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A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF
PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON AMERICAN WOMEN IN COMBAT

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Thomas M. Lyon
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
December 2018

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In January of 2016 all U.S. military branches, under orders from the Pentagon, lifted their ban on women in combat, meaning that women could apply for any military job, including combat positions that had previously been male-only jobs. According to *PBS NewsHour*, “Carter said that the military would be opening all ‘remaining occupations and positions to women. there will be no exceptions [sic]’” (Tobia). The controversy surrounding this issue started well before 2016 though. In 1993, when women were first allowed to fly combat aircraft, it happened at a time when the “military [had already] long . . . resisted efforts to open combat roles to women” (Lancaster 1993). Even now, in 2018, controversy remains. Just after the Pentagon issued the ruling to lift the ban in December of 2015, Marine General John Kelly, head of U.S. Southern Command, publicly doubted the claim made by the Pentagon that physical training standards for military jobs would not be lowered in order to accommodate female troops. *PBS NewsHour* claimed that General Kelly stated that “the military will eventually be pressured to lower the qualifications so more women can serve in jobs like the Marine infantry” (Baldor and Regan, “Debate over Women in Combat Continues”). Despite all this, the ban has been lifted and integration efforts in the military are well underway, including among Army and Marine infantry units, the biggest ground combat components of the U.S. military.

My purpose throughout this analysis of the issue of women in combat is to present a balanced view—the good, the bad, and the reality of the women’s lived experiences in combat. The first set of data looked at in Chapter IV are two combat memoirs from women who have seen military combat. The first woman, Maj. Mary Jennings Hegar, was an Air Force helicopter pilot who was shot down while on a combat rescue mission in Iraq. Her story is retold in her book, *Shoot like a Girl*. The second woman, Capt. Jane Blair, served as a Marine officer in Iraq and recounts her combat experience in *Hesitation Kills*.

In addition, Chapter V presents an analysis of recent online discourse—news articles and reader responses—by people, many female veterans themselves, who are passionate one way or the other on the issue of women in combat. The online analysis is presented via themes connected back to research looked at in the Literature Review, which brought up major arguments from both sides of the issue of women in combat.

Ultimately, my goal for this research is to present an example of the reality of women’s combat experience, through the personal writings of women who have been there; that is done with the stories from Capt. Blair and Maj, Hegar. Secondly, I want readers to get a clear understanding of the arguments being made from both sides of the issue, along with the sources of support used to ground these claims, as they are represented through major news publications. Through this balanced look at the issue, readers are better able to create their own opinions and ideas about this highly complex and controversial issue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I'd also like to thank my entire dissertation committee—Dr. Pagnucci, Dr. Savova, and Dr. Kuipers—for all of their help and guidance throughout this project. I'm especially thankful to Dr. Pagnucci for his *never-ending* patience, advice, and mentoring through all the challenges I faced in completing this dissertation. Thank you for guiding, advising, and most of all, for believing in me.

Thank you to my wife, Sophia, and my two kids, Alexandra and Brendan, for creating such a loving and peaceful environment at home—without that, I couldn't have gotten anything done at home as I did. Actually, I never would have expected that I could get any work done at home; in fact, I used to make such an effort to keep my work confined to my office on campus. But somehow, at some time, I made the decision to start working from home, right in the living room—surrounded by two excited toddlers who played and fought all around me as I did my work; and somehow that environment helped me relax and achieve better focus on my work. I never would have thought that'd be possible.

I'm very grateful for the service of Maj. Hegar and Capt. Blair—our country is strengthened by their military careers that were devoted to the defense of American freedom. Also, I'm thankful to them for publishing their stories for others to learn from.

Thank you to the military veteran authors and commenters for publishing their thoughts and experiences through a public medium. Their online voices of concern enable the public to glean ideas and information about the issue of women in combat, and ultimately make their own informed opinion. Additionally, all the other authors and

contributors to the online discussion on women in combat—thank you for your contributions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Recent Changes in Women’s Role in the U.S. Military.....	1
	Public Concerns about Women in Combat.....	2
	Value to the Academy.....	4
	Statement of Purpose and Research Questions.....	6
	Statement of Purpose.....	6
	Research Questions.....	6
	Research Approach.....	6
	Pragmatic Literary Analysis by Design.....	7
	Narrative Analysis by Principle.....	9
	Data Overview.....	10
	Two Female Veterans’ Memoirs.....	10
	Online Discourse about Women in Combat.....	11
	Researcher Perspective: Supportive but Skeptical.....	12
	Key Terminology.....	12
	Combat Service Job (CSJ).....	13
	Combat Exclusion Policy (CEP).....	13
	Military Service Member.....	14
	Memoir.....	14
II	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
	Qualitative Research of Women in the Military.....	15
	Overview of the Three Studies.....	15
	Narratives from Women in the Military.....	19
	Overview of the Three Narratives.....	20
	Relevant Themes among Women’s Stories.....	21
	Adopting Masculinity.....	22
	Avoiding Femininity.....	24
	Sexual Harassment.....	29
	Copying with Stereotypes.....	37
	Zeigler and Gunderson’s Research on Women in Combat.....	40
	“Protecting Women”.....	41
	“American Society Is Not Ready for Female Casualties”.....	42
	“Readiness Concerns”.....	42
	“Cohesion, Morale and Readiness”.....	45

Chapter	Page
III	METHODOLOGY47
	Data Collection.....47
	Memoir Data.....47
	Online Discourse.....47
	Data Analysis.....48
	Thematic Coding.....49
	Data Analysis Sequence50
	Researcher Bias.....50
	Limitations of Research51
IV	THE REAL EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN COMBAT.....52
	Introduction.....52
	Aim High: Maj. Hegar, Air Force Combat Search and Rescue Pilot.....53
	Theme Overview53
	Author Background53
	Theme1: Sexual Harassment54
	Theme2: Coping with Stereotypes63
	Theme3: Bravado71
	Theme4: Just Doing Her Job.....78
	Semper Fi: Capt. Blair, Marine Corps Aerial Reconnaissance Officer.....96
	Theme Overview96
	Author Background96
	Theme1: Coping with Stereotypes96
	Theme2: Left out107
	Theme3: Love in War.....122
	Theme4: Finding Her Place126
V	POLITICAL STRIFE134
	Introduction.....134
	Goals135
	Bias and Fair Representation of Ideas.....135
	Okay, Get Over It. The Ban Has Been Lifted—Women Are Doing This!137
	Claim 1: Women Are Able to Meet the Exact Same Training Standards Already in Place for Men.....137

Chapter	Page
Claim 2: Inequality Between the Sexes Is a Primary Obstacle to Integrating Women into Combat Jobs.....	150
Hold on, Now. Our Fighting Forces Are Falling Apart Because of This!	157
Claim 1: The Liberal Political Agenda Is Superseding Military Effectiveness	157
Claim 2: Biological Differences Are Real: Strength Limitations and Sexual Tensions Make Women in Combat a Bad Idea.....	169
 VI CONCLUSION	 180
Summary of the Issue.....	180
Key Findings	181
Resilient and Effective.....	182
Islands of Truth.....	183
Revisiting Purpose and Research Questions	184
Maj. Hegar and Capt. Blair.....	185
Public Discourse	187
What’s Next?	191
 WORKS CITED.....	 194

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Themes in Literature Review.....	22
2	Phases of Data Analysis.....	50

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

RECENT CHANGES IN WOMEN’S ROLE IN THE U.S. MILITARY

In 2013, The Pentagon announced that it would be opening up all military combat service jobs (CSJ) to women with a timeline of three years for full implementation (Press Operations). Over the course of recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, women have had an increasing role in and around the battlefield (Bumiller and Shanker). One contributing reason for women’s increased role in combat is the changing nature of today’s battles. In modern-day warfare the concept of a clearly divided battlefield is an outdated idea.

According to U.S. Army and Marine combat experts,

in the post-Cold War era, the nonlinear battlefield is becoming more common. Should this trend continue, defining direct ground combat as occurring “well forward on the battlefield” may become increasingly less descriptive of actual battlefield conditions. (US GAO: Gender Issues)

In this kind of non-linear modern battlefield, keeping women in hard-to-define “rear’ positions does not afford them much ‘protection” (Zeigler and Gunderson 46). As a result, women in recent conflicts have found themselves in combat situations, in one form or another—one way or another.

In January of 2016 the combat exclusion policy (CEP) for women in combat was officially lifted. Then Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter made the announcement in December of 2015, claiming that “There will be no exceptions,” even though the Marine Corps had requested an exemption to the policy (Rosenberg and Philipps). Lifting the CEP

for women officially allows them to enter into any CSJ in any military branch—no exclusions and no exemptions.

PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT WOMEN IN COMBAT

Women seeking to integrate into these new jobs will likely face the challenge of trying to get into a place where others may not really want them there simply for being women. The arguments against women in combat jobs, such as infantry, are based on a set of likely well-known biases such as these; women,

1. Have physically weaker bodies
2. Present a romantic distraction to men
3. Will cause others to give extra attention to women's safety
4. Are emotionally illogical (Bonenberger)

This set of arguments create the foundation of stereotypes that women are up against in CSJs. Adrian Bonenberger, a former U.S. Army officer, explains his inside perspective on women serving in CSJs in his article titled "How to Make Women's Service in Combat Roles a Success":

For much of the seven years I served in the United States Army infantry, I believed that women would make poor infantry soldiers. I believed that efforts to put women in uniform on my left, carrying a machine gun, or on my right, firing a grenade launcher, were wildly misguided at best, and downright dangerous at worst. I believed this throughout Ranger School and Reconnaissance School. I believed this while reading articles about how women had experienced combat as part of counterinsurgency efforts, and therefore deserved to join infantry or Marine infantry units. I believed this while walking along ridgelines in Afghanistan at 9,000

feet with 100 pounds of armor and gear on my shoulders, cursing the day I was born.

I don't believe it anymore – time away from the hive mind, perspective and watching women do CrossFit at strength levels beyond anything I achieved as a soldier have convinced me that women are capable of meeting the challenge of infantry training and infantry missions as well. At the same time, the Army and Marines still have deep-seated reservations about allowing women to serve in their infantry units. (Bonenberger)

Bonenberger's description of the "deep-seated reservations" within infantry units was echoed in a recent survey of U.S. Special Operations forces, which oversees elite units that fall under the category of CSJs. The survey was sent out to 18,000 members of the special operations community who currently work in combat positions that were previously closed to women. The survey response rate of 50% was said to "[reflect] the high interest in the subject" within the special operations community. Exact results of the survey have not been released. However, overall concerns from this recent survey were revealed regarding the possibility of training standards being lowered for women, increases in sexual harassment and assault, and about women being "treated more harshly" (Baldor AP Exclusive). One survey respondent claimed that "Gender equality is not an option when the bullets are flying . . . Most males in the area of the world I work in would rather back hand a female than listen to her speak. There is a reason we send men to do these jobs" (Baldor US Special Operators). Another stated that "No one wants this. Do us a favor and listen to what we are saying for a change. Can Washington really afford to take that risk so politicians can

brag to the public that they brought gender equality to SOF?" (Baldor US Special Operators). Finally, one respondent detailed his response as such:

I could list hundreds of reasons why women cannot do the job that a Green Beret is required to do, but as I only have 1,000 characters, I will choose the one that I think is the most important," . . . "I weigh 225 pounds, and 280 pounds in full kit, as did most of the members of my ODA (a 12-man Army Green Beret unit). I expect every person on my team to be able to drag any member of my team out of a firefight. A 130 pound female could not do it, I don't care how much time she spends in the gym. Do we expect wounded men to bleed out because a female soldier could not drag him to cover? (Baldor US Special Operators)

A 2001-2002 survey of 350 male and female cadets from Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC programs showed a similar disapproval of women in these jobs, and "Overall, nearly fifty percent of respondents [were] against women serving in the special forces" (Ziegler and Gunderson 27).

That was the kind of turbulent controversy that surrounded the issue of women in combat circa 2016. It's important to note that there have been many changes and developments to this issue since the lifting of the ban. It is not my intention to cover those developments though, as my research focuses primarily on the issue around the time of the lifting of the ban (app. 2012-2016), when the arguments from both side were most prominent.

VALUE TO THE ACADEMY

Looked at from the perspective of the overall value of this research to the discipline of the English academy, I see two primary benefits. One is that this research has sought to do

what a narrative analysis seeks to do: to tell a story that brings to life the elements most important to the original authors whose story is being analyzed. By way of Major Mary Jennings Hegar and Captain Jane Blair's narratives, as well as all of the authors of online discourse from Chapter V, my primary goal was always to give credibility and validity to their story—their personal issues, their individual claims—through a pragmatically grounded narrative analysis. Therefore, my hope is that my research serves as a model for narrative analysis as well as pragmatic literary criticism, and adds to the myriad of subjects and lives that have been analyzed in the English academy, always with full regard in mind for the sake of the original authors' voice.

Secondly, in specific regards to English composition studies, there is a long history of embedding social issues into the foundation of a writing class (e.g., through critical pedagogies), with a goal for students to find their inspiration through rhetorically focused writing that finds its roots within the variety of social issues surrounding our world. According to Ann George, author of the essay titled "Critical Pedagogies: Dreaming of Democracy", "critical pedagogies . . . envision a society not simply pledged to, but successfully enacting, the principles of freedom and social justice" (George 77). Moreover, "in the English language arts classroom, social justice is a way to increase students' abilities to articulate their experiences, critique their world, and address those identified issues with subsequent action" (Chapman et al. 539). Therefore, my research lends itself well to one of the overall goals of contemporary English composition at the disciplinary level: bringing the world into the writing classroom.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

When someone thinks about the issue of women in combat it can be far too easy to form a quick opinion that lacks a fair and un-biased perspective. We jump to conclusions, often times based on our own political leaning, that has a tendency to shut out outside perspectives that challenge our view points.

Statement of Purpose

As previously stated, my research goal is to present a balanced view of the issue at hand. To do that I looked at two sets of data: two autobiographical memoirs, and a collection of online discourse about the issue of women in combat, from both opposing and supporting perspectives.

Research Questions

1. How do women describe their experiences in combat?
2. What are the major arguments being made for and against the issue of women in combat, and how are those arguments supported?

The first question is directly linked to the first set of data—two memoirs. The second question is directly connected to the online discourse data. Both questions were created in order to allow a pragmatic analysis of the text according to a pragmatic literary analysis, which is explained more in the next section of this chapter.

RESEARCH APPROACH

My research uses a pragmatic theoretical underpinning, while employing the goals and principles of narrative analysis as a research genre. In choosing these approaches I sought to use the most suitable means for an unbiased and rich analysis of my data.

My research topic could easily be researched from a variety of other theoretical perspectives stemming from contemporary interest areas. However, I feel that a pragmatic theoretical framework and a narrative analysis design keep the focus of the research *on the actual research content itself*, rather than outside issues, perspectives, or agendas—which often is the case with ideologically-driven theoretical perspectives.

Pragmatic Literary Analysis by Design

A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once and for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns his back from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power . . . At the same time it does not stand for any special results. It is a method only. (James 25)

Pragmatic literary analysis is rooted in pragmatism, a theory stemming from the works of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. According to John Dewey himself, “The work commenced by Peirce was continued by William James. In one sense James narrowed the application of Peirce’s pragmatic method, but at the same time he extended it” (Dewey 5).

According to Peirce, “the Maxim of Pragmatism . . . is as follows: Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our perception to have: then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conceptions of the object” (Peirce 135). In other words, the pragmatic method involves following a

sequence of effects (James 23). In that way, the pragmatic perspective is not looking back into past events, but rather looking forward at observable experiences (Dewey 8).

In relation to the tradition of literary theory, pragmatism stands in opposition. A pragmatic literary approach can also be thought of as an anti-theory:

[pragmatic] literary analysis examines the nuances of language not to make a claim about the failure of signification or to emphasize poetic slips in meaning but rather to consider what particular uses of language set in motion. (Gaskill 177)

The basic definition of theory is described by Knapp and Michaels as “a special project in literary criticism: the attempt to govern interpretations of particular texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in general” (11). In those regards, pragmatism is very different in goal and approach. A key difference between pragmatism and literary theory is the separation on meaning and intent. From a pragmatic viewpoint, they are one in the same. But, “the theoretical impulse, as we have described it, always involves the attempt to separate things that should not be separated . . . Our point has been that the separated terms are in fact inseparable” (29). In other words, “what a text means and what its author intends it to mean are identical and that their identity robs intention of any theoretical interest” (19). Looked at from that perspective, the pragmatic method leaves little left for a theoretical interpretation. Knapp and Michaels also define theory as “all the ways people have tried to stand outside practice in order to govern practice from without” (30). Making assumptions about a context from a perspective outside that context creates a biased approach to interpretation, where the theorist starts the process of interpretation with a set of different rules than the context they are dealing with.

According to Nicholas Gaskill, author of “Experience and Signs: Towards a Pragmatist Literary Criticism”, the combined pragmatic foundation of John Dewey via his aesthetic theory and Charles Sanders Peirce via semiotics have created “a starting point for a pragmatist literary criticism” (166) that focuses on the effects that are created by a text (Gaskill). Much like the basic theory of pragmatism, a pragmatic approach to literary analysis focuses on a text as “human action that has definite effects on the world” (Gaskill 174). In this way, my data analysis focuses on looking at the observable effects that exists in the content of the text, from both the memoir and online discourse data. This pragmatic analysis of the text is useful for answering my research questions (related to how experiences are described) and ultimately for presenting a clear picture of the issue of women in combat.

Narrative Analysis by Principle

Narrative research is known for being a qualitative research approach that offers an in-depth and rich look at the stories that people tell about their lives—through both spoken (e.g., interviews) and written (e.g., autobiographies, memoirs) word. For narrative research the participants’ lives become the subject of inquiry (Smith and Watson), and the subjective standpoint of the stories they tell is taken as both personal and valid truth for the purposes of the research project (Atkinson). In *Living the Narrative Life*, Author Gian Pagnucci uses his own narrative “stories to argue that stories are worth arguing for,” (69) which is the crux of narrative analysis; Pagnucci also describes this kind of narrative authority as antithetical to the traditional way of citing outside sources in a way that helps prove a writer’s claims (68). In narrative analysis it is the author’s story *itself* that gives credibility to his claims.

DATA OVERVIEW

Two Female Veterans' Memoirs

There are two chapters of data that present a narrative analysis of the issue of women in combat: Experiences of Women in Combat and Political Strife. The first sub-chapter presents the story of Mary Jennings Hegar (MJ), a distinguished Air Force veteran who, as a Captain, served three tours in Afghanistan as a rescue helicopter pilot. The source of her story is her memoir, *Shoot Like a Girl*.

I categorized her narrative according to two themes—*Sexual Harassment* and *Coping with Stereotypes*—that directly connected to ones from the analysis of qualitative studies on women in military, as presented in Chapter Two, Literature Review. Also, looking at MJ's memoir with fresh eyes, not based on any previous studies, led me to create a third theme: *Bravado*. I chose this title carefully because I wanted it to highlight the aspects of MJ's story that show her as the hard-charging, go-getter kind of woman she is. Some may look at it as manly or man-like characteristics according to a traditional binary view of male/female personality characteristics. This could be seen as very related to the Adopting Masculinity theme that came from one study presented in the Literature Review (see Sasson-Levy). However, I see MJ's characteristics as inherent personality traits that make her who she is, rather than newly formed and imitated traits as presented in Sasson-Levy's studies of women in combat roles. This is a distinct difference. Finally, because much of MJ's memoir was focused strictly on the details of her job, a fourth theme, *Just Doing Her Job*, was created to showcase her career highlights.

The second sub-chapter in Experiences of Women in Combat is from Jane Blair, a Marine officer who deployed to Iraq in 2003, serving as a second lieutenant with an aerial

reconnaissance unit. The source of her story is from her memoir, *Hesitation Kills*. The one shared theme between MJ and Jane was *Copying with Stereotypes*. Throughout Jane's memoir she retells thoughts, observations, and situations that highlight how many male Marines view their fellow female Marines. Jane's story also presented different themes compared with MJ's. For one, Jane was married to a Marine who had also deployed to Iraq with her. This may be a partial cause that she did not retell accounts of sexual harassment in her memoir. Instead, Jane expresses her experiences of feeling left out by fellow Marines, making her feel like an outsider at times. These themes are shown under the heading, *Left Out*. Another unique aspect of Jane's story is a romantic element that expresses her feelings and stories about her husband, whom she didn't know if he was dead or alive during early portions of the Iraq invasion. This theme is presented under the heading, *Love in War*. Lastly, while Jane expresses much grief at feeling left out, she also has times of fitting in, contributing to mission success, and ultimately *Finding Her Place*, the title of the last theme.

Online Discourse about Women in Combat

In the sub-chapter *Political Strife*, I analyze excerpts from articles, along with additional reader comments, from various news publications. Most of these articles are from female veteran authors and represent themes from each the supporting and dissenting sides of the issue.

This sub-chapter is organized with the excerpts by authors in support of women in combat first, followed by the opposing article excerpts. Following these sections, in Chapter VI Conclusion, the original research questions will be revisited in light of the full data analysis.

RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVE: SUPPORTIVE BUT SKEPTICAL

I first joined the U.S. Army in 1995, a time when the topic of women in combat was not a widespread or realistic issue by any means. Having spent four years on active duty as an infantryman, I understand the all-male culture of military combat jobs addressed throughout my research. In the summer of 2018, I reenlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves after being out of the military for more than a decade, so I am also now experiencing our newly integrated military system. My experiences in the U.S. Military have influenced my dissertation topic choice, as well as my perspective on my own research issue.

My own personal thoughts on the issue of women in combat are complex. Over the course of studying this topic for close to four years, I have learned a lot about the various sub-issues that comprise the entire issue. I have come to see many valid claims made from both sides of the issue—and while I don't agree with many of the arguments made within the materials herein, I understand them all—and I recognize all of them as valid claims to be considered. While I am 100% supportive of our American military, I am skeptical of the policy to allow women into the traditionally male-dominated field of military combat jobs. My skepticism is rooted in many of the same opposition arguments presented throughout this research in Chapter I and later in Chapter V.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Some terms need clarification and defining according to how they will be specifically used throughout this dissertation.

Combat Service Job (CSJ)

This is a broad category of jobs that are defined by their requirement to conduct or directly support battlefield combat operations with enemy forces. According to

Today'smilitary.com, some of these jobs include the following:

Combat Mission Support Officer, Field Artillery Officer, Special Forces Officer, Artillery and Missile Officer, Armored Vehicle Officer, Surface Warfare Officer, Infantry Officer, Navy SEAL, Army Green Beret (Career Fields and Profiles)

Combat Exclusion Policy (CEP)

This is the official policy implemented in 1994 that simultaneously advanced and restricted women's combat opportunities in the military. The advancement came from the fact that the CEP replaced a previous Risk Rule policy, which prevented women from being in or nearby any dangerous combat zone (U.S. GAO). Through the new CEP, women could now be in or near combat zones by being temporarily attached—not officially assigned—to any unit, including a combat unit. The official definition of the CEP is the policy that,

excludes women from assignments to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is direct ground combat. The purpose of this change was to expand opportunities for women in the services. [1] Additionally, the Secretary stipulated that no units or positions previously open to women would be closed. At that time, the Secretary issued a definition of direct ground combat to ensure a consistent application of the policy excluding women from direct ground combat units.

(U.S. GAO 3)

¹ This is referring to the CEP replacing the Risk Rule, which was an earlier version of the modern ban on women in combat.

Military Service Member

A man or a woman working in one of the military branches: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard.

Memoir

A form of personal writing defined as being centered on a particular event or time in one's life, rather than a life history or autobiography, which is usually considered a more comprehensive story of one's life (Buss; Siegel; Smith and Watson). According to Smith and Watson in *Reading Autobiography*, [Memoirs] often bracketed one moment or period of experience rather than an entire life span and offered reflections on its significance for the writer's previous status or self-understanding (4).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

This chapter presents relevant literature (qualitative research and autobiographical narratives) on women in the military. The three qualitative studies included here were chosen for their relevance to the issue of women serving in CSJs—two are studies done with women Marines that use interviewing as the primary means of data collection. The third qualitative study was conducted with Israeli women soldiers in combat and non-combat positions. Finally, one book, *Moving Beyond G.I. Jane*, is looked at in the end of the chapter for its relevance to the current debate on women in combat.

My primary research was conducted through an extensive online search through the University of Dayton's Roesch Library via their online search tool called UDiscover. UDiscover is a comprehensive search engine that can "get results which include books, e-books, journal articles, and government documents all in one list" (UDiscover). I also did online searches through popular sites such as Amazon, when looking for books relevant to the issue of women in combat.

Overview of the Three Studies

The study titled "The Battle for Equivalency: Female US Marines Discuss Sexuality, Physical Fitness, and Military Leadership" was conducted in 2003 and looks at in-depth interview data of 67 female Marines of various ranks including both enlisted personnel and officers. These participants represented a combined perspective of women in the Marines for "over a span of three decades (entering the USMC between 1977 and 2003)" (Brownson 770). Another unique perspective of all the participants is that they were not novice Marines or

new recruits in any way. According to author Connie Brownson, the participants all carried the responsibility of being mentors to their fellow Marines of both sexes. Brownson added that the participants' "positions of trust and confidence as Marine [senior enlisted leaders] and officers qualify their opinions about the organization and individual behavior within it" (770). The author's purpose was,

to introduce and explore the concept of equivalency through female Marines' perceptions of females' sexual agency and how the enactment of that agency lends itself to success or failure in the hyperphysical, male-dominated environment of the USMC. (768)

Each interview lasted more than one hour, and participants were asked "open-ended" questions, "encouraging a subject's embellishment on her personal experiences as a US Marine" (771). Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, with some themes being highlighted during the transcription and data analysis process, while "the concepts of 'femininity' and 'sexual harassment' existed in the interview questions" (771) prior to the actual interview process. The author of the study mentioned that the participants of the study felt as though they were integral members of the Marine Corps community due to their Marine Corps service; however, "as their reflections indicate, females' physical biology and perceived femininity greatly influenced their personal and professional Marine Corps experience" (771). Key themes that appeared from interviews included "femininity," "sexual harassment," "equivalency" (771)—among others. Brownson stated that the responses from the participants of her study provided "empirical groundwork for an 'equivalency' alternative" compared to the traditional idea of equality and sameness among

men and women in the military; in her own words, “a female doesn’t have to be a man to be as good as a man...she need not be his equal but flourishes as his equivalent” (785).

The next study is a Ph.D. dissertation completed in 2014 titled “United States Women Marines’ Experiences and Perspectives about Coping with Service Life: A Phenomenological Study.” This research involved the in-depth interviewing of 15 women Marines. Author Beth-Ann Vealey mentioned that “gender-specific research on military women is limited,” which creates a void in the literature on “addressing women-specific issues for those currently serving in an active duty status” (vii). The author also stated her purpose “to learn more about military women’s experiences and perceptions of stressors, coping behaviors, and sources of social support within this context” (vii). A feminist standpoint perspective—“to empower the oppressed to improve their situation” (Vealey 43)—was the overarching theoretical framework used by the author.

Data taken from interviews with participants “revealed five core themes and sub-themes” (vii) including a lack of strong female presence in the Marine Corps, stereotyping and harassment, gender issues, coping strategies used by female Marines, and “qualities of supportive leadership and . . . the need for mentoring from senior women Marines” (67). The first theme of lacking a strong female presence in the Marine Corps was described by female Marines as being physically outnumbered by male Marines and the feeling of having to work extra hard to compete with male standards while never being accepted by their male peers. The second theme described stereotypes and harassment that “contributed to a decreased sense of worth and belonging for women Marines” (73); common stereotypes included being viewed and labeled as an object, often with sexual connotations, while harassment accounts ranged from verbal harassment and sexual advances, to

inappropriate touching. One female Marine mentioned the “feeling that women are not safe” (78) in the Marine Corps due to all of the harassment and sexual assaults that she was aware of. Thirdly, female Marines experienced problems with identity as being both women and Marines, which felt as two opposing identities that made it hard to be confident in their role and purpose as female Marines. Fourthly, Marines described positive “self-generated strategies such as exercise, being assertive, setting boundaries, humor, and positive attitudes to be helpful” (89). Other strategies included seeking help from others, and some unhealthy coping strategies such as the development of eating disorders in order to maintain body-weight limitations. Finally, Marines explained a need for caring leadership in addition to strong positive female role-models for other female Marines, which was described as considerably lacking in the participants’ contexts.

Upon concluding, the author offered a number of implications for further research on female Marines including a guiding research question very relevant to my own dissertation—“What are the experiences of active duty women Marines as they are integrated into specific combat-designated billets, and how do these experiences affect their coping behaviors?” (130).

The final study, “Feminism and Military Gender Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in ‘Masculine’ Roles” was conducted by Orna Sasson-Levy from Hebrew University in 2003. The author based her study off of data from a larger study of in-depth interviews of 52 male and 47 female Israeli soldiers originally taken “within a year of their release from the army” (441). The goal of her research was to contribute her findings to research and debate on “gender and national identities of women soldiers serving in ‘masculine’ roles” (440). Stating her thesis at the beginning of her article, the author claims that women

servicing in traditionally “masculine roles” in the military take on the same kind of masculine characteristics as their male counterparts, which simultaneously represents “resistance to and compliance with the military gender order” (441). This was reflected in Sasson-Levy’s data set through the analysis of three themes including a simultaneous *avoidance to femininity* and the *adoption of masculinity* while within the context of participants’ military workplace.

Sasson-Levy concluded that “[participants’] mimicry of masculine patterns undoubtedly expresses subversion of the military norms of femininity, but it also contains an element of obedience and acceptance of the military’s central values” (458), and she gives a final suggestion that in order to gain true equality in the Israeli military, Israeli society needs to readjust the conception of gender and how it relates to people’s positions in society and the military.

Looking at these three studies together shows a similarity among the first two studies, which both dealt with female Marine participants; results showed that sexual harassment and the feeling of gender-related struggles are clear parallels between the two studies. Sasson-Levy’s study, while having very different cultural context, also reflects participants’ gender related issues in how participants reported that they actively took on masculine characteristics in order to fit in among the male-dominated military context of their lives.

NARRATIVES FROM WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

This section adds to the discussion of women’s military lives with three narratives from *Gender Camouflage: Women and the U.S. Military* by D’Amico, Weinstein. The book presents these narratives in their original full length, without any kind of analysis. The three

narratives I chose from the book were chosen because they related most closely to themes that appeared in the qualitative research in the previous section. Each narrative has a concise focus on the authors' major challenges to military service. I discuss them here along with the previous qualitative studies to further broaden the look at themes that appear in the stories of military women.

In my search for narratives from women in combat, I was looking for autobiographical stories that were focused on women's military experiences. In addition to searching through the UDiscover tool from the University of Dayton, I also did searches through Amazon for memoirs and autobiographies from women in the military.

Overview of the Three Narratives

1. *An Officer and a Feminist*. This is Karen Johnson's story of her career as a nurse in the U.S. Air Force from 1972-1992. While Karen enjoyed her job as a nurse and experienced a "deeper sense of community" in the Air Force, she also tells a story about the uglier side of her encounters with "sexism and racism" and "sexual harassment" (35) throughout her service and her transformation from a "quiet, naive, nonpolitical idealist" to "an assertive activist of the 1990s" (32).
2. *Too Bad She's a Girl*. Here, Lillian Pfluke retells her beginnings as a West Point cadet in the very first class of women in 1976. Lillian's distinguished career in the Army included numerous awards and "achiev[ing] a maximum score on every Army [physical fitness] test taken in fifteen years of service" (82). Lillian also tried—unsuccessfully—to gain entrance into the Army infantry branch by writing a letter to the Secretary of the Army requesting an exemption to the

policy against women in combat that was in place at that time in history. Lillian retired from Army service in 1995.

3. *Warriors without Weapons*. This story comes from Donna Dean, “an eighteen-year Navy veteran and mental health therapist” (90). Her story focuses on her struggles to be accepted among other higher ranking women officers. She also tells about an emotional experience going to a veteran’s conference following her service in the Navy. The experience was marked by an emotional outpouring from her and fellow women veterans regarding recollections of sexual harassment.

