

THE BATTLES WOMEN OUGHT TO FIGHT: STRATEGIC
CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMINISTS AND THE ARMED FORCES

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMINISTS AND THE ARMED FORCES*

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MSc(Econ) in Strategic Studies (Specialist)

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September 2012

The word length of this dissertation is 14,990 words.

I hereby declare that this work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree. It is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended. I hereby also give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Karolien E.M. Michiels
12th September 2012

Acknowledgements

Studying Strategic Studies was an impulsive decision, a reaction to meeting West Point people. Being from non-militarist Belgium, I did not see why one would join the military. I started reading and became fascinated with the fundamental questions the military raises. As unfamiliar as it was, then, military strategy was not a problematic choice for me. Feminism was. I suspected that if feminism be important, it must be because I am a girl. I do not want to make choices because I am a girl.

To quote Winifred Holtby, I wrote this dissertation *because* 'I dislike everything that feminism implies. I desire an end to the whole business, the demands for equality, the suggestion of sex war, the very name feminist. I want to be about the work in which my real interests lie. ... But while inequality exists, while injustice is done and opportunity denied to the great majority of women, I shall have to be a feminist.' Feminism is relevant, not because of gender but because we need to speak up for those who are less heard.

I thoroughly enjoyed the 'Women & War' module. Many thanks to Dr. Jennifer Mathers, my module convener and, after I had concluded that *actually, women and war is pretty cool*, my dissertation supervisor. She gave reading advice and commented on arguments. She let me talk about my frustration and exaltation – rarely anything in between – with the literature and showed a way out. She graciously allowed me to borrow many books. Thank you for having me as an advisee and for your help as my advisor. Many thanks also to those who will read and mark this work.

在家靠父母，出外靠朋友 – at home you can rely on your family, abroad you have friends. Toon was probably the first one. Thank you for everything. Sorry for keeping you up. And distracting you from work. And dragging you to all sorts of events. Maria, thank you for all the Afternoon Tea Club meetings, the unforgettable quotes, the adventures and the crazy amounts of laughs and I.R. debate. A very specific thank you for your remark on the need to dehistoricize feminist theory. Many thanks to Tabea, Mike, Matt, Ursula, the Ph.D. community and the debaters.

Michael thinks no part of a dissertation is more boring than the acknowledgement of the boy/girlfriend and probably that I should not be writing this (I would say one can only *hope* that the actual dissertation is the better read). The problem is that he also happened to be my debating coach and that I really learned more from him than from anyone else this year. As far as building arguments and critical thinking (*and* making dinner) goes, he is the better half. It was not just the amount of history and philosophy that you explained over the course of the year. It was the way you taught me to argue in relentlessly logical ways about social sciences and other things non-positivist. It was all the analysis about essays. And all our conversations about this dissertation even when you were busy with a much larger Ph.D. – especially our discussion about violence, passion and *Fight Club*. I shudder to think what a mess chapter four would have been without it.

David Jones, see chapter six for the Game of Thrones reference you were lobbying for.

My parents generously supported me in this third degree, and I am happy to reassure them I am done (except for the one I will be starting next week, of course). Thank you for everything, always. A big thank you also to my grandparents for all the cards and the simply decadent amount of Easter chocolate sent across the English Channel - *een dikke merci aan mijn grootouders voor alle kaartjes en de decadente hoeveelheid paaschocolade die het Kanaal over zijn gestuurd*. And as usual, my gratitude goes to all those siblings and friends who support me, as my sister Laura assured me, 'in good and in idiotic plans'!

Abstract

This dissertation argues that combat roles in the United States' Armed Forces should be opened up to women. It does so firstly by establishing positive reasons – benefits that would come from having women in combat – and secondly by giving negative reasons – demonstrations that the disadvantages of women in combat do not outweigh the benefits. Both for practical and principled reasons, women should therefore be allowed to serve in combat. Subsequently, two chapters are devoted to the primary parties affected in this debate: the Armed Forces and women. This part of the dissertation explains why both these groups have an interest in repealing the combat exclusion. The Armed Forces have this interest as the combat exclusion is part of a wider misogynistic culture that has come to hurt the Armed Forces. For women, access to combat is beneficial as it entitles them to the direct and indirect benefits connected to that essence of military service. The overall conclusion is that allowing women into combat is the right choice, both from a practical and from a principled point of view, and that this would benefit not only society, but also the Armed Forces and women as a group.

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CHAPTER ONE Women in arms: introduction

萬里赴戎機 關山度若飛
朔氣傳金柝 寒光照鐵衣
將軍百戰死 壯士十年歸
(花木兰)¹

*She went a long distance for the business of war
She crossed passes and mountains like she were flying
Northern gusts carried the rattle of army pots
Chilly light shone on iron armour
Generals died in a hundred battles
Stout soldiers returned after ten years
(The ballad of Mulan)²*

What, why, how

The Chinese warrior girl Mulan was said to have defended her country under the Tuoba Wei dynasty.³ Like other fictional (Epipole of Carystus, Polly Perks) and real (Joan of Arc, Nadezhda Durova, Maria Quitéria) women from all over the world, she did so posing as a man.⁴ Little surprise there: the combination of women and combat has historically been fraught with difficulties and remains problematic today. This dissertation is about the roles of women serving in armed forces. Its overall argument is that maintaining combat exclusion for women is undesirable both for those concerned with women's interests and for those

1 百度百科, 木兰诗. Available at <http://baike.baidu.com/view/31736.htm> [Last accessed 1 September 2012]. Text reconverted from modern Chinese to classical Chinese using *Wenlin*.

