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Narrative Framing of U.S. Military Females in Combat: Inclusion Versus Resistance

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NARRATIVE FRAMING OF U.S. MILITARY FEMALES IN COMBAT: INCLUSION
VERSUS RESISTANCE

NARRATIVE FRAMING OF U.S. MILITARY FEMALES IN COMBAT: INCLUSION
VERSUS RESISTANCE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Sociology

By

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ABSTRACT

This study utilizes discursive data to examine how the strategic use of narratives inform policies that shape women's participation in military service overall and more specific, the current controversy over exclusion of women from participation in combat roles within the U.S. military. Specifically, I examine popular military newspapers, blogs and the Department of Defense 2012 Report regarding policies and regulations of female service members. In this study, I provide a sociological analysis of current military-cultural narratives and the institutional narrative discussing women's participation in combat roles in order to provide evidence of the current threat to the military form of hegemonic masculinity.

This thesis is approved for recommendation

To the Graduate Council.

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I would first like to extend my great appreciation and thanks to all military service members, past and present and all military families around the United States for their service to this country.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife and future child. I am sincerely grateful for the sacrifices made by my wife and her support in this challenging journey to achieve my degree and finishing this research project. Additionally, I hope that my research may assist in the creation of better world for my children and future military service members and families.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The following study provides evidence of the current threat to the military form of hegemonic masculinity within the U.S. military structure. By examining the structure of narrative responses from the Department of Defense and military culture discussing whether or not women are allowed to participate in direct combat roles adds to our understanding of how the construction of narratives becomes a strategic activity involved in the shaping of lives and human conduct; specifically, these strategically constructed narratives influence the extent to which women have the opportunity to fully participate in all military roles, especially direct combat roles.

When the ACLU filed suit against Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta and the military in November of 2012 on behalf of four female service members, it was not because the conversation of women in combat had not yet begun. Policy recommendations were already in place and all branches of the military had been tasked with determining what areas should be opened to women. The military's top brass acknowledge that in the contemporary "asymmetrical battle space" (Farnell 2009: 20), women are an integral part of combat. Indeed, more women have fought and died in Iraq and Afghanistan than any war since World War II (Benedict 2009: 3). Rather, the ACLU filed suit because the military was not moving "fast enough" on the policy recommendations already in place, arguing that regulations against women in combat are "outdated assumptions and stereotypes about the proper roles of men and women" (USnews.com 2012/11/27).

In January of 2013, Secretary Panetta announced that restrictions against women in combat will be lifted. However, Panetta's decision allows branches of the military until January

of 2016 to determine what areas should remain excluded. Thus, the ACLU's perception that the U.S. military is dragging its feet may be well informed. Examination of the policy recommendations and narrative responses from various branches of the military reveal a complex condition that renders women's participation in combat problematic and controversial in a military culture steeped in a long history of hegemonic masculinity.

The narrative structure of military policy constitutes a "legitimate" story (Czarniawska 1997) but what flows from military policy must be placed within a context. As Schutz (1973) reminds us, the absence of an examination of intention prohibits us from understanding human conduct but to dismiss the social context, in which this occurs, prohibits us from understanding human intention. This research examines the narrative structure of the U.S. military culture that has led to recent proposals to allow women's full integration within the U.S. military structure as well as the broader societal narratives that have informed these proposed changes in military policy.

Problem Statement

Until January of 2013, women were banned by Department of Defense (DoD) policy from being assigned to more than 220,000 of the 1.4 million authorized active-duty positions. Regardless of their individual abilities, qualifications, and performance in the "War on Terror" operations, women have not been allowed to serve in direct combat roles with official titles that would allow for promotion, described as the "brass-ceiling" by some (Iskra 2007:1). Although increasing gender integration within the military has gained substantial support over the years, there has been a similar increase in resistance toward any new military policies that would allow women to have access to any military role, especially direct combat. The recent policy changes are no exception.

Traditionally, the military institution has been a gender-defining entity. Political in nature, the U.S. military constitutes a “collection of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations” (March and Olsen 1989: 160) with the power to define *what* is to be done and *who* is to do it. Identities flow from such rules. Consequently, the military has been and continues to be a gender-sorting institution with narrative strategies that shape and influence the role of women (Segal 1999). Again this does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, broader societal processes are involved in perpetuating historical and social constructions of gender. In order to understand the consequences for female military service members, it is necessary to examine the narrative structure that has informed the current policy changes.

Historically, the social construction of women’s military roles has served as a mechanism for reproducing inequality within the military structure in terms of excluding women from total participation (Segal 1999). Women who seek to enlist or be commissioned in military service often still face scrutiny and barriers that prevent them from pursuing certain interests, such as becoming part of a combat unit sharing the burden of conflict alongside men.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the narrative structure of the U.S. military as it relates to women’s participation in direct combat roles. Narrative plots are the mechanisms by which specific events are made meaningful and they contain a temporal order (see Polkinghorne 1988). The sequence of the story, not the truth or falsity of it, is often what defines the plot and gives narratives their persuasive power (Bruner 1990; Czarniawski 1997). Present-day narratives circulating throughout our culture and institutions are not static entities, but rather, they are in a constant state of motion essentially forming a “discursive milling mass” (Jager 1999: 35).

Discourses evolve over time and become independent as a result of historical processes (Jager 1999). Narratives become a bridge that closes the gap between daily social interaction and large-scale social structures (Todd and Fisher 1998). Loseke (2003) notes that many stories in our world are constructed through social problems discourse, which is often composed of narratives created by a wide variety of authors for the purpose of convincing publics that morally intolerable conditions exist and must be eliminated. In other words, normative discourse plays itself out in claims-making activities and assumes a narrative structure in order to persuade policy-makers and public opinion.

Informed by this understanding of narrative, the specific questions that will guide my research are as follows:

Research Questions

1. What are the narratives of change within military culture that inform the policy changes currently underway for women service members?
2. What are the narratives of resistance that exist within military organizational culture that perpetuate a negative perception of women's participation in combat?

Significance of This Study

Women's participation within America's military continues to encounter resistance; patriarchal sentiments and a masculine ethos still linger within the military culture (Holyfield 2011). More important, narratives influence the current policies and media coverage. Despite the evidence of women serving in combat situations, a cultural ambivalence still exists in the United States as well as other nations with regard to women serving in "combat" roles. This issue is likely to be the focus of continued political conflict for quite some time (Segal 1999).

By examining the narratives that revolve around the current policy changes, this research aims to add to our understanding of the military as a gendered institution that shapes identities of women service members. According to Davis (2002: 3), “within sociology, for instance, there has been a resurgence of interest in narrative as a social act and form of explanation, on storytelling as a social process, on life histories and ‘accounts’ as social objects for investigation, and on the narrative constitution of identity.” By examining the narrative structures embedded in U.S. military culture, identification of specific narrative plots may shed light upon the gender order of military service in today’s armed forces. While narratives are “situationally produced and interpreted, they have no necessary political or epistemological valence but depend on the particular context and organization of their production for their political effect” (Ewick and Silbey 1995: 197). As a legitimate institution, military narratives carry political and social weight in facilitating or inhibiting female military service. Identification of these narratives should inform our understanding of the political and social consequences for female participation in today’s all volunteer force and their proximity to warfare in the “asymmetrical” combat zones of our current military conflicts. A more in-depth discussion of narrative is provided in chapter two. I turn next to a summary of the thesis and its overall content.

Chapter one has identified the research problem, research questions, and its significance for sociological investigation. In chapter two I provide a historical overview of women’s participation in the military that has led to the recent policy changes. Next, I provide a feminist informed social constructionist framework that addresses hegemonic masculinity and the construction of women’s participation or lack of participation as a social problem. Following this theoretically informed framework, I address narrative inquiry as an epistemological/analytic tool for examination of the concerns raised by hegemonic masculinity. Finally, I conclude

chapter two with previous empirical works that have examined women's participation in military life.

Chapter three provides the methodological approach of my study, identifying data gathering, sampling and analysis techniques. Chapter four includes findings from the data with empirical illustrations that inform our understanding of hegemonic masculinity within today's military. Specifically, I identify the narrative plots that both constrain and facilitate women's participation and our understanding of the shifting policies. Chapter five includes both a discussion and conclusion of this research, its limitations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Overview of Women's Military Participation

The involvement of women in American wars dates back to the revolution (DePauw 1981), but during World War II, a major shift occurred in the nature of women's military participation; women served in large numbers and their roles expanded. The civilian industry as well as uniformed military services experienced a major increase in employment of women because they became essential to the war effort (Campbell 1984; Gluck 1987; Holm 1992; Treadwell 1954). As the war progressed, women saw an expansion beyond the usual roles they played such as, health care, administration, and communications to include more technical and combat support jobs. Women served in almost every specialty in the armed services, excluding direct combat while including airplane mechanics, parachute riggers, and weapons instructors (Segal 1999).

In the 1970s, the representation of women in the military increased dramatically due to the start of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). Additionally, U.S. Congress and the U.S. Senate passed the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972. Although never ratified, the combined effects of both occurrences helped open more job specialties to women and increased the number of women recruited into the U.S. military (Segal 1999). In 1971, there were nearly 43,000 women in military service (30,000 enlisted and 13,000 officers), constituting 1.6 percent of military personnel on active-duty (Segal 1999). Toward the end of 1980, there were about 173,000 women meaning they represented around 8.5 percent of total active duty forces (Segal 1999).

A key turning point for women was during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Between August 1990 and February 1991, approximately 41,000 women were deployed for combat operations in the Persian Gulf (Eitelberg 1991). These military women made up about 7

percent of all military personnel deployed, (including all ranks and active duty and reserve personnel combined (Segal 1999). During combat operations, thirteen American women were killed among the 375 U.S. service members, and two women were taken as prisoners of war (Eitelberg 1991). Segal (1999: 573) states “the experiences of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm demonstrated that the policy excluding women from offensive combat roles does not provide complete protection from death or capture.”

Women currently make more than 14 percent of the active-duty positions of the U.S. military; since 2001, more than 255,000 have deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. More than 130 women military service members have been killed and almost 700 wounded (McSally 2011). Women casualties in Iraq are higher than the Korean, Vietnam, Gulf War, and Afghanistan wars combined (Benedict 2009).

