

The Myth of the Macho Military*

Regina F. Titunik

University of Hawaii at Hilo

The public debate about the incorporation of women in the U.S. Armed Forces has primarily included feminist-inspired critics, who denounce the hostility toward women they perceive is promoted in the military's masculinist culture, and, alternatively, opponents of the greater inclusion of women in the military, who valorize the exclusivist masculine qualities that many feminists criticize. Although these ideological adversaries differ in their estimation of military culture, they both share—and have reciprocally reinforced—a view of the military as steeped in the traditions and practices of aggressive masculinity. This article shows that the prevailing view of the military as hyper-masculine is misguided. Not unhindered aggressiveness, but camaraderie, discipline, and service are the qualities instilled in soldiers. These qualities foster military effectiveness and counterbalance sexist tendencies producing a complex institutional culture congenial to women in significant respects.

Polity (2008) **40**, 137–163. doi:10.1057/palgrave.polity.2300090;

published online 17 December 2007

Keywords *military; women; war; hyper-masculinity; feminization; aggression*

Regina Titunik is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Her teaching and research areas include political theory and gender & warfare. She has published on Max Weber's political thought and gender integration in the U.S. Armed Forces. She can be reached at titunik@hawaii.edu.

Introduction

The participation of American military women in the current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq has been more extensive, more extraordinary and, at the same time, more ordinary than in any previous American war. Scenes of American servicewomen captured and rescued, decorated and disgraced, are

*For their generous assistance with various aspects of this paper, I thank Todd Belt, Enbao Wang, and Susan G. Brown. My sister, Deborah Titunik, read an earlier version of the manuscript and made valuable editorial suggestions. The paper benefited from the incisive comments of the anonymous reviewers for *Polity*, for which I am also grateful. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility.

salient in the imagery of these wars. While the sight of weapon-toting females deployed to a war zone has lost the novelty of the first Persian Gulf War, American servicewomen are now involved in combat operations to an unprecedented extent. To be sure, women are still excluded from direct ground combat in company and battalion-level infantry, artillery and armor units, but in an insurgency environment, where battle lines are blurred, women regularly find themselves in the heat of battle. In addition, the Military Police (MPs), from which women are not excluded, necessarily play a prominent role in stabilization and counter-insurgency campaigns. Consequently, women MPs are presently engaged in much the same activities as all-male combat units.¹ Not only do women find themselves in the combat arena as members of certain units, the military has also found it necessary to make deliberate and extensive use of servicewomen on patrols in order to search Muslim women.²

As American women have made inroads into the activity of war-fighting—and into positions that were formerly exclusively male—a debate about their presence has evolved and sharpened since the 1970s. Opponents of women in the military have expressed concern about the consequences of gender integration for military effectiveness. These critics have typically sounded alarms about the “feminization” of the Armed Forces.³ “Feminization” evidently refers to the increasing numbers of women in the military and to the policies that have been made to accommodate them, which critics view as softening the military and diminishing its fighting ability.⁴

What is striking about the “feminization” lament is the extent to which the view of the unadulterated, hyper-masculine military put forward by these critics mirrors the most prevalent feminist view of the military as the quintessential male-dominated and masculinity privileging institution.⁵ Paradoxically, opponents of

1. Vernon Loeb, “Combat Heroine,” *The Washington Post*, November 23, 2003: D 01.

2. Reeba Critser, “Female MPs join infantry on front line,” *Army LINK News*, October 2002; Ann Scott Tyson, “The expanding role of GI Jane,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 3, 2003: 1; Erin Solaro, “Lionesses of Iraq,” *Seattle Weekly*, October 6–12, 2004.

3. The idea of the feminization of the armed forces seemed to have caught on with the publication of Brian Mitchell, *Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1989).

4. See Mitchell, *Weak Link*; Brian Mitchell, *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1998); Stephanie Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military: Can America's Gender-Neutral Fighting Force Still Win Wars?* (New York: Scribner, 2000); Francis Fukuyama, “Women and the Evolution of World Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 77 (1998): 24–40; Walter A. McDougall, “Sex, Lies, and Infantry,” *Commentary* 104 (1997): 43–47; Harvey C. Mansfield, “Why a Woman Can't Be More Like a Man,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 3 (1997): A22.

5. See Cynthia H. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Judith Reppy, eds., *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Discrimination in Military Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1997); Madeline Morris, “By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture,” *Duke Law Journal* 45 (February 1996): 651–781; Karen O. Dunivin, “Military Culture: Change and Continuity,” *Armed Forces and Society* 20 (1994): 531–47; Gerhard Kümmel, “When Boy Meets Girl: The ‘Feminization’ of the Military: An Introduction Also to be Read as a Postscript,” *Current Sociology* 50 (2002): 615–39.

gender integration in the armed forces, on the one hand, and many feminist critics of the military, on the other, share substantially the same view of the military, except that one side appreciates what the other view excoriates. As is often the case, ideological opponents occupy the same conceptual universe and share certain basic assumptions. Both view the military as a bastion of aggressive masculinity where dominance and assertiveness are promoted. Both also conceive that engendering the manly warrior involves distancing men from women and fostering an aversion to female qualities. As I will show, both views are overly simplistic and fundamentally flawed.

This article reviews the debate surrounding the issue of military women, identifies misunderstandings on both sides, and attempts to move toward a clearer understanding of the military and women's involvement in this institution. I will argue that the belligerent qualities both sides attribute to military culture do not contribute to combat effectiveness⁶ and, in fact, the requirements of combat effectiveness have led military organizations to limit the aggressive qualities associated with hyper-masculinity.

Feminism, Military Women and the Fight for Equality

In the course of the struggle for gender equality, feminists have been ambivalent about women's equal participation in the military. Feminists have not been able to decide whether women should join the military as equals or use the achievement of gender equality to put an end to the scourge of war that men have perpetrated.⁷ A good deal of this uneasiness about the military also derives from the anti-war protest of the Vietnam era. Indeed, the most recent wave of the American feminist movement emerged from the anti-war movement of the 1960s. Since the tragedy of that terrible war, soldiering has been viewed by feminists—and many on the left, generally—as a brutal occupation properly disdained by decent people. The prevailing perception of the military continues to be colored by a fundamental and lingering distrust of “trained killers.”⁸

Due to this underlying aversion to war and its practitioners, the feminist movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s initially disregarded

6. Elizabeth Kier, “Uniform Justice: Assessing Women in Combat,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (2003): 343–47.

7. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 231.

8. Interesting in this regard is Richard Heckler's account of the reactions of his friends when he accepted an assignment to teach aikido to the Green Berets. Heckler encountered an “Us and Them” outlook that labeled soldiers as the harmful “them” whom “we” are better than. Richard Strozzi Heckler, *In Search of the Warrior Spirit: Teaching Awareness Disciplines to the Green Berets* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1992), 3–4. See also Thomas E. Ricks, *Making the Corps* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 289.

servicewomen issues.⁹ Certainly the ideals of greater gender fairness, promoted by the feminist movement, enhanced opportunities for military women.¹⁰ But the most significant advances made by women in the U.S. armed forces during this period were occasioned by the termination of the draft in 1973. Because of concerns that the services would be unable to attract enough men into the new All-Volunteer Force, a “task force established by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in 1972 ‘set out to prepare contingency plans for increasing the use of women to offset the possible shortages of male recruits after the end of the draft.’”¹¹ As a result, and somewhat unexpectedly, the percentage of women in the armed forces climbed from 2 percent in 1973 to 12 percent in 1993 to 15 percent in 2003.¹²

The increased utilization of women in the military after 1973 until at least the early 1990s, it must be stressed, was connected primarily with military necessity, not direct feminist pressure.¹³ To be sure, a number of military women activists have been instrumental in promoting gender equality in the military, including Major General Jean Holm (USAF-ret.), Brigadier General Evelyn Pat Foote (USA-ret.) and Captain Rosemary Mariner (USN-ret.). In addition, the women members of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), an organization established in 1951 to advise the Pentagon on matters relating to military women and help attract more female recruits, became active in fighting for equal treatment for military women in the late 1970s.¹⁴ But women activists within the military environment, both military and civilian, have often been reluctant to self-identify as feminists.¹⁵ Indeed, military women have generally tended to eschew the label.¹⁶ Given their relatively small numbers in the armed forces and concern to gain acceptance, women may be hesitant to adopt

9. Cynthia H. Enloe, “The Politics of Constructing the American Woman Soldier,” in *Women Soldiers: Images and Realities*, ed. Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E. Russo, and Lorenza Sebesta (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 89; Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest inside the Church and Military* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 64.