2 Translation based on but different from H. Frankel. My version translates the expression '萬里' without exoticism, as 'great distance' rather than '10,000 miles' (interestingly, Frankel translates '10,000' literally and 'miles' liberally). The tense, a historical present, was changed as English in this context often prefers a past tense.

Frankel, H. *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 68-72, cited in Columbia University, *The Balled of Mulan (Ode of Mulan)*. Available at <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/china/mulan.pdf> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

3 Chen S. *Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 2012), p. 41.

4 Pratchett, T. *Monstrous Regiment* (London, Doubleday, 2003).

Smith, W. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology, Volume II* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1849), p. 41.

Beaune, C. *Jeanne d'Arc: Vérités et légendes* (Paris, Perrin, 2008).

Heldt, B. 'Nadezhda Durova: Russia's Cavalry Maid', *History Today*, 33:2 (1983), pp. 24-28.

Vidas Lusóponas, *Maria Quitéria*. Available at http://www.vidaslusofonas.pt/maria_quiteria.htm [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

concerned with the Armed Forces.⁵ Although the conclusions bear relevance to other Western liberal democracies, the focus will be on the United States.

The place women should occupy in armed forces has long been subject to intense debate. One form of that question that is currently particularly relevant is whether women should be allowed to serve in so-called combat roles, as combat is the main area from which they are still principally excluded.⁶

The role of women in armed forces constitutes an important debate for a number of reasons. The military – like the police – is crucial to our conception of the state ever since Weber defined it as the organisation that maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.⁷ It has a long history of association with the concept of citizenship.⁸ The American military budget for 2012 was close to one trillion dollar (including Veteran Affairs and Overseas Contingency Operations – Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan).⁹ The Armed Forces' purpose, as traditionally

5 'The Armed Forces' refers to the United States' military, whereas 'armed forces' is the general designation for militaries as a concept and all over the world.

6 They are also excluded from Special Operations Forces (there are a number of those Forces; most of them technically speaking fall under a specific other branch of the military, such as the Green Berets of the Army and the SEALs of the Navy, but they are commonly considered a different category). It is a misunderstanding that women are not allowed in the Marine, although it is the most male-dominated branch of all, with 6.8% women, whereas for the other branches the percentage is between 13.6% (Army) and 19.1% (Airforce). Numbers as of April 2012.

Dao, J. 'Marines Moving Women Toward the Front Lines'. *The New York Times* (online), 24 April 2012.

Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/25/us/marines-moving-women-toward-the-front-lines.html> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Statistic Brain, *Women in the Military Statistics*. Available at <http://www.statisticbrain.com/women-in-the-military-statistics/> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

7 Weber, M. *Politik als Beruf: Geistige Arbeit als Beruf. Vier Vorträge vor dem Freistudentischen Bund. Zweiter Vortrag* (München, Duncker & Humblot, 1919), p. 4.

8 Feinman, I. *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers & Feminist Antimilitarists* (London, New York University Press, 2000), pp. 44-110; 198-212.

Enloe, C. *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London, Pandora Press, 1988), p. 16.

Kerber, L. 'May All Our Citizens Be Soldiers and All Our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguities of Female Citizenship in the New Nation', in *Women, Militarism, & War*, edited by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Savage, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), pp. 89-104.

Snyder, R. 'The Citizen-Soldier Tradition and Gender Integration of the U.S. Military', *Armed Forces and Society*, 29:2 (2003), pp. 185-204.

Campbell D. 'The Regimented Women of World War II', in *Women, Militarism, & War*, edited by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Savage, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), pp. 107-122.

Jones, K. 'Dividing the Ranks: Women and the Draft', in *Women, Militarism, & War*, edited by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Savage, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), pp. 125-136.

9 The budget of the National Intelligence Program (which is classified anyhow) is not included.

understood, is the very safeguarding and survival of the state – *conditio sine qua non* for all other matters of state. The Armed Forces, in other words, are the protectors of, constitutive for and part of the state and nation. They form an important part of the American identity and are omnipresent in popular culture.¹⁰ They are neither far away nor an institution separate from the rest of society; and what they do, has an impact in, on and for society.

Then there are women, whose importance as a group hardly needs to be stated. They form over half of the population of the United States.¹¹ Women are equal citizens to men, at the very least on principle. Yet women have a problematic relationship with the military and with citizenship.

To a large extent problems encountered by women in the military are problems they encounter in greater numbers than men everywhere. These problems include sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, becoming the victim of violence, a bigger likelihood to be killed (as a civilian), expectations of free or cheap labour, lesser career chances and other forms of double standards.¹² The Armed Forces, however, are especially problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, violence by the Armed Forces carries an aura of legitimate violence.¹³ The importance of their task and the inherent acceptance that violence may be needed for the Forces to function properly problematizes judgement of and critique on military violence. In a similar way, the importance of the military task leads to a general acceptance of military hierarchy and discipline, with the individual subordinated to the overall cause. This makes complaints about treatment of women or pressure on them inherently problematic. Secondly, the military

Office of Management and Budget, 'Fiscal Year 2012: Budget of the U.S. Government' (Washington: Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2011), pp. 59-64; 133-140.

10 Stahl, R. *Militainment, Inc.: War, Media, and Popular Culture* (New York, Routledge, 2009).

Enloe, C. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000).

11 United States Census Bureau, 'Age and Sex Composition in the United States: 2010 Census Brief' (Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011), p. 2.

