforts, a wide range of audiences upon which they are intending to prove themselves, as well as an infinite possibility of rhetorical contexts and outcomes of the audiences associated.

Their self-assessments also highlight the challenges of separating the physical from the discursive, as their means of proof are not always tangible, and even when they are tangible, physical proofs, they are not always sufficient enough evidence for these women to enter into an authoritative position in the social network. Throughout the surveys, seventeen of the thirty-one women used some version of the term "proof," typically in the form of a past tense verb *proved* or *proven*. And while clearly even men who are joining or attempting to join such an intensive, dangerous combat related job must prove that they are capable of belonging both mentally and physically, all seventeen women who responded articulated that there is an additional gendered component of needing to prove themselves in order to belong within the community. For example:

there is definitely an additional sizing up that occurs when youre [sic] a girl. You have to prove yourself above the competency of a guy to be taken just as seriously. There is no room for average.

This response illustrates the social position of women in EOD in comparison to their male colleagues. Proof that would be sufficient for a standard or average male EOD technician, who is more readily accepted as an authority does not serve sufficient for a woman, who enters into the community outside of the bonds of the brotherhood and with the additional constraints from the

ideologies of the domestic and maternal. Furthermore, in conjunction with statements of having to prove themselves more extensively than their male colleagues, they use terms like “worked harder” (6 times), “pushed harder,” (5 times), or had to be “better” (7 times). For example: “*I worked hard and proved that I was capable of being in combat and doing my job as good or better than my male counterparts*” (Navy Officer 6). Because cultural norms dictate that these women are not likely to be authorities in regards to combat labor, the required proof they must provide surpasses the examples that would be sufficient evidence for their male colleagues. This example highlights Hahn and Oaksford’s understanding of proof on a continuum, and also reinforces that different rhetors, who come from different social and institutional positions, must present varying degrees of proof as evidence before their persuasive efforts are accepted.

Women in EOD’s responses also illustrate the conflation of culture and nature in presenting these various forms of proof. For example:

In order for SOF [special operations forces] units to take a support element they were not experienced with (in this case EOD who had not done a work up cycle with them) you have to prove your competency. Even more so with being a female. I did this by giving them intel briefs on the IED threats in their area, proving hands on training and even working out in the gym with them, and strategically go to the range when they were there, all so they could see I was an expert in my field and also physically fit to handle the demands of combat ops [operations] (Navy Officer 6)

Her response captures the intertwining of physical and discursive, particularly in using the word *competency*, which could also be expressed as a social position of authority or agency. She articulates both the need to prove her character as intelligent by providing examples through “intel briefs” about the enemies’ weapons and the nearby area to be seen as an EOD expert, as well as the need to provide physical evidence with hands on training and working out in the gym with new team members to prove she is physically capable of handling the combat operations.

Another component of proving herself is persuading her audiences that she belongs in the EOD community and the other combat related communities with which she works, noted by the statement that she had to prove her competency to a new special forces team, even more so “*being a female.*” She speaks here of establishing herself with a group of all male team members who are used to working with other male team members who more readily “belong” because of the brotherhood that reassures them other male colleagues in combat forces can be trusted and depended on; however, because she is a woman, she must not only prove she is physically and mentally capable of performing the job, but also capable of belonging within the group.

Her awareness of her social position, as well as her ability to acknowledge and articulate the differences between herself and her male colleagues are also evidence of the changes to the discursive and physical workplace. For example, this same respondent, when asked a follow on question regarding her ability to embody the EOD warrior in the same way as her male colleagues states:

I have fought with our men on the battle field, carried them to medevac planes, stood by them in hospitals and received them under the flag. I feel and have always felt like a sister to my brothers in this community.

In this small clip, she reinforces her belief that she has proved her worthiness as a female in a field surrounded by predominantly male EOD technicians, In particular, she uses the term *sister*, an important shift in terminology in giving examples as proof of this worthiness. She at once recognizes the existence of the brotherhood and the familial metaphor, but also opens up a discursive and physical space for herself by changing the metaphor to reflect her capability to belong because she has proven she has a rightful place there through fighting on battlefields, carrying teammates when they were injured, and being part of the group when mourning the loss of a teammate. This occurs with five other women’s references to themselves in connection to

their male colleagues, with terms like *sisters to their brothers* or *sisters and brothers*. While this small change in wording might not appear drastic or significant at first glance, in returning to Eisenhart and Johnstone's understanding of discourse both shaping and being shaped by the world around it, the way women reference themselves disrupts the cultural notions of the brotherhood, even if they are not explicitly, intentionally setting out to cause such a disruption. It changes their social position, as having an insider status, or part of the important familial, institutional bond. Characterizing themselves as a female sibling who also cares about the nation reinforces that the work they have done means they belong within these spaces and should be respected, gender aside. As Kat Hill suggests in her article on using familial language in communities, calling someone "brother" or "sister" indicates a degree of leveling of social or cultural hierarchy (182). Whereas, the brotherhood metaphor does not allow women to level out the gendered playing field, using the phrase of a female sibling allows for more inclusion and for recognition of their equal status within the framework of the "nation-as-family," which can defray the power dynamics that are often bound up in the brotherhood metaphor, which places men in a more powerful role than women in the military, social hierarchy. This disruption, albeit small at times, is important to recognize, as the small ruptures begin to make changes to the gendered ideologies of the all-male fraternal mentality.

One woman's response spoke to changing this brotherhood metaphor to more adequately reflect the nation-as-family mentality, and while she articulates the need to earn one's place by providing various forms of evidence, she also acknowledges herself as an authoritative figure within this familial community and refrains from using gendered terminology altogether:

EOD is like a family. You have to prove that you are worthy of the respect that the badge commands. Once you prove that you are worthy of wearing the crab, the EOD community takes care of one another. I embody the concept of an EOD Warrior by being an active

part of this family and doing my best to put in my best effort in everything EOD related.
(Air Force Enlisted 1)

The context and timing of this use of discourse is relevant, as calling herself a member of an otherwise all-male workplace family would have likely been received negatively both within the military institution and in the civilian world even thirty to forty years ago, and marks an important change in both the discursive and the material spaces. As well, the civilian workplace world has become more careful about choosing gender appropriate or gender neutral language, and as the military institution has recently shifted its policies to include full integration and gender neutrality. This makes the rhetorical context appropriate, and opportunity for women in EOD to feel empowered and adequately positioned to use such a shift in terminology.

Context and timing is also an important consideration in the final component of women's discussions of their multiple forms of proof. Over the past decade in civilian workplaces, there has been an extensive re-envisioning of workplace schedules, expanding childcare options and schedules, tele-commuting, and additional domestic related workplace benefits to include more maternal and paternal leave, alongside more public discussions of women's roles in the workplace, sharing of household responsibilities and childcare, and changing medical perceptions of women's pregnant bodies. While most of the U.S. Armed Forces has yet to reshape their parenting policies, in 2018 the United States Navy did revise their parental leave policy to state that parents would be able to decide which caregiver takes the six weeks of leave post childbirth or adoption rather than this policy only being granted to the mother (Nash). These policy changes mark an important shift in the ideologies about men's and women's roles in the workplace and the domestic realms.