10. See Katzenstein, *Faithful and Fearless*, 71. In addition, the military’s expectation after 1972 that the ERA would pass led to their changing discriminatory assignment policies and including more women in nontraditional occupations and leadership positions.

11. Martin Binkin, *Who Will Fight the Next War? The Changing Face of the American Military* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1993), 6.

12. GAO Report to Congressional Requesters, *Military Personnel: Reporting Additional Servicemember Demographics Could Enhance Congressional Oversight* (September 2005), 9.

13. See Mady Wechsler Segal, “Women’s Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present and Future,” *Gender & Society* 9 (December 1995): 757–75.

14. Katzenstein, *Faithful and Fearless*, 57–60.

15. Katzenstein, *Faithful and Fearless*, 60, 86; Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *Sound Off!: American Military Women Speak Out* (New York: Paragon House, [1988] 1992 reprint ed.), 176–89; Helen Rogan, *Mixed Company: Women in the Modern Army* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1981), 303; Karen O. Dunivin, “There’s Men, There’s Women, and There’s Me: The Role and Status of Military Women,” *Minerva* 6 (Summer 1988): 43–69.

16. Schneider and Schneider, *Sound Off!*, 176–82.

a posture that would alienate them from their male counterparts. But it is also the case that military women very often take pride in their organizations and share the values of the military.¹⁷ The perceived hostility of mainstream feminism to the military—along with its connection with peace activism—accounts for some of the distance maintained by military women.¹⁸

Women's progress in the military from the 1970s to the 1990s was fairly steady, despite some stalling tactics. In the early 1980s, women's increased presence alarmed some members of the Department of Defense and a policy of "Womanpause" was advocated that involved reducing recruitment goals for women until their impact on readiness could be evaluated.¹⁹ The attempt to contain women's increasing participation in the armed forces was rejected by Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, however, and ultimately failed to stem the tide toward the incorporation of greater numbers of women into the military.

In 1990 the American public witnessed women being deployed to the Persian Gulf on their TVs and saw female soldiers in battle fatigues participating in Operation Desert Shield 1990 and then Operation Desert Storm 1991. About 40,000 women participated in the first Persian Gulf War, representing approximately 7 percent of the U.S. forces.²⁰ Americans became aware that there were quite a large number of women in uniform on whom the military had come to depend. The public also became aware that women soldiers are at risk of being killed and taken prisoner in war. Fifteen servicewomen lost their lives in that war and two women were captured by the Iraqis.²¹ Although women had been killed and captured in America's past wars, these earlier contributions of women to the war effort were generally neglected or quickly forgotten.²² By contrast, the participation of women in the first Persian Gulf War made a strong impression on the public mind. Americans also saw that their military women were placed in danger's way, but were barred by law from occupying the combat positions in the services that bring the greatest career success. For instance, women were permitted to fly the tankers that refuel combat planes in the air, but were not allowed to fly the combat planes they refueled. The women flying aerial refueling missions were certainly vulnerable to enemy fire—perhaps more so than the

17. Schneider and Schneider *Sound Off!*, 186; Rogan, *Mixed Company*, 304.

18. Schneider and Schneider, *Sound Off!*, 180.

19. Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, rev. ed. (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992), 387–97. There is some evidence that this effort to roll back women's participation was a ploy to reactivate the draft (see Holm, *Women in the Military*, 390, 395).

20. Holm, *Women in the Military*, xiii.

21. Lory Manning, *Women in the Military: Where They Stand*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: Women's Research and Education Institute, 2005), 7. See Rhonda Cornum's account of her experiences as a prisoner of war in *She Went to War*, as told to Peter Copeland (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992). Cornum, then an Army major, doctor and helicopter pilot, endured captivity with two broken arms and other serious injuries sustained after her helicopter was shot down over Iraqi territory.

22. See Segal, "Women's Military Roles," 761.

combat pilots—but they were denied the prestige and rewards of flying the combat aircraft.²³

These revelations about the restrictions on women's service appeared manifestly unfair and prompted review of the combat exclusion policies that had been written into the 1948 *Women's Armed Services Act* (codified in Title 10). In 1991, Congress passed an amendment to the 1992–1993 Defense Authorization Act that repealed provisions of Title 10 barring women from flying combat aircraft.²⁴ In 1993, at the urging of then Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, Congress repealed the provision of Title 10 that prevented women from serving on combat ships. There is no statutory law limiting women's roles in ground combat; rather, Department of Defense policies define women's service in ground combat areas. In 1994, Aspin opened more ground positions to servicewomen by rescinding the DOD risk rule that prevented women from being assigned to support units close to combat where there is a high risk of capture. In accordance with these changes, women serve in a number of combat roles but remain excluded from "units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground"²⁵ and from units and positions "doctrinally required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units."²⁶ According to GAO and RAND estimates, women are currently "excluded from 15 to 20 percent of all military positions."²⁷ The most recent controversy regarding military women centers on the question of whether these remaining restricted combat positions should be gender integrated.

Contesting Military Misogyny

During the 1990s, when women's military roles were changing dramatically, a number of sex scandals occurred. These scandals brought further attention to the issue of gender integration in the armed forces and energized feminist critics of the military. In 1991, during the annual Tailhook Convention of Naval and Marine aviators in Las Vegas, twenty-six women were groped and molested when forced to pass through a gantlet of male aviators (in addition to other debauchery). It seemed self-evident to many observers that this behavior demonstrated that the male-dominated military culture fosters an inclination to

23. Holm, *Women in the Military*, 449, 489.

24. Rosemarie Skaine, *Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1999), 90.

25. Secretary of Defense, January 13, 1994 memorandum, Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule.

26. Secretary of Defense, January 13, 1994, memorandum; see GAO Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, Committee on Armed Services, US Senate, *Gender Issues: Trends in the Occupational Distribution of Military Women* (September 1999), 3.

27. GAO Report, *Military Personnel*, 39.

demean and assault women. This view became more compelling in 1996 when it was discovered that male drill sergeants were sexually assaulting female soldiers in advanced training at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Understandably, advocates of gender equality condemned these incidents of violent sexual discrimination. The Aberdeen episode especially represented an egregious abuse of power that merited energetic denunciation. But, as I will show, this censure was often connected with an overdrawn vilification of the military and its culture as a whole.

The attitudes of feminists toward the military are not uniform, but among feminists there has been a pronounced tendency to view gender discrimination as endemic in the armed forces. The liberal, equal-rights feminists are persuaded that women's exclusion from combat roles engenders demeaning attitudes on the part of military men toward their female counterparts. The combat exclusion consigns military women to a second-class status and the associated stigma invites "disrespect."²⁸ In the liberal feminist view, women have the right (and ability) to participate equally in war and should be "allowed to pursue a career based on their individual qualifications rather than sex stereotypes and male norms unrelated to the job."²⁹ Full equality for women in all the occupational fields of the military, it is thought, will remedy women's current inferior status in the military and bring about equal respect and recognition for women soldiers.³⁰ Other feminists, however, are not so optimistic (or enthusiastic) about the prospects for gender equality in the military.³¹ The "difference feminists" raise concerns about the efforts of women to find an equal place in war-making institutions.³² These feminists value the qualities that are typically associated with women, including pacifism and connectedness, and believe women should work to transform militaristic arrangements rather than enter into them on an equal basis.³³ In this view, the culture of the military, i.e. the values, rules, norms and traditions that shape the outlook of its members, necessarily breeds sexual discrimination. For both liberal feminists and difference feminists, but especially

28. Erin Solaro, *Women in the Line of Fire: What You Should Know About Women in the Military* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 161; see Holm, *Women in the Military*, 127.