12 UN Women, 'Facts & Figures on Women Worldwide', (New York: UN Women Headquarters, 2010).

13 Of course, this is true regardless of whether that violence is directed at men or at women, but we know it is disproportionately directed at women.

is one of the most masculinized institutions that exist, and as such its impact on women – and gender roles, including those of men, in general – is especially important. Thirdly, there is no comparable state institution (and it is hard to think of systematic examples in the private sector as well) that systematically and principally (as well as *legally*) excludes women from certain roles.¹⁴ Moreover, because the military is an institution so central to the state, exclusion from parts of it might very well threaten women's inclusion in the state, although this claim is less straightforward than it seems. The relationship between women and the military has many aspects. We focus on women *as soldiers* both because of the contemporary relevance of this issue, with the ongoing debate on women in combat roles, and because it highlights the problematic relationship with women as citizens, rather than as victims.

The question whether women have a place in the United States military Forces has by now become a moot one. Although problems remain and need to be addressed, they obviously factually do. There is no meaningful debate about a return to a completely male army. One question that remains is whether women ought to serve in combat roles; the argument of this dissertation is that they ought to and this will be demonstrated in four steps. The next chapter explains how the status-quo hurts all stakeholders, including men and the Armed Forces, and analyses possible benefits of women in combat. These are positive reasons: they explain why the exclusion should be repealed. The third chapter looks at negative – enabling but not compelling – reasons. These arguments explain why the exclusion should not *not* be repealed. The fourth chapter takes a closer look at the Armed Forces. It argues that the military's take on women is symptomatic for its identity, and, crucially, that this identity might not be the best way forward for the Armed Forces. The fifth chapter addresses a continuing debate within feminist literature: whether women should *want* to serve. The proposition says women should strive to serve for all the benefits, direct and indirect, that can be gained from military

¹⁴ Without providing an alternative for women. Separate sports leagues do not count.

service. The opposition says the indirect harms ultimately outweigh the benefits and that women should resist joining. We demonstrate that the case made by those in favour of serving is logically more consistent than the case of the opposition. The last chapter is the conclusion and sums up how the benefits of women in combat roles outweigh the harms, both for the Armed Forces and for those concerned with the feminist cause.

The 'combat' exclusion: understanding the debate

The literature

While a brief overview of the literature on women in combat is useful, it is not necessary to retrace all arguments in great detail at this point: the second and third chapter debate whether women should be allowed to serve and discuss the merits of the arguments that constitute the (relevant) bulk of the debate. As such, they not only engage with and analyse the existing literature, they also take a clear stance about it. The fifth chapter does the same regarding the feminist debate. The fourth chapter is the construction of a debate rather than an analysis of an existing debate. It draws upon works on (military) culture, strategic imperatives, and gender theory.

Interest for women and gender perspectives in International Relations is relatively new and only got up to speed in the late 1980s. Enloe, Tickner and Elshtain are three names who first opened up this debate. Enloe narrates how women are left out of the picture of International Politics and argues that 'gender makes the world go round'.¹⁵ She also extensively wrote about the process of militarization and the impact on women. While she has little to say about women in combat in specific, she was crucial in generating the space in which this debate

¹⁵ Enloe. *Khaki*.
Enloe. *Maneuvers*.

takes place. Tickner engaged International Relations as a discipline.¹⁶ She demonstrated its 'masculinist underpinnings' and showed how the discipline itself is gendered. Elshtain is the one who most engaged with the topic of war; her characterization of archetypal men as 'just warriors' and women as 'beautiful souls' remains a key understanding about the relation between women and war.¹⁷ The issue of women and combat has been addressed by feminists, strategists, military personnel and policy makers. The academic literature on it largely consists of contributions by the first three groups. Whether women should *want* to serve is a feminist debate that runs along the division between liberal and radical feminists. Throughout the dissertation, attention is given to the wider cultural context of the issue as well as to the most recent developments: references to popular culture, policy documents and news articles will appear where relevant.

Understanding the debate on women in the military

Women, first allowed into the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948, currently constitute 14.6% of all military personnel but are excluded from combat roles.¹⁸ This exclusion is highly contested, mainly but not exclusively by feminists (although certainly not all).

It seems unlikely that the exclusion of women from combat roles can be maintained in the long run. The 'tide of history' is clearly against it.¹⁹ Looking at the wider history of women in

16 Peterson, V. 'Feminisms and International Relations', *Gender & History*, 10:3 (1998), pp. 582-583.

17 Elshtain, J. *Women and War* (New York, Basic Books, 1987).

18 Situation as of April 2012.

Statistic Brain, *Women in the Military Statistics*. Available at <http://www.statisticbrain.com/women-in-the-military-statistics/> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

19 Baker, K. 'Marine Corps Officially Says They'll Let Women Train for (Some Types of) Combat'. *Jezebel* (online), 9 July 2012. Available at <http://jezebel.com/5924571/marine-corps-officially-say-theyll-let-women-train-for-some-types-of-combat> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

Carreiras, H. *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (New York, Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-3.