The backlash of these shifts and changes in workplace and domestic culture and policy are evident with public news articles about women's inability to have it all, with authors such as

Anne Marie Slaughter arguing in 2013 that the realities are women still carry the majority of responsibilities in the domestic realm and sacrifice careers more extensively. However, the current rhetorical context means there are shifts in ideologies about domesticity in American culture affording a variety of different opportunities for women in navigating their agency and authority both in the workplace and in their personal lives. In the surveys, women often noted needing to prove that their domestic and personal lives did not prevent them from doing the work of EOD, but the opportunity to even present these forms of proof suggest changes in the current timing and context in modern American society and in the military institution and in combat labor, more specifically. One woman's response to the way she managed her daily working life, speaks to shifts in historic norms and perceptions that a young woman's roles in society is to find a husband so that she can fulfill her domestic roles:

I had a job to do...my job wasn't to find a husband, but to keep the guys to my left and right alive by handling explosive hazards.

She implies that these ideals of domesticity can hinder women in her workplace, but also demonstrates a cultural shift in this antiquated mentality. Another female EOD technician, mentioned above, explained how she was given an ultimatum by her husband during EOD school because of the way it impacted their domestic life together, asking her to choose between her career and her marriage to him. While the female EOD technician is still confronted with having to make a choice, the changing contexts of domestic and workplace gender roles affords her the authority and agency to make the choice to maintain her career in a dangerous, dynamic workplace rather than continue in a marriage with an unsupportive husband. This type of choice was not even in the realm of possible social and workplace dilemmas even thirty to forty years prior when women entered into the EOD community, highlighting the ways in which

institutional and cultural change has occurred, albeit slowly, and not without backlash and continued constraint, as highlighted earlier in the chapter.

Two other women articulated that they did not have to make those choices between the domestic and their careers, despite coming up against institutional and cultural norms that women could not maintain such a dynamic, challenging career once they had children.

In planning to become a mother, I searched for an opportunity (billet) that would not impact my command manning ie be unable to fulfill the duties of an EOD tech and 'take up space'. I was offered the chance to go to military language school and was able to have my son during that duty station versus being stationed in an EOD billet at an operational command. This made it a win win, an EOD tech with a language skill so, yes my pregnancy had impact on my military service but I was able to make it a positive one. (Navy Enlisted 3)

While her response speaks to making an “alternative choice,” she inevitably turns this into providing more substantial proof that she can be both a capable, intelligent EOD technician and a mother, one who took advantage of the opportunity to learn a language that broadens her future prospects in the military institution in terms of being deployable or assigned to a combat related command where a language translator is needed. Of course the reality is that she still had to make a choice during the height of her career that a male colleague might not have to make, which highlights that institutional and social change, especially in regards to gender roles and norms, are slow to occur, often difficult to see, and are often subjective and vary substantially depending on the individual rhetorical context, the rhetor, and the audience.

Conclusion

While women in EOD readily articulate the challenges they face because of their gender in a combat related workplace specialty, their responses also speak towards institutional and cultural changes, occurring because of an assemblage of agency, human and non-human elements working together in this particular context and timing. In providing various degrees of

proof in order to overcome the gendered constraints they face within this workplace, they also highlight the emergence of the cyborg, techno-body, a real possibility in the current rhetorical context. Throughout the surveys, these women speak of first being EOD technicians, not male or female, adamantly stating that gender does not dictate whether or not they can effectively perform the requirements of their job. For example:

First I was an EOD Technician (the word Warrior is the new catch phrase for media purposes). I was a highly-trained military member serving in the Navy who was responsible for disarming, rendering safe and disposing bombs. I willingly put myself in harms ways to protect the lives and property of others. I participated as a teammate and, later, as a leader in High Risk complex special operations missions and was a important part of my team, resilient, steadfast and accomplished. (Navy Enlisted 3)

She writes from an authoritative position, someone who has institutional agency because of her physical and discursive experiences and evidence, being highly trained in the career field to disarm and dispose of bombs. She also has the experience of putting herself in harm's way because the job requires her to protect the community, which further provides evidence that she is a team member and a leader, and that she also has other valuable workplace traits, such as resiliency and accomplishment. She makes it clear that none of these traits are just for male or female community members, but are traits of an EOD technician. The genderless perceptions of herself and her role in the workplace have been made possible by this assemblage of agency, to include her own experiences and knowledge, but also the current context of changing perceptions of women's workplace and domestic roles, changing technologies and scientific advancements, as well as the changing contexts of wartime labor. She is not alone in feeling as though she can embody the EOD warrior, gendered constraints aside, as twenty-six of thirty-one respondents said "yes, absolutely" with every one of these survey respondents following their comment with terms like *same, as capable, gender does not matter, job is the same no matter male of female, in uniform we are not male or female*. Thus, in spite of these women's declared lack of

intentionality, either individually or collectively, their survey results suggest changes to institutional and societal roles and ideologies, which are always laden with challenges, backlash, disruptions, and setbacks that make it difficult to clearly see where and how changes are occurring. Their ability to simultaneously acknowledge the gendered challenges they face along with statements of proving their authority and agency speaks to how complicated and multifaceted institutional and societal changes are to navigate and understand, and how in the midst of these changes it can be difficult to articulate exactly what the impact for the U.S. military institution and combat forces will be in the future.

However, their positioning over the past forty years is one of particular relevance for various, multi-layered reasons, in helping assess the prior, current, and future discourse of gendered norms and gender roles in American society and in the American military institution. The concluding chapter will speak more in depth about the ways the example of women in EOD can help to shed light on the challenges twenty-first century scholars face in analyzing gender roles in the current context. In particular, hearing their real-time perspectives provides a relevant, situated example of the institutional and societal changes and shifts in domestic and workplace gender roles and the tension that exists as these roles have begun to shift in such a way that the discourse associated with them has also shifted, sometimes simplifying or downplaying these changes by stating change has occurred simply because the related policy discourse has now changed to include terminology like gender equality. Although theorizing and analyzing these women's experiences in the midst of them occurring can prove tricky in terms of analysis, their current activity in conjunction with the government documents, the changing contexts of warfare, technological advancements, and other changing rhetorical contexts means there is potential for more thoroughly understanding how their experiences can be used to help better the

discourse and the experiences of other women who will move into these positions. These women's situated knowledge and experience in a contemporary lived context allows for being able to study them in real time and to use their knowledge, experiences, and expertise to better assess the prior, current, and future gendered discourse in continuing to revise and improve the notions of gender equality and full integration. This is an important step that must occur not just in the United States military institution for women moving into combat roles, but for women across the board moving into positions where their presence was restricted by gender norms and/or by policies, most often by both, and how this requires substantial time and energy in recognizing how to shift the culture and discourse of these institutions, to create differing, more inclusive policies that more effectively, adequately integrate women in a more equal capacity.