RELEVANT THEMES AMONG WOMEN’S STORIES

Themes that stood out among the three studies and three women’s narratives reviewed will be looked at in closer detail in this section. Table 1 below shows all relevant themes according to which study or narrative they appeared in. Some of the themes, such as sexual harassment, appeared in very different ways in different studies; these kinds of details will be noted as each section is explored in more detail. Themes were chosen from the qualitative studies for their connections with other research herein; except the Adopting Masculinity theme, which was chosen for its close relationship to the Avoiding Femininity theme.

Table 1

Themes in Literature Review

	Adopting masculinity	Avoiding femininity	Sexual harassment	Coping w/ stereotypes
Qualitative Research				
Sasson-Levy: "Israeli Women Soldiers"	X	X	X	
Brownson: "Female US Marines"		X	X	X
Vealey: "Women Marines' Experiences"		X	X	X
Women's Narratives				
Karen Johnson: Air Force officer 1972-92			X	
Lillian Pfluke: Army officer 1980-95			X	
Donna Dean: Navy officer 1963-81			X	

Adopting Masculinity

Women taking on and adopting the masculine characteristics of their fellow male counterparts was something that only appeared to be a theme in Sasson-Levy's study of Israeli women soldiers. The "mimicry of combat soldiers' bodily and discursive practices," (448) as Sasson-Levy calls it, was used strategically by women in order to integrate into their masculine work environments; this conditional strategy was usually abandoned by women after finishing their military service. One woman, Tali, reveals how the adoption of masculine traits was likely an unconscious behavior for her,

Mom says I started to talk more dirty and much more abrasively and much more aggressively [during the service]. That's what she said. I didn't even notice that it had happened. But she says I wasn't like that before the army, that I was more

delicate. She says that now, I'm starting to be like I used to be. I mean, that now I'm losing the toughness and the armor. (448)

Sasson-Levy notes that oftentimes women were ordered not to express their femininity, and that the ability to take on masculine traits was learned "from their male and female commanders" (449). For example, women would often receive explicit orders from their superiors to manage their physical appearance in a way that disguised any trace of femininity including not being allowed to wear perfume, wearing their caps pulled down low to conceal their eyes, and not being allowed to wear jewelry.

Another account came from a male Israeli soldier, Nadav, who told of his run-in with the masculine display of some other women Israeli soldiers:

We arrived at the training base early in the morning. We had no idea where we were or where we should go. Just then, a group of women soldiers in an infantry-training course woke up. On their way to go to the showers, with just towels around them, they stood in a line about 20—30 meters from us with their guns between their legs, barrels pointing upwards, and shouted, "We want to fuck" . . . We were embarrassed, we were in shock. We didn't understand what we'd done to deserve it. It was kind of like seeing ourselves in the mirror at other times, to see how embarrassing it is. Because there was something so masculine about them, it was shocking to see. (450)

Sasson-Levy mentions that the group of women that Nadav had encountered "were imitating a common sexist chauvinist ritual among Israeli infantry soldiers, who shout 'We want to fuck' when they encounter a woman soldier with whom they are not familiar." She mentions the women in Nadav's story as displaying "strength as they combine masculine

and feminine traits” (450). The female soldiers’ behavior here seems to reverse the more typical situation of sexual harassment of women by men.

Although the theme of adopting masculine behavior did not appear in other studies or narratives, there is one interesting point to Pflukes’ narrative; she tells the story of growing up as an overachieving young girl with an inclination for things such as swimming and football. She wrote that, “In fact, if you talk to people who knew me in my youth, they’d all tell you the same thing; great student, great athlete, great leader” (Pfluke 80). Later she goes on to have a very successful career in the Army, marked by pushing the gender boundaries at every chance she had in order to be the kind of person she originally was before military service. For example, as a young girl she pushed the envelope by developing expertise in an all-male sport, football. Then while in the Army, she petitioned to be commissioned as an officer into the infantry branch, which at that time was closed to women. In other words, I perceived her personality to be consistent throughout her life: before, during, and after her Army service; for this reason, I chose not to consider her as adopting masculinity, as the masculine traits she expressed were traits that she had not adopted, rather, according to her own narrative, she had those traits from a very early age. In this way, her story does not fit into the category of adopting masculinity as the other cases in this section.

Avoiding Femininity

Even though only one out of the three studies shows a theme of adopting masculinity, all three of the qualitative studies displayed a strong theme of participants who avoided expressing characteristics of femininity as a strategy for integrating into their hyper-masculine surroundings.

In the case of Sasson-Levy's participants, it appeared that their shunning of femininity was a reactionary self-defense mechanism that occurred simultaneously while taking on masculinity. A possible danger in this case is that the anti-feminine attitude can possibly become internalized and transferred from a negative identification with femininity—to a negative identification with women. This is exemplified from the response of Shiri—one of Sasson-Levy's participants—to a comment about women being paratroopers:

[No, women cannot be warriors, because] first of all, I think there is a bodily limitation: they can't carry heavy things that men can carry, all the equipment that men carry in the infantry is very heavy . . . Now when I talk about myself, I kind of detach myself from my general attitudes, but generally I'm quite chauvinist. Look, I think that women don't function well under pressure . . . And it's not just in the army; you can also see it driving on the highway. But when it comes to me, I have a license and I drive, you see. So it's like there's some contradiction here, but I don't deal with it. (451)

At the beginning of Shiri's remarks she speaks of women as "they," as though in her mind she is not associating herself with actually being a woman. Another woman from Sasson-Levy's participants, Na'ama, shares similarly negative sentiments in her retelling about army boot camp:

It was like a kindergarten. Seven hundred thousand girls . . . My saying for the whole time of basic training was that a girl can't see worse nightmares. Everyone had creams, lipsticks, all sorts of . . . disgusting . . . seven hundred thousand makeups. Pathetic. I felt like nothing, like one of seven hundred thousand other tits. (452)

Na'ama's disgust with the women in her boot camp, similar to Shiri's disgust, places herself opposite of the other women, as if she is not thinking of herself as a woman. Sasson-Levy points out that Na'ama "adopts a male gaze" (452) when she refers to the other women as "tits."

For the women Marines in both Brownson and Vealey's studies, the ways of avoiding femininity were different. While the women Marines in these two studies were not taking on masculine traits, their avoidance of femininity still showed ownership of it, rather than Sasson-Levy's participants who looked down upon femininity as something outside themselves. In this way, the women Marines seem to be *hiding* femininity, rather than being able or wanting to *avoid* it altogether. One of Brownson's Marines, Captain Jackie, explains her strategy:

I think the reason that I never experienced the 'typical' female problems is because I never let sex be an issue. My presence here is as a Marine, and I will accept no less from anyone else . . . I think that's one of the mistakes our young female Marines make, trying to be part of that male group to the point that they don't establish the personal boundaries to protect themselves from misunderstanding and they wind up making themselves vulnerable. (783)

While earlier accounts from Sasson-Levy's Israeli women soldiers of taking on masculinity appeared to be a strategy for fitting in, Captain Jackie's strategy sounds more like a defense mechanism to ward off attempts of sexual harassment or assault. Gunnery Sergeant Marisa echoes a similar word of advice for fellow women Marines:

. . . it is imperative that she [a female Marine set] boundaries with these males. She can't wait even an hour to decide how to react in this new environment. She has to

be proactive and draw the line before the guys have the opportunity to draw it for her . . . For many of them, though, it's a power trip having so many eager young men after them and it's almost cruel the games I see them playing. (Brownson 783)

Brownson mentions in her research that "all female Marines interviewed agreed that self-management is the key to females' success in the Marine Corps" (783). The final excerpt comes from Captain Melinda, retelling about "the best advice she ever received" from her Platoon Sergeant (784); her comments, if anything of a widespread attitude among other women Marines, gives possible insight into why the theme of adopting masculinity did not appear in either of the studies done with women Marines:

She said . . . "Close your eyes and picture the perfect Marine. He's about 5'11" chiseled chin, straight back, small waist, right? High-and-tight?"² And, I'm like, "Yes, Platoon Sergeant." And, she replies, "Okay, well, of course, that's everyone's vision of a perfect Marine. You will never fit that stereotype. So, just stop trying. Don't ever try to be that. Just be yourself. Remember that eyes will be on you because you are a small population in the officer corps." . . . [Ignore] the rumors about being promiscuous, or bitchy, or a lesbian, she said; just affect what you can. Don't worry about that. Be your own person because everyone's going to be looking at you. Where a guy might be able to blend in, there's no blending in when you're ~ 5% of the population. (784)

Just as Sasson-Levy mentioned that Israeli women soldiers often learned how to adopt masculinity from their superior officers, here in Captain Melinda's account we see her

² High-and-tight=a military-style haircut with close-cut hair on the sides and very short neatly trimmed hair on top

learning to manage her gender identity in relation to her male peers. By highlighting the point that women are already in the spotlight because of their disproportionately low numbers in the Marines, and mentioning the gender stereotypes that female Marines are up against (“being promiscuous, or bitchy, or a lesbian” 784), Captain Melinda’s Platoon Sergeant was reinforcing the need for female Marines to be aware of their gender and understand the implications of the social consequences that exist when female Marines do express their gender.

Women Marines from Vealey’s study express something more extreme than simply hiding femininity though—they express the need to hide their biological womanhood, i.e., their bodies. For example, a woman named Hayden explains that “You have to lose your womanhood to meet the male standard . . . To be a marine I had to hide being a woman as much as possible” (84). Vealey’s participants express the feeling that the Marine Corps does not even value them as women, regardless of how much they conform to the standards set for them. Here, Vealey shares Autumn’s struggle to conceal her body from the male gaze:

Autumn explained having a complex for about the first nine years of her enlisted career and felt challenged to even participate in “a conversation with a male Marine . . . you could just see them paying attention to your body parts and not you . . . [I]t happened so much . . . I would cover myself up as much as possible, even when it was really hot outside, it was so uncomfortable . . . until I got breast reduction” . . . She explained further, “to be a Marine I had to deal with that and hide being a woman as much as possible” . . . (Vealey 72)

Autumn’s commentary is an extreme example of avoiding femininity because it involves physically altering the natural characteristics of a woman’s body in order to avoid the

feminine-identification that occurs among her male Marine peers. Her personal example of surgically reducing her breast size in response to peer-pressure against feminine characteristics clearly indicates the severity of the pressure not to express feminine characteristics. Another woman, Arlene, expresses her ideas about the Marine Corps' perception of women, "[I]t seems like the Marine Corps is trying to push the women out." This is echoed by Jessica, another participant who stated, "I do feel like the Marine Corps is trying to weed us out [W]e are just not recognized for being women and it's just hard to explain!" (72)

Here, Jamie expresses a comment about her view of a woman and a Marine as two fundamentally separate identities, "I guess in so many words, I was being a woman and I wasn't being a Marine . . . [I]t's just hard being a female in the Marine Corps because you can't do things that a woman would do without other guys viewing you as different" (73). Jamie's comments connect back to something mentioned in Brownson's study by Captain Melinda about the ideal Marine fitting the mold of a man—not a woman. Therefore, according to Captain Melinda's Platoon Sergeant, women Marines should not waste time trying to emulate the characteristics of a man. In this way it seems like these Marines were in a gender-neutral confinement, where they could not live up to the gender standards set for males in their context, nor could they freely express a feminine gender identity due to the various consequences that would likely result.

Sexual Harassment

From looking back at Table 1 that shows all of the themes occurring throughout the studies and narratives, it's obvious that the issue of sexual harassment was the most prominent theme among all the studies and narratives included here in the literature review.

According to the 2014 “Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military,” overall cases of sexual assault have decreased: “6.1% in 2012 to an estimated 4.3% in 2014” (8); while *reporting* of cases has significantly increased: “53% increase in victim reports of sexual assault” (6) from 2012 to 2013. In short, according to the report on sexual assault in the military, “the estimated gap between reporting and prevalence” (8) has lowered down to the narrowest level in the history of U.S. military sexual assault data collection. According to the actual report:

This report shows that, in fiscal year 2014, the estimated prevalence of sexual assault decreased across the Department and that the estimated proportion of victims choosing to report the crime has increased to an unprecedented level. Despite these positive indicators, the Department of Defense’s commitment to progress is enduring and includes ongoing work with the Services to incorporate best practices and reforms that improve its ability to address the crime. Every Service member must participate in creating a culture where sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not tolerated, condoned, or ignored. (13)

Not all of the participants’ stories regarding sexual harassment were the same. For example, in Sasson-Levy’s study, she labeled one of her themes “Trivialization of sexual harassment” (447). She explained that “most of the women soldiers I interviewed told me stories of what could be termed sexual harassment, but only a scant number labeled these events as such” (453). Her first example came from Rutti, who claimed that other members of her platoon “would sing: Rutti is a whore, Rutti gives head to the whole company” when they became bothered by her. According to Rutti, “Obviously it wasn’t fun. It’s annoying,

but you can't take it too hard. It's a trivial song, nobody notices it, nobody pays attention to it" (453). Another woman, Dorit, tells a story about her experience at weekly meetings:

Everyone said that when you get to the army you degenerate. I really didn't, I really developed . . . I felt I had half the world in my hands. Until I'd get to the headquarters meeting. We'd sit in the meeting and the intelligence officer would speak, and some other officer would speak, and then it would be Dorit's turn, and they'd relate to her like . . . not like a girl, but a woman, flirting with her, trying to start with her, writing her letters . . . Here, I've got a letter that three of the sector's regimental commanders wrote to me . . . "You have to decide, the indecision is killing us, damaging our abilities, upsetting our concentration, we kindly request that you make up your mind" [and choose which one of us you want to be with]. (454)

Even though her fellow officers' actions are obviously sexual harassment, Dorit thinks otherwise: "maybe other people could call them sexual harassment. But I don't; I really, really don't" (454). Sasson-levy explains the women's trivialization of sexual harassment as a way to avoid becoming a victim because "if women reproduce the stereotype of women as victims, they will not be able to act as equals in the army" (455), and she cites other research in her claim that ignoring sexual harassment is a very common occurrence. It seems that ignoring or downplaying the significance of sexual harassment as Dorit describes it could also serve in her own interests of not standing out or calling attention to her or her gender, almost as a self-defense method for her career. Even though Sasson-levy explains the advantage that Dorit can receive from not highlighting the harassment against her, she overlooks how Dorit may actually be helping those kind of sexual harassment behaviors to persist by not taking action to stop them. Also, because Sasson-Levy's study

involved Israeli women soldiers, cultural differences in perception and acceptance levels of sexual harassment is also a possible explanation for the participants' explanations of their stories.

In Brownson's study a woman named Rosemarie tells about her concern for violence against women:

I've been in a trial for a Marine who raped a girl who lived in the barracks. She made herself vulnerable. She was drunk. She had passed out in his room. Now, what he did to her was wrong. He admitted that he raped her. What he did was wrong, but what she did was wrong, too. She made herself vulnerable. We still have to protect ourselves. (Brownson 782)

Rosemarie's comments sound similar to the trivialization of sexual harassment that was looked at with Sasson-Levy's participants. While Rosemarie does claim that the man in her account did something "wrong," she also overemphasizes the wrongdoing of the female Marine, making it sound like there was an equal wrongdoing from the woman and man. In Rosemarie's version of the story, the uneven focus on the woman's wrongdoing makes it appear as though—from her perspective—the woman is more to blame than the man is.

Another echo of Sasson-Levy's study of women trivializing sexual harassment comes from one of Vealey's participants, Robin, as she states, "there are times that I am being discriminated against because I am a woman but I am too busy to worry about it" (Vealey 75). However, most of Vealey's participants did not trivialize their perceptions or experiences with sexual harassment. Vealey also explains that many of her participants reported intimidation tactics by male Marines in superior positions of authority. A woman, Jojo, tells her story:

I was seen as the little girl to them, like they could kind of bully me . . . I used to smoke and he came up to me and just grabbed the cigarette out of my mouth and starting [sic] smoking it . . . I just felt like they thought they could take advantage of me and walk over me and it was okay . . . because I was a female. (76)

Another woman, Jessica, explains how one man's harassment made her come to not only hate him, but the Marine Corps as well; meaning that her view of men in general had become negatively influenced by her experiences with men in the Marine Corps: "[I] almost didn't re-enlist, he made my life hell, I hated the Marine Corps because of one single person!" (77) She goes on to explain how sexual harassment of women by men is taught to new male recruits by the instructors: "[L]ike they would do eyes right³ when the drill instructors were marching their platoons by us to have every single recruit look at us . . . [I]t is like being violated . . . [T]hey are teaching male Marines to harass female Marines!" (77). This kind of institutionalized harassment as Jessica describes it seems like a way to reinforce the subordinate gender roles that male and female Marines must act out in their jobs. Similar to how gender roles and restrictions have been described earlier as coming in the form of direct orders from superiors, here sexual harassment also seems to come in the form of a standardized training that gets learned from male Marines by their superiors.

Finally, another Marine, Autumn, recalls the feeling of powerlessness in the face of a higher ranking perpetrator: "[He] would come in to my room when I lived in the barracks all of the time, and he would make these sexual comments and sit on my bed . . . I was so

³ Eyes right is the name of a command given to a group of service members, which tells them to simultaneously turn their head and eyes at a 90 degree angle to the right.

uncomfortable and didn't know what to say because he was such a higher rank than me" (77).

One account from Captain Amelia in Brownson's study tells of sexual harassment and the resulting consequence on the perpetrator:

A female recruit accidentally said, "Good morning, ma'am," to a Drill instructor because that's what female recruits say all day long: "ma'am" [not "sir"]. Well, his response was, "If I put something in your mouth, you'll know I'm not a 'ma'am'." It was investigated . . . I do know that that male Marine is no longer a Drill Instructor. There's no place for that. (782)

All of these accounts from the three studies included in this chapter highlight the danger and pervasiveness of sexual harassment issues with women in the military. The following analysis provides a closer look at sexual harassment as a theme in the three women's narratives included in this chapter.

In Karen Johnson's narrative, "An Officer and a Feminist," she recalls her encounters with sexual harassment and assault:

During my military career, I was sexually harassed by military men on several occasions, and I was sexually assaulted once. Shortly after entering the Air Force, I encountered the first harasser, who was definitely a "wolf in sheep's clothing." This lieutenant colonel was a military chaplain and Catholic priest (my mom had warned me that all men were dogs). This "fifty-something" priest wanted to be my lover. With genuine horror, I explained to him that though I was a Protestant, I believed in his vow of celibacy and didn't want to compete with God. On a couple of other occasions I was harassed by a captain and a colonel. While in civilian attire, I was

exiting a disco in Spain when an enlisted sailor standing in a line of other soldiers reached out and groped my genital area from behind—I had a few words with that sailor. The one time I reported being sexually harassed to the harasser’s supervisor, I was told that I must have misinterpreted the officer’s comments and behavior. So, like many other military women, I dealt with sexual harassment on my own. (34)

While Karen’s accounts of sexual harassment and assault are from an earlier time⁴ than most of the accounts from the three studies in this literature review, they share the same kind of severity. The fact that most of the harassers she mentioned were higher ranking than her is similar to previous accounts herein where there is a significant difference in rank between the woman and the harasser she describes—this is the most common situation that sexual harassment arises from; as MacKinnon explains,

it is only under conditions in which men systematically hold superior positions to women and are not only willing but able to abuse their position with impunity, and in which women have so few practical alternatives, that [sexual harassment] persists. (92)

Lin Farley’s early study of sexual harassment in the workplace revealed that “superior male status in the culture [and] sheer numbers” (15) were two prerequisites of sexual harassment, which can be seen represented throughout all of the accounts herein.

Next, Lillian Pfluke’s account of sexual harassment comes from her four year as a cadet at West Point:

I never seemed to get my fair shake. Sure, everyone expects to get harassed as a plebe, but we women all seemed to get more than our fair share. It’s no secret that

⁴ Karen’s dates of military service were 1972-1992.

we were regularly called bitch, whore, and worse; that we were accused of sexual promiscuity or lesbianism; that we were subjected to such inappropriate “pranks” as shaving cream filled condoms in our bed or semen in our underwear drawer.

What most people don’t realize is the toll that juvenile and hateful treatment takes on a person after a while. The constant barrage of insults, harassment, and inequalities made even the strongest among us harbor self-doubts. We all felt very isolated and defensive as a result of never being accepted as contributing members of the institution, and we became extraordinarily sensitive to all issues of prejudice.

(81)

Lillian’s account describes a very misogynistic perspective of women cadets by fellow male cadets. As mentioned previously, the results from “Gender Stereotypes and the Evaluation of Men and Women in Military Training” revealed that female cadets’ lower overall evaluations are likely linked to the negative perception of female cadets in comparison to the “stereotypic male cadets” (701) even though performance measures showed no “sex differences” (702). In other words, even though male and female cadets performed their actual duties as cadets in relatively the same ways, the official cadet evaluations of male and female cadets revealed that females had lower evaluations, which was likely connected to the fact that perceptions of training-related attributes were lower for female cadets compared to males.

In the final narrative here by Donna Dean, she tells about attending a women veteran’s conference in 1981, two years after completing her Navy service. The conference agenda had become sidelined as numerous women veterans began to share their experiences of being sexually harassed, assaulted, and raped during their time in military

service. The atmosphere was very emotional—many women openly crying. Donna describes what happened in the middle of this emotional outpouring:

One of the women—a World War II marine, I think—wore the little hat of the veteran’s organization she represented. This organization had been exclusively male until it was forced by court order in the early 1970s to admit women. This woman was enraged at what she was hearing: all this whining and complaining! She spitefully spat at us, “Remember, you all volunteered! None of you were drafted!” We listened and were too polite to correct her. None of us had volunteered for rape, violence, and dehumanization. (92)

The woman who “spitefully spat” at the women at the conference seems to take on the role of a man—like some of the women in Sasson-Levy’s study—by expressing what appears like rage at the other women. Donna’s comment in response to what the woman had originally said is poignant. It’s a shame that a woman fighting for her country not only has to worry about her safety from foreign enemies trying to kill her—but far too often she has to look out for her safety to her immediate right and left, from the men who should be fighting faithfully alongside her, not against her.

Coping with Stereotypes

The two studies with women Marines (Brownson; Vealey) both had strong themes among the participants of fighting against the image of the stereotypical Marine—a physically fit man who is “everyone’s vision of a perfect Marine,” (Brownson 784) according to Captain Melinda. In this way, female Marines were being shut out from a popularly accepted Marine identity, which they could not fulfill according to male Marine perceptions. For the case of the female Marines described here, the process of identity construction was being actively

blocked by male Marines within the participants' social context—causing an identity dilemma for the women Marines. According to their accounts, they are shut out from creating the exclusive male-only Marine identity, as well as being shunned and discriminated against for their identity as women; in this preposterous kind of situation, how can they create a healthy identity as women Marines?

Not only are the women Marines from those two studies describing being shut out from creating an identity as a Marine and as a woman, but they also describe the misogynist attack on their womanhood and demeaning stereotypes of women Marines—Brownson claims “these problematic but sometimes accurate stereotypes describe social—‘favored,’ ‘slackers,’ and ‘whiners;’ and sexual as ‘bitch,’ ‘slut,’ or ‘dyke’ categories” (778). A woman Soldier⁵ in an article from the *New York Times* describes the same sexist categorization of military women as she recalls serving in Iraq: “You’re a bitch, a slut or a dyke—or you’re married, but even if you’re married, you’re probably one of the three.” She speaks of embracing her given role: “I think being a staff sergeant—and a bitch—helps deflect those things” (Myers). This last remark seems to suggest that the woman’s rank and the aggressive characteristics associated with being looked at as a bitch help enhance her persona as a strong Marine, even if she has to put up with the negative stereotype that coincides with the it. Finally, another almost identical recollection of the stereotypes of women that exist in the Marine Corps’ came from a woman named Sophi in Vealey’s study: [W]hen I first checked in, you had three labels, you were either a bitch, a lesbian, or a whore, and you know as soon as you check in they will stereotype you I was a lesbian . . . cuz I wore basketball shorts my first two weeks there. It was tough” (Vealey 73).

⁵ A soldier is a service member in the U.S. Army.

One woman from Brownson's study, Staff Sergeant Marie, tells her understanding of women Marines in Iraq, working both within and outside the standard stereotypes:

You do have females in Iraq getting pregnant. But, then you have [Gunny Sergeant] Noel, who got a purple heart. They had a mortar round come in that got her pretty good, but she stayed out there. They said, "Hey, you can go back to the States and recover," and she said, "No, thanks. I'll stay." You have the female Lionesses, who are performing very well with men . . . everywhere I went [in Iraq], the females that I saw were doing their part. I really can't think of any negative stories about their performance. Their behavior, of course, is another matter. You have gyms and stuff and they'd show up in their little gym shorts barely covering their butts, but it's really just normal girl-boy rituals that you see anywhere in the world. They just happen to be in a combat zone with their rifles stacked while they work out. (778)

Staff Sergeant Marie's account presents a balanced view of female Marines that has not been very frequent among other female Marine accounts herein. The balance of gender performance comes from the masculine way that Gunny Sergeant Noel seemed to take on her battlefield role, while back at the base gym it sounded like traditionally feminine sexual characteristics were openly displayed. Brownson notes that because the ideal stereotype of a Marine is out of a woman Marine's control, she "must choose her loyalty wisely" (779) in order to have support for her career through association "with a peer group in which she positively contributes" (779).

Overall, the themes from the stories of women in the military in this section pointed strongly to the problem of sexual harassment in military organizations which are male-dominated; research has shown that sexual harassment of women who work in male-

dominated fields is “significantly greater” (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 13) than reports from women who work in other fields with more equal numbers of men and women. As noted earlier in the Sexual Harassment theme of this section, recent data from the “Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military” reported that not only has there been an increase in cases of sexual harassment being reported over the last decade, but *reported* cases from 2013 to 2014 showed a very significant increase from previous years (Department of Defense). The Department of Defense report stated that while the increase in reported cases is very positive, continued efforts by service members and leaders in every military branch need to take place in order to “[create] a culture where sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not tolerated, condoned, or ignored” (Department of Defense 13).

ZEIGLER AND GUNDERSON’S RESEARCH ON WOMEN IN COMBAT

According to authors Zeigler and Gunderson, the claims made for and against women in combat are broken down into four major categories. In their book, *Moving beyond G.I. Jane*⁶, they describe ideas, biases, and relevant research according to each of these four categories, which ultimately presents a well-rounded view of the issue of women in combat. These four categories are summarized below to help provide context for this issue. These themes also help set a focus for the later analysis of online discourse, which uses the *physical readiness* sub-theme as a primary argument in the current debate of the issue.

⁶ See Chapter 3: Discriminatory Practice or Discretionary Decision: The Combat Exclusion Policy, sub-section “Hell No, They Shouldn’t Go!”: Arguments Against Women in Combat.

“Protecting Women”⁷

Referred to by the authors as the “myth of protection,” this argument is based in old-fashioned cultural values that see women as the weaker sex and in need of physical protection. Moreover, this protection includes “the notion that the reason men fight is to protect women and their roles as child bearers and mothers (Peach 1996 as qtd in Zeigler and Gunderson 45). So, this argument goes beyond the simple physical domain and includes the protection of separate gender roles that classify women and men with contrasting abilities and characteristics that are inherent to either gender.

The argument for protecting women is challenged by the authors by claims that even when taken at its basic physical protection premise, the argument doesn’t hold up. During war, female civilians “have not benefited from this ‘myth of protection’—they are often left behind to take care of themselves while civilian men, believing they will be the target of the enemy, flee the area” (46). As for actual female military service members, protecting women still doesn’t work, according to the authors. Because of the nature of modern-day warfare, which is characterized by unpredictable circumstances, unclear battle lines, and potentially lethal enemy threats from all directions, there is no safe place on the battle-field to place female service members.

A prior ban on women in combat, known as the Risk Rule, was designed to evaluate the potential risk for women in any given area on or around the battle-field. Based on the evaluation, military leaders would decide if and where they could safely send women to serve (Kamarck). Regardless of this ban, “Of the 122 Americans who died in the confrontation with Iraq, the majority were killed in combat support, not combat, roles”

⁷ See Zeigler and Gunderson p. 45

(Grinnin as qtd in Zeigler and Gunderson 46). Therefore, if women in non-combative roles serving in apparently safe areas on the battle-field are more at risk than those actually in direct combat, the argument of protecting women from danger does not hold up when claiming that women should not be allowed in military combat roles.

“American Society is Not Ready for Female Casualties”⁸

The simple argument here is that American civilians would not be able to handle a war in which America suffered high levels of female casualties. Ziegler and Gunderson draw on survey data from the late 80s and early 90s to present a general idea of the American public’s overall favorable opinion (72% and 79% on two surveys) of having women in combat (Skaine as referenced in Zeigler and Gunderson); more recent survey data from 2013 is right around the same percentages, with 71% and 74% according to Fox News (Blanton) and Gallup polls (Brown).

While support for women in combat has been consistently strong for several years, “it is impossible to say exactly how the public will react to female military casualties with any certainty, barring actual experience with large numbers of women in combat” (Zeigler and Gunderson 49).

“Readiness Concerns”⁹

Sexual Tension

The idea that men and women in an integrated unit would form sexual relationships, which would negatively impact a unit’s ability to function, is an ongoing concern for opponents of women in combat. Backed by human nature, this concern posits that the innate desires of

⁸ See Ziegler and Gunderson p. 48

⁹ See Ziegler and Gunderson p. 50

men and women are too powerful to overcome. One comment from a Special Forces soldier sums up the sexual tensions concern:

If a woman comes into my office, I do a physical assessment. Even if it's just for ten seconds, I go through a sexual scenario with that woman. Can I ignore it? I try to
But it's natural. There's nothing wrong with it. We have to be real about it. (Simons as cited in Zeigler and Gunderson 51)

Countering this biologically-based claim is the idea that men and women have been working together in "other professions and other situations" where these nature desires do not considerably disrupt the workplace. Furthermore, as men and women continue to work together "these 'natural' sexual feelings can undergo change" (51).

In 1994 the U.S.S. Eisenhower made a six-month tour as the very "first gender integrated combat vessel" (52). This ship's deployment is often cited as a prime example of the potentially negative effects that an integrated unit can have on a unit's readiness. During the six-month tour the ship suffered from a 13% pregnancy rate among the 415 women serving on the ship. However, other reports from integrated crews showed that even though sexual tensions caused a noticeable disruption among the crew, "the attendant problems were lessened (but did not disappear)" (52) over time.

Feminine Health Issues and Pregnancy

The argument here is that women's health supplies and hygiene needs would interfere with their ability to conduct combat operations in adverse physical environments, where showers are far and few between, increasing the risk of health problems. Secondly, the fact of female pregnancy interfering with unit readiness is a real concern. The authors cite a study (Mitchell 1998) where data showed that a large number of mixed-gender units in in

the Gulf War had reported pregnancies that had adverse effects on their unit's performances.

The counter to these claims starts with the understanding that both men and women have separate health issues that are particular to their different bodies. Secondly, in the case of pregnancy, some claim that men's discipline issues have more negative effects on unit readiness than women's pregnancies do (Holm 1993).

Physical Readiness

The most common argument against women in combat is summed up by Israeli military theorist and historian Martin Van Creveld as such:

Are there some women who are capable of performing well in combat?

Undoubtedly. Are most women physically less capable of doing so than most men?

Undoubtedly. And that, in fact, is the best possible reason for excluding women from combat. (Creveld as qtd in Zeigler and Gunderson 54)

This stance on women's physical capabilities posits that although women may have the capabilities to perform their duties in combat, they will generally perform much poorer than most men could.

However, recent successes by women in the CSJ field (e.g., Army Ranger School, Army and Marine Enlisted courses), have shown that some women can meet the same physical fitness standards as men. Moreover, the U.S. Army has begun a program known as Soldier 2020, a program designed to facilitate the integration of women into Army combat jobs (Koester). The program aims to scientifically evaluate Army occupations and training standards in order "to match the right Soldiers, regardless of whether they are men or women, to jobs that best correspond to their abilities" (Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A.