29. Holm, *Women in the Military*, 508.

30. This view was expressed by Pat Schroeder in the aftermath of the 1996 Aberdeen Proving Ground sex scandal: see Sheryl Stolberg and Melissa Healy, "Harassment is Old Battle for Many Army Women," *Los Angeles Times* (November 15, 1996): A22.

31. For a useful discussion of varieties of feminist thought and war see Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 34–58.

32. Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 41–48; Kümmel, "When Boy Meets Girl," 618; Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 287; Ilene Rose Feinman, *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 19–31; Annette Fuentes, "Women Warriors? Equality, Yes—Militarism, No," *The Nation* (October 28, 1991): 253, 516.

33. Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 41–48; Feinman, *Citizenship Rites*, 19–31; Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985), 4.

for the latter, the current practices and norms of the military generate adversarial attitudes toward women. My criticism is directed primarily against “difference feminism” understood broadly as a view that identifies traits associated with “masculinity” and “femininity”—whether innate or socially produced—and supposes that the qualities associated with masculinity are privileged in the military and those associated with “femininity,” devalued. Although some of the theorists I discuss might more properly be defined as “postmodern feminists,” insofar as they regard gender concepts as constructed, these thinkers very often assume an inextricable link between biological men and women and “historical constructions of masculinity and femininity.”³⁴

Although some recent feminist scholarship breaks with the narrow view of a homogeneously masculine military culture and calls attention to the complex character of the military’s gendered culture,³⁵ the idea that the military promotes stereotypically masculine traits and generates hostility toward women is prevalent. In one exemplary account of military misogyny—“By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture,” by Madeline Morris—the military is portrayed as a “masculinist” institution that encourages attitudes that correlate with a rape propensity.³⁶ The qualities inculcated by the military culture, Morris writes, include “dominance, assertiveness, aggressiveness, independence, self-sufficiency, and willingness to take risks,” while characteristics “such as compassion, understanding and sensitivity” are discouraged.³⁷ The publication of this article happened to precede the Aberdeen Proving Ground revelations by a short time, a coincidence that brought considerable public attention to Morris’s pronouncements and gained her a position as a consultant to Army Secretary Togo West in 1997. A similar—and similarly well-timed—take on the male-dominated military is found in Linda Bird Franke’s *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military*. Franke describes her book as a “narrative of the cultural and biological forces within the military culture that divide the sexes, dictate women’s harassment, and demean their achievements.”³⁸ The argument that discrimination against women is deeply ingrained in military culture is made so relentlessly, one is ultimately forced to conclude that women will never find an equal place in this male-dominated institution.

34. See R. Claire Snyder’s criticism of this type of view in *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republican Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), 163; see 163–65 and 144–45. I include Cynthia Enloe’s work under my broad definition of “difference feminism” although she is often seen as a postmodern feminist. It is necessary to note, in this regard, that individual feminist theorists cannot be easily pigeonholed into any particular category of feminism.

35. See Paul R. Higate, ed., *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 28, 30–31; and Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers*.

36. Morris, “By Force of Arms.”

37. Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 174; see Katzenstein and Reppy, eds., *Beyond Zero Tolerance*, 6.

38. Franke, *Ground Zero*, 18.

Because these critics take for granted that enmity toward women is deeply entrenched in military culture, they fail to raise the question of whether sexual discrimination is really more pervasive in the military than in civilian occupations. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that particular hostility to women is not found in the military.³⁹ Data collected from the General Social Survey, University of Chicago, National Opinion Research Center in 1991 regarding job satisfaction show that white women soldiers are slightly more satisfied with their jobs in the military than are white civilian women (46 versus 41 percent). The percentage of black women soldiers satisfied in their work is nearly double the percentage of comparable black civilian women (47 versus 25 percent).⁴⁰

More recently, data collected in connection with the *Triangle Institute for Securities Studies' 1998–1999 Surveys on the Military in the post-Cold War Era* also indicate that discriminatory attitudes are apparently not rampant in the military and that in fact civilians seem to have more demeaning attitudes about women than military personnel. Responses to survey questions assessing attitudes towards gender integration in the military—analyzed by Laura L. Miller and John Allen Williams—challenge conventional wisdom about the hidebound, sexist military.⁴¹ When asked to respond to the statement that “the military should remain basically masculine, dominated by male values and characteristics,” 28.2 percent of civilians from the general population and 17.4 percent of civilian elites selected “agree strongly” as compared to 14.6 percent of military elites (see Figure 1). In addition, civilians in the general public were over three times more likely than military elites to believe that it would “greatly hurt” military effectiveness if the military were less male-dominated (see Figure 1). The data also reveal that military elites have more confidence in women leaders than do civilians: compared to 58.7 percent of civilian elites, 67.8 percent of military elites said they would be “equally confident with male or female commander” (see Figure 2). In addition 72.7 percent of military elites think there is less sexual discrimination in the military than in the society at large (and elite military women’s responses resembled elite military men’s responses in this regard).⁴²

39. Even Morris’s own data shows that rape is actually less prevalent in the military during peacetime than in civilian life. For a fuller consideration of Morris’s data, see Regina F. Titunik, “The First Wave: Gender Integration and Military Culture,” *Armed Forces and Society* 26 (Winter 2000): 250–51, n10.

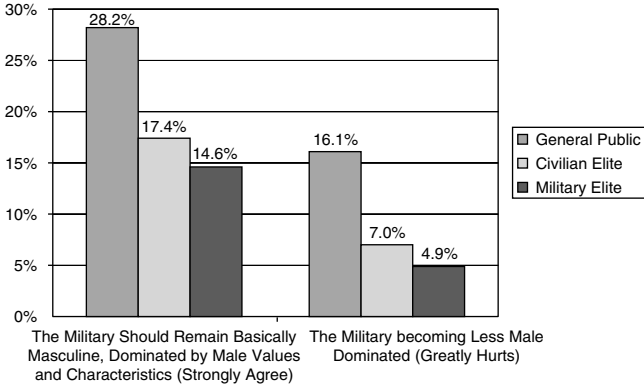
40. Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 106.

41. Laura L. Miller and John Allen Williams, “Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness?” in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, eds., Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 361–402.

42. Miller and Williams, “Military Policies,” 374.

Figure 1

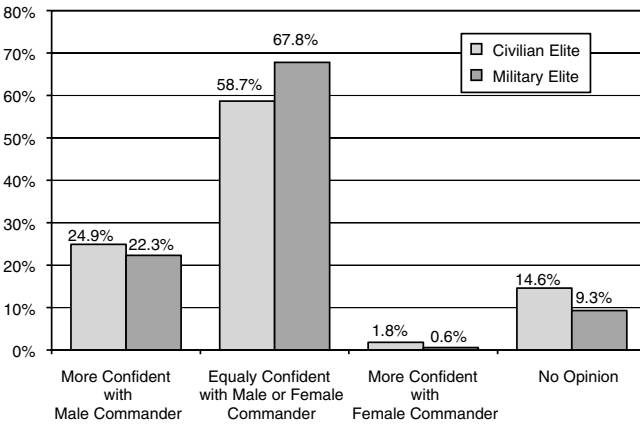
Attitudes toward gender integration: value of male dominance.



Source: Miller and Williams, "Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness?" in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, 377, 384.

Figure 2

Attitudes toward gender integration: confidence in commander.



Source: Miller and Williams, "Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness?" in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, 380.

These findings are not adduced to advance a claim that greater gender fairness is found in the U.S. military than in civilian institutions, but rather to invite greater scrutiny of common assumptions regarding bias against women in

the military.⁴³ To be sure, women experience discrimination in the military and the combat exclusion policy, which relegates women's service to an ancillary status, has legitimized unfair treatment. Moreover, war fighting, across cultures and times, has been mostly reserved to men. In order to induce men to do what is, after all, unpleasant and antithetical to human instincts, war fighting has been associated with a positive ideal of "manliness."⁴⁴ Exalting this ideal through rituals, ceremonies and cadences has often involved excluding and denigrating women.⁴⁵

But the military is a complex environment embodying sometimes contradictory traditions and tendencies.⁴⁶ As I will show, the qualities required for organized warfare rewarded as "manly" are not aggression and bloodlust, but, paradoxically, are qualities that both opponents and proponents of an imagined hyper-masculine military associate with femininity: teamwork, submission, obedience, and self-sacrifice.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the military culture, with its emphasis on comradeship, cooperation, and the rewarding of merit—in addition to its equal pay for equal work—produces conditions favorable to women. While the image of the manly warrior plays an ideological role in the military, with real consequences, this image coexists in complex ways with the requirements of organized warfare that prevail against the masculinist ideal.