CHAPTER 5
GENDERQUAKES, DEFINITIONAL RUPTURES, AND BACKLASHES: THE PUSH AND
PULL OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AMERICAN
MILITARY INSTITUTION

Introduction

The Center for New American Security, a bipartisan, non-profit research and analysis organization established in 2007 focusing on issues of U.S. national security issues, produced a report in April 2018 titled “The (Mostly) Good News on Women in Combat. Despite the title, the report includes statistics that indicate few women have attempted to join the combat related communities opened in 2016, and those who have attempted have mostly failed during the training school process. They add:

only two years into formal implementation of the integration policy, female service members have gained a small but important share of the combat arms population in the military. At the same time, the military services face an uphill battle to recruit women who are interested and capable of serving in combat roles, while still maintaining physical standards. (Swick & Moore)

Discourse like this exemplifies beliefs that women have now been given equal opportunities due to the changed policies, and reinforces beliefs that they are then just incapable of accomplishing these tasks or do not have the desire to participate in such labor. The reality, as this dissertation project has analyzed, is much more complex and multi-layered, and is not adequately reflected by the current policy discourse on women in the United States military institution. Instead, the current cultural and institutional context, specifically the continued gendering of this workplace, reflects the history of the institution, the historic gendering of the combat spaces, as well as its connection to other institutions and the historic, cultural, and institutional gender ideologies

about men's and women's bodies and their appropriate domestic, political, and workplace roles. Women's current status is also impacted by those previous policy restrictions on women's roles in these spaces; discourse that has persuaded and reinforced the cultural and institutional beliefs about women's incapacities for combat labor that are still present despite the policy removal.

The report's discourse also places emphasis on human agency within these rhetorical contexts, particularly focused on women gaining ethos. The expectation then falls on the marginalized individual to be able to make these gains within a community and cultural setting that has historically been all-male, instead of also focusing attention on the ways in which these specific institutions and workplace cultures have historically restricted women's access and, thus, need to shift or realign in order for more systemic, institutional change to occur. Of course, changing the policies marks an important first step, but the discourse of the policies cannot erase all of the related ideologies, values, and symbolic language that are so intertwined with the policy discourse, some existing before, and some existing because of, the policies. When viewed through the lens of only humans being agentic, the heavy burden is put on women in this rhetorical context, as individual agents, with the expectation to produce or craft ethos, or to be agentic or feminist actants of change, all alone or as a collective group, instead of assessing the vibrant materiality of the current and previous rhetorical contexts and the way the discourse was shaped and continues to shape these contexts. Classifying this as a purely human agentic issue, as one where these women are, or are not, making the decision to join these special forces units, or attempting to join and train, inaccurately portrays the breadth of the rhetorical contexts and the many elements, both human and non-human, involved in the sustaining and perpetuating of gender constraints and the overcoming of such constraints. This oversimplifies and overlooks the institutional, cultural structures that have been in place for centuries that have operationalized

specific gender interests, including all of those previous policies that restricted women's access and asserted to the general public and the American military institution that women were not physically or mentally capable of doing these jobs.

This type of discourse also does not get to the root of other aspects of intentionality, specifically authority and power, whereby the responsibility for the current and former rhetorical contexts is labeled solely as those in the "military services," which while left unsaid by the authors is meant to reflect those human agents in authoritative positions, who explicitly oppose and restrict women's abilities to serve in the United States military or have the ability to decide their future fate. While there are those men in leadership roles who oppose women's service in combat and express this explicitly or implicitly, and which likely guides their actions, such as leaning towards only recruiting other men for special forces positions, there are many other factors and elements that have been actants and have aided in creating the prior and current rhetorical contexts. As well, there are also many agentic elements, both human and non-human, which have come together at this specific enchantment point to begin creating opportunities for changes to gender ideologies, beliefs, norms, and roles, and for women to take advantage of these opportunities, but this cannot be assessed as agency and authority solely possessed by humans. However, through the theorization of vibrant materiality, it becomes clear that many agentic elements work together to forge changes in these opportunistic contexts, but change will not occur immediately or forcefully, as policy repeals and the related discourse often assert, just as the gendered constraints and operationalizing of gender interests did not immediately or abruptly occur.

As Sadie Plant acknowledges in her book *Zeros and Ones*, these changes are not a "revolutionary break" or an "evolutionary reform," but something "running on far more subtle,

wide-ranging, and profound fault lines” (38). She recognizes, alongside Jane Bennett’s theorization of vibrant materiality that nothing can fully take the credit or the blame for these shifts, just as nothing or no one in particular could take the full credit or blame for the historic gendering, but instead the credit and blame is dispersed amongst many different elements, such as advancements in machines and technology, in communications and media, in the contexts of wartime and the labor required, as well as shifting ideologies of gender roles in the workplace and in the domestic sphere, which have come together and created these enchantment points and opportunities for change. Plant refers to this as a “genderquake,” which will, inevitably, receive backlash because of the ways these shifts challenge traditional ideologies and roles. This is where it becomes especially important to continue analyzing gender roles and gender constraints, as these backlashes represent moments of growth and change, but also represent the stalling or backwards movement and struggle that occurs because of the breaking away from the old frames and definitions. Assessing the discourse and the rhetorical action associated with the backlashes is just as important as assessing the growth and change in order to recognize what works and what does not work and why, and to understand that change related to gender ideologies and norms does not occur as a product or an end point, but is a fluid, shifting process.

Thus, while this dissertation project has taken a narrow lens focused on a specific, small group of women in a special forces community of the American military institution, a rhetorical and discourse analysis of this group of women provides an example that can be more broadly applied to the previous, current, and future constraints and affordances of women attempting to move past antithetical gendered ideologies of the twenty-first century workplace and in the domestic realm. They are just one example of many affected by the massive shifts in cultural and societal ideologies, lifestyle, and even workplace circumstances, which have impacted gender

roles in American society in the twenty-first century. After a century of rapid, sometimes volatile, change, it is often discussed as if change has stopped occurring, as if there has been this pinnacle of gender equality, which reintroduces bifurcation and buries the challenges women continue to face in these rhetorical contexts in the workplace and in domestic labor. Davis, Winslow, and Maume refer to this as the “stalled revolution” where these policies and changing lifestyle circumstances make it appear as though equality has been gained. This is also the place where resistance or backlash often exists, where those who were previously positioned as authoritative and powerful within the cultural or institutional network feel threatened by the changes that have occurred (6). Contradictions can also be seen, as women articulate that they still feel constrained by gender ideologies, but also empowered or more than capable now working in spaces where they previously could not.