Since World War I and II, women have experienced cycles of expansion and contraction in military roles rather than seeing an overall increase. Contemporary representational differences that exist among military branches of service with regard to women are primarily due to the differential occupational distributions. Because women are excluded from combat roles, men continue to be overrepresented in combat occupational specialties (Segal 1999).

Little is known about the process by which women come to be placed in particular types of military occupations. Following their eighteenth birthday, if women choose to enlist in the armed forces and are accepted, they are eventually assigned to one of more than 100 jobs, or military occupational specialties (MOSs); however, some MOSs are classified as involving combat or they are deemed non-combat occupational specialties. Some combat positions are combat engineering, infantry, and artillery (MacLean and Parsons 2010). The American military excludes women from these particular occupations (Department of Defense 2004); therefore,

perpetuating a gender segregated military. Non-combat occupational specialties range from military police to administration (MacLean and Parsons 2010). Of course, there are more non-combat positions that are available to military service members than combat-related specialties.

According to the Department of Defense, direct combat is defined as engaging “an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force’s personnel” (GAO 1998:7). Furthermore, DoD policy states that “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” (GAO 1998:7). Traditionally, the definition of direct ground combat has been linked to particular location on the battlefield (Farnell 2009). But as stated earlier, such distinctions are now blurred in the current wars.

I turn next to my theoretical framework which provides the context for these established divisions along the lines of gender within the history of military culture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW

Social Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity

Berger and Luckmann (1966: 19-20) explain that “the world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these.” A masculine orientation to military life has historically been taken for granted as a reality. But as the above section demonstrates, women have been present throughout warfare, though marginalized. Their continued marginalization reflects the biological essentialism that has held sway through cultural hegemonic beliefs about what constitutes feminine and masculine.

Ridgeway and Correll (2004: 510) argue that “widely shared, hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender and their effects in what we call ‘social relational contexts’ are among the core components that maintain and change the gender system.” Systems of difference, such as gender, become constructed as a distinct organizing principle of social relations through the development of defining cultural beliefs (Ridgeway 2000). Cultural beliefs about gender are hegemonic such that the descriptions of women are embedded or institutionalized in the media, government policy, and normative images of the family (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Further, “framing assumptions about women, men, and the work for which they are suited that are contained in hegemonic gender beliefs can become embedded in the organizational structures, authority lines, job classifications, institutional rules, and administrative procedures of employment firms” (Ridgeway and Correll 2004:524).¹

For Foucault, discourse, consisting of narratives and discursive frames is “...an institutionalized way of thinking that tells people what is right and what is wrong, what is normal and what is deviant” (quoted in Creek 2006: 6) and creates effects of truth which are themselves neither true nor false. An analysis of discourse requires a study of the social construction of ideas or concepts as well as the history involved. Most importantly, it requires the study of the relationship between power and knowledge. The relationship between knowledge and power is important because knowledge creates power; power then uses knowledge to construct and treat people as subjects and they (the subjects) in turn are governed by that same knowledge (Ritzer and Douglas 2004: 457). These regimes of truth come to govern individuals externally through the structural conditions of institutions; however, they may govern people internally as well

¹ (See also, Acker (1990); Baron, Devereaux Jennings, and Dobbin (1988); Nelson and Bridges (1999); Reskin and McBrier (2000)).

wherein individuals internalized “ways of knowing” (Foucault 1980) consequently controlling them. With this in mind, gendered narratives found in the larger society and the military-culture come to be institutionalized and more specifically, they come to govern women by creating a system of inequality. The consequence is that women cannot fully participate in any occupational specialty of their choice within the military, thus, depriving them of full participation.

Connell (1995: 77) claims that “hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power.” Located at the top of the gender hierarchy, hegemonic masculinities exist in relation to subordinated gender constructs. The concept of hegemonic masculinities has been used to explain everything from individual identity constructions, to corporate power and the policies of nation-states (Campbell & Mayerfield Bell 2000; Collinson & Hearn 2005; Demetriou 2001; Donaldson 1993; Hearn 2004). Connell (1987: 186) writes that the process of structuring masculine hierarchies can be regarded as ideological warfare where women are marginalized for the purpose of reducing their power.

Connell (2006:246) notes that with regard to the notion of power, “men have near total control of coercive institutions (military, police) and control of the means of violence (weapons, military training).” Within the military, the ranking system (general to private) ensures that some men are able to maintain a level of dominance over women. Such institutionalized hegemonic masculinities become configurations of everyday gender social practices.

It is important to understand that hegemonic masculinity is in no way fixed. The masculinity essentially occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations meaning that the position is always contestable (Connell 2005: 76). Connell (2005) further stresses that women may challenge the dominance of *any* group of men meaning that old

solutions can be eliminated in order for a new hegemony to be constructed; hence, existing hegemonic forms of masculinity within the military can be transformed for the purposes of eliminating or reducing levels of oppression. Such changes would include a narrative structure that challenges the existing order.

Ewick and Silbey (1995: 200) argue that narratives, as socially organized phenomena, become involved in both “the production of social meanings and the power relations expressed by and sustaining those meanings.” Narratives can function to sustain existing hegemony or they can serve as tools for resisting existing power structures. Accordingly, through the production and reproduction of our stories, narratives constitute the hegemonic structures in society that work to shape social lives and conduct. In other words, narratives at all levels of society, from macro to micro, do more than simply reflect or express existing ideologies—they shape them as well (Ewick and Silbey 1995). This is possible because “...storytelling is strategic. Narrators tell tales in order to achieve some goal or advance some interest. Why are stories told? We tell stories to entertain or persuade, to exonerate, or indict, to enlighten or instruct (:208). We consciously construct narratives around the rules, expectations, and conventions of particular situations.

Thus, the narrative structure of U.S. military policies regarding women’s full participation in direct combat roles as well as existing military-cultural narratives are likely to express hegemonic assumptions about the social world insofar as they are cultural productions embedded within a broader cultural landscape. As with other narratives within a given culture they are “social acts that depend for their production and cognition on norms of performance and content that specifies when, what, how, and why stories are told” (Ewick and Silbey 1995: 197).

With regard to the structure of gender relations, narratives at the macro-level can produce cultural constructions of gender which become imagined characteristics of disembodied types of people that simplify a complex world (Dimaggio 1997). In addition, these narratives construct symbolic boundaries around types (e.g., female versus male) of social actors (Lamont and Virag 2002). According to Massey (2007: 211), “the degree of gender stratification”—can vary widely from place to place and overtime. However, as the following empirical studies suggest, the military’s gendered division of labor has managed to survive due to gendered discourses that have been produced and reproduced.

Previous Examination of Women and the Military

Previous works have examined the imagery and stereotyping of females in the military. For example, Enloe (1993) finds that the designation of specific roles to military service members as appropriate or inappropriate for a specific gender is supported by underlying discourses that are productive of gender. In *The Morning After*, Enloe (1993) attempts to understand how beliefs about masculinity and femininity are both introduced into and reproduced by nation-states. She argues that basic concepts such as citizenship, rights, and national security are infused with gendered meanings and presuppositions (Enloe 1993). Militarized states become central sites for the construction of meanings with regard to manhood and womanhood (Enloe 1993).

The U.S. military employs idealized notions of masculinity and femininity, which serve to define the public face of the military as an institution. During the “War on Terror,” these idealized notions of gender continue to exist within the military and society as a whole (Sjoberg 2010). Sjoberg (2010) states that tropes, such as “just warrior” and “beautiful soul” which are examples of militarized masculinity and femininity pervade the military and the stories that are

created for public consumption are hyper-gendered. Her conclusions come after an exploration of the constructed gender roles found in recent “hero” narratives about individual military service members in the “war on terror” created by various military press releases and any other media outlets that reported the stories. Specifically, Sjoberg examined standout stories like that of Pat Tilman, Jessica Lynch, Chris Carter, and Paul Ray Smith. She discusses how gendered ideologies continue to exist and change in the narratives of idealized military masculinities and femininities. Accordingly, women’s participation in the American military has come to be understood as passive, feminine, and even demure (Sjoberg 2010).

Similarly, gender tropes found in the news accounts surrounding two U.S. military women examined by Lobasz (2008) present a discursive space for American women by reproducing images of who women are (i.e. who they should be), and how they can be expected to act. These media representations of women are constructions of gender that become part of the so-called “common sense” realm of knowledge. According to Lobasz (2008), gendered tropes are used to reproduce traditional views of femininity, reinforcing the existing sex/gender system and classic binary oppositions that have historically put women at a disadvantage. The Iraq invasion of 2003 introduced multiple challenges to gendered stereotypes of “naturally” peaceful women. These challenges to existing gendered stereotypes were given increased salience because of two women who gained notoriety as U.S. soldiers during the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom: Private First Class Jessica Lynch and Private First Class Lynndie England.

Serving as a 19 year old supply clerk in the United States Army, Private First Class (PFC) Jessica Lynch sustained injuries during an enemy ambush during the initial phase of the invasion of Iraq by American and coalition forces. Lynch was then captured by enemy forces

and held as a prisoner of war until her dramatic rescue from an Iraqi hospital by American Special Forces operatives 9 days later. PFC Lynndie England became well known for her participation in the abuse of enemy detainees located at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The 21 year old Army reservist assigned to a military police company was photographed standing next to sexually and physically abused Iraqi prisoners. Lobasz (2008) argues that the media reinforced existing gender norms by reproducing the predominant female gender images of the *Woman in Peril* (Lynch) and the *Ruined Woman* (England) during and after the Iraq War. Liberal feminists used these stories to make the case that women were no less capable of heroism or depravity than men. Essentially, connections of men with war and women with peace were no longer sustainable. Women as a group were neither less courageous nor were they more upstanding than men.