Enthusiasts of military manliness, on the other side of the ideological spectrum, also neglect complex and contradictory tendencies in military culture. Those who regard themselves as defenders of the unique warrior culture of the military (and oppose the increased presence of women) do not contest the view that the military is fundamentally misogynistic. In a 1997 article entitled "Sex, Lies and Infantry," Walter McDougall wrote that putting "grizzled sergeants" in charge of "nineteen-year-old-girls" is an invitation to the abuse of power.⁴⁸ McDougall's comment indicates the extent to which sex scandals in the military prove equally useful to the right as to the left.⁴⁹ The critics of "feminization" accept the ultimate logic of the difference feminist position—preparing men to fight wars and gender

43. Although some servicewomen do suggest the U.S. military is ahead of civilian institutions as regards the fair treatment of women. See Sheryl Stolberg, "Forget the Scandals." *Los Angeles Times* (November 29, 1996): E1 and E4; Schneider and Schneider, *Sound Off!* 179, 180.

44. Goldstein, *War and Gender*; see Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 226–27.

45. Carol Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); R. Claire Snyder, "The Citizen-Soldier Tradition and Gender Integration of the U.S. Military," *Armed Forces & Society* 29 (Winter 2003): 192–93. Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 49, 66.

46. Titunik, "The First Wave," 240–41.

47. Cf. Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*, 227.

48. Walter A. McDougall, "Sex, Lies, and Infantry," *Commentary* 104 (September 1997): 46.

49. See Mitchell, *Weak Link*, 340.

integration are essentially incompatible. Restraining aggressive sexual behavior and making the armed forces “female friendly” entails, in this view, reigning in the energies that win wars. By putting the brakes on manly aggressiveness in all of its manifestations, the war fighting spirit is undermined.

The lament about the “feminized” military is expressed in Stephanie Gutmann’s book, *The Kinder Gentler Military: Can America’s Gender-Neutral Fighting Force Still Win Wars?* This exposé of the allegedly enfeebled armed forces has been enthusiastically received among opponents of expanded roles for military women. It was acclaimed in the newsletter of *Center for Military Readiness*, an organization whose founder and president, Elaine Donnelly, has been at the forefront of the effort to roll back the participation of women in the armed forces. The epigraph to Chapter One of *The Kinder Gentler Military* quotes the words put into the mouth of Mark Anthony by Shakespeare after the assassination of Ceasar: “Cry ‘Havoc!’ and let slip the dogs of war.”⁵⁰ This quotation expresses Gutmann’s view of war-fighting as requiring the release of the wild dogs of masculine energies unhindered by enervating and emasculating regulations made in slavish deference to political correctness. Gutmann, and many other critics of the “feminized” military assume that unimpeded aggressiveness and ferocity are the qualities required of winning soldiers. Indeed, Gutmann unequivocally declares that “the fiercer, angrier, most-blood-lusting force will win” wars.⁵¹ Phyllis Schlafly, who came to prominence in the fight to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment, also seems to assume that bloodlust is essential for victory when she rhapsodizes about men who are “macho enough to relish the opportunity to engage and kill the bad guys of the world.”⁵²

Restraining the Dogs of War: The Development and Demands of Organized Warfare

The notion that the successful conduct of war depends on truculent soldiers who relish killing their opponents in fact is quite far from the truth. What the proponents of the macho military either fail to understand (or do not make sufficiently clear) is that it is not aggression, but the ability to doggedly stand one’s ground, obey orders, and remain loyal to one’s fellows that creates effective military forces.

The requisites for the successful projection of military power became increasingly evident to human beings around the first millennium B.C.E. Human beings started to figure out that if warriors hung together as a unified mass, they

50. Gutmann, *Kinder, Gentler Military*, 27.

51. Gutmann, *Kinder, Gentler Military*, 275.

52. Phyllis Schlafly, “Feminism Meets Terrorism,” EagleForum.Org (January 23, 2002), emphasis added.

would present a far more formidable force than they would as individuals sent forward helter-skelter to fight other individuals. In about 700 B.C.E., the Greeks invented the “phalanx,” an organized group of soldiers compactly arranged in lines and columns. The Chinese also shifted from individual hero battle to organized warfare in about the same period as the Greeks, a transition reflected in the writings of the famous Chinese theorist of war, Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu saw that energies of massed formations of soldiers combine in such a way as to produce a relentless force. “One who excels at warfare seeks victory through the strategic configuration of power, not from reliance on men. . . . One who employs strategic power employs men in battle as if he were rolling logs and stones.”⁵³

In order for the massed military force to present a solid front, individual bravado and individual heroics were discouraged. As Sun Tzu explains, “when the men have been unified the courageous will not be able to advance alone, the fearful will not be able to retreat alone. This is the method for employing large numbers.”⁵⁴ As this transition to organized warfare occurred in ancient Greece, we find, in a number of historical accounts, the Greeks refusing to honor or even punishing daring individuals who broke the line even when these actions were successful.⁵⁵ We also find in Greek literature of this period a pronounced disparagement of the individual warrior hero. The most notable example of this motif is the derogation of the figure of Achilles—the arrogant and petulant hero of the Trojan Wars—in Plato’s *Republic*.⁵⁶ Modern mass warfare still depends on the principle of group action, while individual showboating remains suspect. Claudia Kennedy, the first woman lieutenant general in the U.S. Army, remarks that while women have a hard time in the business world because they are not good at “tooting their own horns,” the Army has “long fostered a culture in which transparent ambition is not rewarded and teamwork is the norm.”⁵⁷

Interestingly in this connection, when individual warrior battle shifted to massed infantry battle in both ancient Greece and China, women were portrayed

53. Sun Tzu and Sun Pin, *The Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer with the collaboration of Mei-chün Lee Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 63.

54. Sun Tzu and Sun Pin, *The Art of War*, 77.

55. For example, according to Herodotus, the Spartans refused to honor Aristodemus at Plataea, because, though he died fighting magnificently (and had showed exceptional courage in Herodotus’s view), he had rushed “forward with the fury of a madman in his desire to be killed before his comrades’ eyes.” In the Spartan’s view, Aristodemus had “deliberately courted death” to retrieve his honor—having been the only survivor of the Three Hundred at Thermopylae—and the Spartans preferred to honor Posidonius who “without any wish to be killed, had fought bravely.” Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey Sélincourt, revised with an introduction and notes by A.R. Burn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), Book 9, 605.

56. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 388a, 390e, 391a–c.

57. Claudia Kennedy, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) with Malcolm McConnell, *Generally Speaking: A Memoir by the First Woman Promoted to Three-Star General in the United States Army* (New York: Warner Books, 2001), 122–23; see Ricks, *Corps*, 147 and 60–61.

as warriors. We find this, for example, in Plato's *Republic* where women are assigned an equal role in the defense of the ideal state and also Ssü-ma Ch'ien's account in the *Shih Chi* of Sun Tzu training the King of Wu's concubines, a story that also appears in the *Wu Yüeh Ch'un-ch'iu*. According to this story, Sun Tzu was asked by the King of Wu if his military methods could be used with women.⁵⁸ Sun Tzu replied affirmatively and reportedly made the King's concubines into a force that could be employed as the King wished, "even sending them forth into fire and water."⁵⁹ These representations of women warriors likely reflect a dawning awareness that organized warfare requires traits that are typically associated with women. Mark Edward Lewis notes that the references to females and feminine qualities in ancient Chinese literature on soldiering facilitated the movement away from "the celebration of masculine courage and strength" and toward a "model of feminine obedience and compliance."⁶⁰ Arguably, then, the "feminization" of the armed forces started with the advent of organized warfare and the demise of the individual warrior hero.