Keating, J. 'Where a Woman's Place Is on the Front Lines'. *Foreign Policy* (online), 10 February 2012. Available at

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/10/where_a_womans_place_is_on_the_front_lines [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Siegel, M. 'Australia Says It Will Open Combat Roles to Women'. *International Herald Tribune* (online), 27

the military, it moreover becomes obvious that the debate about combat roles is but the latest stage in a debate about whether women should serve the military in ever more masculine roles. First they were not allowed in the military at all, then women were allowed only as nurses, thereafter in mainly clerical and other 'feminine' positions, followed by an ever wider variety of specialisations.²⁰ Currently they are accepted in a majority of functions, but not in combat roles – combat roles being defined, as will be demonstrated, in highly inconsistent ways. The arguments used to defend either the exclusion or the inclusion of women during all these stages remained remarkably stable.²¹ This is telling. If the debate were really about whether women can do men's military jobs and whether women's inclusion would hurt the army in whichever way, one would expect the various historical stages of inclusion to conclusively have proven some of these arguments wrong.²² At the very least, if a former stage has proven the arguments against women's inclusion invalid by demonstrating the success of women's inclusion (and no decision for inclusion so far seems to have been turned back because of any intrinsic failure of women's inclusion), those against inclusion would need to prove how their case is different from the last one. In other words, applied to the current status-quo: given that the integration of women in all military roles they currently fulfil has proven overall satisfactory, those who argue against women in combat roles need to demonstrate how combat roles are different from the other roles that women have successfully

September 2011. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/28/world/asia/australia-will-allow-women-to-serve-in-frontline-combat.html?_r=3 [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

- 20 Peach, L. 'Women at War: The Ethics of Women in Combat', *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy*, 15 (1994), pp. 201-203.
- Campbell, D. 'Women in Combat: The World War II Experiences in the United States, Great Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union', *Journal of Military History*, 57:2 (1993), p.301-323.
- Skaine, R. *Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat* (London, McFarland and Company, 1999), pp. 45-60.
- 21 I almost inadvertently noticed this during my readings. I would start reading a text, come across familiar arguments in only slightly varying disguises, and only realise through side references to the respective current status-quot that these articles were written in a different historical context; nevertheless always charging and ducking the same ammunition.
- 22 The one change that has happened is less focus on women's physical capacities and more focus on the problems of bonding and group cohesion. Yet both groups of arguments were and remain important.

gained access to (or they need to demonstrate the failure of women in these roles, but they rarely choose this approach). Yet neither side is very willing to learn from history or from inconvenient facts. This debate is ultimately a normative debate.

Understanding combat exclusion

Three further aspects need to be kept in mind. The first one is that in fact, women are and have since long been serving in roles officially closed to them, including combat.²³ The second one is that the current legislation on women in combat has roots in congressional decisions in which the women's issue was *never discussed* – the combat exclusion for women was an amendment that passed without scrutiny in 1948 because it seemed obvious at the time that women ought not to serve.²⁴ Since then, it has been subject to debate; but of course those favouring the status-quo are at an advantage. Because of the original argumentative vacuum and the changed assumptions about women (now equal and capable unless proven otherwise), however, the burden of proof really ought to lie with those defending the status-quo. One should not assume that the legislation came into existence for advised reasons in the first place. The third one is that since the original exclusion, no definition of combat coherent with the reality on the ground has yet been reached.²⁵ As Kornblum concludes, the most consistent definition of a combat role seems to be that it is a role from which women should be excluded.²⁶

In 1948, the Army did not *have* a definition of combat.²⁷ The Navy defined it as all service

23 Peach. 'Women at War', pp. 199-200.

Center for Military Readiness, 'New Army Policy on Women in Land Combat: Almost Anything Goes' (Livonia: Center for Military Readiness, 2007), pp. 1-8.

Center for Military Readiness, 'Army Still Violating Policy and Law on Women in land Combat' (Livonia: Center for Military Readiness, 2006), pp. 1-4.

24 Decew, J. 'The Combat Exclusion and the Role of Women in the Military', *Hypatia*, 10:1 (1995) pp. 61-63.

25 Kornblum, S. 'Women Warriors in a Men's World: The Combat Exclusion', *Law and Inequality*, 2 (1984) pp. 353-365.

26 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', pp. 353-365.

27 Strictly speaking, the Army did not fall under the congressional statute that excluded women, but it based its

aboard ships, a definition so unworkable that it consequently used civilian, Air Force and Army women to do what was impossible for Navy women.²⁸ The Air Force defined combat as 'service aboard aircraft engaged in combat missions'.²⁹ The Defence Department issued a definition of 'close combat' thirty years later (without clarifying whether there was a distinction with 'combat').³⁰ Combat involved engagement with the enemy while armed and exposed to direct enemy fire, as well as being subject to 'high probability of direct physical contact with' the enemy and to 'a substantial risk of capture'.³¹ The Army's definition (of '*direct* combat', this time) of 1982 is similar but adds that the soldier must be closing with the enemy while repelling his assault.³² From 1988 to 1994 a 'risk rule' existed, which excluded women based on risk assessments. It was rescinded when Desert Storm made it clear that there are no frontlines anymore and that practically everybody in a war zone is at risk.³³ Direct combat assignments remained forbidden, but an attempt to codify this into law in 2005 failed in Congress and was opposed by the Pentagon.³⁴ In February 2012, the Pentagon announced that 'women would be formally permitted in crucial and dangerous jobs closer to the front lines', opening up some 14,000 positions (in which de facto some women were already serving).³⁵ For the infantry, combat tank units, and Special Operations commando units,

policy on the 'perceived intent of Congress'. Also note that the draft still existed (until 1967). Women were allowed to constitute maximum 2% of the Forces (abolished in 1967 too).

Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', p. 89.

28 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', pp. 358-359.

29 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', p. 359.

30 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', p. 359.

31 In 1985, these three conditions need not be met all three at once anymore, but one *or* another needed to exist. Skaine. *Women*, p. 29.

32 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', pp. 359-360. Skaine. *Women*, p. 29.