As well, it can also be more challenging to evidence these continued constraints when they are not explicitly visible in the language and policy discourse. Because the policy changes are so recent for women in other combat communities, there is not much evidence to help exemplify these buried gender constraints; however, after nearly forty years in the community, women in EOD can help paint a more realistic picture of how complicated regendering can be, the genderquakes and the backlashes. Changes to well-worn ideologies about gender are difficult to break, even if the policies and standards change, which gets played out in these tense gender dynamics in the workplace. The changes in the American military institution have been particularly visible, and unsettling, because of associations of war and combat being historically linked with not just men’s labor, but with an iconic figure of masculinity and nationalism, which is also deeply embedded in other areas of American society, including politics, domestic relationships, and perceptions of the differences in physical bodies.

In concluding the dissertation and moving forward with thinking about the exigency of the project in both the civilian and academic sectors, as well as future implications and research, it is helpful to revisit the three major themes that have been threaded throughout the project, in conjunction with concepts of genderquakes, backlashes, and definitional ruptures. In discussions of these concepts, the three overarching themes of the dissertation project can be seen overlapping and working in various, dynamic ways. The cyborg, techno-body allows for understanding the cultural and material constructions of the body, but also the ways in which that boundary positioning has begun to afford women opportunities for taking advantage of changing technologies and scientific advancements. The disparities between the situated knowledge and lived experiences of these women and the ways they vary, often substantially, from the policy discourse that regulates their working and domestic lives, and often their bodies. Finally, the importance of focusing more readily on intentionality and vibrant materiality, as addressed above, in understanding how these rhetorical contexts come to be and the positionality of those granted and those seeking authority within a social or institutional network. The remainder of this closing chapter of the dissertation project will expand more on these themes and the implications they can have for future research and for the future of women's roles in the EOD community, the American military institution, and more broadly in the workplace culture of American society.

Genderquakes, Definitional Ruptures, and Backlashes

Three particular terms, genderquakes, definitional ruptures, and backlashes, help to contextualize the current changing gender ideologies and roles in twenty-first century American society, and are especially important for thinking about the overall breadth of this project and women's roles in the EOD community, in American society, and in the workplace more broadly.

Coined by Sadie Plant, Edward Schiappa, and Susan Faludi, respectively, all three terms were addressed in books published between the 1980s and 1990s, on the heels of two decades of women's movement into the American workforce at striking numbers and with the creation of many government policies addressing women's roles in the workplace and in the public sphere. For example, women were permitted into law school for the first time in 1969, Title IX passed in 1972, Roe vs. Wade passed in 1973, service academies opened to women in 1976, The Pregnancy Discrimination Act was enacted in 1978, women were allowed to serve on non-combat ships in 1978, the Violence Against Women act was enacted in 1994, and women were allowed to fly combat planes and work on combat ships in 1994 (Task; Small). These are just a few highlights of the substantial policy changes that began to occur more readily in the 1970s and steadily continued into the 1990s. These policy changes also collided with a time period in American society that began to see a large migration to more white collar, professional jobs and alternative visions of full-time employment, replacing those most prevalent since the industrial revolution, like blue collar factory jobs, and has continued to do so with industry and technological advancements that began to redistribute the needs of the American workforce to include bodies, work schedules, and the work spaces.

Sadie Plant refers to this time period as an example of a "genderquake," arguing that in the 1990s, in particular,

Western cultures were suddenly struck by an extraordinary sense of volatility in all matters sexual: differences, relations, identities, definitions, roles, attributes, means, and ends. All the old expectations, stereotypes, sense of identity and security faced challenges which have left many women with unprecedented economic opportunities, technical skills, cultural powers, and highly rated qualities, and many men in a world whose contexts range from alien to unfamiliar. (37-38)

Both Plant and Susan Faludi agree that men's central identity since the industrial era, particularly in American society, has been focused on the workplace and economic pursuits for the family,

and as these policy changes began to occur, alongside women's movement into the workforce in larger numbers, those identities became threatened. Faludi uses statistics from two decades, the 1970s and 1980s, of the *Monitor's* polls of what men thought best defined "being masculine" in American society and the majority, perhaps surprisingly, replied that it meant being "a good provider for the family" (79). Of course, this has meant different things throughout the course of history, but during a time of substantial changes in laws, policies, and technological and scientific advancements, which proved to be good news for women in regards to equality in the workplace and in domestic life, it also created a genderquake, or a shifting of gender roles and identities, which feels threatening to those who were previously positioned in these institutional and cultural networks as powerful and authoritative. This creates, in Faludi's words, a backlash, whereby the negative impacts of these changes, particularly the struggles and constraints women still find themselves having in the disparities between the policy changes and their lived, situated experience are blamed on feminism and on women's changing circumstances, rather than the underlying ideologies about gender antithesis that still exist and are causing friction. Faludi argues that the backlash is nothing new; it is a recurring phenomenon that returns every time women make "some kind of headway towards equality," and occurs with new rhetorical contexts and new eras and cultural settings (61).

In conjunction with these changing workplace and domestic roles, ideologies of masculinity have changed. Leo Braudy argues "some accounts ascribe this erosion in the traditional definition of masculinity to changes in the workplace that have undermined the importance of male labor; others to fear of feminism, feminization, and female power. Still other versions have targets the effects of technology and mass production or the end of the Cold War" (xii). In a time when American masculinity has changed in a very visible manner because of

these shifts to workplace labor, the masculinity of combat labor was still held up as this pinnacle of manhood, and often reduced debates about these genderquakes to the division of the sexes and the physical bodies, specifically the physicality of war related labor, which typically surfaces in arguments where the conflation between gender and sex persist, as well as the conflation of the material and the discursive bodies. This is also the site of definitional ruptures, which occur in the policy discourse, but also in other more common cultural or societal definitions. Edward Schiappa argues that there is a distinct difference between a definitional gap and a definitional rupture whereby a gap is an instance when a user does not fully understand the definition, but it can be resolved from consulting a dictionary, or broaching a different group of users' appropriated or shifted meaning, such as with slang terms used by a younger generation (*Constructing* 8). Definitional ruptures are different because they occur when a group of language users reject a particular definition. These debates are what often cause backlashes that exist between different generations, different ideologies, and different value and symbol systems. Over the past century, most especially the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the decoupling of the terms sex and gender have caused substantial rupture and backlash. Gender, historically, has been conflated with sex, and still is in many cases, especially in terms of masculinity being associated with the male body and femininity being associated with the female body. When these traditional definitions begin to rupture, and begin to impact workplace and domestic roles and the related cultural, institutional, and societal discourse, those who either benefitted, directly or indirectly, as an agentic, authoritative subjects can struggle with the institutional, political, or cultural changes. In terms of combat related labor, the rupture is most clearly visible in those who cannot conceive of the definition of the female body not being inherently conjoined with femininity, but instead existing as a cultural construct.

Thus, those who recognize this rupture in the prior coupling of sex and gender and those incapable of shifting their perspective will always struggle to see eye to eye on these definitions, which will continue to cause backlash and problems with acceptance of women, and women's bodies, working in particular jobs, in this case, combat labor.