The qualities needed in an effective fighting force are called forth through two central components of military culture. First, discipline shapes behaviors that are conducive to effective group action. Discipline involves habitually subordinating one's actions to commands, rules and norms.⁶¹ Constant training in the military—what is called "drill"—is used to instill discipline. Drill conditions soldiers to respond automatically to commands and enables them to act in coordination with their fellows.⁶² In addition to instilling discipline and fostering unity, drill, by habituating individuals to prescribed actions, insures that individuals do not become disoriented in the chaotic condition of battle.

An October 16, 2003 firefight in Karbala illustrates the significance of training and discipline. In response to calls for help from an ambushed military police patrol, Private Teresa Broadwell of the 194th Military Police arrived on the scene and fired on enemy soldiers, thus helping save the embattled unit from the ambush. She also provided cover fire for her Lieutenant, Jay Guerrero, who credits her with saving his life. Broadwell's actions inspired confidence in her fellow soldiers because she fired her machine gun in controlled bursts, suggesting that she remained coolheaded. As one soldier on the scene recounted:

58. Plato, *Republic*, 451c–457b; Sun Tzu and Sun Pin, *The Art of War*, 6.

59. Sun Tzu and Sun Pin, *The Art of War*, 7; see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 112.

60. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 112.

61. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*; trans. and ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 53.

62. See Don M. Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," *Orbis* 43 (Winter 1999): 11–26; Ricks, *Corps*, 63.

All I could hear was that SAW [squad automatic weapon] going off. She seemed so calm. It was three- to five-shot bursts, like she was taught. That told us she wasn't freaking out and holding the trigger down and spraying. She covered the whole right side of our truck.⁶³

As this incident shows, steady professionalism, rather than "erratic manliness," is militarily effective.⁶⁴

The second way the military institution and its culture fosters combat effectiveness is through unit cohesion. The individuals in the military group are encouraged, in various ways, to develop a sense of mutual devotion to one another such that they will be willing to hold their ground for the sake of their fellows. This mutual trust, regard, and affection among members of a group, which insure that they can depend on one another, are crucial for military success.

In considering the origins and requirements of organized warfare, it also becomes clear that precisely what is *not* needed for successful military actions is unrestrained aggressiveness. Pugnacious individuals who are so eager for battle that they break ranks to go off fighting on their own are a danger to themselves and to their units. In effect, then, organized mass warfare requires the disciplining and restraining, not freeing, of aggressive, violent impulses.

Valid Concerns and Dangerous Misconceptions

Even granting that the qualities necessary for war-fighting are not antithetical to qualities usually associated with women, it still can be argued that the exclusion of women is necessary for forging the important bonds of cohesion that meld men together into a single unit.⁶⁵ The apprehension that women may undermine group solidarity, especially small-group bonding in the intense environment of ground combat, is a more legitimate concern than fears of feminization.⁶⁶ Although personal friendships and favoritism are bound to affect cohesion in any kind of group, will the romantic attachments that evolve in mixed-gender groups appreciably erode cohesion? Or, to put it another way, will the burden of romantic attachments that might develop in mixed-gender military groups outweigh the benefits of including women in more military positions.

63. Loeb, "Combat Heroine."

64. Cf. Harvey C. Mansfield, *Manliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 76–77, 224–25, 232.

65. Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, *Women in Combat: Report to the President* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 104; Fukuyama "Women and the Evolution of World Politics"; Gutmann, *Kinder, Gentler Military*; 241–43.

66. As regards the cohesion issue, there has been considerable debate as to whether "social cohesion" or "task cohesion" facilitates more effective group performance. On this issue see Elizabeth Kier, "Homosexuals in the US Military: Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness," *International Security* 23 (1998): 5–39; Miller and Williams, "Military Policies," 389–90, 393–94.

These remain open questions at this point requiring further examination.⁶⁷ The critics of “feminization” are right to point out that military effectiveness should not be sacrificed for the sake of egalitarian ideals, but neither should the ideals be carelessly compromised without serious consideration of how military effectiveness is really influenced by certain measures.

As for the effect of women on unit cohesion, evidence currently available suggests that it is not significantly undermined by the presence of women. A 1997 RAND study on the effects of integrating women into formerly all-male units found that their cohesiveness was not damaged by the inclusion of women. Overall, the study found that “gender integration is perceived to have a relatively small effect on readiness, cohesion, and morale.”⁶⁸ Anecdotal evidence also seems to suggest that women bond with their male counterparts and experience the comradeship that is essential to military success.⁶⁹ In a letter copied in Michelle Malkin’s Townhall.com column, a Navy Reserve Nurse Corps Officer who served in the First Persian Gulf War expresses the deep connection she feels to her military community in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks:

Where my fellow Sailors and Marines go, I want to go, too. . . . That’s where my heart is. That’s where the hearts of my unit are. There is a bond among military people, a cohesiveness that cannot be explained. You have to experience it to get the true meaning, the real depth, of the friendships formed and the loyalties created by that bond.⁷⁰

Another woman, who elected to serve in the military after the September 11 attacks, was excoriated by the conservative commentator R. Cort Kirkwood for leaving her young son in order to deploy to Afghanistan. The soldier, Private First Class Christina Carde, not only posted her own impassioned rebuttal,⁷¹ but Kirkwood apparently received an outpouring of angry emails from military men closing ranks with Pfc. Carde. In a follow-up article, the defensive and bewildered Kirkwood misinterpreted this act of comradeship as evidence of their “emasculatation,” and failed to see in their response the clear signs of solidarity with a fellow soldier.⁷²

67. Miller and Williams, “Military Policies,” 388–89.

68. Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale* (Washington, DC: National Defense Research Institute, Rand Corporation, 1997), 99.

69. Schneider and Schneider, *Sound Off!* 261–62, 277–78.

70. Michelle Malkin, “Letter from a Reservist,” TownHall.com Columnists (archive) (September 20, 2002).

71. Pfc. Christina Carde, “Deployed mom defends military choice” (July 11, 2003), http://www.dcmilitary.com/army/pentagram/8_27/commentary/24137-1.html.

72. R. Cort Kirkwood, “The Military vs. Free Speech,” LewRockwell.com. (June 21, 2003).

Out in the field, women report witnessing the same kind of relationships form in mixed-gender units as “traditionally occur among men.”⁷³ Tracy Smith, a black woman soldier who served in the current operation in Iraq, recalls her Iraq tour as terrible, but nevertheless values the rewarding camaraderie she experienced, which she regards as “a high point of her life.” Smith observes that in the field of battle “any differences go out of the window—white, black, male, female, Jew, Muslim.”⁷⁴ As David Segal observes, the “stress of military operations itself fosters cohesion. . . . It is the commonality of experience of the soldiers involved, rather than their gender, that produces cohesion.”⁷⁵

While bonds of solidarity seem to form among more mature soldiers in mixed-gender units, there may be good reason to be concerned about the detrimental effects of gender integrated basic training. Basic training is the initial phase of a soldier’s service when the individual is transformed from a civilian into a soldier. In this phase, which lasts anywhere from six to twelve weeks depending on the branch of service, separation of the sexes may enhance the sense of a “rite of passage” and diminish the “high school” atmosphere that is reported to persist in Army, Air Force, and Navy recruit training (the Marines have continued to keep the sexes apart at this initial stage). According to the Report of the Federal Advisory Committee on Gender-Integrated Training and Related Issues to the Secretary of Defense (December 16, 1997), drill instructors complain about having to spend “an inordinate amount of time . . . investigating or disciplining male/female misconduct.”⁷⁶ After having absorbed the values of service and teamwork apart from the opposite sex, men and women may very well work more effectively together in advanced training and permanent duty station mixed-gender units.⁷⁷ Re-segregated basic training may not be the most adequate solution to difficulties arising in mixed-gender basic training, but only candid acknowledgement of the challenges will lead to optimal solutions.

Even as opponents of gender integration raise some valid concerns, the more outspoken critics of “feminization” entangle these with fantasies about the “old” military as a realm in which individual warrior heroes ran free in what was the last bastion of uninhibited masculinity. The proponents of the macho military seem to be taken in by the Hollywood version of war and its glamorization of muscular heroics, witness Phyllis Schlafly’s comment that “watching war pictures

73. Carol Barkalow, “Let Women in the Military ‘Be All They Can Be,’” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 July 1991, opinion.