Dailey as qts by Koester). The overall goal of this project is to update the way that Army occupations establish and evaluate their training standards. This kind of research may result in “the development of a pre-test, so that individuals can take more time to train and prepare on their own for certain jobs” (NCO Journal).

“Cohesion, Morale and Readiness”¹⁰

The idea that women break the bond formed by an all-male group, particularly in combat, is related to the Greek term, *philia*:

Friendship, comradeship or brotherly love. *Philia*, the bond among individuals who have nothing in common but facing death and misery together, is the source of the unit cohesion that all research has shown to be critical to battlefield success. (Owens as qtd in Zeigler and Gunderson 59)

This forms the basis of the argument against women in combat based on cohesion. As authors Zeigler and Gunderson put it, “If cohesion were actually compromised by the presence of women in fighting units, it could be seen as a compelling reason to limit the role of women in ground combat” (58). In 2015, the Marine Corps conducted an experiment where integrated teams of Marines conducted simulated combat operations alongside teams of all-male Marines doing the same tasks. Both groups were closely monitored and evaluated by researchers in four areas: marksmanship, speed, agility, and strength. “All-male ground combat teams outperformed their mixed-gender counterparts in nearly every capacity”(Seck)—their shots were more accurate, they moved over the battlefield faster, evacuated simulated casualties faster, negotiated battlefield obstacles more successfully, and received less injuries than their integrated peers.

¹⁰ See Zeigler and Gunderson p. 58

Proponents of women in combat often cite other, earlier, experiments with integrated units. For example, the U.S.S. Samuel Gompers, having female sailors make up close to half of its crew, received several accolades including “two consecutive Battle Efficiency Awards” (Zeigler and Gunderson 60). The commander of the ship, Capt. Amerault, cited “crew unity and positive morale” (Amerault as qtd in Zeigler and Gunderson 61) as key elements to his ship’s success. Even the U.S.S. Eisenhower, cited earlier for its disruptive sexual tensions, had ended its tour on a positive note. The executive officer of the ship, Capt. Roulstone, claimed that the Eisenhower’s “readiness had not suffered” (61). He even stated that “the Eisenhower had performed as well, and possibly better, with women aboard than before women were allowed” (Peach as referenced in Zeigler and Gunderson 61). Other studies conducted on integrated Army units in the Gulf War concluded that “the presence of women in combat units does not, and will not, degrade combat readiness” (Peach as referenced in Zeigler and Gunderson 61).

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

Memoir Data

The two memoirs that were chosen as the source of data in Chapter IV were chosen to represent the first-hand experience of women in combat. Therefore, my criteria for selection were to find fairly recent autobiographical accounts of combat experience from female veterans. I did not want to limit the data to just one story, but I did not want too many stories that would take away the ability to highlight the individual nature of each story; as a result, I decided two memoirs would be appropriate.

Online Discourse

For this body of data, I used the research from my Literature Review to guide my data selection. Zeigler and Gunderson's text, *Moving Beyond G.I. Jane*, provided a clear description of major arguments surrounding the issue of women in combat. However, that text, published in 2005, is not up-to-date on all the current arguments being made since the policy announcement in 2013. Therefore, I chose to focus on the arguments that have become the primary focus of the contemporary debate on women in combat—based on my ongoing attention to the issue through major media sources, both print and online. One issue, women's physical capabilities/limitations, was a major issue from Zeigler and Gunderson's text, and has remained a primary issue into today's debate of the issue. The

other two arguments, based on claims of *inequality*¹¹ and a *liberal political agenda*¹², were chosen by me, and were not included in the Zeigler and Gunderson research. I chose those two arguments, as mentioned before, because they have been heavily represented arguments in the current debate of the issue.

Other criteria that I used for my online discourse selection were reader responses and political bias. Because I wanted my data to include public reader responses, I tried to pick as many articles as I could that included reader responses directly connected to the published article. All reader responses were viewed and collected without any special membership or access to the website that the articles were published on. While some of the reader responses are no longer posted with the articles as they originally were, all the reader responses are presented here in entirely anonymous form, i.e., no commenter' photos or usernames. For political bias, partially for the sake of practicality, I looked for articles representing each argument from a publication with a matching political bias, thus making it easier to find suitable arguments.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of each memoir was done in-line with the research on women in combat from my Literature Review. The research therein had thematically represented data based on each researcher's individual effort. Consequently, I see my research as building off of the research efforts from that body of studies. In a similar way as the memoir data, my analysis of online discourse was based on research looked at in Chapter II. Authors Zeigler and

¹¹ See Shinkman, Paul D. "ACLU Sues Pentagon Over Women in Combat." *U.S. News and World Report* 27 November 2012.

¹² See Eden, Jude. "Marines Trolling Girls' Sports Teams for Combat Jobs Should Take a Lesson from the Olympics." *The Stream* 17 August 2016.

Gunderson provided a categorization of major arguments for and against women in combat. In this way, the first level of analysis for both bodies of data was to relate them back to the research from the Literature Review in order to see similarities and/or differences.

The second layer of analysis for each body of data was the pragmatic literary analysis, which focused on looking at the effects that were created by the text. In the case of the two memoirs, the analyzed effect was looked at internally from the perspective of actions and results from those actions within the narrative text. For the online discourse, my scope was larger, and I was looking at what effect each argument created, based on the reactions from public commenters as well as the opposing arguments from the opposite side of the issue.

Thematic Coding

In thematic coding, the researcher organizes data into themes, usually according to another set of previously arranged themes (Ayres), such as the process of thematic coding I conducted through the use of my prearranged themes from research in the Literature Review (see Table 1.). In its simplest form “a code is a label attached to a section of text to index it as relating to a theme or issue in the data which the researcher has identified as important to his or her interpretation” (King 257). In my case, the codes I identified in my memoir analysis were any sections where the narrative content was closely associated with any of my previously identified themes. For both of my data sets, the first reading of the data was a careful read-through, as suggested by Lucia Benaquisto, in order to see what themes were already present—this helped me identify unique themes from my memoir data.

Data Analysis Sequence

Once my data was collected, I went through the following sequence in my data analysis process:

Table 2

Phases of Data Analysis

	Memoir Data	Online Discourse
Phase 1	Careful and thorough read-through, highlighting thematic codes associated with themes from Literature Review (see Table 1.), also looking for codes associated with new themes	Careful and thorough read-through or each article, highlighting excerpts about arguments from Literature Review (see Research on the Issue of Women in Combat, p. 41)
Phase 2	Second read-through for accuracy of initial coding, also checking for missed or overlooked themes	Second read-through for accuracy of initial excerpt selection
Phase 3	Extracted and categorized excerpts by manual transcription, edited and checked for accuracy of text	Extracted and categorized excerpts by copying and pasting, edited and checked for accuracy of text
Phase 4	Analyzed themes in accordance with Literature Review data and pragmatic analysis focus	Analyzed excerpts in accordance with Literature Review data and pragmatic analysis focus

RESEARCHER BIAS

A research design needs to include the researcher’s reflection on their own perspective, and how that perspective relates to their research issue (Marshall and Rossman)—“When they are out in the open, they are more manageable and the reader of the final report can assess how those elements of identity affected the study” (97).

In my case, I am a man with prior military experience (before the lifting of the ban on women in combat, and before the current debate surrounding the issue), and, as previously mentioned, I am completely supportive of all of our American military forces. However, I am *not* confident that allowing women in combat is the best decision for our military, or for our American culture and way of life. With this self-perspective in mind, I conducted my research with attention to being fair, balanced, and not allowing my own biases to affect my research—to the best extent that I could.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

My overall research goal, as previously stated, is to present a balanced view of the issue of women in combat through three perspectives: first-hand (two memoirs), opposing arguments on women in combat, and supporting arguments on women in combat. The primary limitation of my research is that I have not conducted a quantitative study that takes into account large amounts of data. I only looked closely at two memoirs—two individual women’s experiences with combat; obviously, there many other women’s experiences that have no account in my research. Likewise, my second data set, the online discourse, only looked at a small number of articles from a few authors. Therefore, the overall scope of my research is small due to these limitations.

Finally, the entire issue of women in combat is constantly changing. The research I have conducted herein are based in the specific context surrounding the policy change in 2016. Since then there have been many advances with the integration of women in the U.S. Armed Forces, and the issue of women in combat is therefore entirely different at the time one reads this research, compared to what the issue looked like circa 2016.

CHAPTER IV

THE REAL EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN COMBAT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces excerpts from two memoirs of women's experiences in combat, along with a thematic analysis of both memoirs according to recurring themes from each one. Additionally, each memoir is analyzed in relation to relevant studies from Chapter II Literature Review.

My goal throughout the analysis herein is to take each woman's story at face value. My analysis seeks to highlight that value while drawing correlations between their stories and other relevant issues of women in combat as looked at through my previous literature review. In this way, I am not seeking to make any alternate meaning of these memoirs, beyond the meaning attributed to them by each author. The pragmatic foundation of the memoir analysis means that the focus is on looking at the different kinds of observable effects that take place within the text.

As this section relates to my research questions, it seeks to directly answer the first question:

1. How do women describe their experiences in combat?

From my two sources of data—these two memoirs plus articles and comments written *about* the issue of women in combat, these excerpts have an important function: to serve as the first-hand account from real military women in real combat. Compared to the online article data from Chapter IV, the data herein is considered a primary source of data, and therefore a critical part of this entire dissertation.

AIM HIGH: MAJ. MARY JENNINGS HEGAR, AIR FORCE COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE PILOT

Theme Overview

MJ's memoir had two themes—Sexual Harassment and Coping with Stereotypes—that were also themes in my literature review. The two other themes—Bravado and Just Doing Her Job—are based solely on an objective look at MJ's story, not in relation to anything else.

Author Background

MJ began her training for her career as a helicopter pilot in the Air National Guard in 2004. While with the Guard, she made three deployments to Afghanistan between 2007 and 2009, where she worked on fast deploying response crews. Their primary mission was to fly in and rescue wounded service members and bring them safely back to base.

The excerpts here include sections of MJ's memoir from various parts of her life, including her combat experiences and pre- and post-combat events.

The following excerpt from the Author's Notes chapter describes MJ's methods of ensuring credibility of the events she retold in her book:

None of the stories have been dramatized, and the Department of Defense has redacted a few key names and words (covered in black throughout the book). None of the stories have been dramatized, all of the accounts have been scrutinized by the Department of Defense for classified information, and they are relayed here exactly as I remember them. Most of these stories have been vetted by others who were there to ensure accuracy, but people do tend to remember some of the details differently. There were heroic feats of valor and questionable decisions throughout, but for the most part, we all did the best we could with the information we had in the fog of war. Without Monday morning quarterbacks, what follows in my best

attempt to tell our story as seen through my eyes and validated by my comrades-in-arms. (Author's Notes)

Interesting to note here is that MJ had multiple sources of outside validation for her story including individuals who participated in the actual events and officials from the Department of Defense.

Theme1: Sexual Harassment

Like all of the women's narratives looked at previously in the Literature Review, MJ's memoir tells of her experiences with sexual harassment as a major theme during her career in the Air National Guard.

MJ1: in 2003, MJ reported to her very first duty-station as a Second Lieutenant.

"Sir, Lieutenant Jennings reports as ordered!" I was to hold my salute until it was returned, as I had been taught. With my eyes focused at an imaginary point in front of me, I could see Major Johnson eyeing me up and down, taking in my strict adherence to military decorum. "Shit," he said under his breath. "Lieutenant, the first time your time of the month gets in the way of doing your job, you're fired. Now get out of my office" (51).

Analysis: This comment seems almost unimaginable today, which makes it even more shocking that it happened in 2003, a time when women were not allowed into combat jobs but were surely a long-standing part of the overall military institution at that point. This excerpt is also an indicator that MJ was a victim of sexual harassment right from the very beginning of her Air Force career.

The effect of MJ's presence on her commanding officer, Major Johnson, is represented in his decision to eye her up and down and then mutter the word, "shit." This

appears to be a mixed reaction of disappointment, frustration, and possibly sexual interest. His next remark to MJ solidifies his reaction as one of unprofessional disrespect. Following those remarks, MJ salutes him before exiting the room, but he doesn't even bother to salute her, showing that he does not see her as worthy of the kind of military professionalism that he would extend to another man of MJ's same rank.

MJ2: in 2005, MJ was getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan for her 2nd time.

Part of the preparation was getting a flight physical.

Dr. Adams, one of many flight docs on the base, was in charge of my flight physical that year. He conducted a thorough exam, much more thorough than I was used to, as his attempts to ensure I didn't have any tumors led him to groping my breasts far more attentively than seemed absolutely necessary.

"Okay, put your feet in the stirrups," he commanded.

"What? No, you don't understand," I protested. "I just had an exam. I gave the paperwork to the nurse at the front for your review."

"No *YOU* don't understand," he said angrily. "You're not in charge here. You don't get to decide how this goes. I won't sign off on a physical that I don't conduct myself, and if you want to be a pilot, you'll *PUT* our *FEET* in those *STIRRUPS*. *NOW*."

I could feel the color drain out of my cheeks, and I felt like I was about to throw up. He was a general flight doc, not a gynecologist. I tried to explain to him that my husband was the only man who had ever seen me naked, that I had only ever had female gynecologists, and that I didn't think this was necessary.

"Please, sir . . . Can't you just use the exam I had last week?"

He looked at me like I had just slapped him. Then his God complex kicked in.

“No, but what I can do is fail you for psychological reasons,” he barked. “You don’t have the mental toughness you need to be a pilot if you can’t submit to a simple exam. If you don’t get your feet in those stirrups in five seconds, you can kiss being a pilot good-bye.”

I lay back and put my feet in the stirrups and began to cry, involuntarily squeezing my knees together, dreading the exam. It was bad enough having a female doctor examine me, but a male? No man other than my husband had ever touched me there. I bit my lip and tried to tough it out. *He’s a doctor. He knows what he’s doing. He does this sort of thing all the time. It’ll be over soon.*

Dr. Adams snapped his glove on.

“I guess you’re not going to like this,” he said, chuckling.

What followed was in no way a gynecological exam. I lay there crying so hard I couldn’t even breathe as he aggressively and painfully conducted his “exam,” as if he was trying to embarrass me, to hurt me, to put me in my place, to assert his control.

To this day I can’t explain the emotions of that horrible moment, as many times as I’ve gone over it in my head. He was a doctor and a superior and he had complete control over my future. That was the day I learned that mental restraints can be as tight as physical ones (74-75).

Analysis: I chose to include this excerpt from MJ’s memoir because it is the most extreme example she gives of sexual misconduct, sexual assault in this case, that happened to her¹³.

¹³ In 2016, 4.3% of women in the military had reported a case of sexual assault (Annual Report on Sexual Assault).

The aftermath of this event, as MJ describes it, included Dr. Adams immediately admitting his actions to the medical commander at the facility. Then, MJ discussed the event with her superiors and was presented with the option of filing charges against Dr. Adams. MJ chose the alternate option of letting her superiors deal directly with Dr. Adams, ensuring her that they would “handle it” (77). She trusted her superiors, and she was also told that Dr. Adams would not be able to prohibit her flight preparation process based on that physical exam. Personally, it makes me wonder if he ever received any kind of punishment for his actions, or if his colleagues just swept the issue under the rug in order to save Dr. Adams’ career.

Dr. Adams used his position of power as a doctor to take physical advantage of MJ, causing fear, frustration, and shock in her. In her mind she tried to rationalize the situation: “I bit my lip and tried to tough it out. *He’s a doctor. He knows what he’s doing. He does this sort of thing all the time. It’ll be over soon.*” When she cries and closes her knees, she expresses her fear and shock.

Consequently, the entire event has a reciprocal effect on Dr. Adams, as he almost immediately turns himself in to his superiors, showing that he went through some kind of internal conclusion about the event: he knew he would be trouble eventually, so he thought he should get it over with and turn himself in? Or maybe he suddenly understood the gravity of he just did and had feelings of guilt? What is for sure, is that Dr. Adams actions had negative effects on both MJ and himself, almost as immediately as he decided to sexually assault her.

MJ3: while serving in Afghanistan, MJ spent her downtime back on base, always in a ready position to deploy with her helicopter rescue team. In the excerpt below, she realizes that a magazine of 9mm ammo for her pistol is suddenly missing from her locker.

I started tearing apart my locker, looking for it, refusing to accept the fact that it was missing. I turned out every pocket, emptied every bag, and desperately ran my fingers along the edges of the locker. I must have searched for twenty minutes. Then I heard a chuckle behind me that raised the hairs on the back of my neck.

“Lose something?”

It was the guy who told me he didn’t want to fly with me because I was a woman: Richard. He was leaning against the lockers across from mine, eating a Ding Dong. He shook his head and gave a short chuckle as he walked away. I felt in my gut in that instant that he had taken it and there would be no finding it now. Furious, I made sure my radio was turned on, the volume high enough to hear a REDCON call, and I stormed out of the TOC. I found myself walking down the taxiway, my heart pounding, my stomach in knots. Being around the aircraft usually reminded me why I was here and kept me from going crazy, but this time, nothing helped. I was livid. Then I looked up and saw the lights on in the Army TOC, so I decided to pay them a visit. I could use some friendly faces, and unfortunately, I already knew from experience that none of the guys in my squadron would take my side against Richard . . .

Before I could even turn around, my commander stalked into the room with Richard on his heels.

“Jennings,” he barked. “Can you account for your ammo?”

I looked Richard in the eye. “Yes, sir, I can,” I told him.

“Bullshit,” Richard said.

“Show me,” my commander instructed, a tired edge to his voice. I think he had seen this particular prank before, and he had better things to do with his time.

“Right, but I have to tell you—” I started to say, but he just raised a hand and cut me off. I could see in his face that he knew exactly what had happened.

“No, you really don’t. You’re good to go, and that’s all I need to know. Hang in there, MJ. You’re doing a great job.”

Over the weeks that followed, rumors circulated about the incident that were even more painful than the moment itself. A friend reported to me that Richard started telling people about my “lost” magazine and that he happened to have it on good authority that I had lost it “out by the fence.”

When this rumor was relayed to me by a fellow pilot, I was confused. Did he mean I’d lost my ammo, while I was jogging the perimeter? The pilot shook his head uncomfortably and explained to me that Richard was insinuating I’d been on my knees, servicing a fellow airman, and must have dropped it in the heat of the moment.

My stomach roiled, and I felt like throwing up. I had been so careful since arriving in Kandahar to stay above this sort of thing. I hadn’t so much as flirted with any aircrew members precisely to avoid being made into such a joke. My behavior

thus far was above reproach, and now this guy was spreading rumors all over the squadron about me just because I had foiled his plot and made him look like an ass instead of the other way around? I couldn't believe it. (155-161)

Analysis: This last excerpt, about the missing ammunition and rumors being spread about her, was included in the sexual harassment section for lack of a better category to put it under. It definitely fits a common understanding of harassment. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, sexual "Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general" (EEOC.gov). Because it was all being done to her by a man who resented her as a woman in a traditional man's job, and who spread sexual rumors about her, I think it is appropriate to put in this section.

In the excerpt, Richard seems hell-bent on bringing down MJ any way he can, primarily by attacking her reputation. First he attempts to persuade the commanding officer that MJ has somehow misplaced her ammunition, which would put her in serious trouble. But to succeed in that malicious attack, he basically has to convince the commanding officer to take his own word over MJ's. In the interaction, the commanding officer doesn't seem to take Richard's claims very seriously, and when MJ states that she does indeed have her own ammo, the commanding officer takes her word for it—done. But, when that doesn't work, Richard again tries to tarnish MJ's reputation through spreading rumors about her having lost her ammo while having sexual relations with someone "out by the fence."

MJ's missing ammunition, and Richard's antagonizing behaviors, effect MJ by making her panic and worried about getting in trouble. He goes further when that plan doesn't have the effect he had planned. By supposedly spreading rumors of MJ's sexual activity, Richard is trying to enact negative mental and emotional effects on MJ—thus ruining her reputation.

Summary of Theme

The theme of sexual harassment, while not dominating MJ's entire memoir, certainly had significance as the experiences she retold included not only verbal harassment, but also physical assault as in the case of the flight doctor who forced her to take an unnecessary physical examination and sexually violated her in the process.

Also, MJ's experience with sexual harassment was throughout her career, from her very first assignment as a second lieutenant (MJ1) to her combat duty in Afghanistan (MJ3). The case of her co-worker Richard shows the extent of someone going out of their way to attack MJ and attempt to ruin her reputation through dishonestly spreading rumors about her and directly lying to their commanding officer in order to try and get MJ in trouble. However hard Richard tried though, his actions did not have the effect he wanted—as MJ's reputation only grew stronger, through her own positive course of actions.

Sexual harassment was the dominant theme throughout the literature review of studies and narratives of women in the military, and also was revealed as a major theme in MJ's military experiences. In 2017, there was a 10% increase in reported sexual assault cases in the U.S. Military, something that Department of Defense leaders call a "positive trend" (Baldor, "Pentagon Chief"), due to the large amount of cases that go unreported each year (Baldor, "Pentagon Chief"). Sexual assault was referred to by Secretary of Defense

General Mattis as “a cancer in the ranks” for the military in a statement to the Senate Armed Forces Committee. General Mattis also stated in a 2018 memorandum that “By its nature, sexual assault is one of the most destructive factors in building a mission-focused military” (“Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention”).

Looking back to the sexual harassment theme from my Literature Review, there are two clear connections to the accounts from MJ’s memoir. First, MJ’s sexual assault experiences have similarities with the “Trivialization of sexual harassment” theme from Sasson-Levy’s study (see p. 30). In that study, female participants had downplayed their experiences with sexual harassment, describing it as something of little or no significance. For example when the participant named Rutti described how her male peers would sing sexually demeaning songs about her, she described it insignificantly as “annoying . . . nobody notices it, nobody pays attention to it”. In MJ2 (p. 56), she rationalizes the event in her head as it unfolds: “*He’s a doctor. He knows what he’s doing. He does this sort of thing all the time. It’ll be over soon.*” In the aftermath of the event, she also decided not to file charges against the doctor who assaulted her.

Secondly, in Sasson-Levy’s same study another participant named Jojo recalls how a fellow male soldier had walked up to and stole her cigarette right out of her mouth and started smoking it right in front of her. That kind of bullying action is similar to Richard, from MJ’s crew, who also took something away from MJ—her ammunition. In both cases, the man was taking something away from a female peer, with an intended effect to intimidate or create fear, making themselves feel superior.

Theme2: Coping with Stereotypes

While this theme did not dominate the research presented in Chapter II, that does not mean these kinds of experiences did not occur in the lives of the women participants. Here, the excerpts from MJ's memoir reflect her experiences dealing with co-workers who express stereotypical beliefs (or oppose those beliefs) about women, and particularly about women in military combat jobs.

MJ4: as a new 2nd lieutenant at Aircraft Maintenance Officer's training in Texas.

MJ had just finished qualifying with her rifle.

Outstanding, Jennings. You shoot like a girl." ...“No really,” he continued. “Women are physiologically pre-disposed to being excellent marksmen. It’s about their muscle tone, center of gravity, flexibility, heart rate, respiration, and in opinion, psychology . . . He smiled once again, then turned away, leaving me standing there in silence. There were physical advantages to being a woman in combat? I went home that night and did some more research. Turned out he was right. (52-53)

Analysis: I included this excerpt under the Coping with Stereotypes heading because I think it is a unique example of encountering what appears to be a stereotype, but in fact turns out not to be. When MJ hears “You shoot like a girl,” her immediate reaction, before the man goes on to explain, was likely some mix of anger and frustration. But then it turns out to be a case of overturning a stereotype and giving it new meaning. In this case the man was making a connection between positive shooting skills correlated with female shooters. This example shows that there are individuals within MJ's chain of command, while small in number, who do not adhere to the prevalent bias against women in combat. It's also an

interesting example of trying to reinvent a stereotype, from having a negative meaning to an opposite and positive meaning.

Here we have a very positive effect created by the man in the excerpt above. His vocal support for MJ, and thereby women in her position, causes her to follow-up on what he had mentioned to her. When she got home she did some research to see if what he had said was true; her confirmation of his claims has the effect of giving MJ knew knowledge on the advantages of women in combat. While not directly mentioned, it is likely that along with that knew knowledge, MJ had an increase in her self-confidence as a woman in a male-dominated military career.

MJ5: MJ's first deployment to Kandahar, Afghanistan with her Air National Guard unit from New York. She had just met the other members of her flight crew. She was excited about everyone on her crew, except for Richard.

Richard looked the part of the elderly New York Irish cop he was—pale white skin and a paintbrush mustache, a bright red nose and a spare tire around the middle. The first week in Kandahar, he told me straight to my face that he didn't want me on the crew.

"Nothing personal. It's just that women can't hold their own in an evasion scenario." I wondered how he'd do, lugging all that extra weight around his belly if we needed to evade capture.

"Okay," I retorted. "Let's find out. Come on." I put down my gear and dropped into "front-leaning rest," which is the smart-ass military expression for the push-up position. "Right now . . . push-up contest," I continued from the ground. "Let's see who wins."

Throughout my career, this was my go-to rebuttal for blatant jabs at my physical ability. I had done it dozens of times, and I won every single contest I challenged someone to. That's not to say that I could out-push every guy I flew with. Hardly. But for some reason, it was never the strong, fit guys who were threatened enough by me to infer I was physically inferior. It was always the guys who were at the bottom rung of the physical fitness ladder. It was as if, like any bully, they were so insecure that they had to seek out someone they thought was weaker than they were and kick them around. I had never lost a push-up challenge like this, and I was not about to start now. I would push the ground until my arms fell off if I had to.

"Whatever," Richard harrumphed, walking away. He acted as if I was not worth the effort, but everyone knew that he was afraid he would lose. (145-147)

Analysis: Richard was one of the least favorite co-workers for MJ to have to work with. In the excerpt above, Richard represents an open disbelief in MJ's abilities to fulfill her duties in the same capacity as a man. But then, when challenged to actually demonstrate an example of those capabilities, Richard backs down from the challenge. Based on MJ's physical description of Richard's "spare tire around the middle," Richard would likely have lost the push-up challenge that MJ faced him with. So, in essence, Richard was presented with the option or opportunity to actually observe first-hand the kind of capabilities that MJ has, representing women in general. If he had taken this chance he may have lost the competition and thereby been able to overcome the embedded stereotype he openly expressed to MJ. But because he chose not to take MJ's challenge, he walked away with his stereotype of women still stuck in his head. However, there are two possible positive takeaways from this experience, according to MJ's perspective. Firstly, the seeds have been

planted in Richard's head: the seed of doubt as to his own perspectives on women's capabilities, and the doubt of his own capabilities in comparison to other women. Secondly, this open challenge by MJ puts her out there on the male playing field as a participant; she's interacting as others do in her job field: through *brash* displays of physical prowess and a competitive spirit. This kind of action can have an effect on those around her in a way that challenges any preconceived ideas about women's less-than-capable nature in a male-dominated combat job field.

Triumph. MJ challenged Richard, and for whatever reason went through his head, he turned down that challenge and walked away, leaving MJ as the victor. So really, MJ's bravado had a positive effect on her situation in a highly visible way among her peers.

MJ6: after two tours in Afghanistan, MJ reported to the 129th Rescue Squadron in California. She "was one of three pilots assigned to the elite Counterdrug Task Force flying unit named Team Hawk" (173). At her new job, she describes a private conversation with a crewmember she had previously worked with in Afghanistan.

"So, I just wanted to give you a heads-up because I know what you faced in New York," he began in an ominous voice. "You'll find ninety-nine percent of the people here are thrilled to have you. You have a great reputation in rescue for being a good stick and a mission hacker." . . . "But one of the guys here did fight hiring you," he continued. "He doesn't think women should be on our crews, and you're going to have an uphill battle convincing him otherwise. I debated whether or not to even tell you, but I think you should know. Hell, I think he'd tell you to your face if you asked him. His name is Doug Sherry, and he's a former Army pilot.

As it turned out, I already knew Doug, and it didn't surprise me in the slightest. All in all, he was actually a well-respected, reasonably decent guy. He wasn't your run-of-the-mill-chauvinist—in other words, he didn't seem to hold a low opinion of women based on his own insecurities, and he didn't shove it in people's faces. Maybe he'd had some sort of experience with a mediocre fellow soldier on which he based his opinion, but that wasn't enough to scare me off. I actually looked forward to showing him what I could do (175-176).

Analysis: What comes across here is MJ's eagerness to prove herself, not only for her individual abilities, but also as a representative for women in her field. Like the push-up challenge with Richard in a previous excerpt, MJ was ready to assert herself in order to overturn commonly held stereotypes about women. In the case of Richard though, he wasn't up for the challenge. Doug Sherry, just from the description above, sounds like his belief is different than Richard, in that he is described as a nice and reputable person despite his beliefs about women. The same probably *couldn't* be said of Richard, based on MJ's description of him and his likely involvement with trying to get her in trouble, as well as spreading harmful rumors about her around the base where they were stationed.

MJ also describes what sounds like a highly supportive and female-friendly working environment: “ninety-nine percent” where supposedly in support having of MJ onboard due to her reputation that she had created for herself as a woman in combat during her two previous combat tours. I wonder how much her positive reputation had an effect on her new unit; were their men there who initially would be opposed to a female pilot, but had changed their views because they had heard that MJ was *tried and true*? Perhaps MJ had already done much of her work for herself—of changing hearts and minds—prior to

arriving at this unit, through her diligent efforts at excelling at her job during her combat tours.

MJ7: upon arriving in Afghanistan for her third tour, MJ describes her feelings about working with a crew of friends she had previously worked with.

The only person I had left to win over was Doug Sherry, but I didn't spend much time worrying about him. Some people would always make generalizations about others based on their race or gender; once I finally decided to accept that, I found a great deal of peace (189).

Analysis: MJ describes a feeling of peace as an effect of her acceptance of people's "generalizations." This description of MJ's feelings is more laid back than before, after she has had time to live with the fact of Doug Sherry's feelings about her. In the excerpt before this one, MJ seemed ready to get into the push-up position and challenge Doug Sherry as she had done previously to Richard. But in the excerpt here, MJ seems much more confidently relaxed, without the need to assert her abilities right from the start. This apparent confidence seems to stem from her ability to understand that she must choose her battles wisely, and there are likely too many potential opponents to confront. An insecure tendency would be to eagerly take on all opponents, while a confident person who has grown into their position is more able to select battles strategically.

MJ8: about half way through her third deployment, some of her crewmembers changed—some went home, while a few new ones arrived. Here, MJ describes being introduced to her gunner, Major George Dona.

"Welcome aboard, George—the men you'll fly with here are top-notch," I heard Doug Sherry say, around the unlit cigar in his mouth. It was seven a.m.—

seriously, did he sleep with that thing in his mouth? George wore a smile at all times, so I couldn't tell if he'd caught the men comment. I was pretty sure Sherry didn't mean it as a pointed jab in my direction, but it just solidified for me once again how utterly invisible I was to him. He never missed an opportunity to show me—intentionally or not—that he didn't think of me as a part of his team.

Later that day, we walked out to our Pave Hawk with the new team for a dry run, George caught in the crossfire of our banter.

“You haven't flown with MJ before,” Steve informed him jokingly. “Please don't judge all of Team Hawk by our one weak link.” On cue, he deftly stepped out of the way before I could slug him. Experience had taught him well.

TJ waved a dismissive hand. “You sure about that, Steve? I hear that it's the Flight Engineer who is the weak link on Hawk.”

“Shut up and go oil your barrel, Gunner,” Steve shot back, laughing.