These definitional ruptures also highlight that right now the concern over women serving in war and combat is taking the spotlight because it represents the most recent push for women's equality and the equivalent genderquake, definitional rupture, and backlash. However, this is not a peak in the "march towards equality" (Faludi 61). Popular history has often depicted women's equality as a flat line whereby women maintained the same societal and cultural roles for centuries and then there was a sudden peak in the 20th century of change, as noted above. However, this time period only marks certain policy changes in regards to workplace movement, and also represents other shifts in American society, but as Lisa Small highlights in her timeline of "Women's Legal History in the United States" different shifts and policy changes regarding women's equality and rights have been at play since the foundation of the country's laws were laid in the 17th century. This push towards equality is, then, an accumulation of events, rhetorical contexts, audiences, and assemblage of agency and elements both human and non-human that push and pull, with many peaks and valleys, which the definitional ruptures, genderquakes, and backlashes highlight. Policies often allow for masking these as one-time events, or a set of events in a certain time period, such as women's workplace equality, which bury the continued gender inequality that persists. This is where the disparities between these policy changes and the situated knowledge and lived experiences of women exist; in between these one-time events or policy discourse changes that were supposed to immediately affect change, but whereby the past and current discourse and ideologies about women's roles, their

bodies, and their abilities still persist. This kind of discourse can also reinforce an “us versus them” binary, where there are only two sides of a war, and where men and women are pinned against one another, instead of recognizing the more entangled nature, which is brought to bear more clearly when using the language of vibrant materiality instead. There are many forces present in this entangled process. This is not just a man versus woman issue, or an issue of the human agents themselves pushing and pulling against one another, but many other agentic forces are involved because of prior discourse and prior norms and ideologies that will continue to impact the current and future language, discourse, and ideologies.

A lot of myths and stereotypes about what women are experiencing and why or how feed into the continual gendering process and the operationalizing of gender interests. This dissertation project addresses some of those myths and the ways they continue to perpetuate antithetical logics about men and women in the workplace; women are incapable physically or mentally, women do not want to participate in this kind of work, or that equality has been achieved. However, women’s experiences are often so varied and multi-layered that it would be difficult to label their experiences holistically. Their lived experiences can be very different from the policies that regulate their lives, but just as important is the reality that those who are often the creators and writers or individuals providing input of these policies do not have the same situated knowledges, and many times will never experience these same constraints or the policies will not impact their lives in the same way. This gets to the heart of these popular culture articles and debates about women’s abilities to have it all and choice rhetoric about women’s domestic and workplace roles (Slaughter; Hirschman; Williams; Crittenden). Instead of acknowledging that the problems that still exist are often more holistic-systemic, cultural, and ideological-the agency and intentionality often remains solely focused on individual or collective groups of

women and their choices. Discourse related to choice rhetoric gets thrown around in these instances, for example, it was “her” choice to get out of the military, it was “her” choice to have children, or it was “her” choice not to get married and be a single career woman. The reality, however, is much more complicated and involves many more agentic forces, human and non-human and continued constraints that stem from only revising portions of policies to advocate for gender equality, but then not revising policies down to those that impact the daily working lives of women, such as scheduling, location, and even family related policies that accompany that labor.

This also entails the continued cultural norms that “manipulates a system of rewards and punishments, rewarding those who ‘follow its rules’ and isolating those who don’t” (Faludi 14). By rules, of course, it is meant the cultural and societal norms that are in place and often clash with changing policies or ideologies about women’s equality in conjunction with their colleagues and counterparts. Thus, even while culturally there is a greater understanding of the continuum of men’s and women’s femininity and masculinity, when judging men and women in workplace and domestic roles, they are still often judged on a binary: men do this, women do that. While the focus of this dissertation is on women’s roles in the military institution, and on their continued gendering despite the policy changes, these norms, of course, also impact men, who have an expectation within society of certain types of behaviors and even physical capabilities. Davis, Winslow, and Maume argue that these cultural norms shape interactions between individuals, which continually lead to discriminatory practices in the workplace and domestic spheres based on stereotypes rather than actual experiences, even when the preferences or abilities between individual are identical (6).

These issues, again, speak to women's intentionality and even willingness to push back against the backlashes that continue to "churn underneath the surface, largely invisible to the public eye" (Faludi 12). Faludi argues that it is asking too much to "expect a woman in such a time of isolation and crushing conformism to brave a solitary feminist stand" (Faludi 73). This really gets to the heart of the survey responses of women in EOD and their unwillingness to claim feminist agency. In a workplace environment where they are already the significant minority, sometimes the only woman at a particular command or on a combat deployment, stating intentions that are starkly in contrast to the system that has been in place in the institution for centuries, means taking the chances of exiling herself even further. Faludi refers to this as the "safe harbor" whereby saying one is not a feminist seems the most "prudent, self protective strategy" in battling the mass male culture (73). This also speaks to the ways in which individual women feel as though they cannot form collective bonds in the workplace, as women in EOD stated in their survey responses, not feeling particularly aligned with their fellow female EOD technicians, or feeling as if they did align with them. Of course, Faludi's text is referencing the backlash of the 1980s and 1990s, and does not speak to the current changes of the past 20 years in regards to the ways recent agentic elements, such as social media, other relevant technologies, and continually shifting of gender roles and identity have allowed for women to break away from this safe harbor in some workplace sectors and cultural settings. For example, the recent #metoo movement would not have been possible in the 1990s without the recent advancements of computer, mobile phone, Internet, and social media technologies, which did receive backlash, but did not lessen the impact of women's collective voices taking advantage of this opportunistic moment and has had significant influence on discussions of sexual harassment and assault in American culture.

This points towards other positive factors imperative to understanding the current changes to gender roles and gender ideologies and women's push towards equality in and out of the workplace and in the public sphere of American society, most specifically that these are occurring alongside other shifts in American society caused by technologies and scientific advancements and workplace needs and roles. In these new twenty-first century understandings of workplace roles and domestic labor, women are more adequately prepared to work in pieces and parts: "they are advanced players of an economic game for which self-employment, part-time, discontinuous work, multitasking, flexibility, and maximal adaptability were suddenly crucial for survival" (43). This returns to the image of the boundary figure and the cyborg identity, whereby women have always been on the boundary, multi-tasking or piecing together jobs and portions of their domestic and workplace identities because they were told they did not belong or could not do this particular kind of labor. Plant argues that while men of an older generation only defined themselves by their sense of identity at work, and have thus been devastated by these shifts in workplace needs and technological advancements of the twenty-first century, women have always found themselves more capable of separating because of little options except to continually explore, take risks, change jobs, work from home, or even accept limited availability positions. She also states that under these new circumstances of the changing rhetorical contexts in American society and in the workplace, caused by an assemblage of elements and factors, women are "far better prepared culturally and psychologically" for the new economic conditions that have emerged at the end of twentieth century and into the twenty-first century (43). Thus, alongside definitional ruptures and the decoupling of sex and gender, technology is also changing the way we see gender, and gender related labor, not just in the military but in many other sectors, as well. However, this is not an easy, smooth transition. Much

of technology and workplace policy changes are still operationalized by gender interests, underlying societal cultural norms about gender, but women can use these changing contexts and timing and these evolving technologies to help create more opportunities in this push towards equality.