33 Cushman, J. 'History of Women in Combat Still Being Written, Slowly'. *The New York Times* (online), 9 February 2012. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/us/history-of-women-in-combat-still-being-written-slowly.html> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

34 Cushman. 'History'

35 Cushman. 'History'

Keating, J. 'Foreign Policy: Women On The Front Lines', *National Public Radio* (online), 13 February 2012. Available at <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/13/146802589/foreign-policy-women-on-the-front-lines> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, 'Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S.. Armed Forces'

however – together 238,000, or one-fifth of all positions – the exclusion remains in place, even if it has been argued to be 'unhelpful at least, irrelevant for the most part, and a compromising issue at worst'.³⁶

Definitions of combat, including the current ones, do not cover all situations that are in practical and military terms considered combat, they do not reflect real risks (often logistics and support rather than offensive troops are targeted by the enemy) and their application has been and remains inconsistent. They are grossly useless in military or strategic terms. For the purpose of the debate, however, combat roles can meaningfully be understood as the most risky, strenuous parts of military service that constitute the essence of what the Armed Forces are about: the offensive destruction of enemy forces. This essentially characterises combat roles (all over the world) and it is according to this understanding that the debate about the role of women is held.

(Washington: Department of Defense, 2012), p. 19.
36 Cushman. 'History'

CHAPTER TWO Why allow women into combat? Stakeholders and gains

*Aux armes, citoyens
Formez vos bataillons
Marchons, marchons
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons
(la Marseillaise)*

*To arms, citizens
Form you battalions
March on, march on
Let an impure blood
Water our furrows
(French national anthem)*

The debate on whether women ought to fulfil combat roles has multiple facets. This chapter discusses the stakes. Once it is demonstrated how current combat laws hurt the different stakeholders and possible gains from the repulsion of the exclusion are pointed out, the burden of proof lies on those who want to maintain the status-quo. In other words, because combat exclusion is severely problematic, as will be proven, those who want to defend it need to show that to allow women to combat is worse.³⁷ Their arguments will be discussed (and proved insufficient) in the next chapter.

Public and policy debate about the stakes

Policy and public debate, often fuelled by feminists and obviously concerned with national security, has mainly focused on three aspects.³⁸ Firstly, there is the question of whether women

³⁷ Argumentation in favour of combat exclusion rarely outright *denies* the harms; it usually dismisses them in favour of overriding national security or military interests (see chapter four) (or, on a rarer occasion, in favour of the interests of women, see chapter five).

³⁸ This debate is ongoing and of course a combination of these arguments and rebuttal is often used within one article. I have made a similar description of this debate in an essay for the 'Women and War' module in the second semester. For an impression of the current debate, the following articles can be interesting: Angyal, C. 'Congressional Battle Ready: Iraq War veteran Tammy Duckworth runs for office and has some words for Rick Santorum'. *The American Prospect* (online), 23 February 2012. Available at <http://prospect.org/article/congressional-battle-ready> [Last accessed 17 March 2012]. Broadwell, P. 'Wanted: Women in top military roles'. *CNN* (online), 22 February 2012. Available at <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/22/wanted-more-women-in-military-roles/> [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

are capable of fulfilling the *duties* associated with combat roles. This concerns whether women would be an asset or a liability from a military point of view and as such, the interests of the Armed Forces are at stake. Secondly, as feminists have convincingly demonstrated, military roles not only consist of duties, but also entail a large number of implicit *rights*. These include entitlement to honour, duty, agency and social status; to violence and to political and nationalist engagements. Having women fulfil these roles means entitling them to those rights. Combat roles, as the most masculine and exemplary roles of all, are especially important. The third aspect is how the importance and masculinity of military service in a patriarchal society militarizes gender roles. How does serving the military influence the societal status of an entire gender? If women cannot serve or are excluded from the symbolically important roles, this reconfirms the narrative of women as passive and subordinate to men and their protection. It also inhibits women's credibility in politics and as citizens.³⁹

Carmon, I. 'Should Women Serve In Special Forces?'. *Jezebel* (online), 20 May 2011. Available at <http://jezebel.com/5803981/should-women-serve-in-special-forces> [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

Franks, T. 'Franks: Women Should Not Serve in Combat Roles Because of Gender Differences'. *Roll Call* (online), 20 May 2011. Available at http://www.rollcall.com/features/Defense-2011_Policy-Briefing/policy_briefings/-205824-1.html [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

Fritz, J. 'Women's Equality in the military isn't all about PT'. *Ink Spots* (online), 13 February 2012. Available at <http://tachedhuile.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/womens-equality-in-military-isnt-all.html> [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

Hirshman, L. 'Female soldiers fight the brass ceiling'. *Salon* (online), 11 February 2012. Available at http://www.salon.com/2012/02/11/female_soldiers_fight_the_brass_ceiling/ [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

Jacob, G. 'Women in Combat: The Crow Is Cooking'. *Huffington Post* (online), 17 February 2012. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/greg-jacob/women-in-combat-the-crow-_b_1284672.html [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

Jelinek, P. 'Military commission: Lift ban, allow women in combat'. *Associated Press* (online), 14 January 2011. Available at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41083172/ns/us_news-life/t/military-commission-lift-ban-allow-women-combat/#.T2Z3utnnNOR [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

For an overview of the debate as a whole, see International Debate Education Association. 'Debate: Women in Combat'. *International Debate Education Association* (online), 27 September 2011. Available at http://debatepedia.idebate.org/en/index.php/Debate:_Women_in_combat [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

39 Tobias, S. 'Shifting Heroisms: The Uses of Military Service in Politics', in *Women, Militarism, and War*, edited by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), p.163-186.

Kerber, L. 'May All Our Citizens Be Soldiers and All Our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguities of Female Citizenship in the Nez Nations', in *Women, Militarism, and War*, edited by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), p.89-104.