Howard and Prividera (2004) provide evidence of the marginalization of women soldiers by the “masculine-warrior” culture of the military by examining media reports discussing the “rescue” of Private Jessica Lynch. Their examination of 218 media stories about Private Lynch were published between March 23, 2003 and January 13, 2004 covering both the period of her captivity and her return home to the United States. The types of stories included personal profiles, interviews, commentaries, family interviews, newscasts, news articles, and special reports; furthermore, the focus was directed toward language. Researchers discovered three elements of media narratives surrounding the coverage of Private Lynch.

These included 1) the use of gendered archetypes in the rhetorical construction of Lynch, which illustrated how media representations “perpetuate patriarchal constructions of women and men in the military”; 2) the reduction of media coverage to two other women soldiers who challenged traditional views of what it is to be female and male and how the media chose to

address these challenges (Howard and Prividera 2004). Lastly, Howard and Prividera (2004) examined the rhetorical nature of the rescue act, while examining how it simultaneously empowered the military and marginalized women soldiers. They concluded that Private Lynch was reduced to “Jessica” meaning that she was stripped of her military identity and thrown in the “female victim” role. In turn, this allowed for the “rescuers” to be viewed as “warrior heroes.” “Jessica” was seen as a “victim” and the danger she faced was due to her involvement in the military itself, ultimately leading to the perpetuation of biased military practices and the continued marginalization of female military service members. Gender stereotypes are not only produced and reproduced through the media, but also through military training programs by freshly, trained military personnel.

Boyce and Herd (2003) examined the extent to which gender stereotypes were held by military recruits who were training for military leadership positions. They developed and tested four hypotheses: 1) Male and female cadets will perceive successful officers as possessing attitudes, characteristics, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general; 2) Cadets with more exposure to female commanders will perceive successful officers as possessing attitudes, characteristics, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to both men and women than will cadets with less exposure; 3) Perceptions of successful officers as possessing attitudes, characteristics, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general or women in general, are moderated by cadet performance level and gender; and finally, 4) Perceptions of successful officers as possessing attitudes, characteristics, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general, are moderated by cadet seniority.

Boyce and Herd (2003) utilized a random sampling method to sample members of the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA). A total of fifteen squadrons participated in the study and

nearly one-third of participants indicated that they had not been directly under the supervision of a woman cadet commander. Results of the study indicated that military leaders were perceived by men to have possessed characteristics more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general. Despite having greater experiences with women leaders, men still did not alter their masculine stereotype of successful leaders. On the other hand, women were observed as more likely to ascribe traits typically associated with women leaders to “successful officers.” Finally, results showed that the higher the level of seniority male cadets possessed, the stronger their masculine stereotypes as opposed to their junior classmates. This finding indicates that the military academy’s strong masculine culture results in an increased masculine trait leadership bias moving closer to graduation.

Hinojosa (2010) interviewed 43 men planning to enter active duty military service explored how men socially construct masculine hierarchies. Men typically regard themselves as more morally oriented, self- disciplined, physically able, emotionally controlled, martially skilled, or intelligent than civilians, members of other branches, different occupational specialties, and of different rank (Hinojosa 2010). Hinojosa (2010) finds that men are involved in the construction of hierarchies that subordinate others, such as women, while simultaneously placing their own perceived characteristics in positions of symbolic dominance. Hinojosa concludes that current military policies provide symbolic resources that enable hegemonic masculine identities.

Accordingly, men engage in ideological warfare against women in the military by discursively comparing themselves (their actions, behaviors, perceived virtues, abilities, and motivations) to others (Hinojosa 2010). They exercise symbolic power rather than real power

by constructing a hegemonic masculinity through discursive subordination. This process provides men with the practice necessary for the domination of others.

Women in the military not only encounter marginalization within the military itself, but also out in the broader public. Wilcox (1992) performed a study that identified a bias against women serving in combat throughout the larger society. Using data from the 1982 General Social Survey (GSS), he explored public support for women in combat. Findings suggested that (90%) of the population supported the idea that women should be allowed to participate in traditionally female military roles, whereas only (25%) were in favor of allowing women into ground combat roles. Thus, gender role attitudes were the strongest predictor of support for traditional roles and non-support for expanded roles in the military.

Sasson-Levy (2003) examined the experiences of 47 Israeli women soldiers and found that women's participation in military "masculine" roles shaped their gender identities according to the dominant, hegemonic masculinity of the combat soldier through three interrelated practices: 1) mimicry of combat soldiers' bodily and discursive practices; 2) distancing from "traditional femininity"; and 3) trivialization of sexual harassment. While women soldiers individually transgress existing gender boundaries; they come to internalize the military's masculine ideology and values, learning to identify with the patriarchal order of the army and state. Consequently, this process of internalization accounts for a pattern of "limited inclusion that reaffirms their marginalization, thus, prohibiting them from developing a collective consciousness that would challenge the gendered structure of citizenship" (Sasson-Levy 2003: 440).

Sasson-Levy and Katz (2007) found that regardless of a declared aim of the Israeli military to de-gender the military officer training and create an environment consisting of equal-

opportunity for women, the program actually led to a dual process of de-gendering and re-gendering that further perpetuated military masculinities. The process of re-gendering emerged “mostly through the ways in which cultural codes, stereotypical schemas, and hegemonic gender beliefs were enacted and performed in daily interactions” (Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz 2007:107).

Sasson-Levy and Katz (2007) interviewed seventy male and female cadets, thirty team commanders, eight company commanders, four battalion commanders, and two commanding officers who were male and female. They also interviewed infirmary staff, base doctors, physical training instructors and officers, and master sergeants which are high-ranking enlisted personnel. In addition, data analysis consisted of looking at written texts, such as lesson plans, feedback papers, formal texts such as “The Rationale of Officer Training,” and commanders’ position papers. Quantitative data were also collected from two military bases. The data included medical data (visits to the infirmary and medical exemptions from activities, physical training and navigation grades, theoretical test grades, peer evaluations, and percentages of dropouts/dismissals from the course. This data was examined in order to verify or refute existing common stereotypes and anecdotal explanations, such as the claim that women used the medical facilities more than men. Their study reveals how the cultural schemas are able to maintain the gender order despite efforts to modify or change it. Analysis indicated that the intersection of resources and schemas shape both the durability and the changes that can occur. Finally, they conclude that “a policy of gender integration that disregards the cultural schemas prevalent in the institution is doomed to fail or at the very least to achieve only a partial success” (Sasson-Levy and Katz 2007:129). However, they argue that masculinity is deeply embedded in military

culture for both males and females, is more sophisticated and therefore harder to identify and change.

Regardless of the attempts to re-gender females in the military, research of Israeli women soldiers post service reveals they were acutely aware of their marginalized status within the military. Sasson-Levy, Levy, & Lomsky-Feder (2011) examined content from “Women Breaking the Silence,” (WBS) a collection of testimonies from 20 Israeli women soldiers who had served in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Half of the testimonies were from women who served in combat roles, while the remaining testimonies were from women who served in administrative positions or combat support roles in the (OPT) on the front line. Analysis of the antiwar discourse in WBS revealed that women ex-soldier’s voices were framed by the women’s marginal and challenged status as “outsiders within” the military organization. Women soldiers exhibited a critical gendered voice that challenges combat masculinity post service; thus, the testimonies of women soldiers who served in the Israeli military challenge the taken-for-granted gender order of military societies in two ways: both their source of symbolic legitimacy and the content of their gendered and political criticism undermine hegemonic gendered norms that continually regard men as warriors and the women as mothers of warriors or peace-makers.

In sum, these studies reveal that masculinity remains deeply embedded, regardless of policy changes, especially when policies do not take into account the power of culturally held stereotypes or challenge such assumptions. Similar to the studies reviewed above, a discursive battlefield is visible in U.S. society around the continued, though potentially reduced, exclusion of women from military combat roles (Francke 1997). Lobasz (2008: 308) writes “the images and tropes that proliferate in American public discourse on war, from the draft dodger and the

embittered veteran to Private Benjamin and G.I. Jane, are intrinsically gendered, and help shaped our ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman both in-and outside the military.” Examining the current narrative landscape should reveal just how far the pendulum has swung with regards to women and combat.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Epistemological Perspective

Davis (2002) writes that narrative analysis can serve multiple purposes with regard to social research. Narrative can be a focus of research in at least two ways. First, it can serve as an object of inquiry and explanation; social researchers study how stories are socially produced and function to mediate action and constitute identities. The second approach utilizes stories as a lens or window that allows us the opportunity to access or reveal other aspects of the social world (Davis 2002). Narrative examination then becomes a crucial analytical tool.

For purpose(s) of this study, I employ a qualitative research design in order to gain an understanding of how military narratives explain, justify, or resist women's participation. Specifically, Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey (2011: 9) define qualitative research as an approach that "examines people's experiences in detail, by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, or content analysis." Therefore, I choose to conduct a content analysis of popular web-based newspapers and blogs that active and former military service members visit because these sources represent overall military sentiment toward the policies that influence women's participation. In order to identify the official or legitimated narratives regarding women in combat roles, I also examine the text of the most recent military policy that addresses this particular issue.

Background for the Study

We cannot study events or people in a vacuum. As a former member of the United States Marine Corps and a veteran of combat, it is important that I reveal my own background as a researcher. Our own social location often influences our choice of topic and, without full

disclosure, may compromise our findings as well. With regard to my own feelings on the issue of women participating in combat roles, I am ambivalent in so far as I have both positive and negative feelings. For example, as a former marine infantryman, I never personally worked directly with women in a combat environment. I can imagine scenarios wherein female presence might assist combat operations but I can also visualize scenarios wherein lack of physical strength might lead to casualties of fellow combatants. Consequently, I focus upon the narratives available and employ a sociological view that examines the content of the debate from other military members. I am not aligned with either side of the debate but rather want to better understand the cultural themes inherent in them.