George smiled and nodded, not saying much. Clearly he took the quiet approach. I could tell he was waiting to see if all this cockiness bore out when we got in the air. And it did. As soon as we got the bird up in the air and crossed the fence out of Kandahar, we all sat a little straighter and looked around a little more intently. Within a few days, it felt like the best crew I'd ever flown with. Steve, TJ, George, and me. We had our rhythms coordinated, and we quickly trusted each other's instincts. It felt like a true team. It was a damn good thing the team managed to gel so quickly. Only two weeks after George arrived, I would experience the longest day of my life with them. (211)

Analysis: Here MJ is still faced with Doug Sherry's attitude against her: the subtle remark at the top of the excerpt about *top-notch men* serves as a subtle reminder to MJ of how Doug "didn't think of [her] as a part of his team." But she is also not affected by his actions, nor the other crew members. In her description, despite Doug's comments about her, MJ and her new crew get set very quickly, ready to work together. Her interactions with her crew, as she describes them, present her for the most part as *just one of the guys*. The playful banter between her and the other crew members display the comfort level, as an effect, that they all have while working with each other.

There is an interesting distinction between Doug Sherry and MJ's team mate Steve, who also made a direct insult to MJ's abilities—more directly than Doug's suggestive remark. The difference is one of an insult coming from a friend or a foe. It's obvious from the way that MJ describes her interactions with Steve, that his remark is one coming from a friend in a way that only friends can trade quips back and forth. In contrast, Doug, making a much more indirect remark, is described as an attack based on the adversarial relationship he already has with MJ.

Summary of Theme

One thing that stands out to me about MJ's descriptions of these instances of dealing with stereotypes is that it was usually one select person who was responsible for looking at MJ with a stereotypical viewpoint, e.g., Richard or Doug Sherry. For the most part, she seemed to be surrounded by people who accepted her for who she was as a great pilot, regardless of her gender. There is strength in numbers, and when you have support from a majority of those around you, it creates the effect of a strong source of support, whether it's felt or not.

In Brownson's study with female Marine participants from Chapter II, one participant named Captain Melinda describes the identity of "everyone's vision of a perfect Marine," (Brownson 784) being an athletic male; thus, female Marines are faced with challenging that established identity. It's likely that here in MJ's excerpts she is also challenging a similar identity construction maintained in the minds of Richard and Doug Sherry, who cannot assimilate MJ, based on her gender, into their pre-constructed idea of the perfect person for a military combat job. Furthermore, when Richard apparently spread rumors about MJ having sexual activity with other men, a baseless rumor, he seemed to unfairly label and categorize MJ in a similar manner as was described by Myers in a New York Times article and Vealey in her research with female Marines. In both instances, there was a description of how female Marines were often labeled as one of three things: a bitch, a slut, or a dyke. Here the context is different with MJ being in the Air Force, but the stereotypical label appears very similar.

Theme3: Bravado

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines bravado as,

1. a : blustering swaggering conduct - youthful bravado
b : a pretense of bravery

That pretty much describes MJ's personality in a nutshell. Bravado may bring to mind other male-oriented terms such as macho or manly, but bravado has no gender distinction by definition, and thus, works well to describe MJ's behaviors in this section.

I chose this theme due to the way in which MJ writes about herself throughout her memoir in very distinct and personal way that reveals the uniqueness of who she is.

Looked at in relation to the other themes, this one is set apart by being based on a characteristic rather than a series of situations, as the other themes are.

MJ9: while stationed stateside, MJ describes having to part with her motorcycle.

A few years earlier, while I was still in college, I had spent all of my savings to buy a brand-new Yamaha FZR600 motorcycle. I'd replaced the stock pipe with a carbon fiber Yoshimura exhaust system that made me feel like I was flying a jet whenever I opened her up. This bike was my baby, but during my time in Japan, I'd had to keep her in storage. At this point, I knew I had to make smart decisions, so I resolved to sell my bike to pay for my private license. It broke my heart, but it was just one in a long line of sacrifices I had to make to achieve my dreams. I was sure it would be worth it. (58)

Analysis: Motorcycles are often associated with men—speed, power, danger. But here we read about MJ's love for motorcycles, clearly associated with her love for flying: "a carbon fiber Yoshimura exhaust system that made me feel like I was flying a jet whenever I opened her up." It's likely that the integration of women into military combat jobs, while an initial effect of overturning the primary stereotype of only men being suitable for combat jobs, also has an effect that begins to overturn a myriad of other stereotypes as well.

MJ10: MJ describes a classroom experience, learning about survival techniques, during her first week in pilot school at Columbus Air Force Base.

I swallowed nervously as I looked up to meet his eyes. I hated being singled out, but I walked to the front of the classroom.

I stood in front of the class as the instructor continued talking.

“So you’ve ejected from our aircraft and you’re waiting to be rescued. No one comes, and it’s your third day out there on your own. Captain Jennings, can you reach into this cup and pull out what you find?” He held up a paper cup above my eye line.

I could feel something slimy and immediately realized it was a fat worm about a half inch thick. No problem. I could do this. Just as I painted my tough-guy face on, the six-inch worm wrapped itself around my finger. To my utter disappointment, I shrieked and dropped the worm on the floor. The class laughed as the instructor explained that I’d never survive due to prudish American food aversions.

Not five seconds after I had dropped it, I bent over, picked up the worm, rolled it between my palms, and tossed it back like a shot of whiskey.

“Mmmm. What else you got?” The class roared in laughter and cheered me on.

I noticed, as I returned to my seat, one of my classmates looking a little green. I patted him on his back and said with a gentle smile, “Don’t worry. I’m sure we don’t all have to do that.” He glanced at me, grateful for the support. (93-94)

Analysis: First it was girls and bikes, now its girls and worms. This excerpt is something that we would typically observe an over-active guy doing in a classroom setting in order to gain attention for his peers. But the description doesn’t feel forced here—it feels like an honest description of who MJ is and how she expresses herself—and the effect she has on others around her. At the end of the excerpt, MJ describes one of her male classmates “looking a little green” at her worm-eating behaviors. She then reassures him with a pat on

the back that basically she *took one for the team*. It feels like a role-reversal between her and her male classmate: usually the guy would be the worm eater and the girl would be turning green. Consequently, MJ's bravado has the effect of working at tearing down typical gender stereotypes while also defining her among her peers.

MJ11: more fun during pilot training at Columbus Air Force Base.

As the highest-ranking student, I was appointed the class leader. I tried to think of a way to cut the tension during the morning briefings without disrupting the learning. A few of us decided that we should begin a word-of-the-day competition. The challenge would be to attempt to use the word in the morning briefing without arousing any suspicion among the instructors...."Good morning. Aircrew brief for Tuesday, March twenty-ninth, is as follows," I began. "Weather is good with unlimited ceiling, clear visibility, and flaccid winds at about five knots from two seven zero . . ." despite their best efforts, a few of my classmates cracked smiles, and the instructors began looking at each other. I finished the brief, and everyone went about his or her daily schedules. I couldn't believe I had gotten away with it.

(100-101)

Analysis: The class clown. Now we've seen MJ take on three distinct characteristics usually associated with men: the bike lover, the worm-eater, and now the class clown. But, like the previous examples, it works for her, and it doesn't seem like artificially forced behavior, rather it becomes her and her natural personality. In the above description, MJ had used the word *flaccid* as an inside joke among her peers, having the effect of getting her some laughs and livening up the mood in the class, while also serving as way to bond with her peers.

MJ12: MJ traveled to Fort Rucker for the next phase of her pilot training.

During the academic phase at Fort Rucker, I had an incident with one of the civilian instructors that was a humbling reminder of how much more I had to learn. One day the instructor said something I disagreed with. Obviously, as a student, I should have listened to the instructor and let it go, but instead I was disrespectful and pushed back, a little too hard as it turned out. I had given in to a feeling that most of us feel at one point or another in training—that one of our instructors didn't know what the hell he was talking about. After the altercation, I quickly realized my error and wrote the instructor a letter. It was an unequivocal apology, because I was truly embarrassed that I had been disrespectful to him. On my way into another class, I handed it to him with lowered eyes. (105)

Analysis: I included this excerpt here because it displays MJ's personality in its extreme. She realizes that she had gone too far and overstepped her boundaries with her superior, so she did her best to reconcile the problem. She exercised bravery: thusly, a display of bravado. Although we don't read about the actual event, which she didn't include, we learn of her experience *going too far*. In other parts of MJ's memoir, she describes male co-workers who go too far in one way or another—typically portrayed as a male personality defect. But here, MJ is the one admitting to going so far that she almost got in trouble for it as an effect. In the aftermath of the above event, MJ's letter saved her butt. Her instructors were discussing what to do about her, and when she turned in that letter, they decided not to get her into trouble. It was lucky for her that she was able to recognize that she went too far, and she took immediate action to repair the damage she had done.

MJ13: upon arriving to Afghanistan for her first tour, MJ describes her love of knives as she prepares her battle gear.

... but I augmented my vest with things like a rescue knife, which you can use to break glass and cut seat belts, a push knife, a boot knife (I like knives—what can I say?), a handcuff key, extra water and ammo, a flashlight with red and UV interchangeable lenses, and a small metal tube that carried a single cigar.

The cigar was my promise to myself that I would get out of that country alive. I planned to smoke it after my last mission and before the flight home. The last nonstandard item I carried was a folded-up American flag. It made a triangle about eight inches long, and I kept it in a Ziploc bag to keep it relatively free from dust. I planned to carry the flag with me on every single combat mission I ever flew. (138)

Analysis: Now, MJ's previous examples of her hard-core personality could be argued with: lots of women are class clowns and ride fast bikes, come on. But now it's knives and cigars—this is very stereotypical masculine territory. But also, like her previous examples, MJ strides into these examples as if she already owns the personality trait—it just doesn't feel forced. And the fact that her job is highly conducive to things like knives, American flags, and cigars, makes her ownership of these traits all the more natural. Once more, this excerpt shows that MJ's bravado-fueled personality has the effect of working to overturn typical gender stereotypes about how men and women should behave.

MJ14: MJ arrives at the 129th Rescue Squadron in California after her second tour in Afghanistan.

He looked up and broke out into a huge grin that matched mine. It was Steve Burt, my cigar-smoking buddy from KAF.

“Well, holy shit. Look what the cat dragged in. How the fuck are *you*?” Steve asked as he got up to give me a shoulder-slapping hug. I breathed a huge sigh of relief—I was back with my people. I greeted the other two pilots, who had also become friends of mine in Afghanistan. Something in my chest untied—I’d found my home. (174)

Analysis: This final bravado example shows something unique compared with all the previous ones: dialogue and bonding between MJ and a male friend in a way that’s described as if she were a guy—the male bonding experience, physically and verbally with the aggressive “shoulder-slapping hug” and foul language. And of course, like we’ve come to expect by now with these excerpts from MJ, she embodies the experience quite naturally. In this way, MJ’s mere presence has the effect on her friend in similar way as if Steve had bumped into a male friend of his.

Summary of Theme

From her bug-eating tales, to her love of combat knives, MJ is someone who has the kind of personality we usually associate with fast-paced and dangerous jobs like a combat rescue helicopter pilot. Through all her recollections, nothing seems faked or adopted in order to take on characteristic that would help her fit in with her peers. She describes the natural way she is and how she interacts with males in her career. However, you could also interpret MJ’s excessive bravado as something she feels compelled to do in order to fit into her all-male working environment—sure, that’s possible. But it could also be said that most men who show off their bravado in similar ways as MJ has might be to doing it as a way to compensate for an insecurity or to gain an effect of acceptance from their peers; in that way, it could be considered a similar characteristic. So, in my claim that MJ’s behavior

appears natural, I mean it seems as natural as any showboat behavior, typically displayed by men, designed to gain attention and acceptance from peers.

I intentionally labeled this theme differently from the Adopting Masculinity theme found in Chapter II. As previously mentioned, there are distinct differences with MJ's behaviors, as she retells them, and the behaviors described in the research that fell under the category of Adopting Masculinity. For example, in Sasson-Levy's research she describes female participants' behaviors as having two key characteristics: first, they took on common male-associated behaviors in order to better integrate into their male-dominated work environment. Secondly, they gave up those behaviors after their military service. Now, one could argue that MJ was following the first characteristic—that she was actually doing all these things described throughout the Bravado theme as a way to integrate into her work place—possible. But the second characteristic, while we don't actually know because her memoir is almost entirely during her military service, there is no evidence, as in Sasson-Levy's study, that MJ gave up her bravado-style behaviors once she left the Air Force. As a result, I labeled it under its own unique category, as I saw it.

Looking back to Lillian Pfluke's narrative from Chapter II, she also had this kind of behavior that appeared inherent in her personality traits, more so than it appeared to be an artificially adopted behavior that was used as a strategy to integrate among male peers.

Theme4: Just Doing Her Job

A large part of MJ's memoir revolves around the details of the various flight positions she had. It's relevant to recall here because of the nature of her job in a field dominated by men and traditionally closed off to women. Therefore, this theme seeks to highlight the details of

MJ's job, other than issues of sexual harassment or stereotypes, which are covered as separate themes in their own sections.

MJ15: thinking about her sleeping arrangements and noticing the difference of being a female in a male environment.

We slept in large tents, shared by a couple dozen people. Unfortunately, as a female, I wasn't allowed to be housed with my crew this time. Other than a few miscommunications when it came to catching rides in to work, it wasn't a big deal. On the flip side, though, the few times when I have been housed with men instead of just women, there have been absolutely no issues. After all, if teenage girls and boys can sleep together in a school gym during a lock-in, professional adult men and women should be able to share a giant tent with a few dozen of our fellow squadron members without us all making a bigger deal out of it than it has to be. (196)

Analysis: A common counter-argument to the *sexual tensions* concern is exemplified by MJ's description above. Professional men and women should be able to control themselves with members of the opposite sex, even in close quarters and co-sleeping arrangements, like above. MJ also draws the parallel to teenagers co-sleeping in a gym, a normal occurrence in high school, which primes adolescents to responsibly co-exist with members of the opposite sex.

This excerpt shows not only MJ's frustration as an emotional effect of the gender divided sleeping arrangements of her unit, but it also shows her disbelief, a mental effect, in the logic behind the separation of the sexes. She has also experienced coed sleeping arrangements, as she mentions, and she uses that experience as support that military service members of the opposite sex can easily handle sleeping in the same room together.

MJ16: appreciation for fire-power and comradery.

We picked up and headed for the river. I heard the .50 of our sister ship laying down cover for us at about fourteen beautiful rounds per second. We banked left and headed north along the river before falling in behind our lead bird. Mat and Doug had just saved our asses, but we did this for each other all the time. We never thanked each other. We were just doing our jobs, sometimes four or five times a day.

(200)

Analysis: This example shows MJ's love for fire-power, and I could have easily put this excerpt under the Bravado section. I chose to put it here because it appeared to me to represent her comfort-level with the various details of her job, including weapons and warfare.

Like her excerpts from the bravado section, this excerpt shows MJ's natural comfort level in her job. People in her kind of job have to have some sort of interest in being around large noisy weaponry, and MJ describes the comforting mental effect of the rhythmic pulse of the large .50 machine gun mounted to the side of their helicopter.

MJ17: MJ reacts to being shot while piloting her helicopter and having to make a decision about her condition.

I heard a crack like a baseball bat hitting a home run, and then the helo's windshield shattered right in front of my eyes . . .

My right arm felt warm and wet, but I ignored it. I was thinking only about the wrecked windshield . . .

One look at George's horrified face reeled me back to the present tense . . . I followed George's gaze to the blood spreading over my exposed arm and the leg of

my flight suit. I had the strangest split-second moment of relief that I had tied my sleeves around my waist in an attempt not to overheat. Now I wouldn't have to patch a bullet hole in the arm of my uniform. . . "I'm hit, but . . . I can still fly," I told them, fully confident that I was telling the truth. "I'm hit, but I'm okay!" "Are you really okay?" There were four voices all at once in my headset . . .

Shrapnel peppered my right forearm and right thigh. The arm wounds were superficial. I couldn't see the leg wound, but the spreading bloodstain was worrying—first it was the size of a grapefruit, and then it grew larger and larger until it was the size of a basketball. But after a few minutes the stain stopped spreading, and I began to breathe easier. I'd never been shot before, but I'd flown so many wounded troops that I could tell a serious wound from a paper cut. No reason to call off the mission.

In the back, TJ was doing just that. "I repeat . . . Pedro one five Co-Pilot . . . We're RTB . . ." *Return to base!*

I didn't blame him—I was covered in blood, but I was in no way ready to head back to base.

"Gunner—hold that," I said. I could sense the look he was giving me in disbelief. Even George had started to look a little pale through his dark Hawaiian complexion.

"Look guys, I swear!" I reached my arm up over my head and moved it side to side. "I have full range of motion, and my leg has already stopped bleeding. We've got three cat-A soldiers down there. Let's get back in it."

After all, we had to give them “brave inspirations,” right? Category A meant urgent, and I wasn’t going to be the reason they bled out. I had lost enough soldiers to this war already, and I knew that if we lost them I would never forgive myself for heading back to KAF.

Steve was the only one who didn’t seem to object. After so much time together flying drug eradication missions in California, he knew me well enough: If I said I was good, I was good. He knew I would never endanger my own crew out of some sense of bravado.

After a moment of silence, George piped up to the guys in back.

“You guys okay with going back in?”

He got affirmative answers from everyone, so he began to turn the aircraft back toward the convoy. (219-221)

Analysis: This shows MJ’s confidence and leadership skills. She had enough confidence in herself to know she was okay enough to continue on with their mission after she realized that she had been hit by enemy gunfire. Not only that, but she was able to display that confidence to her crewmembers in a way to gain their confidence in her—as the effect. These are key skills necessary for success in her job, and she performs them exceptionally well. Given the extreme circumstances, just being shot and her covered in blood, it took MJ to confidently convince the others of her suitable condition, despite outward appearances.

This excerpt is a very good example of MJ’s bravery and being able to handle the chaos of warfare. It’s these kind of stressful combat situations that opponents of women in combat claim that women cannot handle. So this excerpt shows MJ, again, having the effect of overturning stereotypes about what women are capable of in a military combat job.

The reaction from her crew is also largely supportive, although reluctant at first, but rightly so perhaps, given that one would question the suitable condition of any man or woman who had just been shot and was in charge of flying your helicopter. MJ's crew member, Steve, was the man who in an earlier excerpt was teasing MJ on their way to fly a mission. My comment at that time was that the relationship between MJ and Steve appeared like two close co-workers who shared a deep trust in one another: this excerpt here reinforces that, as "Steve was the only one who didn't seem to object" on the helicopter when MJ was insisting that she was okay. She attributes Steve's trust to all the "time together flying drug eradication missions in California" that they had experienced together.

MJ18: a little later, realizing that they would have to land their helicopter in the middle of extracting their wounded patients from a combat zone.

"We're not going to make it back to Kandahar," I stated, as clearly and calmly as I could. "We're pissing gas."

I saw the tiniest flicker of alarm on George's face.

"We have to either land over there"—I pointed to a flat spot of rocky sand just over to our right—"or we're going to crash . . . over there."

I pointed to a different ridge five miles off.

George didn't question a word I said. Without pause, he immediately pointed out a rocky spot where he planned to drop the helo. *There?* It was the right call. Harder to put land mines under rocks than sand. Our ordeal was far from over, and we weren't going home just yet. George needed zero distractions so he could

concentrate on flying and landing our failing aircraft at the site, so an eerie hush came over us as he dove toward the rocky terrain . . .

Alongside that checklist, I tried to quiet my brain from playing out a script that I knew was no horror movie. It was our new reality: IEDs on the ground everywhere, no perimeter security, hills around us full of Taliban. I knew I'd fight to the death—far better than being captured and marched through enemy territory with a bag over my head.

I reached around for my rifle, grabbed it, and slid out of the helo down to the rock-strewn terrain. After three tours in Afghanistan flying into countless combat zones, this was the first time I'd ever stepped outside the wire of an air base, on the ground in enemy territory . . .

The third patient was another story. She looked young. I couldn't tell the extent of her injuries, just that panic had her shivering, despite the overwhelming Afghan summer heat. As she sat still on her seat, her eyes darted wildly around the cabin and outside to the hills. I bent close.

"Hey... hey, look at me." I locked on to her gaze.

"A rescue bird was just shot down in Afghanistan. Every aircraft in a one-hundred-mile radius just launched to come get us"—I got straight to the point—"so calm down. We'll be out of here soon."

As I stood up and turned back to TJ, I rolled my eyes.

He nodded in agreement. "Man, that's why they shouldn't let women on those convoys," he said to me quietly.

Covered in my own blood and soaked with jet fuel, I stared him down hard for a tick, but he didn't catch on.

"Are you fucking kidding me?"

TJ looked bewildered for a second; then it clicked.

"Oh, not you, MJ! You kick ass..." he stammered.

I turned back to the bay door. I had no time to think about what it meant that TJ, who knew I was a warrior who would hold my own, somehow thought I was the exception. He still couldn't accept the fact that some women were every bit as capable as a guy in uniform.

After all, the pilot in Pedro 16 was a guy, and his loss of nerve was still fresh in my mind. Speaking of which, where the hell were they? Why weren't they landing next to us to get us out of Dodge? Not to mention, I was the one with blood all over my rifle arm, still ready to fight. Battle readiness had nothing to do with gender and everything to do with individual capability.

I shook it off and stepped in front of the open bay door. None of the patients had body armor, but I did, so I put myself between them and the hills. ██████ [sic] stepped down next to me. He scanned the ridge off the tail of the helo, covering six to nine o'clock; I had nine to twelve o'clock off the nose. Standing shoulder to shoulder with a special-ops warrior like ██████ [sic] felt good. This was what I was made for. I felt it in my gut. In the last hour, I'd been shot by the Taliban, had my aircraft riddled with bullets, and landed hard in enemy territory. I can do this. I'm not scared. At that moment, I wouldn't have switched spots with anyone in the world, because I knew I was the best person for the job. (232)

Analysis: There are several examples in the above excerpt that are worth taking note of, all in one way or another displaying MJ's ability to take on the challenges of her job, all while facing stereotypes, even in the middle of a hectic combat-zone.

Firstly, when MJ had to make the decision to land their helicopter in a combat zone. She knew the helicopter's condition and the resulting consequences of crashing if they decided to fly home at that moment. Again, she had to display her confidence and likewise be accepted by her crew at the same time—these both happened. When she told George exactly what their options were—land now or crash soon—“George didn't question a word I said” is what MJ stated about the effect that her statement had on George .

Then, after landing, MJ was ready to face death: “I knew I'd fight to the death—far better than being captured and marched through enemy territory with a bag over my head.” So, she was every bit in here element, capable and ready to do her job, even in the most extreme conditions. As she mentions in the memoir, “this was the first time I'd ever stepped outside the wire of an air base, on the ground in enemy territory.” This was a first. Yes, she had just been shot, which was also a first, but now she was venturing into what is probably one of the worst-case combat scenarios for a pilot: being on foot in enemy territory. But the effect of that chaotic situation on MJ was positive in that it put her in the right mindset to fight for her life.

Next, she had to use her leadership and confidence to reassure a younger female patient onboard who was on the verge of panic—a very positive leadership effect. While doing this, she also traded a few words with one of her crewmembers, TJ. For a second or two, he completely forgot that MJ was a woman, and he shared a moment of *seemingly* male-bonding with her: she had rolled her eyes at him in response to the upset female

patient she had to calm down. His response is to share with MJ his feelings that women shouldn't be allowed in combat because, like the young female patient, they can't handle high-stress situations like the one they were in the middle of. Her comment back to him causes him to *wake up* and realize what he just said to MJ, which makes him give a quick exception to MJ as being different from most females. She expressed frustration for being looked at as an exception among women, rather than an example of what any woman could do in her situation, given her time and effort at her job.

Finally, she teams up with a special ops member of their crew, who is tasked with being in charge of their team in the event of landing in enemy territory. She describes her feelings as she helps protect the wounded patients of her crew: "I knew I was the best person for the job."

MJ describes this combat situation well; there are multiple things going on, from the urgency of the moment, to the reflection on the disparaging comment from her crew member, TJ. Ultimately, she did her best here and set an example of what women are capable of in combat.

MJ19: still later, getting ready to leave the combat zone with their patients.

Finally. Our sister ship was going to land. The Kiowas would take four aircrew out on their skids first, and the rest would go with Pedro 16. This might just work.

"Aircrew out first," [REDACTED] [sic]¹⁴ said. "MJ- you and the Gunner jump on the first Kiowa."

¹⁴ The blacked out parts are taken as they were in MJ's memoir. Some names had to be blacked out by her for security reasons.

“No way,” I protested. I didn’t want to leave the others behind. Then I bit my tongue. [REDACTED] [sic] was the PJ team leader. Technically, George was in command, but he would never second-guess [REDACTED] [sic] orders. Tactical lead had fallen to [REDACTED] [sic] as soon as we had stopped flying and started acting like ground troops. He didn’t need me second-guessing him just because I didn’t want to evac first. (235)

Analysis: This excerpt shows MJ’s dedication to her job through her reluctance to evacuate the combat zone. While she is supposed to be first to evacuate out of the combat zone because she is an aircrew member, MJ shows her desire to stay and provide security for the others and be one of the last to go out—an immediate reactionary effect on her. In the end she comes around, though, and realizes her place among the others and that by her protesting to go, it might cause more harm than good in that situation.

MJ20: feeling envious of those on her crew allowed to stay in the combat zone and help get the patients out safely.

I knew him well enough to know exactly what must have happened: He’d seen the PJs struggling to get two patients and a litter across the ridiculous amount of terrain that Pedro 16 had put between them and the wrecked aircraft. Seeing this, Steve had given up his one sure ticket out to help the PJs move the wounded across the open ground under steady Taliban sniper fire. I was furious at him for putting himself in danger, but at the same time, admiration flooded over me. Admiration and worry. I was also jealous that he’d managed to convince the PJs to let him stay while I was being forced to bug out. (237)

Analysis: This excerpt is not long after the previous one, where she had begun to protest having to leave the combat zone so early. Now, on her way out she realizes that another male member of the aircrew, Steve, had somehow managed to stay behind and help out with rescue efforts, just as she had originally wanted to. Her self-admitted jealousy and longing for the battlefield is an evident emotional effect here as she explains her inner feelings about being forced to evacuate. Her wounded condition had nothing to do with having to evacuate. According to protocol in that situation, the PJs are in charge now that they are on the ground; PJs are special operations soldiers who ride along on rescue helicopters in case of an emergency landing like what just happened. Their job is to prioritize the combat evacuation of everyone there: aircrew members first, then the PJs can get the wounded patients out.

MJ21: so happy to be able to put rounds down range.

Finally. *Point of origin!* I wanted to scream victory into the rotor wash. It meant I finally had something to shoot at. I knew TJ couldn't have seen it, though, hanging on to the other skid, with the fuselage blocking his vision. I managed to squeeze off a dozen rounds as the helo lifted off the ground I doubted my shots would be lethal or even accurate at this range. All I could hope for was to get the enemy to duck to give us enough time to take off. If I kicked up enough dust, there was a chance the others might be able to see where my shots were aimed so they could identify a point of origin for their own weapons. (238)

Analysis: This is just a little while after the previous excerpt, when she was getting ready to evacuate. As her helicopters are in the air leaving the battlefield, she sees enemy gunfire towards her and the exiting aircraft. "Finally. *Point of origin!*" expresses MJ's happiness at

being able to engage the enemy, just in the nick of time, seconds away from being off the battlefield. Her effort to engage the enemy is more about bringing attention to the enemy location in hopes of others seeing her gunfire and being able to fire at the enemy positions with the larger weapons from the aircraft. Even on her way off the battlefield, in the last few seconds, MJ is still in the combat mindset, helping to set an example of competence and leadership. As revealed in a later excerpt (MJ25), her shots at the enemy location had a very positive effect of helping keep enemy gunfire at bay while the helicopter took off.

MJ22: after arriving safely back at base, MJ heads to the HQ center to get information on the comrades who had stayed to get the patients out.

Captain . . . Captain, sir, I have to check out these wounds. I can't let you go until I take a look," the medic insisted.

I ignored the "sir" and kept walking, but he continued to shuffle backward in front of me and TJ. Without breaking stride, I switched my rifle to my left hand and showed him my right arm.

"See? I'm fine. Little shrapnel, but it's small, and I can get it out later."

"Okay," he persisted annoyingly, "but I'm going to have to take a look at that leg."

Exasperated, I stopped. If the medic was going to get in my way, he'd better make it quick. I looked him in the eye and dropped my pants right there in the middle of the yard. A dozen or so soldiers had been watching our awkward dance toward the TOC, but until that moment I'm not sure they noticed I was a woman under all of that body armor and helmet. Now they stared openly—at my Hello Kitty panties.

TJ stepped up to the nearest soldier and nearly blew him down. “What the FUCK are YOU looking at?”

All of the men snapped out of their stasis and urgently rediscovered whatever activities they had been doing before my arrival. The medic dropped to his knees, seizing his chance to look at my leg wound.

“Okay—no more bleeding. You’re good to go...ma’am.”

Satisfied that I wasn’t in any immediate mortal danger, the medic let me keep walking, but still he danced alongside us while pulling out some pills.

“A painkiller and some antibiotics,” he said, thrusting the tablets out to me.

(241)

Analysis: First, there’s a gender mix-up as the medic, as he’s required to, does his best to check out MJ’s physical condition, as she is visibly wounded. Her aggressive attitude shows very little concern for her own physical condition as she does her best to push past the medic. A few things about her behavior here. One is that she definitely displays a total disregard for her physical condition, something we often see the macho-man character do in action films. But also, as a reader, there is only one other significant medical encounter that MJ wrote about in her memoir: the sexual assault from Dr. Adams in the Sexual Harassment theme, earlier in this chapter. Based on that experience, that could also be a contributing factor [an effect] to her adamant resistance of letting the medic check her physical condition.

The way that MJ describes taking down her pants for the medic to do his required check has a very confident feel to it. Yes, they are out in public with many other men

nearby, but that doesn't bother her at all. It's not until her pants go down in fact, that anyone else realizes that she is, in fact, a she.

MJ23: MJ standing her ground and speaking the truth during the after-action meeting from her previous mission.

When George and Pedro 16's Aircraft Commander got to the part where we were isolated on the ground, the other AC chimed in and started making claims that I was not willing to let slide.

"Then we all landed to pick you guys up," he said, clearing his throat.

"Wait a minute," I piped up.

Fifty faces turned to me. About five of them already knew what I was going to say, and from the looks on their faces, they were relieved someone was going to call him on his bullshit.

Do it, MJ. Someone has to say something.

"Why did it take you guys so long to pick us up?" I questioned him straight to his face. "Were you dumping gas? I would have thought you guys would have landed right next to us as soon as we shut down."

The AC stared back at me in disbelief. The silence was deafening.

"You weren't on the ground that long," he snapped back.

"Anyway, at that point—"

"No," I interrupted him. "We were. We were there for, like, twenty minutes!"

"I'm sure it felt like that, MJ." He chuckled, as if he were talking to a child. "But it wasn't long at all.

"Intel . . . How long were we on the ground?"

Throughout the entire incident, the intel guys and gals had been listening to the radios and taking note of every single thing that happened, including the times.

“Um, eighteen minutes, Captain,” the intel troop answered sheepishly. It was clear he did not want to get in the middle of this.

“Eighteen minutes.” I nodded confidently. “Okay, so what took eighteen minutes?”

Eighteen minutes was a long fucking time to be sitting on the ground taking fire when perfectly good aircraft was circling above, refusing to land.

“I don’t know,” he said. (250)

Analysis: MJ took a stand here to defend herself regarding the details of events that took place on the battlefield and the other aircraft with them. The discussion taking place in the excerpt above is about Pedro 16, the second helicopter that went together with Pedro 15, MJ and her crew’s helicopter. Because MJ’s aircraft went down, they had called to Pedro 15 to land and help evacuate the patients and crew, which didn’t happen till 18 minutes later—a “long fucking time” to wait on the battlefield, according to MJ. The pilot had claimed that MJ and her crew had not waited long—thus the argument in the excerpt. Basically, there was a disagreement because the Pedro 16 pilot had not promptly landed to support MJ’s crew due to concerns about excess weight from an overload of passengers. But at the debriefing, the pilot downplayed the excess time that MJ and her crew had to wait to get picked up.