Woollacott, A. 'Women Munition Makers, War, and Citizenship', in *The Women & War Reader*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (London, New York University Press, 1998), p.126-131.

Other aspects have been overlooked. The first one is the impact of women's status in the military on the *majority* of (military) women. Feminism has the problematic tendency of looking at the experience of high-class, white, high-ranking women.⁴⁰ It often focuses on fights for equality at the top, overlooking the more basic concerns of many women. For instance, the economical impetus to serve in the military (do women have an equal opportunity to get a job in the Armed Forces?), never receives as much attention as the military as an elite career option (do women have equal chances to become a general?), even though the former aspect might concern many more women. Secondly, feminism in its struggle for women's positions tends to ignore men's concerns and plights (although it tends to be good in recognising and criticizing male interests), often overlooking possibly valuable cooperation and common interests. Men's and women's interests in the Armed Forces are consequently almost always portrayed as a zero-sum game. The third aspect is that women, including those in feminism, still are rarely bold enough to claim the basic equality of citizenship.⁴¹ That is, women rarely make the argument that they ought to have the same political rights as men, including military service, in no unclear terms. Proponents of women in combat roles think wrongly (and maybe their opponents think this, too) that they need to demonstrate that women make the military *better* and that they therefore should be allowed to serve. It would be more strategic – and correct – to remind everyone of the basic assumption of equality and leave it to the opposition to prove that women are *unacceptably much worse* than men at combat.

Not only men's and women's interests are often portrayed as a zero-sum game: feminist and military interests are perceived as just as incompatible. Yet while some might have more to

40 Phillips, A. *Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class* (London, Virago Press, 1987), pp. 1-14.
 hooks, b. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Botson, South End Press, 2000).

41 Or maybe they see it as a given, but it is nevertheless a strategic weakness.

gain than other from the revocation of the combat exclusion, there are clear benefits for all relevant stakeholders. It is true that some stakeholders have more to lose, too; but these losses constitute the loss of unfair advantages held for too long. As such they are invalid arguments. We first establish the benefits for all parties (men, women, the Armed Forces) of military service and women in combat in the strictest sense, considering soldiering a profession; we then substantiate the more indirect stakes that are linked to the societal and symbolic function of the military as a crucial part of our politics (for men, women and society).

Military service as a profession

Excluding women from combat not only excludes them from a symbolic stronghold but also from real jobs. In February 2012, the Department of Defense announced that it would open up 14,000 places to women (its report to Congress provides an detailed overview of these places and is worth having a look at).⁴² Some 238,000 positions, mainly in infantry, armour and special operations units, will remain closed.⁴³ 66 percent of all Army positions are theoretically open to women; 88 percent of Navy assignments; 99 percent in the Air Force and 68 percent in the Marine Corps.⁴⁴ In reality, these numbers are lower because for many higher-ranking positions, combat experience is a must – and if it is not an explicit requirement, the implicit requirements remain (in the same way that logistics is never a good place to start, even for men). In other words, the combat exclusion severely limits women's career opportunities. Excluding women from the most prestigious assignments (as well as the higher ranks) also means concentrating them in the least well-paid jobs.⁴⁵ Of course, women currently do not get excluded from serving in the Armed Forces altogether by the combat exclusion, as not enough women want to join the Forces to fill all the spots available to them

42 Office Under Secretary, 'Report'

43 Office Under Secretary, 'Report'

44 Office Under Secretary, 'Report'

45 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', pp. 353-365.

(which would theoretically only happen if two-third of the Army becomes female). Women can still serve. Alternatives, however, do not mean that women do not get disadvantaged – especially if for the roles they are allowed to fulfil, they are competing with men who are *also* allowed to serve in these roles. Women who want to join the infantry, cannot do so – and other MOS (Military Occupation Specialities – types of jobs) are obviously *not* the same or equal choices (if they were equal, women would be allowed to join the infantry in the first place). Men do not get competition from women for joining special operations units. Yet women who want to work as translators have to compete with both women and men. The concentration of women in the lowest-paid and lowest-appreciated jobs continues after they leave the military.⁴⁶ Indeed, women not only get less opportunities to make a career in the military; their diminished career chances and lower rankings also mean that they learn less transferable skills such as leadership experience which would be valuable in civilian life.

Then there is the problem of women who de facto operate in combat (far from few, as a scathing 2007 report of the Center for Military Readiness shows).⁴⁷ They take the risks and perform their duties, but they get no official recognition for the sacrifices they are making, which leaves them with most of the disadvantages described earlier and none of the advantages of being out of combat.

The disadvantage most specific to combat exclusion, however, is the symbolic value of combat. Combat is the most masculine and prestigious of all military activities. It is the core purpose of the Armed Forces. All tasks the military performs – intelligence gathering, transport, medical services, administration – ultimately support combat and are tangential for soldiership. Combat exclusion makes *women* tangential. It allows 'the guys' in the military to

46 Skaine. *Women*, pp. 45-60.

47 Peach, L. 'Women at War: The Ethics of Women in Combat', *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Public Policy*, 15 (1994) pp. 199-207.

Center Military Readiness, 'New Army Policy', pp. 1-8.

Center Military Readiness, 'Violating Policy', pp. 1-4.

maintain the myth that women are not necessary for the Armed Forces, that they are second-rang, that they are less. As such, it validates the harassment, including sexual harassment, that many women in the military are subject too.