Background and Setting:

Sample Selection

The military narrative is best accessed using a homogenous/purposive sampling method (Patton 2002). The discussions contained within these articles and blogs are created by military members almost exclusively with similar backgrounds and interests. These texts are also theory-based (Charmaz 2006; Patton 2002) in so far as they best represent the military culture perspective generally. With regard to my sampling time frame, I select articles beginning from March 2003 through October 2012 to represent a period of considerable discussion around the issue of allowing women to participate in combat roles. Debates about women in the military and participation in combat roles began following the capture and rescue of Private First Class Jessica Lynch during the initial phase of the American invasion of Iraq. I examine articles discussing issues regarding women serving in combat roles within the U.S. military, online debates about changes in military policy that would allow for the integration of women into combat units, and discussion blogs open for comment from prior and active military service

members surrounding the issue of women serving in combat units. I utilize the Google search engine in order to find relevant articles, news reports, and discussion blog posts. I employ the following combinations of search terms to identify any relevant material related to the issues under study:

- Women and combat (175,000,000 results)
- Women in combat (58,200,000 results)
- Women in combat roles (2,220,000 results)
- Women in military combat roles (1,150,000 results)
- Exclusion of women in military combat roles (4,050,000 results)
- Women and combat roles (2,460,000 results)
- Military times and women in combat (22,100,000 results)
- Military times and women in combat roles (3,560,000 results)
- Marine corps times and women in combat roles (1,370,000 results)
- Army times and women in combat roles (2,810,000 results)
- American legion and women in combat roles (582,000 results)
- Stars and stripes and women in combat roles (176,000 results)

Using a funnel approach, I choose to sample from the above those articles that address the proposed policy of women and combat specifically. Documents in the sample are restricted to military related publications in order to assess the overall sentiment toward the proposed changes. Specifically, I examine 36 military related articles and on-line comments posted in order to assess narratives of resistance versus narratives of change or positive comments toward inclusion of women. The title and publication are identified below:

Navy Times www.navytimes.com

“DoD to issue overdue report on women in combat.” February 8, 2012

“Santorum: Women shouldn’t serve in combat.” February 10, 2012

“Lawsuit challenges combat exclusion for women.” May 25, 2012

Marine Corp Times www.marinecorptimes.com

“No women volunteer for Infantry Officers” July 2, 2012

“A Marine Corps 1st: Women take Infantry Officers Course.” October 2, 2012

“Corps IDs units for women-in-combat research.” May 29, 2012

Army Times www.armytimes.com

“Army brass mulls sending women to Ranger School.” May 16, 2012

“General: USMC not giving women infantry jobs.” April 25, 2012

Tillmans, Jessica Lynch to testify on Hill.” April 23, 2007

“Ex-POW Lynch: New perspective on Iraq wounds.” December 14, 2011

“Combat jobs open to female soldiers this week.” May 15, 2012

Military Times www.militarytimes.com

“SECNAV: All Navy jobs should be open to women.” April 11, 2011

“Female Soldiers say they’re up for battle.” April 24, 2011

“Panel cites progress in putting women on subs.” June 29, 2011

“Bill would lift combat restrictions for women.” May 20, 2011

“Women’s groundbreaking flight sparks debate.” April 16, 2011

“First woman picked to lead carrier air wing.” June 2, 2010

“Pentagon opens more military jobs to women.” February 9, 2012

“Combat jobs open to female soldiers this week.” May 15, 2012

“Panel: Let women serve in combat roles.” December 7, 2010

“Report: Too many whites, men leading military.” March 7, 2011

“Women in combat: Army to open 14K jobs, 6 MOSs.” May 2, 2012

“Back home, female vets fight for recognition.” July 13, 2010

“First woman to lead air wing reports next year.” June 21, 2010

Stars and Stripes www.stripes.com

“Reactions mixed on women in combat arms.” January 14, 2011

“Marine general: Women’s infantry training will be same as men’s.” May 3, 2012

“Soldiers downrange support idea of women in combat but question how it would play out on the front lines.” February 10, 2012

“Odierno eyes more expansion of women’s combat roles in the fall.” May 16, 2012

“Advocates of women in combat not in fight.” June 5, 2012

“The Army’s no place for young men.” September 26, 2012

“Army uniform designed for women now for all.” September 26, 2012

“Commission to recommend allowing women in combat units” January 13, 2011

Burn Pit www.burnpit.us

“Will adding women to Combat Arms help or hinder this country’s ability to fight wars?” April 5, 2011

“Survey results: Survey of Burn Pit readers regarding gender exclusion policies in the combat arms.” April 4, 2011

“Is women in combat next?” January 20, 2011

“Wanted: Your opinion on inclusion of women in combat arms units.” March 31, 2011

American Legion www.legion.org

“Is it a good idea to allow women to serve on U.S. Navy submarines?” February 2010

“The same standards for everyone” May 6, 2011

“Insight into today’s military” March 22, 2011

“The measure of a woman” August 1, 2008

“Commander calls for greater focus on the needs of female veterans: Hill testifies at joint session of congressional committees.” September 10, 2009

“Women Veterans” 2012

“Legion panel focuses on military women” April 1, 2011

“Panel focuses on women veterans issues” September 7, 2011

“Should military restrictions against women in combat be lifted?” March 2011

To sample the military’s “official” narrative, I examine the report issued to Congress on February 2012 to the Department of Defense discussing the review of laws, policies and regulations restricting the service of female members in the U.S. armed forces. This particular document captures the legitimated narrative of the military institution by including both the mandate to examine women’s inclusion and the “official” responses from each of the military branches and the Department of Defense. The report was prepared by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness. The report is organized in the following manner:

- Executive Summary (i-iii)
- Report to Congress Regarding Women in Service Review: (p.1-16)
- Sections that include the Institutional Mandate:
 - *Section 535* (p.1)
 - *Restrictive Laws, Policies, and Regulations* (p.1-2)
 - *Scope of the Review* (p.2)
 - *Review of the Findings* (p.3)
 - *Equitable Opportunity to Compete and Excel in the Armed Forces* (pp. 3-4)
 - *Elimination of Co-location Exclusion* (p.4)
 - *Exception to Policy* (pp.4-5)
 - *Gender-Neutral Assignment Standards* (p.5)
 - *Notification to Congress* (p.14)

- *Legal Analysis* (pp.14-15)
 - *Conclusion* (pp. 15-16)
 - APPENDIX A- Direct-Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (pp.17-18)
- Sections that include the Narrative Responses:
 - *Air Force* (p.6)
 - *Army* (pp.7-8)
 - *Marines* (pp.9-10)
 - *Navy* (pp.11-13)
 - APPENDIX B- Army Detailed Description of Positions to be Opened (pp.19-20)
 - APPENDIX C- Marine Corps and Navy Positions to be Opened (pp.21-22)

Data Analysis

The coding processes for this study consists of initial codes or “chunk by chunk” as I move through large amounts of text. The purpose of initial coding is to organize the data in order to prepare for the next stage, which is focus coding. According to Charmaz (2006: 46), focus codes “pinpoint and develop the most salient categories in large batches of data.” Subsequently, the researcher then identifies the most prevalent focused codes. Following the focus coding process, I utilize axial coding to relate emergent categories to subcategories. The purpose of axial coding is to specify the properties and dimensions of a category (Charmaz 2006). Essentially, the aim is to link emergent categories with subcategories then consider their relationships (Charmaz 2006). In the process of axial coding, dimensions and properties of salient themes will be identified. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998: 125), the process of axial coding answers important questions such as “when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences.”

While engaging in the process of initial and focus coding, I identify any *invivo* codes that might be embedded within the texts. *Invivo* codes serve as a “symbolic marker of participants’ speech and meanings” (Charmaz 2006: 55). This is especially prevalent in military language and reflects the military’s distinctive culture. While I utilize the constant comparative method, I am

also informed by the *a priori* themes available in the literature (e.g., evidence of masculinity, gender performance, resistance, and marginalization). For Charmaz (2006), coding becomes an important link between the data collection and developing emergent theory to explain the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Military Narratives: From Official to Unofficial

This chapter is organized by addressing each of the five areas of policy that were required in response to the Congressional mandate given to the Department of Defense. I begin with a summary of the policies, the “official” responses to and identify implemented policy changes. Next, I offer the official narrative justifications for inclusion or continued exclusion of each policy. I present these in order to reveal the overall challenges as they relate to the suggested policy changes. With regards to the narratives, both represent military culture in distinctly different ways. As will be revealed throughout, the “official” narratives are identified as (limited) narratives of change but also include some evidence of resistance, though censored. The “unofficial” narrative responses include largely uncensored resistance. While in the minority, those narratives responses that encourage female inclusion are presented as well and identified as narratives of change. I begin with a summary of the Report to Congress and follow with an analysis of the “official” narrative structure.

Summary of the overall report to Congress

The overall policy suggestions which resulted in the 2013 policy changes announced by the Secretary of Defense address five major policies the Department of Defense was required to revisit by Congress. These are reproduced below along with the DoD responses and the actual policy changes made:

- 1) **Direct Ground Combat: DoD policy prohibits women from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground.**

Response: Secretary of Defense has approved an exception to the 1994 policy that would allow the United States Army, United States Marine Corps, and the United States Navy to open positions at the *battalion* level of direct ground combat units, in select occupational specialties currently open to women.

Policy change: Positions opened at battalion level. These positions (USA: 755, USMC: 371, USN: 60) do not include occupational specialties closed to women, such as infantry.

- 2) **Berthing & Privacy: The Secretary of the Military Department concerned may restrict positions where the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive.**

Response: The Department retains judicious use of this element of policy until such as facilities and weapon systems can be constructed to provide a reasonable measure of personal privacy. While the Department has the desire to retrofit barracks and weapon systems to facilitate the unrestricted assignment of women, as a practical matter, resource and readiness concerns require a more methodical approach.

Policy change: The intention of the Department is to address this issue in the design phase for any future plans for construction and/or retrofitting of weapon systems. The Department further states that it will open positions accordingly.

- 3) **Co-location: The Secretary of the Military Department concerned may restrict units and positions that are doctrinally required to physically co-locate and remain with direct ground combat units that are closed to women.**

Response: The Department has concluded that the elimination of co-location as an element in the Department's policy is prudent at this time... This provision will no longer be an authorized reason for restricting positions or units.

Policy change: The Army designated 13, 319 positions as restricted by this element and will open these positions after the required congressional notification period has elapsed. Embedded within these positions are 80 units and 6 occupational specialties previously closed to women.