While the details of that exact situation may be difficult to follow, the importance of this excerpt is to show MJ speaking up for herself and her crew in a public forum amongst her peers—something difficult to do, and even more so given the nature of MJ as the lone

woman in her unit, among many who may doubt her abilities. She even has the effect of causing the man she's arguing with to be at a loss for words: "I don't know" was his answer to MJ's pointed question.

MJ24: the topic of MJ's shots fired comes up during the debrief.

But George just breezed over the fact that I had been firing and began to ask the room if there were any questions. I couldn't believe it. The debrief was nearly over, and I was about to get away clean. Then one of the Army guys raised his hand.

"Who was it that was firing off of my skid?" he asked.

Shit. I was going to be in so much trouble. I had let my protective instinct for Steve and the others cloud my judgment, and I'd probably be grounded for it. So much for my flying career.

I took a deep breath and meekly raised my hand to the level of my ear.

"Umm, that was me."

"Fuckin' A, that was awesome," he responded with a grin.

"We were out of ammo, and when I saw that muzzle flash, I didn't think we were going to make it outta there. You got their heads down so we could lift. Nice job."

(251)

Analysis: MJ's actions to return fire to the enemy earned her the respect and praise of her peers as an effect, even though she was worried that she was going to be in trouble for her actions. In all, the debriefing was a very positive experience for MJ because she was able to take a stand and voice her side of the debate regarding the Pedro 16 landing incident. Not only did she voice her position, but she was accepted as an equal to her peers. Then, at the end of the meeting, she receives praise for her brave actions to engage the enemy in order

for her fellow aircraft to safely take off from the ground. This was a great moment for MJ because her bravery on the battlefield did not go unnoticed: she received recognition and praise for her actions, which likely had an effect on all those at the meeting about how they perceived women's capabilities in a combat situation.

Summary of Theme

This theme of Just Doing Her Job also had elements of other themes such as Overcoming Stereotypes and Bravado, but I decided to put excerpts here that I felt showed MJ's primary attention in her story-telling to the details associated directly with her job as a pilot. Moreover, these excerpts have described MJ's actions, and the effect of those actions, as a woman in combat—performing her job successfully, with bravery and distinction. For these reasons, this theme of Just Doing Her Job is one of the most important themes because it sets an example for women's capabilities in combat.

MJ's commitment and love for her job is shown well through her retelling. At times readers could imagine that gender had no part in how events played out—such as her actions under fire as a pilot, while at other times the fact of being a woman may have had an effect on the outcome of an event—such as MJ not being able to stay and help evacuate patients on the battlefield while Steve, another aircrew member, was able to stay behind and help.

While this theme of Just Doing Her Job has no strong connections to any research from Chapter II, MJ's memoir, and her career, share some things in common with Lillian Pfluke's narrative. One is that they both express a hard-charging bravado in their personality—as mentioned on p. 82. Also, they both had very successful and prestigious careers that set an example for other military women to follow.

SEMPER FI: CAPT. BLAIR, MARINE CORPS AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICER

Theme Overview

Jane has one theme shared with MJ's narrative analysis and research from the Literature Review, Copying with Stereotypes, and three unique themes: Left Out, Love in War, and Finding Her Place.

Author Background

Jane Blair started her career with the Marine Corps as an enlisted Marine up until the rank of Corporal. She then was commissioned into as an officer and deployed with her aerial reconnaissance unit to Iraq in 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Jane's memoir is centered almost entirely on her deployment to Iraq, detailing the various stages of the operation and the role she played as a second lieutenant in her unit.

Like MJ did in her memoir, Jane makes mention in the preface to her book about her attempts to tell a valid recollection of the events she experienced:

Thanks to all my Marines, my colleagues, and leaders in the Corps- you will always be my tribe, and I am forever devoted to you. Special thanks go out to all the Marines at VMU-1; I hope that I have done justice in portraying our time in Iraq. (xi)

At the beginning of MJ's memoir we saw a similar recognition for the commitment to accuracy by the author. Jane recognizes her fellow Marines that she served with, and her own commitment to retell events as accurately as possible.

Theme1: Coping with Stereotypes

When the U.S. Military was ordered to open up all combat jobs to women in 2016, the Marine Corps was the only service to request an exemption to the policy, directly asking to have their combat jobs remain exclusive to men only. This is important to make note of

because it sets the Marine Corps apart from the other military branches in that they did not agree with the policy to allow women into the Marines' combat jobs. Additionally, the research looked at in Chapter II highlighted some of the common stereotypes that female Marine participants had reported in various studies. Thus, this theme of stereotypes is a major one in Jane's memoir, more than any other theme that came up. The fact that Jane had previously been an enlisted Marine may have served as an advantage to her towards her peers, but the fact of being a second lieutenant, the lowest officer rank, was likely a contributing factor to her being looked at with additional stereotypes.

Jane1: Jane has an interaction with a fellow male Marine officer.

At exactly 0730, Captain Long, one of the S-3 officers who was the convoy leader came around and said, "Hey, Lieutenant, where the hell are the drivers?"

"They are getting the vehicles, sir," I replied.

"Did you tell them to be here at 0800?"

"Yes, I did. There was no one else around, so I made the call."

"You need to learn your role," he said. "I'm in charge, and we needed to leave by 0730."

"There was no one here on time," I responded. "We wouldn't have been able to leave by that time, even if the drivers were still here, because they didn't have the vehicles."

"Before you make a decision again, Lieutenant, you need to ask the people who are in charge." I would have made the point that it's difficult to be in charge when you're not physically there, not to mention lazy as hell, but I decided it might not have gone over in the professional spirit I intended.

Captain Long walked away, cursing my name and mumbling something about Lieutenants. But our flight surgeon, Lieutenant Commander Dave Lambert, had heard the whole thing and approached me. Doc was one of those square-jawed, handsome, doctor types.

“Jane, don’t ever let anyone talk to you like that again. You were in the right.”

“I know I was right, Doc, but he gets all flipped about it.”

“I know you’re the junior officer in the squadron. But he still shouldn’t be talking to you like that. Men need to be cursed back at. Throw a couple of ‘fucks’ and ‘shits’ in there next time, and he’ll fucking shut up quick, because he’s wrong, and he’s just trying to intimidate you. It’s like the apes that puff out their chests to look more intimidating. They’re posturing. Just put the fucker in his place. He wasn’t around in time to let the drivers know, and you did the right thing.”

“So you’re saying if I raised my voice and cursed at him he’d respect me?”

“Fucking A. That’s how men are. Simple. You’d fucking intimidate him, and that’s what he needs. He’d never talk to you like that again, I guarantee you.”

“OK, Doc, but if I get brought in front of the CO for disrespect toward a senior officer, I’m going to blame you!” I said jokingly. (78-79)

Analysis: Jane describes an interaction with her flight surgeon, who supports Jane and gives her advice regarding a conversation she had with Captain Long. Captain Long may have behaved and spoken towards Jane in way that showed his feelings about women in combat, apparently blaming Jane for something that was actually his own responsibility. Lucky for Jane, she has someone in her corner, the flight surgeon, who reassures her and gives her some advice for how to stand her ground with other male Marines. Jane is at a double

disadvantage in that she is a junior officer, a second lieutenant, and a woman. Just being a second lieutenant as a man would be bad enough for her because it's the lowest officer rank, the newbie. Adding being a woman on top of that means that the resentment and stereotypes against her are a compounded effect.

In my literature review, adopting masculinity was a theme that appeared in Sasson-Levy's research with Israeli female soldiers. Many of the Israeli women that the author had interviewed explained having to act and look like men in order to be accepted among their male peers. In this excerpt above, we see Jane getting this kind of *adopting masculinity* advice from the flight surgeon, Doc Lambert. His advice is basically to meet other's aggressive communication with her own aggressive profanity, with confidence as the resulting effect. He suggests that if she is speaking the same language as her male peers, she will be better able to stand her ground and communicate her point.

Jane2: Jane discusses the idea of women in combat with a fellow Marine.

The three vehicles arrived at 0745. Inside, I felt satisfaction knowing that we would have been waiting another half hour had the Captain given them the order when he arrived. As we pulled away from the secured perimeter, we made our weapons condition 1. Doc Lambert sat across from me in our Humvee.

"I don't think females should be in combat," he told me in a matter-of-fact fashion. He loved Socratic dialogue and pushing people's buttons. I wondered if he also loved getting his nose broken.

"I don't think so, either, but here I am. It's not like I had a choice."

“Choice or no choice, most of the females I’ve seen out here are emotional basket cases. You should hear some of the things I do. Women are too emotional. They’re not conditioned for this type of environment.”

“Women are a lot more vocal in their feelings than men are; that’s all. Men express anger, women cry. Same emotion. You think the men are conditioned for this? Wait until the bullets start flying and see how many of your fearless boys wet themselves.” (78-80)

Analysis: Doc Lambert shares his feelings on women in combat with Jane. And he does so in a mature way that invites frank conversation. As Jane notes, “He loved Socratic dialogue and pushing people’s buttons.” So he wasn’t just trying to stake his opinion in the ground, case closed. He appeared to be in dialogue with Jane. Doc Lambert’s major claim is that women are not emotionally suited for a combat environment. Jane’s retort is that no one, man or woman, is ideally suited for combat; both sexes express extreme emotions in response to stress: “Men express anger, women cry. Same emotion.” This is a great opportunity for Jane to engage with other males in her environment over the issue of women in combat—confronting stereotypes head on as the effect of the interaction with Doc Lambert.

Jane also admits to Doc that she also doesn’t think women should be in combat, indicating that it wasn’t her choice to be there. This is interesting to me for two reasons. One, it is very different from MJ’s memoir, which described her in an ongoing fight to get herself into the one job she wanted: a combat rescue pilot. Here with Jane, it seems that she has revealed to us that it was more about the needs of the Marine Corps that led to her ending up in a combat zone. Secondly, Jane seems to be dealing with the issue of women in

combat from a conflicted standpoint. It sounds like she is not opposed to the idea of women being in combat, but just personally doesn't want to be there herself.

Jane3: Jane has an encounter with some male Marines while in garrison, after the conclusion of combat operations.

My mind wandered back to the present, to the hormonally charged infantrymen who were ogling my girls. One, an average-looking Joe Corporal, had the balls to approach them when I turned away.

"Hey, how's it goin' ladies?" he said. "You've gotta excuse me for staring, ladies, but it's been almost three months since we've seen chicks, and I just wanted to talk to say hi and to welcome you all to Iraq. We've been out there for at least a month without anything. By the way, you don't have a clean pair of socks I can have, do you?"

We had been out here just as long as they had, under the same conditions. True, we weren't infantrymen, but we had done everything and gone everywhere they had. Apparently this guy thought we were fresh off the boat. I walked around the vehicle just in time to intercept the sock transaction and said, "What are you doing, Corporal?"

"I'm trying to get a pair of socks," he responded with a complete lack of military courtesy. "We haven't been able to go to the PX in over a month."

"Really, where do you think we're coming from?"

"Uh, I'm not really sure. Kuwait?"

"We've been out there just as long as you have, no PX, no showers.

So you're done. Move. *Now.*"

He looked at me strangely and turned around.

“Oh, and by the way, Corporal...”

“Yeah?”

“I’m an officer, so you better go to your officer and get some training on the proper customs and courtesies for addressing officers.”

“Yes—”

“Unless you want me to do it for you?”

“No, ma’am.”

He walked back toward the LAR vehicles, saying quite audibly to his fellow squad members, “The Lieutenant said no and to fuck off!” I heard them all laughing.”

(206)

Analysis: The attitude and stereotypes from the young male Marines was so severe that they had lost their military bearing—speaking to an officer with no regard for her rank. There were a few different stereotypes at play here. Firstly, the male Marines likely assumed that the women “were fresh off the boat,” not having undergone any of the same conditions as the young men had, when in fact the women had just gone through many of the same conditions as the male Marines. Secondly, the male Marines acted towards the women in a way that displays their stereotypical superior attitude towards them—from two standpoints. First, there is the superior attitude that infantry Marines have over all other Marines due to their significant importance as *tip-of-the-spear* combat troops; secondly, there is a superior attitude they display as male Marines compared to female Marines: this is also a particular issue that we saw in Chapter II, with the female Marine

participants from Bronson's and Vealey's studies, who dealt with significant stereotypes as female Marines.

Jane stood up to the plate and took the initiative to take charge of the situation and put the male Marines in their right place at the bottom of the *chain-of-command-food-chain*. The other women with Jane seemed oblivious of everything going on. Jane described one of them as having flirted with one of the *sock-seeking* male Marines. Thanks to Jane's initiative here, the women were protected from possible advances from the Marines—and the women were able to hold onto their socks, a much needed commodity in their situation—a very tangible effect of Jane's initiative.

Jane4: Jane has a talk with her CO, just following the interaction with the sock Marines from above.

When we got back to the main camp, my CO asked how things went and I gave him a debriefing. I briefly mentioned that the females were getting harassed by the showers.

“Harassed? Come on...tell me what really happened,” he said.

“Well, the young Marines come over and flirt. It's pretty harmless, but they can get pretty disrespectful.”

“Well, Jane, what did you expect? Do what you have to do if they get out of hand, but remember this—”

“Yes, sir?”

“Remember, war has changed them, Jane. They're not quite the polite little gentlemen they used to be. They've been out here for two or three months like we have. But they've probably taken casualties. They may have even killed up close.

They may not have been as lucky as us. Not that it's an excuse for their behavior now, but they're more aggressive now than they've been in their whole life. They're going to do things they've never had the sack to do before, and a lot of it will be wrong. Let them flirt, Jane. It's harmless enough. They're wound up to the extreme, and probably the best thing their leader could do is sit them in a fighting hole until they get bored enough to dull that aggression."

"I guess you're right, sir. I just don't think they realize we've been out here, too. It's frustrating, sir. They see females and automatically think we're straight from Kuwait."

"Probably they don't realize. But you know you've changed, too."

"I have, sir?"

"Oh, yes. Maybe you can't see it, but I do. You've changed a lot since you were in garrison. You don't see how aggressive you are now. We've all changed since we've been out here. Wait until we go back to America. People are going to think we've lost our minds!"

"They won't be right, though."

"They will be right! A civilian doesn't turn every corner expecting to shoot at someone wearing an Iraqi uniform or expect to be gassed at every moment. You can't live with that type of intensity, or people will think you're psychotic."

"I guess so, sir."

"They're going to look at us like we're some intense crazed lunatics.

Trust me, I've seen it before. Coming home won't be the flowery parade you think it will. It will be full of frustration and for a while, you won't feel like you

belong. You'll see. You'll wake up one night because you hear a dog barking down the block, and you'll low crawl to the door, thinking someone's coming to kill you. Then, one day, you'll finally unwind enough that things feel normal once more. Then you'll be able to go out in public again without thinking everyone wants to kill you."

"Kind of like a severe case of culture shock?"

"Exactly. You'll see. Just wait." (207)

Analysis: I think this conversation between Jane and her CO is insightful because he points out various perspectives and stereotypes, which Jane had not thought of before. First, he describes at length the side of the male Marines, and the kind of things they have just gone through in order for Jane to better understand their behaviors from the previous interaction Jane had with them. He also makes it clear "that it's [not] an excuse for their behavior," but he wants Jane to understand the perspective from their standpoint. He also reassures Jane of the importance to take charge: "Do what you have to do if they get out of hand" he says. Also, he talks about their flirting as something insignificant by itself: "Let them flirt, Jane. It's harmless enough." In that way, he is telling Jane to be mindful about the Marines' behavior—as far being able to distinguish and draw the line between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

Next, he points out that Jane, herself a Marine having gone through some of the same experiences as those men, has also been changed as an effect of her time in a combat zone. He describes Jane as having become more aggressive than she was prior to their combat deployment. In way, this may relate back to other examples of adopting masculinity, as Jane conforms—unknowingly in this case—to standard behaviors displayed by Marines in a war zone.

Finally, he relates all of their shared Marine experiences as contrasting with the civilian experience, and the kind of difficulty, as an effect, they will all have once they return to America and attempt to re-socialize into society. The CO has given context to the environment that Jane and he are surrounded by, while he is clear not to excuse the sock Marines' behaviors, and at the same time reminding Jane to always take appropriate action when necessary.

Summary of Theme

Jane had to put up with multiple stereotypes as a female Marine, and also as an officer. There are harsh stereotypes usually held against female Marines; this is echoed by Jane's own account, and going all the way back to the two studies with female Marine participants from the Literature Review.

Dealing with stereotypes was an ongoing struggle for Jane. Working for her was the fact that she took initiative when necessary—such as with the sock Marine incident. And according to her CO, she became naturally more aggressive during her time in combat. Also, she had some clear supporters around her, such as Doc Lambert and the CO of her unit. Overall, Jane stood her ground on all accounts, which can only serve as a positive example to others about how a female Marine can perform in a combat job.

Like the stereotypical view of the ideal Marine not including the female gender—as shown in Brownson's study with female Marine participants, Jane's recollections reveal the same kind of stereotype inside the mind of some her fellow male Marines. For example, in the interaction with the sock Marines, there is no other reasonable conclusion for how those enlisted Marines showed disrespect towards Jane, other than the fact that she is a

woman—and therefore, she doesn't fit into the mental framework of acceptable characteristics of a Marine officer.

Theme2: Left out

Much of Jane's memoir retells her feelings of being isolated from the male leadership in her unit, mostly through what she sees as being actively shut out from leadership meetings and other critical events. But Jane also describes being mentally left out because the ideal Marine, according to the stereotypical view, is the male Marine.

Jane5: Jane recalls the other Marine officers in her unit.

As for the officers in the section, there was First Lieutenant Lisa Bishop, a thin, wispy young woman whose idea of fun was tandem surfing in Los Angeles. She entered competitions with her husband where she would get on his shoulders while they were catching a wave in Malibu. She was sweet but quiet and dead set on getting out of the Corps once her contract was up.

"This place is just not for me. You'll see, women just don't get treated the same." She told me.

The senior officer was Tony Debucher, also a First Lieutenant. From the start, he clearly didn't want me there. After I talked to him for about fifteen minutes, giving him a motivating speech about my background and how I could be an asset to the section, he just shook his head and said, "I'm going to put you down in the supply section because we don't need any help up here. Besides, I don't know where you came from. I wasn't expecting you to arrive; you just popped up on our radar about a week before you checked in. I think two officers is enough. If the CO wants you back up here, we'll discuss it then."

I clenched my jaw and tried to control my rising pulse as rage radiated down my spine. But then I took a breath and felt sorry for him. The fact that Debucher wasn't standing up for me made me think he was one of those unfortunate souls who had forgotten that after mission accomplishment comes troop welfare, and he wasn't taking care of me, one of his Marines. By the grace of God, this misbegotten breed is a minority, but the fickle finger of fate had put one across the desk from me, smiling like he was doing me a favor by putting me away in a warehouse, away from his eye. I couldn't raise too many objections, and I took it because I was only a butter bar and he was a First Lieutenant. So I sucked it up and hoped that the harmony of my universe would eventually reassert itself. (14-15)

Analysis: Jane learns from Lisa Bishop that there appears to be a systemic attitude towards women Marines—again, this is something that has appeared previously in the Literature Review with the three-part stereotype of a *bitch*, *slut* or a *dyke*. Jane's first interaction with Tony Debucher was frustrating for her because she was looked at more as a burden than an asset to the unit. But there wasn't much that she could do in that situation, given her subordinate rank to Debucher. The feelings expressed by Jane, that Debucher "wasn't standing up for [her]" are reminiscent of MJ's feeling towards many of the men she had worked with, some who may have been okay with her being there, at best, but who would not go any further to actively support her presence in any way.

The way Jane describes it, she seems to have no official place in the unit as an effect of the attitudes towards her. Debucher already claimed to have enough officers where they already were, so he assigned her to the supply section, not knowing where else to put her. Debaucher also sounds wary of Jane, as if he doesn't trust her. He claims that he didn't

“know where [she] came from” and goes on to explain how she had suddenly arrived to the unit without notice. This excerpt portrays Jane as physically left out of any primary role in the unit while being looked upon with skeptical eyes from Debucher.

Jane6: Jane expressing her preparations for the first situation meeting for her unit, only to find that she was not included.

In the meantime, I studied the maps, camps, roads, and Iraqi language and culture—anything to increase my odds of surviving over there. The next day, First Lieutenant Debucher gave a brief to the squadron about what our unit could expect once we got to Iraq. He basically pointed to the map and gave a casual snapshot of the area without details. It was the worst brief I had ever heard. I couldn’t hold it in anymore, and I told him so. “I could have helped you prep for that brief if you needed background information, Debucher.”

“Nah, that’s all they need to hear, no need to get technical,” he said.

“That was the most incomplete situation report I’ve heard, and you know I have the background with that area.”

“Who do you think you are? I told you to just stay down in supply. I know what I’m doing, and they don’t need all that cultural shit and regurgitation of enemy positions. No one here even understands that shit. Just stay in your box.” (15)

Analysis: Jane has much valuable knowledge which could help her unit: including her Arabic language skills, Middle Eastern cultural knowledge, and other detailed info from her research into the area; all of that could have made her very helpful to the situation report that was prepared for their fellow Marines. Instead, Debucher chose a more streamlined approach to the meeting, feeling that the Marines did not need a lot of the extra information

that was available. It's clear that Debucher had no regard for any of Jane's expertise, and did not want her to help out with the meeting in any way. Jane describes her frustration as the effect of the treatment towards her as a newcomer to this unit, with skills and knowledge that could be seen as an asset. But rather, Jane is left out from making any positive contributions to the pre-combat briefing.

Jane7: Jane reflects on Congress' decision about women's role in military combat operations, and her unit's reaction to that decision.

All I knew was that I was one of two female officers in my unit. The unit had a total of twelve females being deployed—the rest were in some stage of pregnancy. They had told us we still might not be able to go because we would be working exclusively with 1st Marine Division and its regiments, all ground combat units, all male. Females weren't allowed in ground element units that were regimental level or below, as those units would be in direct combat. Despite this rule, my unit would be moving as a ground maneuver force and would therefore be doing a combat mission, extremely taboo for female Marines. Women weren't supposed to be in combat in the Marine Corps, by order of Congress. Still, my CO had gone to bat for us. He called the other female officer, Lieutenant Bishop, and me into his office.

“Congress says you can't go with us. That's what the Generals told me. I told the Generals who were trying to pull you that we would not be mission capable without the females.”

“What did they say, sir?”

“They understood that we had a very unique unit and hadn't planned for females to be part of the ground war. They said I could take you as far as Kuwait but

no farther. I explained to them once again that without the females in the unit, the squadron couldn't function. But the fight doesn't look good, ladies. But chances are this is an argument that I am going to lose, ladies. Our female flight surgeon has been pulled already and given a new job. Still, I'm going to do everything in my power to take you guys with me all the way. I know you all want to be in the fight as much as the rest of us."

As we were leaving the CO's office, he called me back.

"Hey, Jane..."

"Yes sir?"

"You're back up in the collections section. I want you up there, and I want you to get our Marines savvy with cultural knowledge of the region. I know you used to live over there." (15-16)

Analysis: Jane and Lieutenant Bishop must have felt some sense of being torn—some Marines treat them as an important asset to the unit and are willing to go to bat for women in combat, while at that same time Congress strictly prohibited women from being in combat. There seems to be a lack of consistency to the leadership who support or oppose these female Marines: the highest up, Congress, says no women in combat. But then the more directly overseeing leadership on the ground says, hey, we need and want these women in combat with us, and their absence will leave us as an incapable unit. Finally, at the lowest level of leadership immediately over Jane, Debucher, there is resistance and a feeling that Jane is out of place as an unnecessary member of the unit.

The effect of the entire situation must also be difficult for the Marine leadership as well, such as the CO in the excerpt above: his superiors are telling him that he can't bring

his female Marines along, while he is arguing to them about their necessity to his unit's combat readiness. The CO was also aware of Jane's background being an asset to their unit, and he told her he was going to put her in a place within the unit where she could be utilized as an asset, rather than pushed aside and disregarded as Debucher had done to her.

Jane8: Jane reflects on an experience with a Marine who had refused to salute her.

I'd never even thought about the fact that I was female until some back water, hillbilly Marine decided not to salute me because he "didn't salute female officers." That's when I proceeded to chew some ass, telling him he was living in the wrong century. If he thought I should be wearing a veil and cooking dinner at home, why wasn't he living in Afghanistan?

While I perceived myself as a six-foot, four-inch hard ass, I was in actuality a petite five-foot, four-inch female. But as a Marine, I've got no qualms about living up to the standard that all Marines must. I didn't agree with what Lisa Bishop had said to me. The females were treated the same as men for the most part, as long as they were Marines before they were anything else. (16-17)

Analysis: Jane's experience of being ignored by a male Marine who had "decided not to salute [her] because he 'didn't salute female officers,'" appears to have been one thing that made her realize how different she was from the male Marines—as an effect of the non-saluting Marine's behavior. But, she stood up to the challenge of the situation and set that Marine straight. Then, contrary to what she had heard from Lisa Bishop about how Marines were treated in her new unit, Jane has an opinion that "females were treated the same as men for the most part, as long as they were Marines before they were anything else." This

sounds like she's claiming that a Marine has to put their duties as a Marine above any other personal issues they may have; if they do this, they will be accepted by other Marines as the same.

Jane9: Jane and her fellow female Marines were physically isolated from male Marines by having separate sleeping tents.

Among the other Marines in base camp—all 6,000 of them, 5,947 of whom were male—our tent was referred to as “the palace.” This was the running joke among the males. Since the chow tent was only a couple tents down, lines would form at dawn as hundreds of individuals waited for morning chow. The line extended past the front of our tent, and we would often hear comments.

“That’s that female officer hooch,” one marine would say.

“I don’t know what it is about those officers, man, but the higher the rank, the higher they go up on my scale.”

“It’s the uniforms, I’m telling you, there’s nothing like a woman who outranks you in uniform.” . . .

We were essentially the only females they would see for months—or for however long we were here. Some of the Marines had visions of us prancing around in Victoria’s Secret underwear while primping ourselves . . . The reality was we never really undressed past our physical training gear. We got showers about every three days. We didn’t shave our legs or armpits during the duration of the operation. What was very clear to us was that none of us—not even the single women—had any intention of hooking up with any of them, under any circumstances. Most of us were married, and some of us were dual-spouse military. (43)

Analysis: Having to be separated from all the other Marines by having their own tent was one isolation factor. But the effect of isolation was exasperated by the fact that the location of the female tent being close to the chow hall had created this waiting-line of male Marines who would hang outside the female tent on their way to eat their meal, often opening talking about the female tent as an object of fantasy. The fact of what went on in the female tent was probably very similar, in relation to hygiene, as what went on in the male tent: infrequent showers, wearing the same pair of clothes for days at a time, and sacrifice of non-essential personal hygiene.

Jane10: Jane and her fellow female Marines experience being trapped inside their tent by the presence of naked British men.

A lot of Marines didn't understand what we were going through. But Gunnery Sergeant Raber's husband did. He would often visit us to see how we were holding up. We were glad for his visits, as there were other females also at the breaking point. Many of us were being put in combat roles we hadn't expected, and a few were not comfortable with the idea. We talked about that among ourselves, but we never let our male counterparts know. Just then, the Sergeant Major burst into the tent and belted out, "Listen up, ladies, don't go outside the tent right now!"

"What's going on?"

"The British just moved into the tents across the way."

"So, what's the problem with that?"

"Well, the Brits took over the hygiene area also. They're all stripped down in the open and are scrubbing down their junk in front of everyone!"

"Holy shit, that's disgusting!"

“Yeah, and these aren’t the Royal marines, they’re the fat, nasty wingers. Ladies, trust me, you don’t want to go out there.”

The Brits had hijacked the area where we brushed our teeth and did our hair in the morning. And there was no stopping them. Crossing past the Brits’ tent area, we were always met with the unexpected sight of a naked, grown man lathering up his private parts with soap and water, without shame or discretion. We were horrified. The Brits smiled at us. They seemed to have a different definition of privacy than we did. (43-44)

Analysis: Jane and the other female Marines had found themselves trapped inside their own tent as an effect from some naked Brits being outside the tents taking showers in the open. Although the events from this excerpt above are presented with some sense of humor to them, there is also a sense of real frustration expressed by Jane. Because male and female Marines had to have separate sleep areas and hygiene time, someone had to do the planning to ensure privacy for both sexes; with the female Marines being so few in number, it likely made it difficult stake out their own share of time for bathroom use. As we saw in this excerpt, “the Brits had hijacked the area where [the female Marines] brushed [their] teeth and did [their] hair in the morning.” Luckily the Sergeant Major came into the women’s tent in order to protect them from the sight of “the fat, nasty wingers” taking showers in the open.

Jane also describes another male supporter, Gunnery Sergeant Raber’s husband, who would often come to their tent to check in on them and see how they’re doing, aware of the various difficulties that female Marines had to put up with, due to his wife being a Marine.

Jane11: Jane is excluded from a meeting by Debucher.

Naked Brits were the least of my problems—I was having some issues with my own unit. The senior collections officer, First Lieutenant Debucher, seemed to have hijacked all the work. Not only had I missed meeting after meeting because he lied to me and told me there was nothing going on, but he belittled me in front of the other officers. It was clear to me that Debucher wished I had not come. He was very popular with all the other officers. He'd tell one joke after another and have them all laughing. I got the impression that he was not entirely on board with the idea of women in combat, since I often overheard him talking about women as though they were all crazed, emotional things. As for my Marines, I hadn't seen them for days. After a day or two, it was clear that I was being deliberately left out of the loop. When I would ask Debucher what was happening, he would simply say, "There's nothing to concern yourself with." Lisa didn't seem to mind this as much as me. I wasn't sure what to do about the situation, but I knew I had to do something. That same day, the Gunnery Sergeant from my section came by. He was a well-intentioned Marine, soft-spoken and friendly.

"Ma'am. I came to find you and pass you some word."

"Who sent you?"

"Well, I'm actually coming on my own, because I know . . . well, it seemed that you weren't being included in the meetings."

"Gunny, I realize you're trying to help," I told him, "but let me fight this battle. Thanks for looking out, but I need to go find out for myself." (44-45)

Analysis: Being left out is one thing, but Jane describes more than that; she describes Debucher as having “hijacked all the work . . . and . . . belittled [her] in front of the other officers.” Luckily for her, the Gunnery Sergeant was on her side and had come to pass her word about the meeting she had been excluded from. Jane describes one of the other female Marines, Lisa, as not being very effected from being excluded from the unit meetings.

This excerpt is the most extreme of her experiences being left out. It was to the point that as an effect of being excluded, Jane didn’t even know about the meetings because Debucher was keeping unit information from her. Added to that, she was physically isolated from her Marines, not having seen them for days. Finally, Debucher’s dismissing attitude toward Jane whenever she inquired about their unit meetings likely acted as a deterrent for her to find get useful information from him.

Jane12: Jane decides to take matters into her own hands.

I was furious. My blood boiled at the thought that Lieutenant Debucher was doing this to me again. Not only was it belittling to have a subordinate passing word, but to be deliberately left out of the loop because of some idiot’s ego was infuriating. I was certainly not going to fight a war with another Lieutenant who was my boss but whom I couldn’t trust. I marched over to the male officers’ tent and asked to speak to the Lieutenant. Only Captain Hamill, one of the flight commanders, was there.

“He’s not here, Lieutenant Blair.”

“Do you know where he went, sir?”

“He went to a division collections meeting. Shouldn’t you be there?”

“If I knew about it, I would be, sir.” I had no choice but to go to the XO, the next in my chain of command, but he had gone, too. I was waiting by the officers’ tent when the CO approached me.

“What’s going on, Jane?”

“Sir, I’m waiting for the XO.”

“He won’t be back until tonight. Jane, what’s going on? I’m getting that ‘look.’”

“Sir, I don’t want to go above the chain of command.”