74. Matthew Bigg, “Camaraderie key for U.S. blacks fighting in Iraq,” Atlanta: Reuters (December 25, 2006).

75. David R. Segal, *Recruiting for Uncle Sam: Citizenship and Military Manpower Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 123; Solaro, *Line of Fire*, 302.

76. Report of the Federal Advisory Committee on Gender-Integrated Training and Related Issues to the Secretary of Defense, (December 16, 1997), <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/git/report.html>.

77. Snyder, “The Citizen–Soldier Tradition,” 196–97.

[of Afghanistan] on television we almost expected to see High Noon sheriff Gary Cooper or John Wayne riding across the plains.”⁷⁸ Most perniciously, the pleasing illusion of macho heroism apparently lures these critics into mistaking the necessary drill, discipline, obedience and inhibition of individual willfulness in the military for “feminization.”

An example of this error is Stephanie Gutmann’s misinterpretation of an incident she describes in her book deriding the female-friendly armed forces. While observing basic training at Fort Jackson, Gutmann watched trainees jogging around in a circle as their drill sergeants had instructed them to do (and while the drill sergeants were preparing for the next activity). Several young men, Gutmann reports, initiated a running competition, egging their rival platoons on with provocative chants. The young men, as Gutmann saw it, were expressing manly competitiveness until restrained by a female drill sergeant who shook her finger at them. The drill sergeant was acting, Gutmann presumes, in accordance with the new feminized standards of noncompetitive cooperation, which do not abide the degrading razing of another platoon.⁷⁹ She overlooks that there may have been a *military rationale* for the actions of the drill sergeant. These young men were in the process of “basic training,” the initial phase when recruits are taught the discipline, obedience, and submission that are central to military effectiveness. The young men, who started a running competition without being told to do so, were no doubt disciplined because they had acted on their own initiative.

One main purpose of basic training is to instill the instinct to obey orders. If waiting to shoot “until you see the whites of their eyes”—as an officer famously ordered at the battle of Bunker Hill—is decisive for military victory, impulsive, unrestrained aggressive behavior is antithetical to military success. The dire consequences of undisciplined belligerence were manifest in an April 17, 2002 friendly fire incident that resulted in the death of four Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan. The Canadians were engaged in a training exercise when their live-fire was spotted by two American F-16 pilots. Perceiving the fire to be enemy surface to air fire, one of the F-16 pilots, Major Harry Schmidt, requested permission to fire on the site from an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). The AWACS directed him to “hold fire.”⁸⁰ Instead of obeying the order, taking evasive action, and waiting for more information,⁸¹ Major Schmidt declared that he was “rolling in self-defense” and exclaimed “bombs away” as he released a 500 pound laser-guided bomb on what turned out to be friendly

78. Schlafly, “Feminism Meets Terrorism.”

79. Gutmann, *Kinder, Gentler Military*, 76.

80. HQ USCENTCOM, Tarnak Farms Friendly Fire Incident Near Kandahar, Afghanistan, 17 April 2002 (14 June, 2002), 2 and 9.

81. HQ USCENTCOM, Tarnak Farms, 18.

coalition forces.⁸² In his Letter of Reprimand to Major Schmidt, Lieutenant General Bruce Carlson wrote:

You acted shamefully on 17 April 2002 over Tarnak Farms, Afghanistan, exhibiting arrogance and a lack of flight discipline Your actions indicate that you used your self-defense declaration as a pretext to strike a target, which you rashly decided was an enemy firing position, and about which you had exhausted your patience in waiting for clearance from the Combined Air Operations Center to engage.⁸³

It might be objected that while ordinary troops should be more obedient than willful, military leaders must be bold and eager to initiate aggressive actions. In considering this issue, it is necessary to make a distinction between necessary boldness and dangerous recklessness. The myth of the macho military elides this crucial distinction. Certainly, some measure of boldness is necessary in military leaders (and soldiers, too). But what is probably more important in a leader is the ability to craft cunning strategies and the patience to see these plans through. In his *How Great Generals Win*, Bevin Alexander explains that

One of the factors that make a general great, and therefore make him rare, is that he can withstand the urge of most men to rush headlong into direct engagements and can see instead how he can go around rather than through his opponent.⁸⁴

Conversely, not being able to resist the itch to fight and heedlessly rush into battle is often a recipe for disaster. Some of history's greatest defeats have been inflicted on the side most blood-lusting and eager for battle by the more patient force. This was dramatized in the defeat of the Romans by the Carthaginians at Cannae in 216 B.C., often regarded as the greatest battle in Western history. The Romans were led by the inexperienced Consul Terentius, who, as the ancient historian Polybius tells us, was increasingly "inflamed with the desire of fighting." His soldiers, too, Polybius reports were "eager for a battle."⁸⁵ Against the advice of the more imperturbable counsel Aemilius, the heedless Terentius and his over-eager troops were easily lured forward into a double-envelopment devised by Hannibal, the commander of the Carthaginian forces. Although they

82. HQ USCENTCOM, Tarnak Farms, 9–10.

83. The text of the decision is available from CBC News Online, "U.S. Air Force Verdict" (July 6, 2004), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/friendlyfire/verdict.html>.

84. Bevin Alexander, *How Great Generals Win* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 24.

85. Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius*, 2 Vols., trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), Vol. 1, 268.

outnumbered Hannibal's forces by almost two to one, 50,000 Romans were massacred that day. Arrogance and over-eagerness have been the undoing of many an unfortunate force from Cannae to the forces of Alexander I at Austerlitz in 1805 to the ill-fated soldiers rashly sent up to the Chosin Reservoir in 1950 during the Korean War.

The urge to give battle is often a very powerful desire among soldiers and their leaders and one that, through discipline, soldiers must learn to control. Soldiers are eager to rush into battle not because they delight in killing "the bad guys," as Schlafly supposes. On the contrary, as Lt. Col. David Grossman has convincingly demonstrated, most human beings find it very difficult to kill other human beings and pay a high psychological price for doing so.⁸⁶ Moreover, a U.S. Army Research Branch Information and Education Division study of soldiers' attitudes during World War II revealed that the closer soldiers came to the front lines, the less they hated the enemy or even saw the opponent as a "bad guy."⁸⁷ As Richard Holmes observes, the "concept of a hateful and inhuman enemy rarely survives contact with him."⁸⁸

The reason soldiers often become eager for battle is because the anxiety of awaiting the fearful event is unbearable. Regarding the Romans' actions at Cannae, Polybius remarked that "there is nothing more intolerable to mankind than suspense."⁸⁹ Moreover, this desire to start the action is not a characteristic peculiar to men. We also hear about this desperate urge to get the battle going from women who have participated in war. Women stationed in the Persian Gulf in 1991, for example, reported the great relief they felt when the ground war started. A female Army major reported, "We were so glad when they said 'It's time to go.'"⁹⁰ But this eagerness to be unburdened of the waiting and anxiety incident to war must also be controlled and not encouraged.

Unleashing the Dogs of War at Abu Ghraib

The military and women's role in it has been viewed through the distorting lens of two opposing but ultimately similar views discussed above. These views were thrown into disarray when confronted by the stereotype-confuting spectacle of female soldiers as perpetrators of sexual abuse and torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. In April 2004, photos emerged that showed American enlisted

86. Lt. Col. David Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Boston: Little Brown, 1996).

87. Samuel A. Stouffer, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, Marion Harper Lumsdaine, Robin M. Williams Jr., M. Brewster Smith, Irving L. Janis, Shirley A. Star, and Leonard S. Cottrell Jr., *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath*, Vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 159.

88. Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 368.

89. Polybius, *The Histories*, Vol. I, 268.

90. Schneider and Schneider, *Sound Off!*, 281.

reservists belonging to the 372nd Military Police Company, taunting, torturing, and sexually humiliating inmates of the prison. Images of prisoners piled into naked human pyramids, leashed like animals, attached to electrodes, and threatened by guard dogs appalled viewers worldwide. Women were conspicuous among the soldiers, grinning, posing, and giving the thumbs-up sign beside the tormented male prisoners. Three of the first seven soldiers charged with the abuse were women, one of whom, Lynndie England, became the face of the Abu Ghraib debacle.