- 4) **Long Range Reconnaissance & Special Operations Forces (SOF): The Secretary of the Military Department concerned may restrict positions involving long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions.**

Response: Because eliminating this provision may take significant research, time, and effort to achieve, no change to this element is recommended at this time.

Policy change: No change

- 5) **Physically Demanding Tasks: The Secretary of the Military Department concerned may restrict positions, which include physically demanding tasks that would exclude the vast majority of women.**

Response: Accomplishing this complex objective will require significant resources, time, and effort; as much, the Department is not recommending a change to this element at this time.

Policy change: No change

Analysis of the Structure of the Military Narrative

It is important to note that while the Military's "official" narrative is normative and constitutes a "legitimated" story, it is also a response to the reality of war conditions and shifting military culture. As Connell (2005) reminds us, hegemonic masculinity dominates institutions such as the military but demonstrated in the Congressional mandate to address the issues, this is being challenged. Thus, military masculinity is a moving target, always responding to contested

narratives both from within and outside the institution. Consequently, the “official” narrative is one of necessity due to the fact that females have been pulled into combat operations since the beginning of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, regardless of established military policy.

The gender sorting function of the military that has historically advantaged males is in flux but as with all bureaucratic institutions, change is approached with caution. This is especially so for an institution that has historically advantaged males over females.

While it may appear at first glance that the Department of Defense (DoD) policy changes are intended to catch up to the lived reality of warfare, there is likely far more at stake than simply responding to the actual conditions of the current wars. Indeed, the dominant culture of the U.S. military hangs in the balance. A slowed response should not be surprising as the “unofficial” narratives will reveal.

The narrative is especially cautious in its recommendations for full scale integration. As the policy reveals, the DoD employs a strategically hyper-rational discourse for blocking select occupations, citing the need for more scientific research for determining females’ “suitability” for direct combat. This combines with a patriarchal view that females should be protected from the extreme conditions of combat and a biological essentialism that deems them unsuitable for combat and unsuitable for cohabitation with males. While these are not mutually exclusive categories they combine with practical concerns over costs to create an especially cautious approach to full integration.

For example, the issue of what constitutes physical fitness of a particular occupational specialty is combined with a cited need for research. The DoD states that “establishment of scientifically supportable physical standards” is necessary before the military can expand the

number of combat occupational specialties. Moreover, in order to determine what “standards” should be used with regards to physical fitness, the DoD is no doubt aware of the potential backlash from within military culture for what is already perceived as “lower” standards for women. Not surprisingly, it responds stating, “accomplishing this complex objective will require significant resources, time, and effort; as such, the Department is not recommending a change to this element at this time.” Justification for this includes a stated concern for the safety of troops, stating:

“The establishment of scientifically supportable physical standards will likely mitigate the number of injuries incurred during a career (for both men and women) and expand the number of occupational specialties open to women. [Defense 2010:ii]

The current report implies that women are too weak and will put male soldiers at risk, concluding that, “Job related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the vast majority of women Service members” (Defense 2010:2). These statements reveal a biological essentialism that may pose a challenge for female service members who opt for the elite masculine specialties of special ops, infantry, or reconnaissance. The Department states:

The types of missions associated with reconnaissance and special operations pose several challenges related to the assignment of women, These missions involving direct ground combat, do not afford individuals personal privacy, and are the most physically demanding in DoD. The austere conditions and physical demands of such operations serve as significant barriers to *both* [emphasis] men and women (Defense 2010:ii).

Interestingly, the hardship of these conditions is noted for both men and women but the restrictions apply to women, reflecting an underlying assumption that natural/biological differences exists between men and women and that women cannot operate effectively under

austere conditions and cannot perform the physical tasks required if placed in combat roles within the military. In other words, placing women in direct combat challenges the gendered systems of the “masculine war machine” that continues to rely heavily on physical prowess (Sasson-Levy 2003:440).

In those areas where no changes are suggested, further research is cited with the intention of a final report to Congress in 2016. In its February 2013 news release, the Department of Defense reports that this will allow the military time to assess women’s integrations:

Validating occupational performance standards, both physical and mental, for all military occupational specialties (MOS), specifically those that remain closed to women.

Eligibility for training and development within designated occupational fields should consist of qualitative and quantifiable standards reflecting the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for each occupation. For occupational specialties open to women, the occupational performance standards must be gender-neutral as required by Public Law 103-160, Section 542 (199/3).

[<http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=15784>]

In their policy recommendations, the Department of Defense responds to the congressional mandate to investigate whether women have received unequal career advancement within the military through the previous policy that restricts women from combat related occupational specialties and to consider the relevance of co-location restrictions. They report to all branches of service that they will no longer be allowed to restrict positions or units using the previous policy, stating it is no longer “prudent...in light of the current operational environment” (DoD:ii). In addition, the DoD acknowledges that the policy “has become irrelevant given the modern battlespace” (ibid) yet complications to full implementation are then cited as cost

prohibitive, requiring additional research and resources. This is informed by the various responses from each branch of the military.

Although the DoD narrative denies an unequal playing field for females, stating it finds no “indication of females having less than equitable opportunities to compete and excel under current assignment policy (DoD:4), it also cites expansion as a means for women to have greater opportunities for career advancement. This was reiterated again in a February 2013 Pentagon news release which states, “Ensuring that a sufficient cadre of midgrade/senior women enlisted and officers are assigned to commands at the point of introduction to ensure success in the long run.” By restricting women from full participation within the military system, the Institution is thus limiting opportunities for women to advance within the structure. Next, I turn to the responses of the various branches of military service. These responses combine to constitute the above “official” response.

While each military branch of service responds rhetorically with support in eliminating the co-location element from DoD’s policy, as it relates to the “Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule”, they remain resistant. The most obvious inclusion is found within the Army response which states that 66 percent of its active component positions are open to women and as the largest Service, contains more active component personnel than the Marine Corps and Navy combined. As reflected in the DoD report, the Army reports that recent experiences on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan reveal that women should be assigned to open occupational specialties in “select” direct ground combat units at the battalion level. Their stated goal is to experiment with these “select” occupations in order to assess the “suitability and relevance of the direct ground combat unit assignment prohibition and inform future policy decisions.”

While the Army supports *limited* inclusion, it cites slowed integration due to “practical barriers.” Those areas still not available include Army officer occupations such as infantry, and special forces, “with the largest number of restrictions in the infantry.”

Enlisted occupations closed to women Soldiers include four infantry specialties, combat engineer, eight field artillery specialties, special forces, three armor specialties, and three armor or artillery mechanical maintenance specialties. [DoD Report to Congress, 2/2012:13]

While the Army states that it supports gender-neutral standards, it adds that it requires more time to determine the job-related physical requirements. As the unofficial narratives will reveal, physical fitness requirements are a politically charged issue among members of the military. Consequently, the proverbial “can” is kicked down the road by stating that further change will come depending upon experiential outcomes.

The Marine Corps response to the congressional mandate indicates existing occupational specialties and units closed to women are, in fact, due to its primary mission of engaging in direct ground combat and that 68 percent of its active component positions are currently open to women. While the Marine Corps states its position of support with regard to eliminating the co-location element from DoD’s policy, it further states, the recent experiences gained from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan assisted in its decision to request an exception to policy. The request for an exception to policy stated a desire to allow “the assignment of Marine Corps and Navy unrestricted female company grade officers and female noncommissioned officers in the grades of E-6 and E-7, in open occupational specialties, into select direct ground combat units at the battalion level” (DoD:9). Further, the Marine Corps, like the Army, noted that the experience gained by these select assignments will assist in the assessment of whether or not the

direct ground combat unit assignment prohibition is suitable and relevant and informative with regard to any future policy implementations.

Much like the Army, the Marine Corps constructs a narrative in support of slow-change and a hyper-rational approach to any and all future changes with regard to allowing women to participate in combat roles; however, these can also be identified as a form of resistance insofar as they do nothing to eliminate the hegemonic form of military masculinity that serves to reproduce the inequality that women face within the military structure. From the beginning of the Marine Corps narrative response to the Congressional mandate, the Marine Corps engaged in resistance by justifying its restrictive actions toward women due to its fundamental mission of engaging in direct ground combat which, like the Army, defines capability using physical strength measures that are distinctly masculine. Furthermore, the narrative structure of the Marine Corps response reveals a resistance, citing practical barriers. It is then evident that the Marine Corps is involved in the construction of strategic narrative responses that resist changes that would allow for women's increased role in participating in the military structure. Additionally, the Marine Corps response indicates they are currently involved in a process of developing gender-neutral physical standards in order to move in the direction of opening more positions for women. By "examining the physical demands borne by Marines currently serving in combat arms units in Afghanistan", they will be in a better position to construct new, gender-neutral physical standards in lieu of gender-restricted policies (DoD Report to Congress, 2/2012:10).

In January of 2013 the Marine Corps reported that flexed arm hangs would be replaced with pull ups, implying this might allow more females into infantry training. The Marine Corps has been experimenting with putting females into infantry officer (IOC) training under the

current physical fitness requirements. As of April 2013, no women have passed the course. Again, the Marine Corps employs a wait and see approach in order to resist changes that would allow for women's full participation in the military structure. As with the Army, top command is no doubt approaching with caution in response to stark resistance among rank-and-file personnel.

The Navy mentions in its response to the congressional mandate that restrictions currently faced by female Sailors are due "largely to berthing constraints, although exclusion from special operations and direct combat units also apply" (DoD:11). In 2011, the Navy reported that 88 percent of its active duty component was open to women, but is resistant to expansion stating that "the prohibitive costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements affected the Navy more than the other Services due to the enormous expense of modifying sea-going vessels", thus, justifying the restrictions women face because of the costs of retrofitting, privacy problems, and practicality (DoD:11). Hence, the Navy employs a narrative response that actively constructs berthing configurations as a problem, which becomes a rationale for gender-restrictive policies. Similar to the Army's response to retrofitting, the female body is viewed as problematic and concerns for cohabitation and female privacy reflect a patriarchal view that women, more so than men, need privacy. To put it another way, the Navy utilizes a biological essentialist argument to justify its actions in continuing the ongoing pattern of not allowing women to fully integrate within the military structure.