Future Implications and Research

This dissertation project presents many possibilities for future research within a variety of different fields and through various avenues. While the limitation of available materials because of the secretive and sensitive nature of government documents, at first, seemed like a hindrance for research of this particular institution, it has instead presented opportunities to seek out other fresh methods for inquiry, and for expanding methodologies used within rhetorical, and feminist rhetorical, scholarship. The limitations in methods have also caused substantial gaps in research about the American military institution in many different academic disciplines, particularly in studying its current circumstances and policies. This is also, in part, because the American military institution is often perceived as a separate sector, whereby civilians, albeit, intrigued with a patriarchal, hierarchical, and very orderly institution that engages in warfare throughout the globe, feel like the institution does not influence their daily civilian lives, businesses, or society and cultural norms (Braudy). This could not be further from the truth. The ideologies, values, and discourse of the American military institution deeply reflect the values in the civilian and political sectors of American society, of the past and the present, and while this particular research project only focuses on the operationalizing of gender interests in regards to combat labor, there are many other opportunities for expanding on this project or moving into other avenues of research that more specifically address concerns of heteronormativity, hypermasculinity, and race and ethnicity that currently impact American politics and societal and

cultural norms. A focused, intersectional lens that more carefully attends to the ways in which the intertwined ideologies and discourses on race, gender, and sexuality in the American military institution impact the civilian sectors, including politics, would be a fruitful place for additional analysis for rhetoricians and other related scholars.

To date, inside the field of rhetoric and composition, the study of the American military institution has largely been focused on clusters of scholarship on veteran or active duty students in the writing classroom (Hart & Thompson; Wilkes; Corley), and in other academic disciplines in studying the history of the military institution or the history of women's participation within it (Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee; Godson), or in examining the language and discourse of the military institution on a larger, more general scale (Foucault *Discipline*). Feminist rhetorical scholarship has touched on women's roles in relation to the American military institution, sparingly, but has mostly focused on historiography or in the recovery of an individual or collective group of women as part of the war effort in the civilian sectors, such as Jordynn Jack's "Acts of Institution," which examines women's factory work during WWII and Anne George, M. Elizabeth Weiser, and Janet Zepernick's *Women in Rhetoric Between the Wars*, a compilation of chapters by individual authors that focus on women's changing workplace and societal roles due to the wars. Much of the rationale behind this restricted academic inquiry stems from the limitations placed on gathering evidence sufficient enough for larger projects, but also, I would argue in the perception of the American military institution as a separate, non-evasive entity. This project, however, speaks to reasons why academics should be more interested in the institution as a whole, not just its history or the circumstances of individual women's experiences or of the ways different wars have impacted women's domestic and workplace roles. The discourse of the institution, both explicit and implicit, highlights and reflects cultural norms and

more in-depth analyses of this institution from various angles can provide insight into the positive changes and shifts that are occurring within American culture, but also the constraints and restrictions that still exist and the ways these overlap and reflect the larger discursive norms and ideologies in society.

In particular, additional directions for broadening research connected to the American military institution and intersectional approaches include recent policy repeals or debates of policies related to gender and sexuality to include the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” repeal of 2010 and its implications in the past nine years on LGBTQ service members, specifically the differences between their situated knowledge and lived experiences and what policy discourse states. As well, current debates in the political sector about Barack Obama’s 2016 repeal of the ban on transgender service and the current U.S. President, Donald Trump’s reversing of this policy in 2018. This, in itself, serves as sufficient evidence of the political, societal connections to the American military institution, highlights the vibrant materiality, or the assemblage of human and non-human elements with agentic power in these circumstances, and also reflects the genderquakes, definitional ruptures, and subsequent backlashes that have occurred. Both of these policy changes and debates also reflect the heteronormativity of the American military institution, and warrant the need for additional scholarly research on hypermasculinity, specifically problematic in American culture, which is evidenced in an institution such as this, but is more broad reaching into the civilian sector of American society. These issues again speak to disparities between ideologies from the past and the present and the discourse that occurs from policies in place, specifically policies about homosexual or transgender service members that existed until recently, and issues that are still contested in the United States Department of Defense and in American society. All of these controversies signal that the policies alone do not

swiftly remove the associated gender norms and ideologies, and reflect these definitional ruptures, backlashes, and disparities between ideologies about gender and sex. As well, while homosexuality is more accepted in larger sectors of the United States military, in communities such as the one studied for this dissertation project, specifically connected to combat and labor, there is also a clear connection to hypermasculine ideology and a repression and denigration of homosexuality. With this in mind, Faludi argues for the need to address and fill in the gap of scholarly research on masculinity studies, and while the first edition of her book is a bit outdated, and might not capture the more recent studies of masculinity to include: in rhetoric, Leigh Ann Jones' 2016 book *Coming of Age as a Boy in America: Emerging Masculinity as Rhetoric* or James Catano's 2001 book *Ragged Dicks: Masculinity, Steel, and the Rhetoric of the Self-Made Man*; in more interdisciplinary studies like C.J Pascoe's ethnographic study in *Dude You're A Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*; and even the connections between the military and masculinity, such as Paul Higate's *Military Masculinities* and Leo Braudy's *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*; there are still far more studies on women's changing gender roles, and thus warrant expanding or making more clear connections between hypermasculinity, women's continued constraints, and other backlashes related to gender and sexuality.

In conjunction with sexuality and gender in the American military institution, there is also the need for continued research on its lack of racial and ethnic diversity in particular places, such as in officer roles and in special forces communities. The institution itself is still dominated by white males in leadership roles, which mimics a similar problem in the political and private industry sectors in American society. While this particular dissertation project only looked at the limited number of women in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Community, it is important to

make note that in all four branches, EOD is made up of predominantly white males, which is the same in other infantry and combat related communities, according to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense report titled “Population in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2016” (Center 51). In contrast, the report notes that “compared to civilian counterparts, racial minorities are overrepresented in all military paygrades,” however, they are underrepresented in the officer ranks, as well (51). Public myth often suggests that racial minorities enlist rather than join the officer ranks after college because they are from lower class neighborhoods, but the report suggests that the majority of black and Hispanic enlisted service members came from middle class neighborhoods (51). Further analyzing these underlying causes for segregation and gendering within different communities and the hierarchical sectors of the services would be an important place to expand research, particularly to understand if and how there are connections to the prior policy discourse and cultural ideologies, how this mimics or differs from societal and workplace ideologies and perceptions in the civilian sectors, and reasons why, as well how these are changing or can change.