After the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, both opponents of women in the military and difference feminists attempted to adjust their conceptual frameworks to accommodate the discomfiting revelations of women engaging in brutal behavior. In order to reaffirm the belief that women do not belong in the armed forces, right wing commentator Ann Coulter proposed that women are “too vicious” to be in the military.⁹¹ Other less eccentric opponents of military women, such as Linda Chavez, explained the Abu Ghraib events by suggesting that the presence of women in the military diminishes discipline and encourages misbehavior.⁹² Only a year earlier, while reflecting on the issue of women in combat (and assuming the fighting in Iraq was “all but over”), Chavez observed that “females are not just smaller versions of males; they are also, on average, far less aggressive and more nurturing, qualities that suit them to be good mothers but not warriors.”⁹³ But as the war dragged on for another year, these aggression-deficient, nurturing females became responsible, in Chavez’s view, for the abuse and humiliation of captives. Similarly, Elaine Donnelly blamed the cultural celebration of “mean girls” together with the breakdown of discipline in gender-integrated basic training for the events at Abu Ghraib.⁹⁴ Having repeatedly charged the gender integrated armed forces with being detrimentally kinder and gentler, insufficiently blood-lusting, and hamstrung by political correctness, these commentators’ belated concern with rules and discipline rings hollow.

On the feminist side, the spectacle of women participating in the atrocities prompted some soul searching. In the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib revelations, Barbara Ehrenreich was moved to comment that a “certain kind of feminism, or perhaps I should say a certain kind of feminist naiveté, died in Abu Ghraib. It was a feminism that saw men as the perpetual perpetrators, women as the perpetual

91. Michelle Cottle, “G.I. Jane” *The New Republic* 230 (May 24, 2004), 38.

92. Linda Chavez, “Sexual tension in the military,” Townhall.com (May 5, 2004), <http://www.townhall.com/columnists/lindachavez/lc20040505.shtml>

93. Linda Chavez, “Women in combat will take toll on our culture,” TownHall.com (April 30, 2003), <http://www.townhall.com/columnists/lindachavez/lc20030430.shtml>

94. Elaine Donnelly, “Mean Girls in the Military,” Center for Military Readiness (May 18, 2004) <http://www.cmrlink.org/culture.asp?DocID=225>.

victims and male sexual violence against women as the root of all injustice."⁹⁵ However, for other commentators, the events at Abu Ghraib appeared to corroborate the difference feminist view of the military as a masculinized institutional environment in which women play subordinate roles. In assessing the events at Abu Ghraib, Cynthia Enloe revisited the sex scandals in the military and reiterated the view that "a culture of sexism had come to permeate many sectors of US military life."⁹⁶ According to Enloe, the sexual humiliation of Iraqis could be seen as an effort on the part of the male MPs to undermine the foe's sense of masculinity. The women soldiers "could act as ridiculing feminized spectators of male prisoners" potentially intensifying "the masculinized demoralization."⁹⁷ The out-numbered female MPs likely felt pressured, in Enloe's view, to "play the roles assigned to them" in order gain "male acceptance."⁹⁸ Like many other observers of the scandal, Enloe dismissed the "bad apple" theory that a few miscreants acted on their own and directed attention to "the larger US military, intelligence and civilian command structures" as the explanatory context for what occurred.⁹⁹

What Enloe failed to note, from the perspective of the larger institutional framework, however, was the tension between the civilian leadership and high-level uniformed military and former military members that played out behind the events that led to the Abu Ghraib abuses. This tension was noted in The Schlesinger Report on detention operations and in Seymour Hersh's April–May 2004 articles in the *The New Yorker* magazine,¹⁰⁰ which, along with CBS's *60 minutes II* program on April 28, first broke the story of the Abu Ghraib scandal. Enloe's narrow focus on the military's "masculinized culture"¹⁰¹ missed this important aspect of the Abu Ghraib episode: it was the military that resisted the measures that led to the Abu Ghraib abuses.

The conflict between the civilian leadership and the military was first evident when, during the lead-up to the Iraq war in the winter of 2003, then Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki, in response to questions about necessary troop

95. Barbara Ehrenreich, "A uterus is not a substitute for a conscience," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2004: M1.

96. Cynthia H. Enloe, "Wielding Masculinity inside Abu Ghraib: Making Feminist Sense of an American Military Scandal," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 10 (2004): 96–98, 100.

97. Enloe, "Wielding Masculinity," 99.

98. Enloe, "Wielding Masculinity," 99. It might be observed that women have proven capable of torturing and tormenting captives in war apart from a need to gain male acceptance. For example, Yugoslav women partisans horrified a male colleague who disparagingly described their torturing captive Nazi soldiers in a sexualized way by stomping on genitals and choking one captive with "his own testicles," in Linda Grant De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 238.

99. Enloe, "Wielding Masculinity," 92.

100. Incorporated into Seymour M. Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004).

101. Enloe, "Wielding Masculinity," 100.

strength, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the post-hostilities stabilization of Iraq would require several hundred thousand soldiers.¹⁰² Shinseki's estimate was dismissed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz as "wildly off the mark."¹⁰³ Planning for about 100,000 troops, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld also derisively discounted Shinseki's projections.¹⁰⁴ At his retirement ceremony, which none of the high-level civilians in the Defense Department attended,¹⁰⁵ Shinseki, in an unmistakable gesture toward the Secretary, declared that "mistrust and arrogance are antithetical to inspired and inspiring leadership."¹⁰⁶

Former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's contempt for the senior military leadership is well known and exemplifies the impatience with military practices that restrain audaciousness shared by critics of "feminization." According to Seymour Hersh, the development of a special-access program (SAP) to be manned by Special Forces and other operatives grew out of Rumsfeld's "disdain for the Pentagon's senior generals."

Rumsfeld chafed over what he saw as the reluctance of senior Pentagon generals and admirals to act aggressively. By mid-2002, he and his senior aides were exchanging secret memorandums on modifying the culture of the military leaders and finding ways to encourage them "to take greater risks."¹⁰⁷

Subsequent events vindicated Shinseki's cautious estimate of the number of troops necessary to occupy Iraq. As for Abu Ghraib, the low number of soldiers relative to prisoners contributed to the strain that led to prisoner abuse.¹⁰⁸

The Abu Ghraib abuses are also importantly connected with the Bush administration's February 7, 2002 decision to hold the Geneva Convention rules on prisoners of war inapplicable to Al Qaeda and Taliban detainees.¹⁰⁹ Coercive interrogation measures were then authorized for questioning these detainees (who were held, for the most part, at the detention facility at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay). However, as personnel moved between locations, these

102. Eric Schmitt, "Army Chief Raises Estimate of G.I.s Needed in Postwar Iraq," *The New York Times* (February 25, 2003); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006): 97.

103. Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force's Size and Cost," *The New York Times* (February 28, 2003). Ricks, *Fiasco*, 97.

104. Schmitt, "Pentagon Contradicts General."

105. Thomas Ricks reports that "Wolfowitz asked to come but Shinseki declined to invite him," in *Fiasco*, 156.

106. Eric K. Shinseki, Gen. (ret.), "Farewell Remarks," General Eric K. Shinseki, 34th Chief of Staff of the Army Retirement Ceremony (June 11 2003), <http://www.army.mil/features/ShinsekiFarewell/farewellremarks.htm>.

107. Hersh, *Chain of Command*, 16, see 48.

108. "The Schlesinger Report," in *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib*, ed. Karen J. Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 944.

109. "Memorandum of February 7, 2002," in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 134–35.

coercive measures carried over to the Iraq Theater where the Geneva Conventions did apply.¹¹⁰ Moreover, as the insurgency in Iraq grew, the need for “actionable intelligence” became pressing and MPs engaged in detention operations were encouraged to act as enablers for intelligence gathering.¹¹¹ That is, MPs were expected to set conditions “for the successful exploitation of internees.”¹¹² Although it was affirmed that the Geneva Convention rules applied in Iraq, the Secretary of Defense’s April 16, 2003, policy guidelines for Guantánamo were also introduced as a potential model for operations in Iraq.¹¹³ These guidelines included interrogation techniques intended for Taliban and Al Qaeda captives only. Overall, confusion about what rules applied, ambiguity about who, among Military Police, Military Intelligence and civilian contractors, was in control, and pressure on inadequately trained reserve soldiers to make internees pliable for interrogation created conditions that fostered abuses.