Finally, as with all branches, the Navy restricts women from direct combat operations, "Navy women serving in support of the Fleet Marine Force are assigned in accordance with Marine Corps policy, meaning they are prohibited from serving in direct ground combat units" (DoD:12). The Navy justifies the exclusion by stating, "closed assignments are not critical for advancement to the senior enlisted ranks and qualified women do have opportunities to serve

with Marines and to deploy to the current theaters of operation” (DoD Report to Congress 2012:12).

The Air Force also states it is in support of eliminating co-location from DoD’s policy. However, unlike other branches of service that draw recruits to a masculine allure, the Air Force is not as gender constrained. Moreover, the Air Force noted that very few limitations exist with regard to the roles that women can be assigned; specifically, 99 percent of the 299,852 active component positions are currently open to women. It is likely that occupational specialties are not addressed because the “boots on the ground” remain almost exclusively Army and Marine. The issues that face resistance among other branches (direct ground combat) are less evident in the Air Force.

Combined, these responses to the congressional mandate constitute the “official” narrative of the military presented in the Department of Defense report. All branches of service respond to the issue of women in expanded roles positively with the exception of direct ground combat which remains the last exclusive domain for men. Overall, the narrative responses serve to characterize women as an integral part of military operations so long as they do not impose upon the masculine definition of warrior wherein physical strength is still the ultimate yard stick for capability. In its response to congress, the DoD continues to perpetuate an essentialist binary perception of gender under the auspices of protection of military effectiveness. Women continue to be seen as problematic at the level of combat. Drawing from a variety of concerns, from costs, protection, segregation, to a standard of physical strength that remains advantageous to males over females, no branch challenges the underlying hegemonic masculinity of the military. Finally where the military’s official narrative can be seen as censored and appealing to legal and politically charged mandate, the “unofficial” narratives reveal the underlying sentiment. As

these will reveal, physical fitness is code for strength and prowess. Indeed, perhaps what is most important in the official narrative is what is absent.

The second section of this chapter examines the “unofficial” narratives. As this section reveals, military members not associated with the policy narrative provide a far less censored response. Throughout both sections, gender frames are evident. Indeed, as Ridgeway (2007) argues, gender is one of our culture’s two or three primary frames for organizing social relations. Gender is a multilevel structure, system, or institution of social practices that involves mutually reinforcing processes at the cultural, institutional, organizational, and individual levels of society (Acker 1990; Lorber 1994; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Risman 1998, 2004). This is especially prevalent among the unofficial narratives.

Unofficial Narratives of Military Culture

The total number of responses to the military articles sampled totaled well over 500 with comments from self-identified military personnel and comments military family members, such as spouses. Those self-identified as non-military were excluded from analysis. The vast majority, over 90 percent of posts are resistant and as revealed below, even among those that are identified as narratives of change are a euphemism in so far as none challenge the hegemonic masculinity that reinforces a male standard for combat. I have chosen the five most responded to articles to illustrate what constitutes the unofficial narrative of military culture. I will provide illustrations of narratives of resistance—those that best represent traditional military masculinity and narratives of inclusion.

While the official narrative addresses physical standards as requiring more research, what is not evident in the report is the underlying sentiment of resistance. The topic of physical standards and combat occupations created a firestorm among members of the military, revealing

a strong resistance in military culture to the proposed changes. The “unofficial” narratives reveal a mix of responses. Those physical standards identified as gender specific are viewed by males, especially, as a threat to the masculine model of what constitutes fighting capability. For example, when the *Military Times* reported in February 2012 that the Army was opening up 14,000 combat related positions to females, 88 responses to the article were posted on-line within 48 hours and 67 of those protested the changes. Some examples are provided below:

...awesome, so they are removing the female pt scorechar[d], since we are equal,
GREAT! oh the [i]r not, because we are not equal? Wait, wtf!.

It does not matter if the training is the same if the standards are not. Make everything the same and this is cool in my book.

As for the females....when you can mount and dismount a M2 on your own let me know. I have yet to see it happen. Nothing against women, I have served with many and they do a wonderful job, but physically we are not created equal, hence the much lower PT standards.

Standard will be the same? I think not. That is not the ‘real’ standard. If you don’t believe that look at height/weight standards. They have changed as needed. Male standards have hardly budged. I say God Bless the ladies. Time to put heavy rucks, marching guns, ammo and a unforgiving PSG on their backs and never look back. Good times, good times. Welcome to the real Army girls!

The deeply embedded taken for granted assumption is that women should aspire to emulate the males if they want full participation. Rather, women are being told to and are asking to be allowed to assume masculine roles in order to participate.

In addition, there is a shared sense among most of the male responses that women are advantaged because they do not have to conform to male physical standards. For example, in response to an *Army Times* article on women being allowed to attend Ranger School, posted on May 16, 2012, 89 responses were posted within 48 hours. The large majority (73) were against allowing it. Twelve responses favored women attending as long as they could meet the male standard for physical endurance. Among the 73 posts that were resistant, responses ranged from a binary biological essentialism to fear of loss of the elite warrior status. This is illustrative of Mitchell's (1989:218) discussion wherein he condemns the integration of women, stating that not only do men in the military not wish to emulate women, but "whatever women are, men will seek to be anything other." Overall responses included fear of lowering male status as elite, lack of physical strength among females, resentment of women as already advantaged over males and males are natural protectors. Examples include:

Times are a changing! I'm glad I served when Benning was regarded as the Home of the INFANTRY! Now women will be trained there as well? I guess nothing is sacred anymore.

If they do this, I and many others will lose a lot of respect for that which I consider one of the highest honors a man can attain.

It's just another thing being taken away from men.

Changing the tampon while your male battle buddy holds your weapon could be awkward.

Well it's finally happening, combat arms is going to be ruined.

Don't worry about it. Port-a-potties exclusively for the use of women will be strategically located...Or some equally-stupid solution that the pro-female-Ranger crowd will come up with.

Why do they allow women different physical standards? You cannot claim equality and then have different physical requirements. Hypocritical indeed.

These comments reveal a perception among males that they are an "oppressed group" compared to women. Miller (1997) found that such perceptions are directly linked to gender harassment in the military as men believe that women now receive favorable treatment. Consequently, harassment becomes an attempt to "push women back into their more 'natural' roles" (:42). The paternalist component that is attached to military masculinity is seen throughout these narratives as well. Perpetuation of the essentialist binary view is especially evident. Women are assumed to be mothers, wives, nurses, and nurturers that must be protected from the harsh aggression of masculine warriors. For example, An Army veteran responds to the above article, stating, "as an INFANTRYMAN, and a Veteran, This is Unacceptable. A society that lets women in a combat MOS to fight in the place of Men is Cowardice. Notice the word "MAN" at the end of Infantryman. It is there for a reason." I agree females do not need to be on the front lines [be]cause men feel and think that they are to protect a female. [T]hat is the way that men are raised to be." Another response added to this, stating, "Most females can't charge a .50 cal. Most females can't handle a combat arms lifestyle. There's always one or two that could hack it, but 99% can't. You can't change nature." A paradox is evident wherein if women challenge these assumptions, further gender harassment and sexual trauma may occur as a backlash.

Although the majority of the narratives responses found in this particular *Army Times* article indicate a strong level of resistance, some reveal a limited show of support for women's inclusion but it is one based upon women perpetuating military masculinity. Examples include:

I think as a woman who would stand in line for this position...let us in..don't lower the standards. If a woman wants it...she will EARN it fair and square.

I am all for this—provided that there isn't a different standard for women. One single standard. And the women Soldiers I know would want it that way.

I have no issue with this, as long as the standard that has been required up to this point to attend the course is not altered for females in application to the course.

Let females go, some will succeed and some will fail, males fail every cycle. What's the difference.

Note that even among the female posts asking for inclusion, there is no challenge of the male standard or questioning of whether it is an accurate measurement of military readiness. As the above reveal, women military members must construct alternative gender identities that emulate masculinity. This is similar to the findings of Sasson-Levy (2001; 2003) wherein Israeli female soldiers mimic traditionally male traits, reproducing hegemonic masculinity rather than challenging it. This is seen throughout posts by females. With regard to the narrative structure of those responses showing support for women's inclusion, the “unofficial” narratives found within this particular article of the *Army Times* reveal narratives of inclusion insofar as current male standards are upheld, meaning that women should be allowed more opportunities to participate; however, the male standard should remain in order to evaluate fighting capability. The overall responses of both inclusion and resistance remain squarely masculine and intensify

gender distinctions far beyond those offered in the official narrative. Again, even among narratives of inclusion, a male centered “standard” reinforces hegemonic military masculinity.

In an effort to attract opinions on women’s inclusion in combat arms units, the American Legion’s solicited comments on its blog, *The Burn Pit*. Responses to the solicitation on March 31, 2011, reveal similar narratives of resistance toward allowing women to participate in direct combat roles. With a total of 50 responses, nearly half were identified as containing elements of resistance within their narrative structures. Much like the narrative responses found in *Army Times* and *Military Times*, women’s bodies are strategically constructed as an arena controversy. The differing forms of resistance ranged from binary views of women as biologically different to women posing multiple types of threats (e.g., sexual tension, pregnancy, decrease in unit cohesion,) to the all-male combat arms unit. Inclusion in combat is perceived as leading to a variety of problems. Some examples include:

...during their time of month it would be obvious that a female was present and this fact could be used to the enemies advantage.

However, the average female soldier just is not prepared for Combat Arms. To meet a reality based physical capability, the average woman requires a significant amount of extra work to match the physical level attained by the average male in a Pt norm.

...women generally lacked the physical strength to handle the loads.

There were multiple emotional breakdowns.

Fact, 1993 deployment of Forrestal battlegroup before leaving CONUS 10 women offloaded due to testing positive for pregnancy.

Women are constructed as emotional, prone to pregnancy, and overall inferior for combat. Men resent the fact that females can achieve an honorable discharge for pregnancy and some view this

as a loophole of which women take advantage. These assumptions construct women as using sex to their advantage, but noticeably absent is acknowledgement of the scope of sexual trauma that women are subjected to currently. The Pentagon reports that more than 19,000 sexual assaults occur annually at a rate of 52 per day (Korb and Bhagwati 2012).