Pushing Forward with Tectonic Shifts in Rhetorical Studies

The above discussion regarding future implications for this research project, in conjunction with conversation of genderquakes and backlashes in this chapter, call to mind Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch’s use of similar geographic terminology to address the “tectonic shifts” occurring in the fields of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics since the 1980s (34). In their book *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies* they address the importance of the prior research in the fields of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics, but argue for the need to recast the paradigms of inquiry, analysis, and interpretation moving forward, particularly for “understanding complex rhetorical actions across space and

time” in order to disrupt the previous definitions of rhetorical studies as those associated with the public sphere of men (98). I interpret this as their recognition of the importance of the work that has foregrounded the fields of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics, but as rhetorical contexts have changed in the past few decades, in part because of this foregrounded work, and in connection with the shifting of gender roles in the workplace and the domestic sphere, the methods and methodologies of inquiry also need to shift in order to more effectively address the current and future gender constraints, genderquakes, and backlashes, and to look more systematically beyond contemporary values and to envision the possibilities of women’s practices in a broader scope (76). My project speaks to this call for recasting both methods and methodologies of inquiry in the field of rhetoric in an effort to envision women’s practices more broadly, as both impacting and impacted by more systemic, cultural values and ideologies. More specifically, the prior rhetorical practices of women both within and outside of the military institution must be considered in the current shift of policies and discourse about gender roles in the American military institution and in overlapping institutional and cultural contexts. However, now that these shifts have begun to occur, the foregrounding methods and methodologies can no longer account for the newly emerging rhetorical contexts these women are encountering and the current positionality of human agency and authority in these complicated, shifting institutions and cultures. As I learned through trial and error in this project, I could not have moved forward with traditional methodologies of inquiry such as historiography or purely textual analysis because these women are not traditional rhetors and because their position within the American military institution continues to shift in the present day, which speaks to Royster and Kirsch’s call for moving beyond rescue, recovery, and reinscription in feminist rhetorical scholarship (14). This includes broadening the scope of who counts as viable human agents for analysis,

what their rhetorical practices and lives add to the scope of the field, and the impact non-human agency has on the rhetorical context and in interacting with human agents, which requires attending to concerns of present day change in the workplace and domestic realms, and the disparities that still exist between the prior policies, the current policies, and the lived experiences of the women who these policies seek to govern in an effort to better understand these systematic, institutional changes or resistance to change. While it can be helpful to look into the textual, historical documents to see how these rhetorical patterns of gender have occurred and how that discourse still impacts the present day, it is also imperative to push forward into looking at present day evidence, what counts as evidence, and especially how these changes will continue to impact the daily working lives of individual and collective groups of women in the future.

This also points to Royster and Kirsch's advocating for more interdisciplinary scholarship and work that is meaningful on a more global level. This project seeks to make other scholars aware of the real world application of analyzing the American military institution, tied to national and global contexts inside and outside of academia, and how this institution demands further examination through various disciplines and methods in order to better understand those overlapping institutional and cultural contexts and discourses. While the project is rooted in rhetorical and feminist rhetorical analysis, it also pulls from a variety of other disciplines because of the holistic nature of the project, recognizing that as society and its institutions become more globalized, our academic disciplines also demand this kind of interdisciplinarity and collaboration. However, in thinking through how to use Royster and Kirsch's concept of tectonic shifts in the moves and changes occurring in the fields of rhetoric and feminist rhetoric, there are also these same backlashes in the academic institution and in the field of rhetoric as these

changes called on by scholars like Royster and Kirsch have begun to occur in terms of broadening the scope of who and what is analyzed and which methodologies and methods are used. In developing these new lines of inquiry, analysis, and interpretation, there will certainly be push back from those scholars who have worked, or are working, with more traditional methods and methodologies, and requires preparing for those rigorous questions and criticisms of whether or not data driven quantitative or qualitative research is effective for feminist scholarship, how interdisciplinary scholarship can benefit the fields of rhetoric and feminist rhetorics more specifically, and how analyzing non-human agency in conjunction with human agency benefits the field of rhetoric more broadly, specifically our analysis of rhetorical practices and rhetorical contexts.

In anticipating backlash to my particular project, and in thinking through Royster and Kirsch's call for tectonic shifts in the field, I argue that my research methods and major methodological themes including vibrant materiality, situated knowledge and experience, and cyborg-techno bodies are important for framing current and future rhetorical studies. In the twenty-first century, with scholars moving towards more global, interdisciplinary research, it would not bode well to make grand, sweeping statements about the way gendering occurs in each rhetorical context or culture, nor can scholars use the same methods each time in making those varied analyses, as methods that are beneficial to a project such as this, might not be available or worthwhile in another cultural or institutional rhetorical context. However, the methodologies can be used by scholars in several disciplines through various avenues to explore the ways in which the cyborg, techno-body functions to aid different women, or other marginalized individuals or groups, in a variety of constrained cultural, institutional settings. The same can be said for assessing the way women's individual experiences differ substantially from the policies

that govern them, and counting those individual experiences and differing perspectives as evidence in considering the effectiveness of policies and related discourse and whether they adequately reflect those various situated knowledges. Finally, vibrant materiality is a beneficial methodology in rhetorical scholarship for shifting the way ethos and agency are conceived of as purely human, as rhetorical analysis centers on concerns over ethos and agency in a rhetorical context, or the available means of persuasion, for rhetors. Particularly for feminist rhetorics, which often focuses on the agency and ethos of marginalized rhetors and concerns over gender constraints and a human agent's ability to craft or create ethos in the face of these constraints, using a methodological lens that recognizes that these constraints also come from non-human elements can help in discussions of what complicates and restricts these marginalized rhetors' abilities to assert intentionality either individually or in a collective group, and in recognizing that agency and authority are not set, but instead are situational, momentary, or shifting. Attending to these pushes and pulls within the assemblage of agency are essential for making practical, appropriate suggestions for pushing forward with systematic change and geographic shifts and in preparing to adequately address the related backlashes that occur.

In examining women's roles in the EOD community over the past forty years and the newly opened roles of women in combat over the past three years, and comparing this to the history of ideologies and norms about women's roles in wartime labor, the current changes and constraints only represent a small period of history, up against centuries of ideologies that persisted in terms of wartime identities and labor. Just as these ideologies did not become implemented and embedded in societal, institutional, and cultural thought instantaneously, they will not disappear this way either; likely, they will never disappear, as Faludi's assessment of backlash suggests there will always be resistance to change, which will vary by cultural and

societal context. However, this project highlights that these gender ideologies, related policies on equality, and workplace roles are shifting and moving, creating genderquakes and fault lines. Despite these backlashes causing systematic setbacks, and despite not always transpiring in a straight line up, but instead with peaks and valleys, or at a pace that seems insufficient at times, these fault lines and genderquakes signify that the previous definitions, policies, and ideologies cannot ever be returned to what they were before and that movement has occurred and forward momentum will persist.