During the internal administration debate regarding the status of the Geneva Conventions vis-à-vis Al Qaeda and Taliban prisoners, former and active military members were in favor of abiding by the Geneva Convention rules. The debate over the applicability of the Geneva Conventions exposed the conflict between civilian authorities—especially in the Department of Justice—who were impatient with these “quaint” provisions and representatives of the military desirous of sustaining an order-creating body of rules.¹¹⁴ Secretary of State Colin Powell, a career army soldier, asked the administration to consider the costs of contravening the Geneva Convention rules in his January 26, 2002 memorandum and expressed concern about how captured American soldiers might be treated in retaliation.¹¹⁵ According to the report of the independent Schlesinger panel that reviewed detention operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with the State Department’s position and, moreover, opposed a move that would “undermine the United States military culture which is based on strict adherence to the law of war.”¹¹⁶ If abusive

110. “The Schlesinger Report,” in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 940, 949.

111. “The Taguba Report,” in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 409, 451.

112. “The Taguba Report,” in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 409.

113. “The Schlesinger Report,” in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 911–12, 925.

114. “The Schlesinger Report,” in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 923; Hersh, *Chain of Command*, 3, 71.

115. In Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 123.

116. “The Schlesinger Report in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 923, see 947; see also Gonzales’s recapitulation of this position, which he finally regarded as unpersuasive, in Memorandum of January 25, 2002, in Greenberg and Dratel, *Torture Papers*, 120. The Justice Department and the military also came to loggerheads about permissible interrogation methods for detainees at Guantánamo Bay under the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which has been codified as Sections 2340-2340A of Title 18 of the United States Code. See the memoranda written by the judge advocate generals (JAGs) for the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines in *Congressional Record*: July 25, 2005 (Senate), S8794–S8796.

behavior directed at sexually humiliating detainees derives from the military's "masculinized culture," why was the military so adamantly opposed to the policies that permitted these abuses? Viewing the Abu Ghraib events simply as an expression of the gendered character of the military fails to address this question.

Abrogating international rules regarding the treatment of prisoners is antithetical to the aspects of military culture I have discussed above. As I have indicated, military culture encourages orientation to a framework of rules because disciplined subordination to rules promotes military effectiveness. In addition, soldiers want to believe that their actions and risks serve a higher purpose and do not simply represent the exercise of brute force. Throughout history, militaries have developed codes that restrict the way the power over life and death is deployed and distinguish soldiering from serial killing.¹¹⁷ These codes and standards give war-fighting an aura of dignity and meaningfulness and steady soldiers in the chaotic environment of battle. The "code of the warrior," as Shannon French, a professor at the U.S. Naval Academy, observes, also inhibits soldiers from spiraling into the black hole of unhindered atrocity. "The code is a kind of moral and psychological armor that protects the warrior from becoming a monster in his or her own eyes."¹¹⁸ It is well known that ordinary people can be insidiously influenced by situational forces to act in unimaginable ways.¹¹⁹ U.S. military leaders were resistant to abandoning the laws of war because these form part of the framework of standards that orient soldiers in unsettling circumstances. Civilian leaders who disdained the niceties of international law failed to consider that these kinds of rules and norms shield soldiers against moral disintegration. Sometimes citizens are called upon to risk their lives for their country, but their governments must make every effort to insure that they do not also lose their souls.¹²⁰

Another war during which soldiers were failed by their leaders was the Vietnam War. Very young people were left to fend for themselves in bewildering, frightening and life-threatening conditions. Rick Champion was made a lieutenant at the age of nineteen and sent to Vietnam to lead an infantry platoon of equally young men. Champion has told me that the presence of a career non-commissioned officer (NCO) in his command preserved his unit from

117. Shannon E. French, *The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present*, foreword by Senator John McCain (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2003), 5.

118. French, *The Code of the Warrior*, 10.

119. Craig Haney, Curtis Banks, and Philip Zimbardo, "A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison," *Naval Research Review* 26 (September 1973): 1-17.

120. French, *The Code of the Warrior*, 10.

the descent into moral chaos. In a novel about his experiences in Vietnam that he is writing, he says:

It was with the greatest good luck that I'd been assigned to a rifle platoon with a career NCO as platoon sergeant. He was twice the age of any of us and had seventeen years in the infantry He was also the most effective leader to keep a short leash on our young killers. He knew ways to bridle their wayward lust for blood, mayhem and revenge. His reassuring presence and deep knowledge of the infantry made us the luckiest platoon in the battalion. Many of the rifle platoons in the battalion had no senior NCOs keeping order in the ranks [The] ominous result was the speed in which the young killers, free of the leash of restraint imposed by a strong sergeant turned predatory, taking license with civilians encountered in the countryside. Unchecked, the unsettled children, nearly all of them a victim of a bout of madness at one time or another, became marauders.¹²¹

Career NCOs are the “backbone”¹²² of the military and embody and preserve its best traditions. It is those customs, rules, and traditions that stand between soldiers and chaos in every sense. The myth of the macho military perilously neglects the importance of those codes and their restraining effect.

“Once More unto the Breach”

Warnings about the “feminized” military now appear overly hasty as the gender-integrated armed forces perform competently and courageously in Iraq and Afghanistan (despite being overextended and under-equipped). Service-women play a vital part in current military engagements and overall have performed admirably in exceedingly difficult operations. During a March 2005 firefight in Iraq, for example, Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester of the 617th Military Police Company braved enemy fire and successfully fought off insurgents who had attacked a supply convoy. Hester is the first woman to be awarded the Silver Star since World War II.¹²³

The military's reliance on women soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq has recently compelled the Army to modify its collocation rule and include women in forward support companies (FSCs) that deploy alongside front line, combat forces. This apparent breach of the 1994 regulations provoked Elaine Donnelly and others to

121. Richard Champion, *The Children's War*, in progress.

122. Rudyard Kipling characterized NCOs as the “backbone of the army” in his 1895 poem “The Eathen.” This line has been incorporated into the U.S. Army's NCO Creed.

123. Eric Schmitt, “First Woman in 6 Decades gets the Army's Silver Star,” *The New York Times* (June 17, 2005): A 16.

protest the Army's moves to bring women closer to the arena of combat. In an effort to reverse the new Army policy, Donnelly exposed the Army's inclusion of women in FSCs and urged members of Congress to act on the matter.¹²⁴ As a result, in May 2005, key committee members of the House Armed Services Committee attempted to add an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 that would bar women from serving in units that collocate with combat forces. The proponents of this effort, led by the Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, Duncan Hunter, were ultimately unsuccessful, however. Hunter was pressured to withdraw his amendment due to strong opposition from Army officers and civilians in the Pentagon and both Democratic and Republican lawmakers.¹²⁵

As is often the case, ideology shattered against the hard realities of military necessity. The demands of war have compelled greater reliance on women, and military culture has been able to accommodate women's changing roles. The military is not a monolithically or rigidly hyper-masculine environment, but a complex culture that embodies competing values, some of which have facilitated the advance of servicewomen. In order to properly understand the role of military women in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, it is necessary to finally abandon one-sided frameworks that have distorted our understanding of the military, the requisites of military effectiveness, and women's participation in this organization.

124. Elaine Donnelly, "Army Changes DOD Rule on Women in Land Combat," Center for Military Readiness (March 14, 2005), <http://www.cmrlink.org/WomenInCombat.asp?docID=245>; Rowan Scarborough, "Women in combat ban again at issue," *The Washington Times*, (February 4, 2005).

125. Rowan Scarborough, "GOP Retreats on Women-in-Combat Bill," *The Washington Times* (May 26, 2005). Important among the Republican opponents to the proposed measure was Rep. Heather A. Wilson of New Mexico, who is an Air Force Academy Graduate.