Another characterization furthers the paradox in that men are constructed in these narratives as “protectors” and women as “victims” that would need rescue from their male counterparts. Multiple examples reveal a perception of women as dangerous to the mission. The essentialist argument is used for males as well as females. Some examples include:

Unless that protective wiring has been undone, a man will do what he has to to protect any female he knows.

Every male soldier looked out for the female soldiers; to include myself. It is ingrained in the male psyche to PROTECT women and children.

...men have an innate ability to want to protect women at their own peril. This is not good. I believe men spend much time bonding in the all male units and this cohesion should not be interrupted, no matter what. Yes, this sounds old fashioned, I don't care, call it what you will. I call it saving lives.

Back in 1968, when I would fly with our unit, a few of the men let me know-nicely-but strongly, that they didn't like me being there because if the plane was in trouble, they'd automatically feel the need to 'save me'. They would be putting their lives on the line, and they worried about their families and what would become of them.

I am 85 years old, WWII vet. I was raised with the idea expressed by some of the respondents that a man should protect and defend women. [I]t is the way that I was

raised, and not because women are 'weaker', but because they are our mothers, nurses, sisters, etc. and should be looked after.

Many of the narrative responses revealed other forms of resistance insofar as what consequences would follow if women were allowed to participate in combat roles. Numerous responses indicate a collective sentiment that unit cohesion would be impacted as a result of allowing women the opportunity to participate in combat arms units. For example, a female service member who served as a medic on a convoy escort team, states "Females change the dynamic and cohesion, good or bad they definitely change it." Another female with 18 years of military service mentions that she has "NO desire to interrupt the cohesion of an all male unit." Further concern emerges that bonds and alliances would form leading to an overall danger to individuals and teams. One male service member states that he witnessed "...a breakdown in that unit's cohesion, for example, a Female Spec 4s hooked up with their married Squad Leader. Her single Team Leader took exception to this, because he had a crush on the Spec 4." According to the respondent, this led to a pattern of others in different squads of the platoon "hooking up" with various members.

This particular narrative response reveals a reoccurring theme in the many forms of narrative resistance-- that the introduction of women into combat arms units will lead to a negative effect on the overall cohesiveness of the all-male military unit. In turn, an effect on unit cohesion would ultimately affect actions on the battlefield. The same respondent states he "believes there is an attitude that can't be overcome between women and men. Call it machismo, chivalry, chauvinism, paternalism or whatever. I don't think they will change and I think despite our best intentions and training to the contrary, that attitude will affect actions on the battlefield."

This particular *Burn Pit* post contains multiple instances of respondents using narratives of resistance; however, not all narrative responses were identified as narratives of resistance. Although few in numbers, some of the “unofficial” narratives emerged as supportive of allowing women the opportunity to participate in combat arms roles, but seemed hesitant to transform current standards for the sake of political correctness noting that cautious change should be the correct path. For example, “The argument that they don’t have the strength to drag their buddy out of a burning hummer has not stopped DoD’s policy of putting them in that hummer on a daily basis anyway while calling them company clerks. I am adamantly opposed to a dual standards for the sake of political expediency. If it takes x skill, strength, or aptitude to do a job, it must be required of everybody, male, female, young, or old. If you can do the job, you should be able to do it.”

The *Marine Corps Times* posts in May of 2012 contains 27 responses with a majority being narratives of resistance. In fact, 71 percent of responses identify as resistant to women being allowed to participate in direct combat roles. The military form of military masculinity can be identified in several of narrative responses. The ideal form of masculinity requires physical strength, competence in combat, emotional/psychological strength, and ability to accomplish combat objectives. Some examples of these narratives of resistance are listed below:

I wonder how the Corps is going to deal with the psychological and medical issues...

No offense but it’s a case by case basis for FET’s. The ones we had attached to us in Afghanistan did virtually nothing and couldn’t come close to meeting the minimum physical requirements to keep up with us on patrol.

They also been the main reasons of blue on blue fire.

While the *Marine Corps Times* article contains similar narratives of resistance, some narratives of inclusion can also be identified. For example, one narrative response claims that female service members are an important piece to having military success on the battlefield; specifically, in recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It amazes me how close minded people can be. I'm married to a female Marine that went a full month with no A/C running water real shower or hot meal. With the Muslim people a woman could not be talked to unless you are a woman or her husband was around. They will not say anything that the husband does not want them to say. If the husband was not there and a woman was talking to them they would spill everything. So now where would that leave us. I know so many grunts that think being an 03² makes them better than everyone and laugh at them when they get out preformed by everyone else. An I have been with almost every regiment on Camp Lejeune so that is a lot of Marines.

Again, women are welcome to participate in combat arms units *if* they follow the same standards as their male counterparts. One male veteran states "As long as they are required to follow the same standards and requirements demanded and set forth in the infantry they will do just fine. I never saw a problem with it when I was a 03."

Other narratives of inclusion state that some women can outperform some men; therefore, women should be allowed the same opportunities as male service members in participating in direct combat roles. This narrative draws upon biological essentialism to challenge the overall notion that women are, in fact, weaker than males. One female service member states "...if there are standards to be a grunt and a female can pass them, what the hell is stopping them? Some females can do just a good of job, if not better then any male." Another female serving in the Army shows limited support for inclusion stating that she knows females capable of performing

² The Marine Corps identifies its members serving in the infantry as 03 Marines. Each Marine who has the number 03 as being the first two numbers of their military occupational specialty (MOS) code are considered part of the infantry. Some examples include: 0311 (Infantry Rifleman), 0341 (Mortarman), 0331 (Machinegunner, etc.

the duties and responsibilities that men take on when joining a combat arms unit. She advocates support for women's inclusion insofar as they are able "cut it." Similar to the female service member before, she states that she knows "females who are actually stronger and more capable than the MEN in the Unit at these tasks."

Indeed, the *Burn Pit* posts reveal within the narrative structure of responses a willingness to support women's inclusion into combat arms units; however, these narratives of inclusion cannot be regarded as narratives of counter hegemony. Similar to previous narratives of inclusion, the *Burn Pit* responses reinforce military masculinity in the sense that they support upholding the male "Standard" of determining who is worthy and who is not worthy.

While limited in the number of observable narratives of inclusion, the *Military Times* article posted May 2, 2012 contains some responses showing support for increasing opportunities for women in the military. While these do not challenge hegemonic masculinity, they also do not necessarily reinforce it. Some examples include:

As a 17 year veteran, it puts a smile on my face to see the DOD opening up more opportunities for our 'sisters in arms.' If we have folks capable of doing these jobs I'm glad to see them given the chance to do it.

There are many young women in the ranks looking to serve in a new and different capacity. This is certainly a step in the right direction.

As an Army Captain I am proud of these women!

The big Scare? What is so scary? Every woman for sure is not going to want to be an Infantry soldier.

The real issue here is about having a choice. If you wish to serve your country (male OR female) you should have a choice on where it is; regardless if it's SF, Infantry or QM.

It is important to note that most narratives of inclusion are posted by either females, spouses of females and male officers. The vast majority of “grunts” were resistant. Combined, these unofficial narratives reveal that inclusion is a complex term as it relates to military policy on women. It is important to note that none of the narratives of inclusion challenge the hegemony of military masculinity within the military structure. Indeed, most perpetuate it.

In sum, the bulk of unofficial narratives reveal an overall view of women as unwelcome, unsuitable, undeserving and distracting of military service as it relates to the ultimate warrior status still perceived as the combat soldier. Physical strength is extremely valued among members of the military.

A Pew research study conducted in January 2013 revealed that the public broadly supports the lifting of restrictions with 66 percent in favor. However, among military households, only 22 percent believe the policy changes will improve effectiveness. This places those in the military that are resistant to the policy change with a dilemma. They do not have the support of civilians or command. A felt absence of support may explain the hostility aimed at both women and policy makers in these narratives. Moreover, it may lead to negative consequences as their resistance to women in combat leads to further backlash.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion/Conclusion

This project was intended to capture the narratives of resistance and narratives of change/inclusion within the U.S. military culture as it relates to the Congressional mandate to expand women's roles. I chose the Department of Defense Report to Congress as the text for the official narrative. The policy changes suggested in this report have since become actual policy within the military. While expansion has taken place in many areas related to combat support and proximity on the battlefield, direct combat remains off limits to females.

With regard to existing military narratives surrounding women's inclusion in military combat roles, their structure, content, and the performative action within already defined and regulated social contexts often articulate and reproduce existing ideologies and hegemonic relations of power and inequality (Ridgeway 2004:212). These above narratives clearly perform this function and the fear is real for many that these changes will further emasculate the military, as suggested in an earlier response. "The castration of the US Army continues. God help us all."

Gender as "an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference, "becomes a mechanism by which the hegemonic form of military masculinity maintains its dominance in the military gender order. Ridgeway (2004:523) writes "The resilience of gender hierarchy is further reinforced by the way social relational contexts carry preexisting gender beliefs into new activities at the leading edge of social change in society." Despite recent advances in military technology and the emergence of the asymmetrical battlefield, existing gender beliefs and social relational contexts maintain hierarchal structures of gender in society and cultural beliefs themselves (Ridgeway 2004). The majority of narrative

responses found within the “unofficial” narratives or military-cultural reinforce the military form of hegemonic masculinity by constructing a heteronormative conception of gender that essentialized male-female difference (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The construction of these narratives of resistance (biological essentialism) is a common strategy throughout. Essentially, the strategic act of “doing gender, doing difference” exercises strong persuasive power in shaping policy (West and Zimmerman 1987) and may continue to restrict women during this policy shift.

As for the “official” narrative, an examination of the response to the congressional mandate provided by the Department of Defense and the various Military Services reveals what Acker has called the “gender reality” of the institutional processes involved in perpetuating inequality for females within the military structure (Acker 1992:568). Acker (1992:568) writes “the construction of images, symbols, and ideologies that justify, explain, and give legitimacy to institutions” becomes a gendered process or mechanism for reproducing the gender configurations of practice in the U.S. military. Embedded within this official/ “legitimate” narrative are several instances of resisting the movement to allow women the opportunities to participate in direct combat roles.