“There’s nothing the XO and I wouldn’t discuss, so you might as well tell me.”

I reluctantly spoke.

“Sir, I know I’m new to the squadron, but I don’t really feel like one of the officers yet. I’m not getting any word and have been left out of almost everything. I don’t even know where my Marines are because the Lieutenant senior to me won’t tell me. I feel like I’m deliberately being kept out of the loop. Sir, I don’t want to say that it’s because I’m a female, but it’s happening to Lisa, too.”

The CO looked down and thought about it for a minute.

“Let me talk to the Lieutenant and the XO and see what I find out. In the meantime, you are an officer in this squadron, and there is no reason for you to be left out. However, I fully expect you to be at our meetings here every night. If you come by and spend some time with the officers, they will get to know you, and you won’t feel left out anymore. Come and play cards with us and get to know some of them. If anyone leaves you out of the loop, it will have to be in front of all of us. No one can hide in the daylight. Put that in your leadership book, Jane.” (45-46)

Analysis: Jane finds support from the CO as an effect of discussing with him about the matter of her being left out of the unit's meetings. His advice to Jane is reassuring in that he not only tells her that he will discuss the matter with Debucher and that as a Marine officer, "there is no reason for [her] to be left out," but he also gives her a little inside tip, for how to help become a more integrated member of their unit—social interaction through playing cards with the other Marines. A simple kind of activity, but something that only *insiders* of their unit are able to participate in, and an activity that she has been prohibited from participating in because she has been kept out of all the meetings.

Another interesting point that the CO made was if Jane took his advice and spent some time hanging out in the officers' tent, Debucher would have a much more difficult time excluding her from activities because she would already be present in the tent. As a result, the public forum of the officers' tent would make it hard for Debucher to get away with actively excluding Jane and Lt. Bishop.

Jane13: Jane shows up to the male tent to play cards and assimilate herself with her fellow male Marines.

Although the CO never told me if the Lieutenant had intentionally left me out of the loop, I showed up at the male officers' tent as he had suggested. Lisa refused to go, though. I went by myself to play cards. While playing, the men passed the word. The CO was right. All the officers in each section ran through their tasking list for the day. I noticed Debucher ignored me, pretending I wasn't there. Despite this, I had gotten word from the top, and no one could interfere with that. I did this every night. Because of the change, I also got to know what the Marines in my section were doing and was finally participating in the upcoming missions with them. Things

were starting to get better, but I still couldn't help feeling like there was some premeditated animosity against me, for what reason I couldn't guess. (46)

Analysis: Things got better and worse for Jane in the excerpt from above. Things got better because she started going to the meetings and hanging out and participating with the other Marines in her unit—this is a noticeable improvement from before when she was shut out from the meetings. But as an effect of actually being present at the meetings, now Debucher was ignoring her, “pretending [she] wasn't there” during the meetings. Also, Jane describes a “feeling like there was some premeditated animosity against [her]” during the meeting. Remembering back to her description of what she knows about Debucher always making jokes and “talking about women as though they were all crazed, emotional things,” it seems likely that with Jane at the meetings, Debucher was not able to make use of usual form of entertainment for his men, and he probably had some resentment towards Jane being at the meeting.

Jane14: Jane reflecting on the new female Marines' tent in garrison after having spent some time living out of the back of five-ton truck.

Our camp had been made more permanent, and huge olive-drab canvas tents were erected, each meant to hold about thirty personnel. I was ordered to move into a tent designated as the “female tent,” which, sadly, forced me out of my solitude in the topless five-ton truck. I had actually enjoyed my hours of peace in the warmth of my sleeping bag and Gor-Tex bivy sack, which had kept me dry. Now I had nowhere to escape, to drown myself in the pages of my journal or to think quietly about this strange state of being. In the female tent, one of the Marines, a female Corporal named Kassie Council, had set up a cot for me in the corner.

“Ma’am, we set up a spot for you. We put it in the corner so we wouldn’t bother you so much with our noise.”

I was grateful, but I was not looking forward to sharing a tent with a bunch of enlisted females. But it could have been worse. The officers’ tent was full of rivalries, and men were such dirty slobs. Word was that Debucher was doing some kind of puppet show with finger bunnies and clothespins attached to genitalia, but I never asked for details. At least the women cleaned up after themselves. While I felt distanced and segregated from the officers, I didn’t really want to hear them talk about women, see them in their skivvies, or see the “puppet shows.” The mere thought weirded me out. (213)

Analysis: As a female Marine officer in her new women’s tent, Jane experiences being left out in two different ways: as a woman among men in her unit, and as an officer among enlisted Marines. So, on the one hand she is among her peers because she moved into the tent with other female Marines. But these new Marines she shares the tent with are enlisted Marines—a group apart from the officers in the unit. That being said, Jane expresses her relief to not having to share space among the male officers’ tent because “men were such dirty slobs,” and she had heard of strange antics that went on with Debucher and the other officers. This compiled isolation among her peers created the effect of making Jane long for the more simple isolation of being by herself in the back of a truck.

Summary of Theme

Jane expresses being left out in multiple ways. First, there are all the meetings that she missed on account of Debucher doing what he could to exclude her, even in light of her potential contributions to meetings. Then, because of the important social interactions that

take place at the meetings, such as playing cards, Jane was excluded from any kind of bonding that could take place with her fellow Marines. Finally, because the female Marines have to be in their own tent, Jane is physically left out from the other Marines, including the other Marine officers.

Through all of her experiences though, she did have supporters who were there to help. From the CO who advised Jane about how to integrate with other male Marines by joining them for card games, to the Gunnery Sergeant who had stopped by her tent to pass her word about the meetings she had missed. And once Jane started going to the unit meetings, the effect was that she was able to start forming relationships with her Marines and better understood what was happening in her unit.

Theme3: Love in War

Jane's memoir includes a major theme based on her reflections of her relationship with her husband, who is a Marine officer in an accompanying unit on the same deployment as Jane. Because her husband is in a different unit and deploys to Iraq ahead of Jane's unit, Jane is separated from her husband for a large part of the deployment, not knowing many details about her husband's whereabouts or safety. This causes Jane distress and longing as she keeps the hope alive that her husband has not been killed in combat.

Jane15: Jane and her husband together on base, prior to being deployed to Iraq.

Jane's husband informs her that his unit is having a formation on base.

"My unit is having an all-hands formation back at the base. It's probably only a recall drill for accountability. We're supposed to bring our gear to stage it just in case we get the call to go."

"Are you sure it's just a drill?"

“They didn’t say.”

“Do you want me to come?”

“You might as well, just in case.”

It wasn’t a drill. They were actually leaving. My heart hit the deck. His CO had gotten the call just an hour prior, and there was an extra plane available to transport troops to Kuwait. They asked the base which units were ready to leave, and Peter’s unit, the artillery unit that would support all of 7th Marines, made the list. Within five hours of that call, they were boarding the white buses to the airfield . . . I watched my husband go off to war as a disciplined Marine would, outwardly stoic, inwardly crumbling. As a wife, holding back tears, I wondered when the man I loved would return to me. Before he stepped on the bus, he handed me a small, sealed manila envelope.

“If I die,” he said, “open it.” He kissed me good-bye one last time and left. (9)

Analysis: Jane has an interesting role as both a Marine and a Marine’s wife. The description above of watching her husband go off to war is followed not much long afterwards by Jane herself going off to the same war as her husband. She explains her “outwardly stoic, inwardly crumbling” composure as the effect of seeing her husband leave. So, instead of stashing away Peter’s letter safely in a drawer somewhere, she will soon be taking that letter with her to the battlefield.

Jane16: reflecting on her marriage, just before deploying to Iraq.

When I first joined, I was single and unafraid of anything life put in my way.

Ironically, the four years I had spent in the Corps had changed me, and I had grown more cautious. And then, for God’s sake, only two months ago I had gotten married! I

was a newlywed without my husband. A bride still, on a honeymoon alone in Iraq spent shivering, pointing my M16 downrange, ready to kill anything. Pretty freaking romantic. I thought back on my happy life and wondered if I was really prepared to die. I thought about my life while I sat there trembling. I laughed. “I’ve got no choice now—to live or die,” I thought. “I just have to survive and keep my Marines safe as best I can.” (107)

Analysis: Jane has ended up in a unique place to be a newlywed—a Middle Eastern combat zone. But her priorities are expressed when she describes her choice “to live or die.” She knows that her duty as a Marine officer is to look out for the safety of her fellow Marines. While her love and worry for her husband is a major emotional effect at this point in her memoir, it is clear from this excerpt that she is putting her duty as a Marine at the forefront.

Jane17: while deployed in Iraq, Jane gets a letter from her husband, Peter.

Mail had also come for the first time—finally—and I was handed a letter from Peter. I ripped it open. It was dated 14 March, before the war kicked off. The letter read:

Have I mentioned yet that I love you? I do, you know, with all my heart and soul. I cannot wait until the day when we can resume a normal life and put this nonsense into dim and distant memory. Let's find a little corner of the world, you and me, that we can carve our lives out of and be happy together. I have many ambitions and aspirations, but my greatest one is to live my life with you, my wife. What do you say? Sound good? It does to me. I miss you, baby, and live only to hold you in my arms again.

All my love, your husband,

Peter (176)

Analysis: There she is as a newlywed female Marine officer with her Marine husband somewhere around her on the same battlefield. Although this letter was no indication that Peter was in fact safe (it was mailed before leaving for combat), it surely had a comforting effect on her and gave her some motivation to stay alive and reunite with her husband. Moreover, amidst all of Jane's struggles in her unit, receiving a love letter from her husband was probably a welcome counter-balance to the ongoing chaos around her.

Jane18: finding time to spend with her husband, back in garrison.

Late at night, I sneaked into Peter's tent to spend the night. Only the officers had private tents, and the enlisted marines shared tents with one or two others. We didn't have tents in my unit; I usually slept in the bed of my truck. So this night, from inside his tent we listened to his Marines talk about their wishes and dreams. They didn't know I could hear them. I heard men's uninhibited talk for the first time in my life, and Peter and I found ourselves suppressing giggles as his marines took turns talking about masturbating. (227)

Analysis: This excerpt is after Jane and her husband's Marines had completed their combat missions, but they were still deployed in a combat zone, waiting to return home. This is a special moment that Jane is able to *steal* with her husband. Also, because she is eavesdropping on the other male Marines, as an effect, it gives her a real first-hand understanding of the kind of conversations that these Marines have.

Summary of Theme

Compared with all of Jane's other themes, and those of MJ's in the previous section, this Love in War theme is one of a kind. Having her Marine husband on the same battlefield

with her gave Jane a unique combat experience compared to most others who have their loved ones waiting for them back in the States. She had the advantage of meeting with him and knowing he was safe long before she would be able to hear from him from the safety of America. Also, being an officer with her Marine husband in the vicinity likely had a positive effect of acting as a buffer to incidents of sexual harassment, which Jane did not mention at all in her memoir.

Theme4: Finding Her Place

Among all the negatives that Jane experienced, she also expressed times when she was able to contribute her skills to the success of her unit. Therefore, like the Just Doing Her Job theme from MJ's analysis, this theme is important because it highlights that when it comes time to actually perform her job in combat, Jane does fit into her unit as an integral member. This is in spite of all the negative things happening towards her, including being left out by her direct superior officer, Debucher.

Jane19: utilizing her Arabic language skills on the battlefield.

It had been almost eleven years since I had to speak Egyptian Arabic, so I was a little rusty. The whole squadron was watching with their M16s pointed in my direction. In the panic, I tried to come up with a plan. Holding my arm out straight ahead, I waved it up and down, palm facing down. That was the hand signal to stop in Iraq. The vehicle had now come to a halt in front of me.

I seemed to have instantaneously forgotten every Arabic word I once knew. I had to dig up something. The word I screamed out was "Yallah!" which means "come here" or "let's go." In not so many words, I told them to kneel down in front of me and put their hands on their heads. I realized later that making them kneel indicated

to them that they were about to be executed, as the Ba'ath party members used this position for executions. But they mirrored me anyway. Shit, I was fucking this up. There were eight disheveled Iraqi men in front of me now . . .

As soon as I had calmed them down, I realized they were staring at me, and it dawned on me that they probably thought it was strange that I was a female. One of the younger ones, a man in his late twenties, looked at me in amazement. I said to them, "Everything's good" . . .

In the meantime, one of the medics walked over to the vehicle to inspect the medicine and was carrying some things away. I shouted over to him, "Hey, don't do that. Bring it back to the vehicle. The rules of engagement say not to remove anything from the vehicles because they'll think you're stealing it." The Iraqi men seemed pretty shocked, as they had never seen a female ordering men around before. They smiled and laughed to themselves . . .

The man in black, speaking for the group, replied in Arabic, "Good Arabic, thank you, peace to you." They all held their hands over their hearts in gratitude. Corporal Valois, who had been near me, in the prone position, covering me the whole time, looked at me and asked, "What did they say, ma'am?"

"They like my Arabic, and they were surprised I was a female!"

"Ma'am, that was really awesome."

"Thanks for covering me," I told him. (116-118)

Analysis: No one can say exactly what would have happened if Jane's unit had been forced to confront the situation from above without the help of Jane's Arabic language skills. But it is clear from the excerpt above that Jane created very positive effects, and was an asset to

her unit when confronted with having to search a bus full of Iraqi men in the desert. Not only did her language skills contribute to unit success, but also her tact and decision making skills as well; she knew and remembered that the current “rules of engagement say not to remove anything from the vehicles because they’ll think you’re stealing it.” So, she told the other Marines not to remove items from the men’s bus. It’s likely that this contributed to the good rapport and trust that developed between Jane, the Marines, and the Iraqi men on the bus.

Thinking back to an earlier excerpt where Debucher had excluded Jane from helping give one of their unit’s pre-mission briefing, the knowledge that Jane displays in this excerpt is exactly the kind of cultural info that would have been useful to teach other Marines prior to going into combat. Simple commands, things to avoid doing, are all helpful parts of preparing for common battlefield situations such as taking enemy POWs.

Jane20: engaging the enemy via assistance from a remote piloted Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV).

As we orbited above, we got notice that rounds were about to impact. Then it happened: splash!

Rings of artillery rounds danced on the ground, hitting the enemy battery squarely. Large plumes of smoke obfuscated the ground area. With only one adjustment, we fired for effect. Like a fireworks display, impact after impact flashed in the target area in a devastatingly beautiful way. I looked on in both fascination and horror.

“End of mission, record as target, stand by for BDA,” I typed dispassionately.

As the artillery smoke cleared, dozens of dead bodies lay lifeless by the trails of the guns. As unreal as first it seemed, I had just initiated fire on these Iraqis. The bodies lay motionless by the destroyed gun tubes. I looked around at the Marines who were cheering, but I didn't feel anything. I just looked at the screen and the tiny black-and-white features of the enemy. Nothing was left of the battery. These bodies were crumpled around the site because I had called in the target. It had been effortless. In one instant, I had become their executioner. (151)

Analysis: This is an important moment for Jane because in it she is fully contributing to the combat success of her unit and likewise to the entire battle she was participating in. While earlier in her deployment she was excluded from meetings with her fellow Marines, when it comes time to actually perform on the battlefield, she was not excluded whatsoever. As her fellow Marines cheer around her at the success of the mission, the direct effect of Jane's actions—and they cheer without regard to the gender of who just took down their targets.

Jane21: Jane reflecting on her combat duties as a Marine.

I was glad we had not yet been shot at. From my perspective, the best option would be if we could accomplish the mission without ever firing a round. After all, we were supposed to be liberating the Iraqi people, not killing them. Yes, the Ba'ath party members were all worthy of a fate worse than death, but the fewer Marines that fell into harm's way, the better. It was about what essential risks were necessary for Marines to accomplish the mission, not how many Iraqis we could kill in the process. Don't get me wrong—I was no pacifist; I just didn't want to see this thing escalate into Islamic jihad because some Private got trigger-happy and killed innocent children. Nor did I want to see my brothers in arms lured into an ambush. These

were not just Marines; the Marines who were leading this fight for Imperial MEF were some of my best friends in the world. The 250 Lieutenants with whom I went through officer training were spread out all over the units on the front line. This was our war, so we should at least try to do things right. (154)

Analysis: This is an interesting excerpt because it shows the high level of professionalism that Jane has as a Marine. While Marines may at times suffer from negative stereotypes about their lack of intelligence or compassion, Jane overturns both of those assumptions here. She explains her willingness to complete her combat unit's mission with the least amount of force necessary—an effective strategy to minimize collateral damage and wasting of resources, while maximizing compassion and conservation of resources. That kind of strategy is also extremely helpful in winning support of indigenous forces in and around the warzone as a direct and tangible effect.

Jane22: having a conversation with a fellow male Marine, the Sergeant Major of her unit.

I was walking back from talking to my Marines when Sergeant Major Rew walked up to me with his usual John Wayne gait and said, “Hey, ma’am, I’ve been meaning to tell you something for a while.”

“What’s going on, Sergeant Major?” He got a twinkle in his eye and smirked before speaking.

“You know, I come from the grunts and was a drill instructor for some years. When my buddies heard I was going to the wing, they all made fun of me. They said, ‘Oh God, Rew, I hope you have females in your unit, because it’s messed up that they’re in the Corps to begin with—and since you’re now all messed up, it’s only

right that you get them.’ They gave me a real freakin’ hard time. So when I came to this unit, I had this impression that female Marines were going to be all jacked up. For the first year, all I wanted to do was transfer out. But the staff changed and we got a great CO, but when we got deployed I was really worried about the ten females. I thought, ‘What kind of drama are they gonna put us through out there?’ I had my worries, trust me. You know, when we had our anthrax shots, things changed—my perspective changed.” He paused again and took off his cover for a moment to scratch his hair.

“In the grunt unit I was in before, a lot of the men refused to get their shot. Many of them made a lot of fuss. It’s strange, but when we got our shots—with the females there right beside the males in line—not a single one of the men complained. It was amazing. It was as if they knew their manhood was at stake, as though the females made them braver. And then out here, I’ve noticed no difference with the females. There hasn’t been a problem. In fact, the females seem to give the men no excuse for backing out or being afraid. They make everything work better; they just balance things out.” (216)

Analysis: Jane has an inspiring conversation with the Sergeant Major in this excerpt. He explains his observations about female Marines in the unit compared to his assumptions about women before actually working in the unit. The Sergeant Major presents an interesting idea about the chemistry of men and women—usually a point or concern—actually working as a potential enhancer of women and men working alongside each other. Basically put, he explains it as the presence of women forcing men to be at their best, “as if they knew their manhood was at stake.” One example he gives is of the men getting shots—

always a time to protest and complain when the Sergeant Major had been in an all-male unit. When he observed the men in his current unit taking their shots—with women present—they had a higher level of professionalism and “not a single one of the men complained.” This is an interesting point about the potential of female Marines indirectly and unknowingly enhancing the bravery of the male Marines around them. Perhaps there is a potential enhancing effect on morale that each gender has on each other in a combat environment—striving to present a strong professional appearance to the opposite sex.

Jane23: Jane reflects on her deployment, just prior to going back home with her unit.

I looked across to that empty distance where my husband had been only a couple weeks earlier. We all watched and waited, too hot to be productive as the oppressive sun moved higher in the sky. Lisa hung out by herself most days and talked to me less and less. Debucher spent his time chatting with some of the Staff NCOs, and I also saw him less and less. Despite this, I was finding my place among the officers and enlisted in the unit, and the officers were beginning to accept me into the fold.

Although I had bonded with the officers, it was still not enough to dampen my hopes of returning home. (234)

Analysis: After all of Jane’s negative experiences being left out of meetings, avoiding naked Brits and such, in the aftermath of her battlefield experiences she expresses a feeling of inclusion with her fellow male Marines. As she puts it, “I was finding my place among the officers and enlisted in the unit, and the officers were beginning to accept me into the fold.”

All the positive bonding she had experienced there on the battlefield was contrasted with her “hopes of returning home” and to be reunited with her husband.

Jane left the description of her time on the battlefield with a high note. She had stuck through it all and had patience and perseverance. Things did change, conditions did get better as an effect of Jane’s ongoing positive action. With the help of her own actions and the support of key Marines around her, she found her place as a female Marine officer in her unit.

Summary of Theme

Jane finally found her place among her fellow Marines. She had several obstacles to overcome along the way, but she also had factors working in her favor that contributed positive effects. First, Jane’s personality, as she describes it, is pretty cool under pressure—she keeps a level head, even in very stressful situations, and is able to think clearly and make good decisions. This *confident independent nature* was also apparent in previous parts of Jane’s memoir where she describes traveling through the Mid-East on her own—not included here because they weren’t relevant to this study. Secondly, she has special skills such as Middle Eastern cultural knowledge and her Arabic language ability, which were contributing factors to her unit’s success. Finally, despite the male Marines who were not supportive of Jane or the other female Marines, there were many male Marines, including very high ranking ones, who were very supportive of Jane and the overall idea of women in combat.

CHAPTER V
POLITICAL STRIFE

INTRODUCTION

In this section, two opposing sides are looked at from the viewpoint of military veterans and civilians expressing themselves in writing through news publications such as *The New York Times* and *The American Conservative*. Articles were carefully picked to represent major arguments from each side, both for and against the idea of women in combat. There were two specific criteria I used to choose articles. First, I was looking for bias, meaning that I was looking for articles in publications known for their liberal or conservative leaning; articles about reasons women should not be in combat came from known conservative publications, and articles in support of the idea came from known liberal publications. Secondly, I wanted large, well-known publications with an established reputation and credibility amongst their readers.

According to a Pew report, “America's partisan divide is well-illustrated by which news outlets people stick to” (Engel). For example, according to that same Pew report, *The New York Times* is in the second most liberal category, behind only *The New Yorker* and *Slate* (Engel). This finding also underscores the “stark ideological differences” (Mitchell et al.) represented in conservative or liberal news outlets, as well as how much readers come to trust a particular news source (Mitchell et al.).

As mentioned earlier in Chapter III, my focus on each specific claim in this chapter was based on two factors: first, the argument about women’s physical capabilities was a major sub-theme in Zeigler and Gunderson’s research, and has remained a major issue in the current debate—therefore, it was chosen as a major claim. Secondly, the remaining

claims were based on careful attention to the contemporary issue of women in combat through popular news media over the course of several years, from 2013-2017.

GOALS

This chapter has significantly different goals from the previous chapter that provided a narrative analysis of two memoirs from women in combat; there, the focus was on highlighting themes that occurred through each memoir with a goal to pragmatically look at how those themes were represented in each memoir. Looking for themes is the one shared goal between this chapter and the previous one. Articles herein were specifically picked for their representation of a major theme either for or against the idea of women in combat. While the previous chapter aimed to address my first research question, this chapter aims to answer the second question:

2. What are the major arguments being made for and against the issue of women in combat, and how are those arguments supported?

This question will be answered by pragmatically analyzing how each claim is supported by article authors as well as commenters who have posted their statements in response to each article—with a focus on observable pragmatic effects in the text. This combination of the article authors and the public discourse that followed each article provides the lively exchange of ideas that serves as the source for uncovering how each claim is backed up by its proponents.

BIAS AND FAIR REPRESENTATION OF IDEAS

A pragmatic approach to the analysis in this section is well-suited to my goal of presenting and analyzing information on the original author's terms—and from the political viewpoint the author is coming from. As stated earlier in this dissertation, according to a pragmatic

literary theory, “what a text means and what its author intends it to mean are identical” (Knapps and Michael 19). In other words, in this particular to this section of data in Chapter IV, the arguments from each side of the debate are presented in the language of the original authors, without any additional interpretation of what their use of language might mean to someone other than the original author.

This entire chapter is fraught with extreme bias in every single article excerpt and user comment presented. For that reason my intention herein should be clearly stated: *my job in this chapter is so present an equally fair look at the arguments being made without trying to discredit or reinforce any one idea or argument—that is entirely the readers’ job.* This is also entirely in-line with the principles of narrative research, as discussed in Chapter I, which aim to give credibility and authenticity to the authors and their stories. Moreover, the reader would be unable to develop their own independent ideas if I showed favor for one claim or another.

Along these same lines, it is important to keep this mind as the second research question is addressed. In highlighting how people for and against women in combat are supporting their claims, it is entirely *not my intent* to provide a critical analysis of how they are supporting their claims—again, that is not anywhere within the goal of this dissertation. By uncovering each side’s claims, and how they support those claims, *the reader* is then in the perfect position of having a good deal of information at their disposal, without the provider—me—trying to show favor either way. Then, that reader is in a position to do further research into the various sources of support highlighted herein and ultimately develop their own stance on this topic.

OKAY, GET OVER IT. THE BAN HAS BEEN LIFTED—WOMEN ARE DOING THIS!

This section will cover discourse from those in support of women in combat. Excerpts from articles and their public comments are presented via two major claims that presented themselves as themes throughout online review of articles.

Claim 1: Women Are Able to Meet the Exact Same Training Standards Already in Place for Men.

This claim is based on the idea that, if women can pass the unaltered training standards that already exist for any given military job, then they should be deemed fully qualified just as a male applicant would. This is a significant claim because the individual training courses that exist for each military job are the primary means of evaluating candidates for those positions.

Excerpt 1: “Testing a Few Good Women for Combat.”¹⁵

This excerpt is from a Marine combat veteran describing a large-scale experiment conducted by the Marine Corps in order to evaluate the combat effectiveness of Marine integrated combat units.

Over the next three months, trainers will be collecting more data as the Marines run through simulated combat scenarios, including live-fire movement to contact and pulling heavy crash test dummies from vehicles. GPS will track each Marine’s position, weapon-mounted sensors will count shots fired, and wired targets will record the timing of each bullet, so that researchers can triangulate who fired where and when. Heart rate monitors will measure individual Marines’ physical exertion in

¹⁵ Fazio, Teresa. “Testing a Few Good Women for Combat.” New York Times 19 March 2015.

real time; subsequent after-action surveys and cortisol swabs will match the Marines' reported efforts to their actual physiological states . . .

The aim, Dr. Allison said, "is to establish gender-neutral characteristics that can predict safe and successful completion of ground combat tactical training and tasks." If remediation is necessary for subsets of the population, she said, "targeted physical training may aim to increase overall force readiness and resiliency." In other words, smaller female Marines might need additional physical training to prepare for inclusion into combat arms specialties. But so might short, slender men. Targeted training would increase the probability that more female Marines could fill combat arms roles, and could help the corps comply with federally mandated gender integration.

But Dr. Allison also warned that "the load is the same regardless of the size of the person carrying or moving the load," and "Marines of smaller stature may find difficulty.

This is consistent with my experience; I am 5-foot-1 and 118 pounds. Marching 20 miles in 80 pounds of gear was more difficult for me than for my bigger comrades, but not impossible. I gained confidence from my stay in Twentynine Palms that carried me through gender-integrated basic officer training. I was encouraged that although the percentage of women was small, we could integrate as much as possible if we performed to the same standards. After all, years later, no one cared that I was a woman when our battalion convoyed from Kuwait into Iraq. (Fazio)

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article¹⁶

1. I do not understand why we would need to test the physiological capacities of women. Just look at the results of any hundred miles race or even marathons and you see that statistically women are as capable as men. Yes they are, on an average, a bit slower. That gap has come down over the years and will further come down purely due to women taking up the sports in greater number. Simple probability analysis shows that. Sure it is harder for smaller persons to carry heavy weights. But that is equally true for men. Perhaps the marines should study to distribute the various tasks among its workforce in a more efficient way. Lighter persons by definition have a probabilistically higher agility.
2. I applaud the military for taking the lead to demonstrate they can operate under the most inclusive policies -- they have a history of doing so. As these well-trained young men and women come out of the military, they won't think twice about women performing any other roles they might come across in the other spheres of their lives -- especially at work.
3. I applaud this effort. I was an infantryman in combat in Vietnam in 1970 and I have long been a proponent of allowing women to perform in combat roles, even in mixed-gender units. I was surprised, but pleased, to find that that was the direction. As the author notes, physical strength is an issue for each individual. There may be women who can't handle the load, but the same is true of men. Women have also long demonstrated their skill with weapons. Some of the most accomplished snipers

¹⁶ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The New York Times' At War blog column immediately following "Testing a Few Good Women" article.

in history were Russian women during World War II. But the primary issue is dealing with the stresses of combat - being able to contain your fear, remain focused, clear thinking and outwardly calm and willing to expose yourself to danger when necessary. No one really knows how they'll do till that moment comes. I've seen men who couldn't do it, but most did. My intuition is that women will do at least as well in that regard and that's what really matters. In a perfect world, we would never find out - never send troops into close combat again. But we don't live in a perfect world and so someday the occasion will probably arise. As unfortunate as that circumstance may be, it will at least serve in some measure to advance the cause of gender equality. I am aware that there is at least a measure of automatic respect that comes with being a combat veteran. I would be inordinately pleased to see some men I know encounter a female combat veteran.

Analysis: Teresa Fazio's article in the *New York Times* highlights the biggest claim of proponents for women in combat: women can meet the same training standards as men; while the number of women may be far fewer than men who try out for these jobs, there is no fair reason to restrict potentially qualified women from military combat jobs. Even if the number who make it through are very few, those very few should be offered a chance just like any man who makes it through the same evaluation.

Fazio gets to the support for her claims at the end of the article, where she brings up her own experiences as a Marine "Marching 20 miles in 80 pounds of gear was more difficult for me than for my bigger comrades, but not impossible." *Not impossible* is the key to her claim as the kinds of rigorous training she underwent was undoubtedly challenging and exhausting for a number of men as well. Commenter #1 remarked,

Sure it is harder for smaller persons to carry heavy weights. But that is equally true for men. Perhaps the marines should study to distribute the various tasks among its workforce in a more efficient way. Lighter persons by definition have a probabilistically [sic] higher agility.

This comment highlights the variable body types among trainees, of both genders. A woman with a smaller and weaker physique is at the same kind of disadvantage of a man who has to compete against stronger and more physically capable men. The comment from #1 highlights the importance of properly utilizing resources, i.e. take advantage of each person's strengths and help compensate for their weaknesses. The comment from #3 reiterates that point with his comment: "There may be women who can't handle the load, but the same is true of men." He also makes note of women's potential advantage of being able to obtain strong expertise with weapons.

This article and its commenters highlight that there is always variation among body types and physical capabilities—there will always be those who are stronger or weaker, or faster or slower than someone else. These excerpts also present the idea that the fairest way to provide military opportunity is to have one fair standard to use; the resulting effect is that *any person* who meets that standards qualified for the job and able to work in that field.

Excerpt 2: "Make the Standards for Male and Female Marines Equal."¹⁷

This excerpt is from a Marine combat veteran reiterating the need for unified physical training standards within the Marine Corps in order to provide a fair playing field.

¹⁷ Germano, Kate. "Make the Standards for Male and Female Marines Equal." New York Times 20 August 2015.

The majority of data being collected to support opening combat roles to women is based on physiology, physical endurance and strength. However, over the the [sic] past five years or so, the women being tested were recruited under different sets of expectations and performance standards from the men. For instance, men perform pull-ups and women do the flexed arm hang. Those standards are simply too different to measure strength and they set women up to fail in the combat integration tests, which then allows the Marine Corps to say that women aren't up to the challenges of combat.

Until we acknowledge the elephant in the room and stop lowering expectations for female performance and conduct, the data will continue to demonstrate why women should not be allowed in these new combat roles. We simply can't allow such an easy out for the military. (Germano)

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article¹⁸

1. As a woman who has out worked, out hiked, out shot, and out 'toughed it out' more than a handful of men, I welcome Germano's ideas for Marines. We see differences between the sexes because we are told to, not because they exist across the board. Yes, some women are weaker physically than some men. But some women, myself included, are stronger than many men and there is no reason we should not be allowed to compete on a level playing field. I'm not some hulking amazon, by the way, just a fit, strong minded person who has grit.

¹⁸ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The New York Times' Room for Debate column immediately following the "Make the Standards" article.