Less obvious maybe is how military men get hurt by the combat exclusion - although their resentment towards women's 'privileged' position easily provides clues. Women do not get the chance to serve in combat – but this also means that they do not *have* to serve in combat and can serve in 'lighter' positions. Their exclusion from combat means that all women have to be assigned to jobs they are allowed to do, leaving men to bear the strains that women do not get. *If* women get promoted, they do so without having done combat – which equally can breed resentment as it is a double standard.⁴⁸ A protected position can also be a privileged position. Likewise, while women are often not heard in sexual harassment cases, sexual harassment is nevertheless so serious an accusation that men are afraid it can and will be randomly used against them.⁴⁹ They feel that different physical standards are fundamentally unfair – although this is an interesting one. Research suggests that men use complaints about different psychological standards to vent the discomfort that they cannot openly express for reasons of political correctness.⁵⁰ It is certainly so that different standards for different age groups cause nowhere near the same trouble, although the reasons against different standards (letting in weaker people) are just as valid for age discrimination as for sex discrimination. In either case, however, different PT standards are not intrinsic to having women serve and can as such not invalidate the principle of women in combat. Soldiers – men and women – also often feel women get an easier time; although of course, when this same research shows that many

48 Cohn, C. 'How Can She Claim Equal Rights When She Doesn't Have to Do as Many Push-ups as I Do? The Framing of Men's Opposition to Women's Equality in the Military', *Men and Masculinities*, 3:2 (2000) pp. 131-151.

49 Miller, L. 'Not Just Weapons of the Weak: Gender Harassment as a Form of Protest for Army Men', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 60:1 (1997), pp. 32-51.

50 Cohn. 'Claim Equal Rights', pp. 131-151.

higher-ranking male officials acknowledge being softer on women, the leadership is to blame.⁵⁰ The hypermasculine culture that the combat exclusion confirms is aggressive towards women but is also based on men conforming to it.

For the military as an institute, there are harms in the combat exclusion as well. On the most basic level, it prevents the military from benefiting of the services of those women who would do well. The double standards it applies to its service members divides the Forces into two categories of non-interchangeable soldiers, with all the logistical problems and feelings of resentment it brings on both sides. Indeed, the logistical hassle of organisation standards for women or integrating them into combat is often cited as making it not 'worth it' to repeal the exclusion for the few women that would want to join; but the hassle that comes with the exclusion is huge and not merely transitional like installing gender-neutral standards.

Military service as a political act

As already indicated, the debate about women in combat is ultimately a normative debate with a much wider impact and scope than just the Armed Forces' task performance. The academic literature indeed gives wide support to the idea that the question about women soldiers is not a mere utilitarian question, but part of a much larger and deeper narrative about the roles of armies, society, men and women.⁵¹ The question is not merely about sex and suitability; it is about gender and appropriateness too.⁵²

Military service has traditionally been considered a male duty. This duty to protect, however, is at the same time the right to do so. It is a right to agency and the high status that come with

51 Kronsell, A. and Svedberg, E. 'The Duty to Protect: Gender in the Swedish Practice of Conscription', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 36:2 (2001), p.461-488.

Macdonald, S. 'Drawing the Lines – Gender, Peace and War: An Introduction', in *Images of Women in Peace and War*, edited by Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden and Shirley Ardener (London, Macmillan Press, 1987), p.1-26.

52 World Health Organization. 'What do we mean by 'sex' and 'gender'?'. *Gender, Women and Health* (online), s.d. Available at <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/> [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

military service. It is the right to be associated to the values associated with the army, such as honour, duty, loyalty and strength. On a fundamental level, it implies the right to be violent. It frames this violence as political and nationalist engagement. Indeed, it has been proven that those groups who are part of the monopolized coercive force of a society also hold the political power in that society.⁵³ By keeping the army a male 'duty' but also very much 'privilege', societies preclude their women the possibility to obtain these rights and this kind of recognition. It is clear that any democracy that disadvantages half its population has a problem.

Ideas about what women and men should might crystallize in the army, but as they are part of a much wider discourse, they are not limited to excluding women from certain military roles. This discourse indeed shows in many ways. Political violence by women is rarely recognised as *political* violence.⁵⁴ Women are systematically portrayed as victims with no agency.⁵⁵ If women want to help the country, they should do so either at the 'home front' or by enabling men to do the ultimate duty – combat.⁵⁶ Women that enter the Armed Forces or act violently are systematically scrutinized over their sexuality.⁵⁷ The idea that binds all those instances together, is the ideal of the women as a beautiful soul, fundamentally passive, in need of protection by a just – male – warrior.⁵⁸ In this sense, the limits of what a women can do and what she is entitled to, are at stake. The stereotypes that are reconfirmed in the military's sex

53 Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', pp. 378-379.

54 Sjoberg, L. and Gentry, C. 'Reduced to Bad Sex: Narratives of Violent Women from the Bible to the War on Terror', *International Relations*, 22:1 (2008), p.116-134.

55 Alison, M. 'Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security', *Security Dialogue*, 35:4 (2004), pp.447-463.

56 Campbell. 'Women in Combat', pp.301-323.

Cornelsen, K. 'Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II: Exploring Military Aviation, Encountering Discrimination and Exchanging Traditional Roles in Service to America', *Journal of Women's History*, 17:4 (2005), p.111-119.

Stone, T. 'Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War', *Women's History Review*, 8:4 (1999), p.605-624.

57 Sjoberg and Gentry. 'Bad Sex', p.116-134.

Hampf, M. 'Dykes' or 'whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 27:1 (2004), p.13-30.

58 Elshtain, J. *Women and War*. New York, Basic Books, 1987, pp. 3-13.

discrimination have real consequences. If women are excluded from combat and never seen as dangerous, they are more vulnerable to sexual harassment. If women can serve using force, these acts of female violence are political violence. If women serve like men, their loyalty, honour, sense of duty and strength can be much less easily questioned and much more easily defended, because they get the chance to prove these values on a day-to-day basis. If women die for their country, not as helpless tragic victims (like nurses) but as heroes, they help bear the heaviest costs of political agency and makes them more obviously entitled to political credibility and influence. But as long as they are excluded from combat, they will not have these chances.