These narrative images of what Connell (2005) calls hegemonic masculinity become pervasive in the institutional structure of the military. These *crisis tendencies* or narrative responses constructed in the official and unofficial/military-cultural narratives indicate a shift in *power, labor, and cathexis* or the structural elements that are interrelated within the structure of gender relations (Connell 1995). Resistance becomes an inevitable outcome within the struggle over resources. Still, as these narratives suggest, at present military institutional identities

continue to produce and reproduce gendered inequalities within the military order still rendering female soldiers as “other.”

The necessity for volunteers and the technologically driven nature of modern warfare that renders women’s presence in combat essential also renders it a complex problem for U.S. military culture. Regardless of women’s positions within the military structure, they do encounter combat in the sense that they do find themselves in situations where either they or fellow comrades are being killed and are engaged in combat with enemy forces. Policy-makers involved in the process of constructing the narrative surrounding the issue of women’s participation shape gendered configurations of practice. As Loseke (2007:669) argues, narratives “serve as justifications for policy and they categorize all people into two groups: those who are, and those who are not, included in policy target populations.” These narratives, both official and unofficial, are actively involved in the production and reproduction of dominant forms of masculinity as well as the preferred form of military masculinity, which resembles that of “the grunt” or men in combat arms roles. The military form of hegemonic masculinity requires, physical strength, competence in combat, emotional/psychological strength, and ability to accomplish combat objectives. Combined, these narratives continue to prohibit full citizenship within the military.

According to Ewick and Silbey (1995), the construction of narratives is a strategic activity in order to achieve some goal or advance some interest. Those opposed to women in combat can no longer rely upon the official narrative to protect male privilege or to persuade a shifting cultural perception at-large. Indeed, the normative conventions that have protected male privilege are dissolving and may well change further. At present, these narratives continue to perpetuate the gender sorting of traditional hegemonic masculinity. As more policies change, the

hostility may deepen or it may dissolve, as narratives can also defy and sometimes become politically transformative. Ewick and Silbey (1995:220) state that “if narratives instantiate power to the degree that they regulate silence and colonize consciousness, subversive stories are those that break that silence.” In other words, the existing hegemonic form of military masculinity can be contested. Narratives can also provide opportunities for creativity and invention in reshaping existing structures of inequality, especially the gender order within the U.S. military.

As suggested by Patricia Hill Collins, resistance, challenge, and change occurs at three levels: the individual level of consciousness and social interactions, the social structural level, and the cultural level (Collins 1990). Inclusion may provide space for changes that indeed challenge counter hegemony in time and serve to alter the current pattern of gender relations with regard to participation in combat arms units. After all, gender relations transform over time. I predict any change to the final restriction—direct combat—will be extremely slow if at all. Evidence of the narratives of resistance and narratives of inclusion, do however, point to a disruption or a transformation in configurations of gender practice at the very least. According to Connell (2005), the most visible evidence of *crisis tendencies* is found in power relations: the legitimacy of patriarchal power’s historic collapse, and a global movement supporting the emancipation of women. Including women in combat support positions and recognizing them as such has clearly spotlighted the continuing problem of legitimacy for this patriarchal structure.

Pelak et al. (1995:169) notes that scholars in the past have tended to emphasize the maintenance and reproduction of gender inequality and have come to neglect “the countervailing processes of resistance, challenge, conflict, and change.” In understanding existing processes that serve to maintain and resist gender relations within a given gender order, narrative inquiry

allows us to recognize the realities of the dynamics of gender in that gendered structures can change in a myriad of ways; however, it can also be understood that changes within the structures of gender relations “do not necessarily subvert the institutional basis of gender” (:169). This appears to be evident here.

According to Sasson-Levy (2001:9), “women’s integration into combat roles neither challenges the male hegemony in the military nor threatens the ideology that links masculinity and combat”, because the military is not “just another patriarchal institution” (Enloe 1988:10); it is the quintessential representation of the state, its ideologies, and its existing policies. It is important to realize that if women are fully integrated within the military structure, thereby allowed opportunities to participate in combat roles, they will likely perpetuate and not challenge masculinity. Consequently, they will continue to face varying levels of resistance, possibly facing strengthening levels of resentment within the ranks and outside the military itself. Furthermore, women may encounter new barriers as the military structure responds to external and internal pressures to alter its stance on allowing or not allowing women to participate in direct combat roles. For example, it is possible that the military in constructing new standards may, in fact, come to strengthen the demands of masculinity upon women who choose to participate in combat roles meaning that previous forms of idealized military masculinity may transform into being more difficult to achieve. Thus, the military may engage in a so-called *regendering* process through the reconstruction and reification of hierarchal gender differences (Sasson-Levy and Katz 2007). Sasson-Levy and Katz (2007) also note that because military evaluation processes are gendered, women will continually face gendered-evaluation biases. Because gender is salient within the military institution, gender bias will be more significant.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Further study is warranted to examine what forms of narratives exist surrounding the issue of whether or not women should be allowed to participate in direct combat roles in the U.S. military and how the strategic use of gendered narratives reproduce gender inequality for women in the military by serving as a mechanism for denying them opportunities of full participation within the military structure. There is a strong need for future research as more positions in combat arms units open for women in the future. What new challenges will women face as it relates to meeting new demands based on changing configurations of the hegemonic form of military masculinity? Will hegemonic masculinity hold regardless of inclusion? If so, how will this effect females who aspire to achieve it? Will the backlash deepen or will shifts among the rank-and-file occur to reduce the marginalization of women?

One of the major limitations of this particular study is time. Due to existing time constraints, I was unable to analyze more narrative responses to each article. Suggestions for future research as it relates to analyzing the narrative structure of military cultural narratives and future policy changes directed toward the issue of women's participation in direct combat roles would be to observe any variation in the differing forms of "unofficial" narratives resisting changes and those that support change as women are allowed more opportunities and the movement or changing of policy. In hindsight, providing a more extensive descriptive analysis may have provided a more complex understanding of masculinity than I have presented here. Surveys of military members should be conducted to assess the overall sentiment. The military surveyed its members on the issue of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" but there is no data yet on the recent policy changes. With these changes now in place, it will be prudent to research how the

conversation about women's service participation in direct combat roles changes or remains the same.

Appendix A

Codebook Examples

Focus/apriori Codes:

<p>“The Standard” will create equality in military – male model “regendering”</p>	<p>inductive/apriori male model</p>	<p>The Standard”, which would require women to adhere to the male standard. Also addressed as women must aspire to reach male model -- “regendering” Sasson-Levy</p>	<p>Example: “While the photo for this article shows a female carrying another person, let’s be honest—that person is not a 200lb man with gear. Until women can do EXACTLY the same thing that men do, I don’t agree with them being in combat roles. That means they have to do EXACTLY the same thing men do on PT tests.</p>
<p>Requirements of combat</p>	<p>inductive/apriori</p>	<p>exclusion based on male model</p>	<p>.....they have to be able to carry any soldiers, not just another female, out of harm’s way. They shouldn’t be bused in from the field every 3 days for a shower while the guys stay out for 45 days. And for the love of God, they have to be able to charge a .50 cal (my husband witnessed a female unable to do so yesterday).</p>

Women do not meet physical strength requirements	inductive	males as victims	“Most females can’t charge a .50cal. Most females can’t handle a combat arms lifestyle.” (p.5)
Women as advantaged	inductive	“ “	“They shouldn’t be bused in from the field every 3 days for a shower while the guys stay out for 45 days.
“ “		“ “	“I can read the regulations and see what the men have to do and then see how the standards are lowered for women.
Women as weaker sex biological essentialism	“ “		Most females can’t handle a combat arms lifestyle. There’s always one or two that could hack it, but 99% can’t. You can’t change nature.” (p.5)
pregnancy – biological essentialism binary	inductive	.women use military to get special treatment	“Even if women were as physically strong as men, which they are not, there’s still one thing they cannot avoid: getting pregnant.” (p.4)
Women soldiers undeserving of combat rewards	inductive	masculinity defines warrior	“How’d you get a CAB? Begging locals to witness the writeup after a mortar round landed 100m away? Trying hard to get those 15 points?” (p.5) “Just because you stand at a checkpoint or go outside the wire on one patrol.” (p.5) “...don’t try to steal

			my cord...” (p.5)
Women’s integration threatens combat soldier identity masculinity crisis	inductive	Possible evidence of crisis tendencies or disruption of structure of gender relations	“The castration of the US Army continues. God help us all.” (p.6)

Focus/Axial/apriori Codes:

Biological Essentialism	Deductive		“I wonder how the Corps is going to deal with the psychological and medical issues...” (p.3) “...and needs extra privacy while operating in a tank with three other smelly guys for a week or more? This won’t work.” (p.2)
Women as sexual threat	Inductive	Cultural narratives construct cultural identities surround women as being promiscuous in combat environment	“...lets just say they were going room to room, but not to training in clearing houses...” (p.4)
Men as “protectors” and “care-givers” paternalism biological essentialism	Deductive/inductive	males biologically predisposed to be “protectors.”	“its in our nature as men to protect and care for women and now they are going to be side by side in combat...” (p.4) “The human male is naturally inclined to defend females...” (p.4)
Framing of women as unintelligent in combat situations and useless in combat	Inductive	.	“The ones we had attached to us in Afghanistan did virtually nothing and couldn’t come close to meeting the minimum physical

			requirements to keep up with us on patrol.” (p.3) “They also been the main reasons of blue on blue fire.” (p.4)
Resistance represents -- Crisis Tendencies hegemonic masculinity, resistance to inclusion, biological essentialism, perceived inequality between males and females – victims, protectors, advantaged, disadvantaged, fear of loss of elite status hyper rational discourse for resistance – “needs more study”	Both from the literature and from data. Crisis of hegemonic masculinity	These responses or events can be referred to as crisis tendencies as they indicate a shift in power, labor, and cathexis or the structural elements that interrelated within the structure of gender relations.	

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