2. If a woman meets the physical and proficiency standards to do a job then that job should be open to her.

As an airborne infantry officer and a combat veteran (Vietnam, '71), 40 years ago I would have had my doubts. Since then, I have worked with many women (including some former airborne NCOs and pilots) for whom I have the greatest respect and who have my unqualified confidence. I can think of male infantry enlisted and commissioned personnel about whom I would have said "I'll give you six of these guys for two of those women in a firefight." There will be challenges. The greatest challenge will be to the leadership, making sure that discipline and respect are maintained in garrison settings. When qualified women are in combat, I'm sure they will be every bit as effective as men and an asset in achieving the mission.

3. I could not agree more. Women should be allowed to serve in any role in the military, so long as they are able to satisfy the requirements for that role. Assigning lower standards to women is not a solution. Not only does it cast a shadow over women serving, but it also potentially weakens our military forces, and puts women at risk. It may be politically correct to allow different standards, but enemy forces will not show restraint against soldiers having reduced capabilities. That said, one must be careful that the standards reflect the expected combat role, and not just typical male ability. Infantry require strength standards because they have to carry heavy loads on the field, and may be exposed to hand-to-hand combat. Navy or Air Force personnel should have different standards, appropriate for their role.

4. Agreed. Standards are the heart of the matter. Demographics, a diversity of membership, symbolic gestures are all 100% irrelevant when balanced against

whether a Marine (man or woman) can perform the job under the same expectations as their peers. To the extent a woman is able to train for and fight in combat with the same proficiency as the other Marines around her, she should be able to serve in that role. If a woman is unable to meet that standard, she is a danger to herself and others if pushed beyond her capabilities. By the way, any man who is unable to maintain these standards should be removed from a combat role as well. If this means women are underrepresented in combat despite their best efforts, so be it. The enemies Marines face are not going to tailor their attacks to accommodate gender differences. Any training program that makes any allowances for any possible physiological differences between male and female Marines is only providing a false sense of confidence.

Analysis: The comment from Kate Germano is important because it brings up a potential discrepancy in training standards that has existed in the Marines—and the resulting negative effects. Female Marines were traditionally held to lower physical standards. This means that a female Marine would be able to get a slower run time, less push-ups, and less sit-ups in order to get a perfect score on a physical fitness evaluation, but a male Marine would be held to higher standards for all those exercises in order to get a perfect score. In essence, the top female performers were not actually evaluated to the same high degree as the men.

In relation to Jane's memoir in Chapter III, she described her sense of being left out, both physically and emotionally, from her fellow Marines. The subtext in her context is that other male Marines who Jane worked with were evaluated according to higher physical training standards, just like Germano explains in the excerpt from above. Consequently,

that separate set of evaluations likely contributed to the difficulty of fitting in among her peers that Jane experienced.

Commenter #2 gives his own personal observations from having worked “with many women (including some former airborne NCOs and pilots) for whom [he has] the greatest respect and who have [his] unqualified confidence.” He also notes that the task of integrating women into combat jobs is likely a challenge to leadership, “making sure that discipline and respect are maintained in garrison settings.” But he has full confidence in women actually completing their combat related tasks in the field.

Commenter #3 makes a good general point in relation to military training standards: “one must be careful that the standards reflect the expected combat role, and not just typical male ability.” This is interesting because there are military research projects, such as Soldier 2020¹⁹, which seek to better evaluate the necessary physical training standards for military jobs in order to better match qualified applicants with suitable positions.

The article and comments here reiterate the need for having one physical standard for trainees. That is the starting point for having women successfully integrate in military combat jobs. As commenter #2 suggested, it is leadership’s job to help ensure there is “discipline and respect” between both genders; in an integrated military, having the same physical training standards is a key foundation for helping to instill discipline and respect among service members.

¹⁹ See Haviland, Amy L. “5 things to know about Soldier 2020.” *U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Public Affairs* 8 November 2013.

Excerpt 3: “Retire the Myths; Women Are Ready for Combat.”²⁰

This excerpt, by yet another female Marine veteran, focuses on then-recent successes of women in both Army and Marine combat job training courses.

Since the Pentagon formally rescinded the combat exclusion policy in 2013, well over 100 women have successfully passed the Marine Corps’ enlisted infantry school and two female officers will graduate from the Army’s elite Ranger School this week — debunking three long-held cultural myths: that women don’t want these jobs, they are mentally and physically too weak for these jobs, and training standards have to be lowered for women to do these jobs. (Bhagwati)

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article²¹

1. Are Women Ready for Combat? Obviously and of course they are. The trouble is I am not ready for women in combat and never will be.
2. well, you needn't be. that doesn't mean women shouldn't be sent into combat just like men are sent. nor should women be exempt from the military draft. they should be required to register just like the young guys. why should our young men bear more risk than our young women?
3. The author is precisely correct in identifying the issues. All roles open to all who meet the SAME standards for that role. No quotas, no different standards for anyone. Yes, men will dominate the combat arms, but there will be women.

Analysis: Anu Bhagwati makes her claims that previously-held perceptions of women’s less-than-capable abilities have been revealed to be myths as a resulting effect of female

²⁰ Bhagwati, Anu. “Retire the Myths; Women Are Ready for Combat.” *New York Times* 20 August 2015.

²¹ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The New York Times’ Room for Debate column immediately following the “Retire the Myths” article.

successes in military training, including more than a hundred enlisted female Marines graduating from infantry boot camp. Also, this article was published just prior to three women who graduated from Army Ranger School, marking two major successes for women in combat.

Commenter #1 gives a very honest statement, likely shared by many, about the torn feeling of supporting women and believing in them, while at the same time worried about women's new roles in the military. I think his comment highlights how people may never really be ready for some major life changes, even if we rationally understand them; we may not be able to accept them until after they actually happen—because until they happen, they are in a way, unimaginable. Commenter #3 points out the likely reality that “Yes, men will dominate the combat arms, but there will be women.” This point goes back to the reality of women being the minority within the military, but allowing equal opportunities for all those serving, regardless of what gender they are.

The excerpts and comment above point out the heart of support for this first claim: female Marines have graduated from Marine enlisted training, and female Army soldiers are blazing their way through Army Ranger training, proving women's capabilities for these jobs.

Excerpt 4: “Now, Open the Ranger Regiment to Women.”²²

John Rodriguez is an Army combat veteran who wrote this article just after the first two female soldiers graduated from Army Ranger School. Even though they had graduated, they were prevented from joining a Ranger unit because at that time there was still a ban on women in combat. Here, John is advocating for the admittance of women into Ranger units.

²² Rodriguez, John. “Now, Open the Ranger Regiment to Women.” New York Times 20 August 2015.

Two Army officers, Kristen Griest and Shaye Haver, have just proved to the world that women have what it takes to pass one of the toughest courses in the U.S. military. Through physically and mentally grueling patrols, they earned the trust and respect of their peers, who evaluated them along with the instructors. I know because I graduated from Ranger School in 2007 as a young infantry lieutenant. Earning my tab paved the way for me to lead an infantry platoon in combat — a path currently denied to women. . .

As part of the "Force of the Future," Secretary Ashton Carter should open up all positions to every qualified individual, but also continue evaluating standards for each job. The current standard to join the infantry, besides being male, is meeting bare minimum physical standards like 42 push-ups — that bare minimum would get you dropped from Ranger School on Day 1. For the infantry, standards should get tougher, but some cybersecurity jobs might relax certain physical requirements in order to recruit skilled professionals. Our military and country need to maximize talent by utilizing our full bench while simultaneously ensuring our standards make sense. (Rodriguez)

*Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article*²³

1. I'm open to women fighting in combat roles as long as they can meet the same standards. I don't want to see standards lowered either. If they are going to fight in combat they need the proper training to do so. The rest of my comment is going to go off course some.. My only qualm is that women too should have to sign up for the

²³ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The New York Times' Room for Debate column immediately following the "Now Open the Ranger" article.

Selective Service Systems just as men; otherwise the government then is outright practicing sexist policies by requiring only men of certain ages sign up. The alternative would be to abolish the Selective Service Systems; though about \$20 million in budget back in 2010, the sums saved is paltry compared to dealing with the national debt however \$20 million is still a decent amount to achieve in other projects like fixing problems in the VA, road and rail infrastructure, or some where else in which the money would be well spent. The SSS is essentially flushing money down the toilet; if we ever get to a point where we need a draft we could develop a more efficient and modern system that includes both sexes. For not, let's use the funding on something else.

2. As long as women meet the same standards as the guys, sure, why not?

BUT...There can be true equality in the military only when women must register for the draft just as men must, at age 18. There's no draft now, but if there ever is one, why should only our young men be required to serve--and die--for their country?

3. Well put, Mr. Rodriguez. Keep the standards high and the same for every applicant, and then it shouldn't be much of a decision about whether they are worthy to serve in the positions they seek.

Analysis: Just before the official lifting of the ban on women in combat in January of 2016, the national spotlight was on the Army and Marines as they conducted integration experiments in order to get ready for the upcoming policy changes. For the Army, the first two Ranger graduates marked a huge success, with an effect of showing the opposition, like the female Marine enlisted graduates, that existing male training standards could in fact be met by women.

The first two commenters bring up the issue of women being included in the selective service draft, the next logical argument about gender equality in the military, after allowing women in combat jobs. Commenter #3 echoes an often heard claim that training standards should not be altered to allow women into new combat positions.

Rodriguez has been there, and he and the article commenters point out that women have gone over the hurdle of successfully passing the same standards that men have to go through, so why not lift the ban on women in combat jobs?

Summary of Claim

This first claim that women should be able to integrate into military combat jobs because they have passed the standards for those jobs has been backed up with two primary categories of support. First, there is the real-life experience of some of the female veteran authors who have completed grueling training along-side their male counterparts. Second, there is success of women having graduated Marine enlisted training and Army Ranger School. The effect of these claims is that it establishes a well-founded argument about women's physical abilities. While women's past experiences in real-world conflicts had shown their performances on the job, there was still doubt about the challenging road of physical evaluations that a candidate has to get through just in order to get into a combat job.

Claim 2: Inequality Between the Sexes Is a Primary Obstacle to Integrating Women into Combat Jobs.

This claim deals with the need for equality in regards to physical training standards and how men and women are treated in military combat jobs. Without a level playing field in all regards, women will not be able to successfully integrate into new combat fields. This is

also represented by providing equal opportunities for career advancement. If women have proved their capabilities for combat jobs through real-world combat experiences, then the resulting effect is that there should be an avenue for them to continue their career in a field they have proved themselves successful.

Excerpt 1: “Focusing on Leadership as Marine Corps Mandate to Integrate Women in Combat Units Nears.”²⁴

Here, Fazio argues about the importance of leadership in creating and maintaining equal respect and support for male and female Marines.

Fourteen years ago, when I was a midshipman at Marine Corps Officer Candidates School, our female sergeant instructor lined us up at attention. “If you’re a woman in the Marine Corps,” she said, “you’re either a bitch, a dyke, or a ho.” Shocking? Perhaps. But with a purpose: she was trying to prepare us to interact with men who wouldn’t always be supportive of our presence. So this fall, before Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter announced that women would be allowed into all military occupations, I looked to the Marine Corps’ yearlong experiment to integrate women into ground combat jobs to see if attitudes had changed . . .

When I interviewed several female Marines who participated in the experiment, I found an interesting pattern. The quality of leadership at the squad, platoon and company level was a key factor that directly affected the successful integration of women into a cohesive unit . . .

²⁴ Fazio, Teresa. “Focusing on Leadership as Marine Corps Mandate to Integrate Women in Combat Units Nears.” New York Times 15 December 2015.

But when the female trackers traveled to Twentynine Palms, Calif., to meet their male counterparts, the respectful environment disappeared. Sgt. Kathryn Bynum, who was part of the same platoon, said some of the women would flirt “and make us look stupid.” A lot of the men “thought we were a joke,” she said. “Even the staff NCOs would sit around and find ways to make fun of us.” (Fazio)

Analysis: Fazio highlight how leaders can have a toxic effect on the performance of those they lead. Leaders who model and promote negative stereotypes about women will spread that negativity to others around them, while harming and hindering the performance of females in the unit.

We saw this kind of toxic environment in both MJ and Jane’s retelling of their own military experiences. In MJ’s case, there were several examples of others labeling her as a ‘ho.’ MJ’s team-mate, Richard, was an example of someone who tried to harm MJ by spreading rumors of her fabricated sexual activities in order to create a negative image of MJ among their peers. And for Jane, in her memoir she described being mistreated by her fellow Marines, without any kind of sexual connotations, in a way that labeled her as a ‘bitch,’ according to Fazio’s labeling categories above.

Not only must evaluations be equal among the genders, but attitudes must be equal—that is what is at the center of this excerpt. The descriptions of male Marines making fun of female Marines are used as a source of support for this claim that inequality is an obstacle to integration. The effect of that kind of unfair treatment is likely decreased confidence, making it harder to succeed.

Excerpt 2: “Make the Standards for Male and Female Marines Equal.”²⁵

This excerpt focuses on the compounding effect of holding female Marines to a lower physical training standard. Germano points out how this situation plays out in Marine boot camp.

The elephant in the room in this debate is not whether women should be allowed into direct combat roles, it is the acknowledgment that for years and years, we have demanded less of women in the military. We owe them — and the American public — better.

The Marine Corps mission is to make Marines, win battles and develop quality citizens. There is nothing in this mission statement about making female Marines and male Marines, who have separate tasks, responsibilities and are up to different standards. Yet we clearly do have different expectations for the performance and conduct of men and women, starting from the day they are screened to enlist. Right from the start, women are held to a lower standard for achievement, which explains why their failure rate on the initial physical fitness test at boot camp is nine times greater and their discharge rate is double that of men. (Germano)

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article²⁶

1. Thanks for this perspective LtCol Germano. I appreciate your efforts to improve recruit training standards for women. As a female Marine Corps officer, I never understood why male and female Marine officer candidates and officers train together at Officer Candidate School and The Basic School, but male and female

²⁵ Germano, Kate. “Make the Standards for Male and Female Marines Equal.” New York Times 20 August 2015.

²⁶ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The New York Times’ Room for Debate column immediately following the “Make the Standards” article.

enlisted Marines do not train together at recruit training. The officers have been doing it for years, and it's been effective as far as I can tell - mutual respect for women and men is much more evident in the officer corps than among enlisted Marines. Additionally, the thought that women cannot endure the rigors of combat is ludicrous, as they have been doing it "unofficially" since at least 2001, and well before that. Ultimately, the best Marines should be selected for each MOS, regardless of gender. Physical strength and endurance are only part of leadership and combat effectiveness. If the effort is taken to train a woman physically for Infantry Officer Course, no doubt she will pass and be an outstanding combat arms officer. The Corps will be better for opening its positions for all qualified.

2. There are no men and women Marines. No black, white or brown. There are only green Marines.

3. This argument makes an extremely valid point and it is the point that should be made against every sexist restriction. If women can do it just as well as men, then women should be allowed to do it. Restricting women from doing something or providing them with different standards refuses to allow that simple comparison.

Analysis: In the excerpt above the claim is made that historically unequal training standards has an effect of producing poor results for women's physical training evaluations. The author implies that any future success of women in combat roles has to start by holding women to the same kind of training standards as men, thereby doing away with inequality in that regard.

Commenter #1 points out that if given the chance, women will be able to rise to the opportunity to overcome whatever training standards exists. This implies that all of these

new combat training courses are being suddenly opened up for women and a high rate of failures shouldn't be a surprise at first. As an institution we have to be patient and allow the time for women to train-up in order to succeed through these courses.

Overall, this excerpt and its commenters bring up a critical point about the effect of military training standards: they form a primary basis for how each sex views each other, and for how those genders view themselves. If you want women to feel equal, they must be succeeding at equal evaluations. The same goes for how others will view them.

Excerpt 3: Bhagwati, Anu. "Retire the Myths; Women Are Ready for Combat." New York Times 20 August 2015.

This excerpt brings up women's past successes in combat as a fact that has to be taken into account when discussing the proposition of allowing women into military combat jobs.

As tens of thousands of women have proved over 13 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, women are capable of the combat skills necessary to fight alongside their male counterparts. The question now is whether to give women the opportunity to compete for coveted combat arms assignments, such as infantry and special forces. (Bhagwati)

Analysis: This excerpt reveals the fact that women have been in combat, in one way or another, both intentionally and unintentionally, for "over 13 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan." Reading between the lines here says that one key effect from those years of experience is that they have paved the way to allowing women into combat positions. In fact, the ACLU backed four women who sued the Pentagon in 2012, prior to the lifting of the ban on women in combat. The basis of their rationale had to do with their own combat experiences, which were not officially recognized or rewarded as should have been due to

then-restrictions on women in combat²⁷. So here, the focus is on allowing equal career paths for men and women, especially given that women have already proved themselves in combat situations.

Excerpt 4: Rodriguez, John. “Now, Open the Ranger Regiment to Women.” New York Times 20 August 2015.

Here, Rodriguez mentions about women’s participation with “elite special operations units” in recent conflicts, serving as the basis of allowing them access into combat jobs.

The performance of female cultural support teams fighting alongside Ranger Regiment and other special operations forces in Afghanistan have proved not only the capabilities of many female soldiers, but also the tactical advantages of a gender-integrated force. All of the services’ elite special operations units should follow the lead of the Navy SEALs and open their doors to physically and mentally qualified women, for the sake of national security and common sense. (Rodriguez)

Analysis: Rodriguez’s point here builds off of all recent ones. Not only have women performed in combat, but they have also performed alongside elite combat units, which further acts as support for the claim that inequality exists if women who proved themselves in those jobs are not allowed a pipeline to a career in that field. This is a domino-effect, in that Rodriguez’s claim rests on women’s performance in one area of military special operations, claiming that women should gain equal access in other areas of special operations, as a result.

²⁷ See Shinkman, Paul D. “ACLU Sues Pentagon Over Women in Combat.” *U.S. News and World Report* 27 November 2012.

Summary of Claim

Simply put, the claims in this section have argued that inequality manifests itself through the inferior treatment of women in the military, which has the effect of acting as an inhibitor to women's success. It has also been argued that inequality manifests as blocking off a career path to women that they have proved themselves worthy of both through real-world experiences and by passing the training standards for those careers.

HOLD ON, NOW. OUR FIGHTING FORCES ARE FALLING APART BECAUSE OF THIS!

This section will cover discourse from those opposing women in combat. Excerpts from articles and their public comments are presented via two major claims that presented themselves as significant arguments in the contemporary debate on women in combat.

Claim 1: The Liberal Political Agenda Is Superseding Military Effectiveness.

This claim is based on the idea that regardless of whether or not our military will become more effective as a result of allowing women into combat jobs, a liberal political agenda has a higher concern for the push to have women in combat jobs as a sign of equality. In Eden's own words, she attaches this agenda to "Obama and the milquetoast flag officers imposing his social agenda," while I chose to label the overarching claim as a *liberal agenda*, which is a more general reference to its political nature, rather than identifying it with any particular leadership or presidential administration.

Excerpt 1: “Marines Trolling Girls’ Sports Teams for Combat Jobs Should Take a Lesson from the Olympics.”²⁸

Eden, a Marine combat veteran, writes this article to use the Olympics as an example of the natural differentiation of men and women’s physical capabilities.

Maybe the Marine high command should take a break from their busy work of social re-engineering and enjoy the final week of the Olympics. They might learn something about men and women the rest of us take for granted.

The first thing that they would notice is that the world continues, as it always has, to not watch men competing against women. Are the Olympics just another relic of patriarchy, or do we know something arch-leftists don’t? What we know is that if women competed against men in the toughest sporting competition on the globe they would never medal and likely would be phased out completely . . .

Obama and the milquetoast flag officers imposing his social agenda don’t care about the military or winning against our enemies, and they certainly don’t care about women. All they care about is getting the numbers. In their complicity they’re trying to recruit young women do jobs they don’t want that will hurt them more than men and won’t help our military objectives. That this is a major priority is the primary reason for our military decline. Good for our enemies; not so good for us. (Eden)

Analysis: Jude Eden’s comment about “social re-engineering” is a reference to the Marine’s integration efforts. She draws a parallel between Olympics and women in the military; her point is that men and women should not be in the same physical arena, as the case is for the

²⁸ Eden, Jude. “Marines Trolling Girls’ Sports Teams for Combat Jobs Should Take a Lesson from the Olympics.” The Stream 17 August 2016.

Olympics; women are successful when they compete against each other based on female standards, not male standards. It is unfair for both sexes to somehow have an unnatural one-size-fits-all standard for both sexes.

At the heart of this source is that we should be looking to other aspects of our world to see how men and women are successful in doing the same activities, but with standards that are appropriate for each sex and their unique biological differences. Eden also highlights the damaging effects of prioritizing a political agenda above military effectiveness: “That this is a major priority is the primary reason for our military decline.” Also, she claims that the effect of forcing women to integrate will also have a negative effect the women in those jobs because they will not be as qualified as men for the combat jobs they end up doing.

Excerpt 2: “Advocates for Women in Combat Value Diversity over Victory.”²⁹

Here, Eden is pointing to the push to have women be included in a military draft as further support that a political agenda is behind the push for women in combat, rather than an actual necessity for it based on a potential improvement to combat effectiveness.

The “Draft Our Daughters” amendment was struck from the House language of the FY17 NDAA in May, but behind closed doors Senator John McCain (R-AZ) who also chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee added the language on the Senate side. It will be voted on later this week.

Just as there should be open deliberation on combat unit integration, there should be a full and open debate on Selective Service and whether or not women should be

²⁹ Eden, Jude. “Marines Trolling Girls’ Sports Teams for Combat Jobs Should Take a Lesson from the Olympics.” *The Stream* 17 August 2016.

included. These responsibilities rest with congress because they are accountable to us, not unelected appointees like Ashton Carter and Ray Mabus pushing Obama's agenda through regardless of consequence. We are cannibalizing museum pieces to fix our aircraft, suffering many more training accidents due to budget cuts, the military is being bombarded with politically correct garbage, and our generals are telling Congress our military is not prepared to fight the next war, especially on multiple fronts. The last thing we need to do is add more bureaucracy to our beleaguered force. (Eden)

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article³⁰

1. For me this issue has nothing to do with the ability of one sex or the other in combat. Just like the whole transgender bathroom issue has nothing to do with who goes in the bathroom. For me both agendas are a lot more insidious. Both try to destroy the natural roles of the sexes. Both seek to demean the nature of each sex. Both seek to destroy the family. Women give and nurture life and men protect that life. That's the winning team. Do I feel less because I give life and nurture it as a woman? Nope quite the contrary, but for decades the indoctrination to demean my natural role has affected millions of other girls. Anyway, no matter how strong the army is, if the civilization fails to protect the family then what is there to defend? If the family is destroyed, it doesn't matter how strong the army is. The country still collapses from within. That is exactly what we are witnessing today.

³⁰ Sample comments came from the public comments section on Crisis Magazine's website immediately following the "Advocates for Women in Combat" article.

2. ... the priority when making military policy is the needs of our combat readiness and effectiveness, not equal opportunity or equal rights. That which diminishes readiness and effectiveness has no business being considered let alone implemented.

This seems so blisteringly obvious, I'm at a loss as to why so many people are so confused. But then we have a commander in chief who himself has never served, a man devoid of honor whose primary goal in life (when he's not doing his damndest to prevent life) seems to be conducting social experiments on our military.

3. Not confused. They want us defeated. They are doing everything and anything to destroy this country. They aren't succeeding, they have succeeded.

4. Not just this country Vinny, all of western Judeo Christian civilization. And we get what we deserve for letting it happen on our watch too as we didn't stand up and fight for Christ, we let the prince of darkness roll over us with barely a whimper as we watched the destruction. Are their any left with the heart of a crusader, or are we all too busy minding our own affairs to notice and care enough to do something about it.

Analysis: Here again, Jude Eden makes her claims that the push to integrate women into combat jobs in one negative effect of the government's liberal political agenda. Her point about the need for an "open debate on Selective Service" being just as necessary for the issue of women in combat leads to her claim that "These responsibilities rest with congress because they are accountable to us, not unelected appointees like Ashton Carter and Ray Mabus pushing Obama's agenda through regardless of consequence." She makes this remark because the policy change for women in combat came about suddenly, for non-military civilians, and was ultimately approved by Ashton Carter, then Secretary of Defense.

But things were different when the topic of women in the draft surfaced not long after the ban on women in combat was lifted in 2016—congress blocked the provision³¹.

Commenter #1 notes the “insidious” nature of the push to integrate women into combat and makes the correlation to transgender bathroom laws as doing the same thing: “Both seek to demean the nature of each sex. Both seek to destroy the family.” This comment uses transgender bathroom laws as the parallel ideology as the push to integrate women: both are aimed at an insidious outcome (i.e., an effect) of contributing to the destruction of the natural order of men and women and their crucial role in upholding traditional family values.

Two other commenters, #3 and #4, take the “insidious liberal plan” a step further to include plans to destroy the country and Western Judeo Christian civilization. This highlights the destructive effects of a blind push for political correct policies such as women in combat in that it adds to the breakdown of important cultural pillars of Western society.

This source uses the push to have women included in a mandatory draft as the source of support that liberal ideology is superseding any common sense approach to look at how realistic or effective the decision actually is.

³¹ See Associated Press. “GOP blocks provision to require women to register for draft.” *Fox News Politics* 17 May 2016.

Excerpt 3: “A Weighty Argument Against Women in Combat. Heavy Body Armor is a Challenge even for Men.”³²

Fumento, an Army veteran, explains the very practical issue of women’s physical capabilities on the job—not in a training school, and in particular in relation to carrying heavy body armor.

But this is an issue where neither politics nor ideology has any place—because it’s a matter of life and death. The purpose of the military should be to accomplish violent overseas missions with minimal casualties. The military is not a democracy, and its purpose isn’t to provide equal opportunity. It is highly discriminatory, based not on skin color or religion but ability . . .

Not surprisingly, a Marine Corps evaluation last year showed that all-male units greatly outperformed mixed-gender units in just about every capacity. The women performed their tasks more slowly, fired weapons with less accuracy, and sustained far more injuries during training than their male counterparts. Male Marines with no formal infantry training outperformed infantry-trained women on each weapons system. And much of that is body-armor-related. When you’re exhausted, you fire less accurately, make more mistakes, have more accidents, and even have lower morale. (Fumento)

³² Fumento, Michael. “A Weighty Argument Against Women in Combat. Heavy Body Armor is a Challenge even for Men.” *The American Conservative* 1 September 2016.

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article³³

1. The purpose of the military is to win wars, not engage in social engineering. In most cases, gender integrated units will not perform as well as all male units. This will result in dead and wounded American troops. Yes, there are women who can do it, such as the tennis playing Williams sisters, but most women cannot.
2. We shouldn't be so chained to political correctness as to ignore the possibility of genuine psychological (and, of course, physical) differences between males and females. In any case, we should agree to look at this objectively. As a strictly biological issue, testosterone is associated with aggression. In this and other biological ways, males seem better designed for physical combat. There are of course many individual exceptions. Some women are stronger than some men. However then we get into the logistical complications of having two sexes on the battlefield. For example, bedding arrangements: can a male and female share a tent without complications? On the other hand, in the case of, say, flying a fighter jet, these arguments might not apply. One further thought: I wonder if there's been a study on the long-term effects of combat on males vs. females (e.g., PTSD, difficulties adjusting to civilian life, etc.)

Analysis: Michael Fumento references the Marines' 2015 integrated experiment that had the effect of "show[ing] that all-male units greatly outperformed mixed-gender units in just about every capacity." He makes the point that those kind of findings should drive the debate about women in combat, rather than political agendas. He describes the distinct

³³ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The American Conservative's website immediately following the "A Weighty Argument" article.

difference of the military as an organization with different priorities than a civilian one: “It is highly discriminatory, based not on skin color or religion but ability.” In particular, he points out that much of the difficulty that the female Marines had during that experiment came down to being exhausted from the weight of the body armor they had to wear.

Commenter #1 points out that integrated combat units will not produce the same battlefield-effects as all-male units; results of the Marine experiment mentioned is also support for that. Commenter #2 points out the reality of testosterone as a key factor in males being more suitable for combat jobs.

Going back to the current claim, this source and its commenters use the Marine Corps’ experiment as their source that ideology is being put above effectiveness. If the results of a large-scale experiment show that integrated units are less combat effective, why are we pushing to integrate women into these jobs? What is the benefit to our fighting forces? That is the logic behind this source in relation to the current claim.

Excerpt 4: “Why Are Women in Combat? The Pentagon Cares Less about Equal Rights and More about Maintaining Recruiting for Endless Wars.”³⁴

Here the focus is the same, but with a different outcome. Beauchamp, an Army veteran, notes the potential advantage of integrating women into combat jobs as mere benefit of increased numbers.

To someone like me who attended infantry training at Ft. Benning over a decade ago, these far-reaching changes have the unreal quality of a dream. Back in 2005, as the insurgency in Iraq was heating up and “The Home of the Infantry” was

³⁴ Beauchamp, Scott. “Why Are Women in Combat? The Pentagon Cares Less about Equal Rights and More about Maintaining Recruiting for Endless Wars.” *The American Conservative* 23 February 2017.

monomaniacally focused on urban warfare and spotting IEDs, a prediction that women would eventually join the infantry would have belonged to the crackpot or crank. The general consensus in the barracks seemed to be that it would be foolish to force such a drastic experiment on the military during a time of war. It was an attitude that rendered the question of whether women were physically or mentally fit for combat almost moot.

But what did matter then, and what continues to grow in relevance as our wars in the Middle East drag on indefinitely, is the stark disconnect between the American military and the American public. In 2005, the problem didn't seem to be diversity within the Army itself, but the fact that the military was like a universe parallel to and almost completely misunderstood (when it wasn't being ignored) by the civilian world. Questions like whether transgender people should openly serve or whether women should be in combat almost seemed like a distraction from the larger issue—the military being cordoned off from the country itself. Simply put, making the military more inclusive as an institution doesn't bind it more intimately with average citizens or make it more responsive to our republic. It just renders the bubble that surrounds it in technicolor . . .

So really, this is about the Pentagon's "right" to hire whomever it wants in order to engage in an endless national hunting party. It isn't about some renaissance in military/civilian relations or a restoration of the military's bond with the public. The deployments continue. The only difference is that now women will get to wear a Combat Infantryman's Badge when they pull the trigger, usually in countries where

Americans shouldn't be in the first place. And that's hardly a victory for anyone."

(Beauchamp)

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article³⁵

1. "Why Are Women in Combat?" To sever our connection with traditional morality, so that a new morality can be programmed into us; to have us violate our consciences, so that new consciences can be constructed for us. This is something that anyone who understands human beings knows to be wrong, and THAT is why it is being done. It is a reprogramming technique similar to the way cults often force new recruits to sever their ties with their families.
2. I don't disagree with your premise—that the DoD is always looking for fodder for its endless conflicts—but they would never have implemented this policy without relentless pressure from Obama appointees at the highest levels of the Pentagon and lobbying groups like the Military Leadership Diversity Commission. Recognizing that combat arms officers have disproportionate representation among general officers, the MLDC's main goal was to improve promotion opportunities for women, and thereby increase the number of female joint chiefs, senior defense officials, etc. I think Obama and his lackeys simply saw an opportunity to score some easy diversity points, combat effectiveness be damned. The fact remains that integration is unlikely to result in a significant number of women joining combat units, much less special operations units, where the strain of endless war is felt the most. Even the watered-down "gender neutral" PT standards won't change that.

³⁵ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The American Conservative's website immediately following the "Why Are Women in Combat" article.

3. It's really a question of basic decency, isn't it? A civilization that sends women into combat has lost its bearings and moral authority. It's no mystery how we got here: feminists and ideologues who admired totalist societies like the Soviet Union or Israel (both of which early on forced women into the military) worked very hard to persuade us that our Christian and Western attitudes (not to mention our basic instincts) on this were wrong. I'm afraid they succeeded. And yet if we send women into combat, we forfeit the claim to the title "civilization", and there's really nothing left for anyone who isn't a complete brute or ideologue to defend. Anyway, if any US government tries to force my daughter into the military – still less into combat – they'll have to deal with me and many other fathers. I'd guess that many of us have served.