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APPENDIX A

EOD CREED

(Adapted for the U.S. Navy)

I am a United States Navy EOD Technician, a warrior, a professional Sailor, and guardian of life. I willfully accept the danger of my chosen profession and will accomplish all duties my great country asks of me. I follow in the wake up of those who have served before me with uncommon valor. I was born from the bombs and mines of the blitzkrieg. I have cleared the world's sea lanes, and fought in the jungles, deserts, and mountains around the globe. I will never disgrace the Navy EOD Warriors of the past and will uphold their honor and memory, both on and off the battlefield.

I am a quiet professional! I strive to excel in every art and artifice of war. I adapt to every situation and will overcome all obstacles. I will never fail those who depend on me. I maintain my mind, body, and equipment in the highest state of readiness that is worthy of the most elite warrior. I will defeat my enemies' spirit because my spirit is stronger. I will defeat my enemies' weapons because I know my enemies' weapons better. Though I may be alone and completely isolated, I will trust my teammates and my country. I will complete every mission with honor, courage, and commitment. I will never give up and I will never surrender. Where most strive and train to get it right, I will relentlessly train so I never get it wrong. I am a United States Navy EOD Technician. (Navy EOD)

APPENDIX B

Survey Questions

1. Which branch of the military do you/did you serve in? Feel free to mark more than one if this applies.
 - a. Army
 - b. Navy
 - c. Marine Corps
 - d. Air Force

2. Please indicate whether you were/are an officer or enlisted during your time of service:
 - a. Officer
 - b. Enlisted
 - c. Prefer not to answer
 - d. Other (Text)

3. If you are retired, what were the circumstances of your retirement?
 - a. Family
 - b. Medical
 - c. Dissatisfied with the job
 - d. Ready for a new career
 - e. Other (Text box)

4. Were you married during any portion of your military service?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. If you answered yes to question 6, can you explain how your marriage impacted your service?

6. Were you pregnant during your military service as an EOD technician?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. Did pregnancy impact your military service as an EOD technician?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. If you answered yes to question 9, can you explain how your pregnancy impacted your career/service?

9. While you were active duty or reserve, did you have children?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

10. Number of children?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5 or more

11. If you had children during EOD military service, can you please explain any parenting challenges you encountered? (Text box)

12. If you had children during EOD military service, did you feel as though you had to manage different standards related to parenting than your male counterparts?

- a. Yes
- b. no
- c. I don't know

13. If you answered yes to question #14, can you explain what some of those different standards were? (Text box)

14. Did you find any particular challenges to being a female and attending training schools (e.g. EOD school, dive school, parachute school, etc.)

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. I don't know
- d. Doesn't apply

15. If you answered yes to question #14, can you elaborate on the specific challenges? (Text box)

16. What were your methods for handling/coping with those challenges? (Text box)

17. How many times did you deploy/have you deployed during your military service?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5
- f. 6
- g. Other (Text box)

18. How many of your deployments did you consider to be "combat related" deployments?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. Text box

19. Did you find any challenges to forward deploying as a female in a special forces platoon?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
 - Doesn't apply
20. If you answered yes to question 21, what were the challenges? (Text box)
21. How did you handle challenges indicated in questions 21 & 22? (Text box)
22. Did you find any particular challenges to your daily work life as a female EOD technician?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
 - Doesn't apply
23. If you answered yes to question 24, what were the particular challenges?
- Comments regarding my gender
 - Doubting or challenging colleagues
 - Trouble with leadership
 - Flirting
 - Not taking me seriously
 - Not applicable
 - Other (Text box)
24. How did you manage the challenges indicated in questions 24 & 25?
- Sucked it up
 - Ignored it
 - Took it up with leadership
 - Talked it out with other colleagues
 - Talked it out with friends outside of the community
 - Other (Text box)
25. Do you feel like you were able to embody the concept of the EOD Warrior in the same way as your male counterparts?
- Yes, absolutely
 - Maybe a little
 - No
26. In regards to question #27, why or why not? (Text box)
27. Do you feel like gender impacted your ability to remain successful in a long-term career?
- Yes
 - No

- c. I don't know
- d. Doesn't apply

28. Why did or didn't your gender impact your ability to remain successful in a long-term career? (Text box)

29. Do you feel like you were compared against male EOD technicians, particularly in situations related to war and combat?

- a. Yes, of course
- b. Maybe a little
- c. No

30. If you answered yes to question #27, can you explain those comparisons? (Text box)

31. Do you feel the EOD community has given you enough opportunities to be mentored?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

32. Did you have the opportunity to make connections with other female EOD technicians?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

33. How did you reach out to other females in the community? What avenues did you use to make such connections?

- a. Facebook or other social media
- b. Friends introducing me
- c. Asking current EOD techs to put me in contact
- d. Asking leadership to put me in contact
- e. Another female EOD tech contacted me
- f. I didn't reach out
- g. Other (Text box)

34. How do you feel like the opportunity (or lack thereof) to make friends with other females impacted your career and ability to navigate challenging situations? (Text box)

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. Why did you enlist or choose to commission as an officer in [branch]?
2. How were you recruited or how did you find out about women's ability to participate within the community?
3. Can you talk about the choice/process of getting into EOD?
4. What do you wish civilians knew about women in the military? Women in combat related designations? About female EOD techs?
5. Can you speak more to the particular challenges of marriage in relation to your EOD military service?
6. Can you speak more to the particular challenges of parenting in relation to your EOD military service?
7. Can you explain one or more instances where you feel you have had to manage different expectations as a female EOD technician than your male co-workers?
8. In relation to training and education (e.g., ROTC training, EOD school, etc.) what were the most difficult portions?
9. Why?
10. Do you feel like your male counterparts had to deal with similar or different challenges throughout school and training?
11. How did these challenges compare or differ?
12. Were there specific situations in your EOD career where you felt like your gender came into question or became a significant challenge in your accomplishments in the community?
13. Can you please speak to these specifics?
14. In relation to these challenges, how do you feel like you best managed those situations?
15. Do you/did you serve with other females?
16. What is your opinion/was your opinion of other women you served with?
17. Do you feel as though you were given plenty of opportunities to be mentored as an early female EOD technician?
18. Could you expand on your answer?
19. Did you/have you reached out to other female EOD technicians to help network and for career advice?
20. How do you feel like this has benefitted your experience in the community?
21. How did you reach out? What avenues or modalities did you use to make such connections?

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EDUCATION

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 Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
 Concentrations: Rhetoric, Writing, and Discourse
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 University of Dayton, Dayton, OH

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Old Dominion University, 2012-2018
 Fayetteville Technical Community College, 2010-2012
 University of Mary Washington, 2008-2010

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

“‘Rape Culture’ Language and the News Media: Valid versus Contested Cases.” *Essachess: Journal for Communication Studies* 7.2 (14). December 2014.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Shining Star Teaching Award. 2016. 2017.

Nan Johnson Outstanding Graduate Student, Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. 2015.

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistantship Award, Old Dominion University, 2013-2014.