Analysis: In this excerpt we see a description of a different effect of the political agenda behind women in combat: more bodies. Beauchamp is claiming that with the difficulty of fighting ongoing wars in the Mid-East, opening up combat jobs to women can only serve to bolster our numbers, thereby making it easier to continue overseas wars, even if the actual effectiveness of small integrated units ends up being less effective than the all-male alternative.

Commenter #1 states that the ultimate reason that women are in combat is "To sever our connection with traditional morality, so that a new morality can be programmed into us; to have us violate our consciences, so that new consciences can be constructed for us." This goes in-line with the overall theme herein of ideology over effectiveness.

Commenter #3 states that "feminists and ideologues who admired totalist [sic] societies" are the ones behind the move for women in combat and a breakdown in Western

civilization. Again, like previous commenters, this statement points to the negative effect that women in combat has on the overall maintenance of Western culture.

The idea presented here is that even if there would be a decrease in combat effectiveness at the small-unit level with the introduction of women into combat units, the more important benefit being sought is that the military maintains its numbers or may actually increase in size over time.

Summary of Claim

The core idea presented throughout this claim is that a liberal political agenda (which at that time was initiated under the Obama administration) is what is driving the integration of women in combat. That agenda values other things—political correctness, maintaining military numbers while sacrificing combat effectiveness—as primary effects, more than it values the strength and effectiveness of a traditional all-male combat force. The main sources of support for these claims are the disregard for the failure of integrated combat units from the results of a Marine Corps controlled experiment, the success of gender segregated Olympic events, and a push to include women in a military draft without stopping to discuss the possible advantages and disadvantages of that decision. Overall, the arguments in this section are founded on a variety of different examples in politics and society that are used to highlight what the government is putting as its top priority.

Claim 2: Biological Differences Are Real: Strength Limitations and Sexual Tensions Make Women in Combat a Bad Idea.

This claim goes to a very well-known pair of ideas that are rooted in the same foundation, biology. Because women's bodies are weaker than men's' bodies they are not as well suited for combat jobs. Because men and women are attracted to each other, the close quarters

nature of combat jobs will bring about romantic distractions among integrated combat units.

Excerpt 1: “Women in Combat Will Put Men at Greater Risk.”³⁶

Parker’s excerpts below focus on the sexual distraction that will occur if men and women are integrated together into combat units. That sexual distraction, according to Parker is stronger enough to break the cohesion of an effective combat unit.

Any combat veteran will tell you that unit cohesion is everything in battle. Common sense tells us that putting young men and women in the prime of their sexual lives together in the field, where the possibility of death is potentially imminent, is a potential — and unnecessary — gamble on unit cohesion. There is, after all, nothing like a funeral to remind the living of their mortal imperative.

Sexual tension is a most delightful distraction in civilian life. But in close quarters, where men likely would vastly outnumber the few women who qualify for combat, other human emotions — envy, jealousy and resentment — enter into a fray that’s already complicated enough.

This is certainly not to blame women for men’s weaknesses. Both sexes are equally responsible for — or perhaps I should say, equally victims of — Nature’s own agenda. There is, meanwhile, only one pertinent question in this debate: Does putting women in combat improve military effectiveness? If not, then it’s a mistake. My mailbox is full of letters from combat veterans opposing this move. A frequent comment comes in the form of a question: What happens to women when they’re

³⁶ Parker, Kathleen. “Women in Combat Will Put Men at Greater Risk.” *The Washington Post* 11 December 2015.

captured? We know what happens. Will our men be able to withstand the screams of their female companions as they are raped or tortured?" (Parker)

Analysis: Kathleen Parker touches on human biology to make her point about "Nature's own agenda" and the trouble it poses for an integrated military fighting force. The result, she claims, will have a disastrous effect on the cohesion of our military fighting forces. She notes that, yes sexual distractions occur in the civilian workplace all the time, and sometimes those distractions have no negative effect at all. However, the military is vastly different due to the disproportionate number of women compared to men, as well as the different environment of being confined to "close quarters" with members of the opposite sex.

This excerpt cites biological issues as a disadvantage to having women serve in combat units: their bodies are weaker, sexual distractions will occur, and female POWs will be used to the enemy's advantage. The source of support here is our well-established understanding of the male and female biology, including the differences between the two, and the strong attraction that exists between men and women.

Excerpt 2: "Marines Trolling Girls' Sports Teams for Combat Jobs Should Take a Lesson from the Olympics."³⁷

In the excerpts below, Eden uses female Marines' failures to succeed in the Marine's Infantry Officer Course, along with their high drop-out rate in boot camp as indicators that females are not suited for combat jobs.

³⁷ Eden, Jude. "Marines Trolling Girls' Sports Teams for Combat Jobs Should Take a Lesson from the Olympics." *The Stream* 17 August 2016.

Some 37% of female Marine recruits don't even make it to boot camp graduation where they're training to become basically qualified, not infantry. We're 0 for 31 on female officers trying to complete the Infantry Officer's Course, and they can't find anyone else who wants to try.

Military women already average two to ten times men's injuries in support units where the physical requirements are much less. The military is hard on the body — much more so for women. Are recruiters informing young women of this fact? Hardly.

If it worked, why aren't women competing with men in wrestling, football, the UFC or any other full contact sport? Because doing so doesn't help us thrive, much less win.

What does it say about this administration and compliant generals like Neller that they want women to compete in the most lethal activity known to mankind despite unchanging disproportionate liability?"

Sample of Public Reader Comments from Article³⁸

1. Thanks for the pragmatic picture. Men and women are simply not equal in terms of physical ability. It's a fact of nature, and the military combat branches are extremely physical. I went through a co-ed basic training about 16 years ago in the Army, and the most fit female in our company, while she could outperform myself in some regards, was still completely blown out of the water by a large percentage of the male soldiers. And yet, for the sake of political correctness, we are allowing

³⁸ Sample comments came from the public comments section of The Stream's website immediately following the "Marines Trolling" article.

politicians to send women off into a combat environment versus the enemy of the day (militant Islamic extremists), where statistically they will die in larger numbers than men, and I shudder to think of what would come of a female soldier who would fall into the hands of Isis or Boko Haram given the treatment other women have found. How is this the loving and caring view of women, and desiring not to subject women to the real horrors of war, and to keep them safe, sexist and patriarchal?

Analysis: Eden points out the discrepancy between male and female physical characteristics and uses wrestling, the NFL, and the UFC as examples of where men and women compete separately because of biological differences. She also mentions the difficulty that female Marines have in completing basic training just “to become basically qualified, not infantry.”

Commenter #1 recalls his own Army training experience, where the most physically fit woman was still far surpassed “by a large percentage of the male soldiers.” This is the idea that even the most physically fit women are about on par with the least physically fit men.

Sources of support here come from the Marine Corps’ initial experiment at allowing women to try out for their Infantry Officer Course: a 37% dropout rate as the effect of allowing female enlisted Marines to try out for infantry jobs, and a commenter’s recollection of his time serving in basic training alongside women.

Excerpt 3: “Advocates for Women in Combat Value Diversity over Victory.”³⁹

Eden’s excerpt below goes into detail about the results of a Marine experiment that showed all-male combat units to be more effective than integrated combat units. She also goes into

³⁹ Eden, Jude. “Advocates for Women in Combat Value Diversity over Victory.” *Crisis Magazine* 7 June 2016.

other related issues such as the advantages that the male body receives from having increased amounts of testosterone.

That which diminishes readiness and effectiveness has no business being considered let alone implemented . . .

We know this because scientific testing has shown it for decades. The Marine Corps' 9-month integration study was only the latest in such testing. Top-performing female Marines ranging in ranks from PFC to Sergeant who achieved men's minimum physical fitness standards or better and also completed the enlisted infantry training were paired with average male Marines of the same ranks. The hypothesis to prove was that coed teams would perform the same or better than all-male teams, but the results were the opposite, the hypothesis disproved. Out of 134 tasks, all-male units outperformed coed units 69 percent of the time. It's not that women couldn't do some of the tasks at all, but where they could, they couldn't perform as fast, struggled with heavy-lifting tasks like casualty evacuation, fatigued faster and suffered greater rates of injury. All of their weaknesses were amplified when they were fatigued like after a long march under load (typically around 80lbs), and the heavier the weapon, the less accurate the shooting . . .

Unchanging physical differences between the sexes will always render women at a stark disadvantage in offensive kill missions. In the Marines' testing, women suffered 2-6 times the injuries of their male counterparts. Active-duty women average 2-10 times the injuries compared to men before even attempting to achieve men's standards or the combat arms' much more grueling demands. It should go

without saying that higher rates of injury are a liability to units that have to endure and withstand the toughest physical demands as they hunt and kill our enemies . . .

The military is tough on anyone but it's much tougher on women because we don't have testosterone coursing through our bodies. We have to exert far more effort into the same training to meet the arduous physical demands. That makes us all the more impressive for serving in the first place, but it doesn't make us interchangeable with infantrymen or render all risks equal in the most violent activity known to man. Just the opposite. There are few to no women who can not only achieve combat unit standards but maintain them over time. We break hundreds to find two who can make it past day one in the Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course (IOC) or through Army Ranger's School. You can bet your life that women have to be a damn sight better than men's minimums to survive, let alone succeed, in the direct ground combat they'll be drafted to engage in. Of the thirty female Marine officers that were deemed eligible to try IOC, none were able to pass or even able to make it past the first two weeks. The females who graduated Ranger School were given additional training and recycled at least twice through each phase where men are only allowed two recycles—at most—over the whole program. The third graduate got three recycles in at least one phase of Ranger School. Their graduation was planned in advance and the Army shredded their records less than a month after. Those records are usually kept for one to two years at the least, but the Army saw fit to destroy them for these individuals. Their graduation was presented as proof that women are just as capable as men of succeeding at combat. The reality was quite different, but why let the truth get in the way of a good story?"

Analysis: Testosterone is a new issue here with Eden, as she uses it as the foundation for her claims of women's physical struggles to meet male training standards: "The military is tough on anyone but it's much tougher on women because we don't have testosterone coursing through our bodies." Of the successes of the three female Ranger graduates, she notes the kind of difficulty they had just to attain the minimum standards—one effect of reduced testosterone in the female body:

The females who graduated Ranger School were given additional training and recycled at least twice through each phase where men are only allowed two recycles—at most—over the whole program. The third graduate got three recycles in at least one phase of Ranger School.

Eden then goes on to make claims related to political agendas that put the female Rangers' graduation in the making, before even knowing if they would finish, all of this in order to try and prove that women are just as capable as men for military combat jobs. However, Eden states, "The reality was quite different, but why let the truth get in the way of a good story?"

Overall, Eden's sources of support are the natural biological advantage that the male body has over women due to testosterone, and how that biological difference played out as an effect in the Marine Corps controlled experiment where integrated units underperformed all-male units. This discrepancy in performance was in large part due to injuries and overall fatigue sustained by female Marine participants during the experiment.

Excerpt 4: “A Weighty Argument Against Women in Combat. Heavy Body Armor is a Challenge even for Men.”⁴⁰

Fumento brings up data on women in the military that highlights physical issues that women face in military service.

There should be data on whether women perform as well as men, and that should be the determinant. And indeed there are, including data on a huge factor that few people bother to consider because they lack the experience of those who have used it, as I have: body armor . . .

A 1992 Presidential Commission report found that “The average female Army recruit is 4.8 inches shorter, 31.7 pounds lighter, has 37.4 fewer pounds of muscle, and 5.7 more pounds of fat than the average male recruit. She has only 55 percent of the upper-body strength and 72 percent of the lower-body strength.” Further, “The average 20-to-30 year-old woman has the same aerobic capacity as a 50 year-old man.” . . .

According to the Surgeon General’s office in 2011, “Army women are more likely to be disabled than men and are approximately 67 percent more likely than Army men to receive a physical disability discharge for a musculoskeletal disorder.” They’re more than five times as likely to suffer stress fractures. Snap, crackle, pop.

(Fumento)

⁴⁰ Fumento, Michael. “A Weighty Argument Against Women in Combat. Heavy Body Armor is a Challenge even for Men.” *The American Conservative* 1 September 2016.

Sample of Reader Comments from Article⁴¹

1. Re: sexism

The NFL has no policy that officially bars women from playing. However, show me how many women can compete against a 260 lbs 6' 6" man, and we'll see if sexism is what makes the difference. I want the toughest military that can be fielded. And fair or unfair, if only the toughest 0.01% of all citizens qualify, so what. And so what if we recognize that yes, it is likely that those with the necessary physical skills will be all men. That does not mean men are better than women, nor are they smarter, nor more worthy. It means that they are biologically better suited for infantry than women.

Analysis: Michael Fumento makes a point about military body armor: "the newest weighs about 30–35 pounds depending on the size of the wearer, and the helmet adds another 3–4 pounds." This fact adds on top of all previous claims regarding physical difficulties for women integrating into military combat jobs. He further brings up research into women in the military that shows the discrepancies between male and female physical capabilities including a 2011 report that found "Army women are more likely to be disabled than men and are approximately 67 percent more likely than Army men to receive a physical disability discharge for a musculoskeletal disorder." All of this is looked at as physical effects of military service on women.

Commenter #1 mentions the fact that women are not officially banned from playing in the NFL but natural biological reasons prevent them from being successful there. In all,

⁴¹ Sample comments came from the public comments section on The American Conservative's website immediately following the "A Weighty Argument" article.

this excerpt and its commenter support the claim that women's biological differences prevent them from being an asset in combat jobs by looking at the real-world sports, the NFL, and research done on women's physical capabilities in the military.

Summary of Claim

Discourse on this claim about human biology favoring males over females points to decreased strength, sexual chemistry, and limited testosterone as the primary reasons that placing women in combat jobs has damaging effects upon the women in those jobs as well as the overall strength of the military. These issues are claimed to be inhibitors to women's continued success. Authors and commenters base their claims in a variety of sources including research projects—one going back to 1992, another as recent as 2015—that show the physical advantages of the male body. Also, basic knowledge of the human body and female drop-out rates during boot-camp are pointed to for support, as is the fact that women are not officially banned from playing in the NFL, but their success there is doubted.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

The excerpts from Mary Jennings Hager and Jane Blair offer first-hand accounts of women in military combat jobs—one a Marine 2nd lieutenant in an aerial reconnaissance unit, the other an Air Force Captain, serving as a combat rescue pilot. Their stories, while sharing the theme of coping with stereotypes, were different from each other and unique in many regards.

MJ was a hard-charging single woman making her way in her male-dominated career path. She faced several adversarial people along the way, but she also had the chance to work with many men who supported her in her career. She experienced sexual harassment, assault, and ongoing stereotypes. But in the end she prevailed, and in her own last words of her memoir: “And to everyone who ever tried to convince me that I couldn’t win, thank you for inspiring me to prove you wrong. Na-na na-na boo-boo” (292).

Jane Blair was a married officer with prior enlisted experience, and she had her Marine husband in relatively close proximity to her during the time of her tour in Iraq. Those factors likely benefitted her in that she was somewhat protected from sexual harassment due to her circumstances. But that did not make her job a breeze—her biggest struggle, based on her story, is one of trying to fit in and be accepted in an environment that is naturally hostile to women. In the words of one of her fellow female officers, “This place is just not for me. You’ll see, women just don’t get treated the same (Lieutenant Bishop as qtd in Blair 14). But like MJ, she had supporters among the struggles who helped her succeed in her job.

Coping with Stereotypes was a significant and shared theme among Jane and MJ. They both experienced ongoing struggles trying to establish their careers in an environment dominated by men. However, they both also experienced help from key people who were supportive of them as individuals and women in combat in general. Jane and MJ also had very different experiences in some regards. For one, they both served in two very different service branches, MJ in the Air Force, and Jane in the Marine Corps. Secondly, MJ spent her entire career as a single women in the Air Force, while Jane was married to a Marine serving around the same vicinity as her. In all, they had much in common in regards to fighting the uphill battle of being women in a combat field in the military, while their individual lives presented unique stories for each of them.

The online discourse that was presented in the Political Strife section represented the handful of key arguments being made both for and against the idea of women in combat. On top of those arguments, the previous chapter also uncovered the various sources of support that people use for their claims on this issue. A large part of both arguments for and against women in combat are centered on women's physical capabilities and the recent training schools that served as sources of support for those arguments⁴².

KEY FINDINGS

In this section I present two key findings from my data analysis. I chose to put them here in the Conclusion chapter because while they represent findings from my analysis, they also help to answer the two research questions, which are presented immediately following this section.

⁴² See Chapter IV, Political Strife

Resilient and Effective

From a pragmatic viewpoint, there is a very close similarity with one key way that both MJ and Jane described their experiences in the military. They were both on the receiving end of various negative and harmful effects described under the themes of Sexual Harassment (MJ) and Copying with Stereotypes (MJ and Jane). However these two women describe their experiences in a way very contrary to many of the participants and narratives from Chapter II, which were described in a defeatist manner—with no positive end result. In short, they were resilient to the all of the negative effects they experienced. Moreover, they were able to positively deal with their experiences, overcome them, and then produce effective changes on their outward environments as well as their inner emotions.

In Vealey's study of female Marines in Chapter II, she had found a theme of "self generated strategies such as exercise, being assertive, setting boundaries, humor, and positive attitudes to be helpful" (89) in assisting the women in their uphill struggles within their male-dominated working environments. MJ's themes of Bravado and Just Doing Her Job are both embedded with multiple examples that match Vealey's theme above. As well, Jane's display of strategies for her success were evident in here ability to be assertive, set boundaries, and maintain a positive attitude. Therefore, Vealey's study has another clear connection to Jane and MJ's stories, beyond the initial themes of stereotypes and sexual harassment.

Additionally, in almost every instance of their stories, they used a combination of peer-support and individual initiative to overcome their struggles. A key example of this is when MJ confronted Richard, by challenging him to a physical pushup challenge, due to his ongoing harassment of her. As a result, not only did he turn her down, but she displayed to

her peers that she was up for any kind of challenge. For Jane, there is the instance of when she showed her capabilities by using her second language skills to take charge of a potentially dangerous situation when her team encountered a random bus in the Iraqi desert, with a group of Middle Eastern men who didn't speak English. There she showed her value to her unit and helped overturn negative stereotypes that others held about her.

Islands of Truth

More than anything else, what I have learned from this research is that each side *has important reasons* for what they believe and they have valid sources to back their claims. However, each side seems to be willfully blinded to the other side. Each side seems to be clinging to their own support while not fully acknowledging the opposing arguments that pose a challenge to their own viewpoint. Both sides are unwilling to accept positive results from the other; for example, when three women graduate from Army Ranger School, we hear criticism of how long it took them to get through, and doubts about the possibilities that they would even be allowed to fail, believing that their success was already pre-planned⁴³. Then on the flip side, when integrated Marine combat units fail to prove themselves as combat effective as all-male units in a controlled experiment, again the validity of the evaluations is disregarded by the opposition⁴⁴. In this way, these islands of truth believe their arguments so strongly that they likely don't need any kind of support to validate their claims for themselves. Indeed, the political arguments made herein on the topic of women in combat are very similar in nature to other political topics where each side believes their own truth at the exclusion of anything that may challenge it.

⁴³ See Jude Eden in Chapter IV, p. 161

⁴⁴ See Bowen, Tom, and Laura Wagner. "Controversial Marine Corps Study On Gender Integration Published In Full." *NPR* 4 November 2015.

Going back to Chapter I and the Value to the Academy section, there is a clear connection here. In the English discipline, and possibly even more so in composition studies, we want our students to engage with controversial issues in order to gain a full and critical understanding. However, much like the issue of women in combat, our modern-day politics are extremely polarized. Sometimes it feels like there is no real growth or development in the exposure of opposing ideas—instead there is a hardening of one’s current position, with more distrust and angst directed at the opposing side, and such seems the case with the issue of women in combat. Policy has moved forward on women in combat, yes. But perspectives still seem staunchly divided.

REVISITING PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of my research is to present the various details of the issue on women in combat in a fair and balanced way. To achieve this, I saw it as important to ask the two following questions:

1. How do women describe their experiences in combat?
2. What are the major arguments being made for and against the issue of women in combat, and how are those arguments supported?

By answering these questions, readers can have a good amount of relevant information at their disposal. It is then up to each individual reader to take the next step and formulate their own opinions on the where they stand on the issue of women in combat.

Therefore, it was not my job to critically analyze the reasons behind why people believe what they believe. In other words, it was not my job to evaluate the sources of support used to make claims on this issue, e.g., validity of various studies mentioned in the previous chapter. There are two good reasons I chose not to analyze those sources. Firstly,

it would ruin any kind of un-biased research from my perspective because once you start looking into the finer details of this matter, everyone's bias will affect their perception and analysis. If I did that, I would taint my research one way or another. Secondly, that task is well beyond the scope of this dissertation and would require an entire research project for that sole purpose.

All of these decisions I made about what to do and what not to do, were decisions I made in order to provide a level playing surface for readers. Those readers, some who may have very little factual information on this issue, can use this dissertation as a starting point to learn about this issue and choose where to go from there to make their ultimate opinions.

Maj. Hegar and Capt. Blair

The themes presented in MJ and Jane's memoirs help to answer the first research question:

1. How do women describe their experiences in combat?

They describe their experiences as an uphill struggle against stereotypes: stereotypes against women in general, and stereotypes specifically directed at women trying to establish careers in the military, especially military combat fields—that is the one shared experience between both memoirs. That experience, and MJ's theme of Sexual Harassment were also significant themes that appeared in Chapter II Literature Review. Beyond that, their descriptions of their experiences are very unique to each woman, e.g., MJ's Bravado theme and Jane's Love in War theme.

Therefore, both MJ and Jane have described their experiences in combat in similar ways as other research of women in combat have shown—their stories reiterate the same problems of sexual harassment and stereotypical perspectives that women face in military

service, and more so in military combat jobs. But their memoirs also offered stories that other research had not revealed—the unique aspects of each individual woman’s journey in the military. That insight is helpful to understand the experiences beyond the known struggles and creates a balanced view of their experiences. By this I mean that our perception on women in combat jobs, let alone women in the military, is skewed when if we only receive negative reports from research that focuses on one particular aspect of experience—such as the research in Chapter II. The experiences presented in *Hesitation Kills* and *Shoot Like a Girl* offer us much more; they offer us a comprehensive view of each author’s lived military experiences: the good, the bad, and all the in-between.

Of course the scope of my dissertation is very limited in answering this first research question entirely. I only analyzed two women’s experiences as they wrote about them. Other than the previously mentioned themes of Sexual Harassment and Coping with Stereotypes, MJ and Jane’s memoirs represent themes that show the unique nature of their individual military experiences.

Bravado vs. Adopting Masculinity

MJ’s theme of bravado was a key was that she described her experiences. As mentioned previously in the data analysis of her memoir, she embodied the characteristics and actions in that theme in a different way than the theme of Adopting Masculinity from Chapter II—by way of perceived ownership of the personality trait, rather than a temporary strategy for success. For example, MJ’s love for fast motorcycles and heavy firepower, as she described it in the previous excerpts, have nothing to do with any outward appearances or attempts to assist assimilation into her male peer group (i.e. she didn’t show off her bike to her male co-workers). By way of contrast, in Sasson-Levy’s research, one woman named

Tali describes her mother's perception of Tali's personality more as a strategy for success. When Tali was in the service her mother described her as abrasive and aggressive—as opposed to her much softer, and less tough personality after she was finished with her time in the military. However, in both cases, whether adopted or inherent, the behaviors described in both the Bravado and Adopting masculinity themes were enhancing characteristics that provided support—and outlet—for the women who embodied them.

A Counter-narrative of Struggle but Success

Jane's memoir runs contrary in many ways to the two studies in Chapter II that had female Marine participants (Brownson and Vealey). While Jane's experiences did reflect many of the negative aspects found in those studies, her ability to triumph over her struggles is a key difference from those studies, which often focused primarily on the struggles described by the participants. Indeed, Jane expressed similar emotions and experiences (e.g., Debaucher constantly shutting her out and leaving her with no active role in her unit at many times). But through all her struggles, Jane succeeded—something we didn't hear about as much in the other research. And in the end of her story, she had solved her biggest problem, through her own efforts along with the help and advice of a few key peer supporters: she had become actively involved in her unit—despite Debaucher's effort to keep her out.

Public Discourse

Looking at the data from the articles and commenters from Chapter III answers the second research question about what sources of support are being used to ground arguments from both sides:

2. What are the major arguments being made for and against the issue of women in combat, and how are those arguments supported?

The arguments for and against women in combat are based on experience, observation and knowledge of human nature, and results from research and experiments with women in combat. The following is a brief summary of each claim made and its related source of support.

Claim 1: *Women Are Able to Meet the Exact Same Training Standards Already in Place for Men.*⁴⁵

Primary Support: *Female soldiers graduating from Army Ranger School, female enlisted Marines completing infantry boot camp.*

With the success of women in Ranger School and the enlisted Marine infantry, women's triumph over the pre-existing male training standards was and still is a major claim by supporters of women in combat. These two events served as the main source of support for the argument that women are physically capable for combat jobs. In the words of Teresa Fazio, a female Marine combat veteran, "I am 5-foot-1 and 118 pounds. Marching 20 miles in 80 pounds of gear was more difficult for me than for my bigger comrades, but not impossible" (Fazio). Therefore, this first claim was based on very recent female military successes that showed their capabilities in relation to military combat jobs.

⁴⁵ Claim 1 and 2 (189-90) are from the Okay, Get Over It. The Ban Has Been Lifted—Women Are Doing This! Section of Chapter V.

Claim 2: *Inequality Between the Sexes Is a Primary Obstacle to Integrating Women into Combat Jobs.*

Primary Support: *Unequal acceptance, official recognition, and career advancement of women.*

The claim of inequality between the sexes has been a major claim presented throughout the literature looked at in this research. This claim of inequality has been supported in a variety of ways including women's combat performance, prior to the lifting of the ban on women in combat. The inequality exists by way of having women who have served in combat but have not received equal recognition or career advancement as a result of their combat experience⁴⁶. According to Anu Bhagwati, "As tens of thousands of women have proved over 13 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, women are capable of the combat skills necessary to fight alongside their male counterparts." However, those women who were serving in combat often did not receive the appropriate accolades and career advancements due to the restrictions on their combat service. This second claim was made based on a long history of inequality and women's successes in the military.

Claim 1: *The Liberal Political Agenda Is Superseding Military Effectiveness.*⁴⁷

Support: *Disregard of female Marine's failures in Marine IOC and integration experiments, major push for women in combat without any clear benefit to military effectiveness, disregard of natural biological difference between men and women.*

⁴⁶ See Shinkman, Paul D. "ACLU Sues Pentagon Over Women in Combat." U.S. News and World Report 27 November 2012.

⁴⁷ Claim 1 and 2 (190-91) are from the Hold on, Now. Our Fighting Forces Are Falling Apart Because of This! Section of Chapter V.

As the push to integrate women into combat faced challenges along the way, the claim that it was motivated by politics rather than military strategy became prevalent. Support for this claim came from various integration experiments conducted by the Marine Corps⁴⁸; where unfavorable results on women's performances were not taken into account when making the decision to lift the ban on women in combat jobs. Looked at this way, this first opposition claim takes a pragmatic look at the results of recent military experiments with women and the refusal to make logical decisions based on those results.

Other ways this claim is supported is by citing cultural examples of men and women's separate competitions in sports and the international Olympics—and how those examples are being ignored; the argument based on the Olympics is that men and women are on different levels of physical fitness. As a result, both genders are most successful when they compete against their own gender, using gender-specific standards of excellence. In that way, they are competing in the same events but in different categories.

Claim 2: *Biological Differences Are Real: Strength Limitations and Sexual Tensions Make Women in Combat a Bad Idea.*

Primary Support: *Natural differences between men and women, women failures and/or struggles in military integration experiments.*

Of course, this claim has been around for a long time because it is rooted in human biology. Less testosterone and muscle mass on the female body has led to the claim that women's bodies are not suited for the physically demanding tasks of military combat jobs. Added on top of this is the fact that men and women are attracted to each other, and having women in

⁴⁸ See Bowen, Tom, and Laura Wagner. "Controversial Marine Corps Study On Gender Integration Published In Full." *NPR* 4 November 2015. and Lamothe, Dan. "Women now 0 for 29 in attempting Marine Infantry Officer Course." *The Washington Post* 8 April 2015.

close quarters with men could potentially disrupt the cohesive atmosphere that binds men together in these jobs. Sources of support for the limited strength claim come very recently from the challenges and failures that female candidates have had attempting to enter into elite military training schools such as the Marine's Infantry Officer Course. The sexual distraction claim is usually founded on more general and pragmatic claims about human biology and the consequences of both sexes working together in the close confines of military combat jobs as a result of that human nature.

WHAT'S NEXT?

It's possible that future research could be done to get a better idea of how combat effective integrated military units are compared with all-male units. In the pre-ban era before 2016, it was difficult to judge and required contrived experimentation. Now, post-ban lifting, it would be much easier to conduct that kind of research directly with already-existing integrated units.

However, some currently worry that the Trump administration will reinstate the ban on women in combat. At the time of this dissertation (summer 2018), Trump had only been president for a year and a half, leaving some uncertainty for future policy changes on this issue. This concern was at center stage when President Trump appointed General Mattis as Secretary of Defense—based on Mattis' prior stance on women in combat. During a 2014 speech to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, General Mattis claimed that "The idea of putting a woman in [combat] is not setting them up for success," and "It would only be someone who never crossed the line of departure into close-quarters fighting that would ever even promote such an idea" (Mattis 2014 as qtd by McCormack, 2017).

More specifically, Mattis' dismissed the concern over women's physical readiness for combat, stating "that's not the point" (Sisk 2016). His concern was with the sexual tension that may develop in an integrated unit:

Mattis also said he was concerned about "Eros" in the trenches when young men and women live in close quarters in the "atavistic" atmosphere of combat. "I don't care if you go anywhere in history where you would find that this has worked," he said of putting "healthy young men and women together and we expect them to act like little saints." (Sisk 2016)

However, these claims on women in combat were all prior to being nominated as Secretary of Defense by then President-elect Donald Trump. Mattis' more recent statements on the issue don't foretell of any plans of reversing the integration of women in combat. According to *The Daily Beast*, Mattis made himself clear during his confirmation hearing:

"The standards are the standards and when people meet the standards then that's the end of the discussion on that," the general said, telling the committee that if confirmed as Defense Secretary, he would not enter the office with an agenda to oppose women in combat. (Mak 2017)

On his plans for women in combat, Mattis claimed "If someone brings me a problem, I'll look at. But I'm not coming in looking for problems... I'm looking for ways to get the department so it's at its most lethal stance" (Mak 2017). If that statement is true, then it all depends on how an integrated force operates in a wartime environment. All of the rhetoric we hear from both sides can really only be tested under combat conditions from an integrated combat unit. Women participating, and passing, military training schools can

only give us limited insight. And much of that we've already seen as women have successfully graduated from Marine and Army enlisted infantry schools, along with the Army's elite Ranger School. Moreover, the Marines have already begun field training with integrated units. According to *Marine Corps Times*, the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines "received three female infantry Marines: a rifleman, machine gunner and mortar Marine." The unit's executive officer, Maj. Charles Anklam III stated, "Our female Marines will find themselves side-by-side their male counterparts in a fighting hole or in their living conditions for the execution of field or deployed duties" (Schogol 2017).

During a 2018 speech to students at the Virginia Military institute, General Mattis did offer his blunt thoughts on the current integration efforts underway in the military: "There are a few stalwart young ladies who are charging into this, but they are too few." And General Mattis continued, "Clearly the jury is out on it, but what we're trying to do is give it every opportunity to succeed if it can" (Casiano). It was also reported that the Secretary of Defense Mattis has requested from the Army and Marines an evaluation of how well women are being integrated into combat positions. Based on these statements by General Mattis, although the ban on women in combat was lifted in 2016, its success is yet to be determined by U.S. Military leaders.

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