Meanwhile, men are under pressure to be a 'real' man – 'real' all too often being defined by military standards in our heavily militarized societies. If this militarized standard is highly masculine and misogynistic, men will not want, or rather cannot socially afford, to be 'pussies'. Real guys like guns. Real men watch hardcore porn. Men bond with each other over women – women often as a possession, an object, a target, a (sex) role. There is no reason to assume all men feel comfortable with these roles. Not all men like guns, like obscene remarks, like dismissing women (I would argue most men often feel best at ease at home, where this kind of behaviour is not in order). But if this is the gateway to social status, men have little choice – not to say they are powerless. As such, militarized gender roles, especially if these are hypermasculinized, misogynistic ideals, and the combat exclusion as one of its most symbolic and powerful examples, hurt civilian men and society.

CHAPTER THREE Why not *not* allow women into combat? Harms and myths.

Winifred: *'This has gone far enough! Far enough! Now just a minute, you pompous old windbag!'*
 Colonel Hathi: *'Winifred, what are you doing out of ranks?'*
 Winifred: *'Never mind! How would you like to have our boy lost and alone in the jungle?' ... Now you help find [Mowgli] or I'm taking over command!'*
 Colonel Hathi: *'What? A female leading my herd? Utterly preposterous!'*
(Jungle Book, Disney)⁵⁹

'Women cannot lead.' 'Their place is with their family.' 'They are too weak to be on the battlefield. Moreover, they destroy the morale of soldiers.' There is no shortage of arguments against women in combat.⁶⁰ Since the last chapter has demonstrated that the initial position must be one of permission – that women should be allowed to combat unless proven incapable, with the burden of proof on the opposition – this chapter deals with the arguments of those opposed to repealing the exclusion. While there are too many counterarguments to repeal every single one extensively, we will demonstrate how mythical and prejudiced reasoning underlies those arguments. This in turn will allow us to point out the non sequiturs

59 Disney, W. *Jungle Book* (Burbank, Walt Disney Productions, 1967).

60 Numerous works in the literature as well as in the actual policy debate address many of these arguments, both in support of them and in opposition to them. For the purpose of this work, I have divided them into types of arguments, rather than engage with each one separately. See for instance:

Kornblum. 'Women Warriors', pp. 385-429.

Van Creveld, M. 'Why Israel Doesn't Send Women Into Combat', *Parameters*, 23:1 (1993), pp. 5-9.

Simons, A. 'Women in Combat Units: It's Still a Bad Idea', *Parameters*, 31:2 (2001), pp. 89-100. (Although this article is an argumentative and logical liability.)

Quester, G. 'Women in Combat', *International Security*, 1:4 (1977), pp. 80-91.

Stiehm, J. *Arms and the Enlisted Woman* (Philadelphia, Temple University, 1989), pp. 181-234.

Baker, K. 'Don't Put Women in Combat, Says Female Combat Veteran', *Jezebel* (online), 5 July 2012.

Available at <http://jezebel.com/5923584/dont-put-women-in-combat-says-female-combat-veteran> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Vaught, W. and Donnelly, E. 'Should women be allowed in combat?', *The New York Times Upfront* (online), s.d. Available at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/debate/index.asp?article=0905> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Ablow, K. 'Why I don't ever want to see women in combat, on the front lines', *Fox News* (online), 19 May 2012. Available at <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/05/19/why-dont-ever-want-to-see-women-in-combat-on-front-lines/> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Juggle Debates, 'Should women be allowed to serve in equal combat roles in armed forces?', *Juggle Debates* (online), s.d. Available at <http://debates.juggle.com/should-women-be-allowed-to-serve-in-equal-combat-roles-in-armed-forces> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

in these types of thinking and to on the whole invalidate opposition to women in combat.

The statistical woman: capability

A first category of arguments against women are based on the premise that women are ‘something-er’ than men, with ‘something’ replaceable by any characteristic that does not become a soldier. Women therefore cannot serve in combat roles. There are numerous examples of this type of argument: women are for instance smaller than men. Women are weaker than men. They are softer than men. Women are more impressionable than men. Women are more emotional. They are less capable leaders. They are more irrational. They are too peace-minded. All are based on concepts of the difference between the average man and the average woman, which is why I would call these arguments the myth of the statistical women.

There are two problems. The first one is that some of these arguments are nothing more than either prejudices, which are untrue, or self-fulfilling prophecies, which might be true but which are not inevitable. The second one is that even the propositions that are factually true – such as the smaller average height of women – do not constitute valid *arguments* because of an implicit non sequitur: from the fact that the average woman is smaller does not logically follow that women as a category must be excluded.

Problems in the propositions

The first problem is easy to assert on principle but hard to assess in practice. From all we know about gender stereotypes and gender relations, we can infer that it is more than likely many or even most stereotypes or prejudices about women do not hold true or do not *necessarily* hold true.⁶¹ Women's reproductive systems do not get damaged by education,

61 Vedantam, S. 'How Stereotypes Can Drive Women To Quit Science', *National Public Radio* (online), 12 July

women are capable of doing clerical work and they make good doctors.⁶² They can withstand the strain of travelling and having a driving license does not turn them into sluts.⁶³ Some stereotypes, however, are more problematic as they *might* be true, and when they are they are true *because* they are true. Girls might be less good at mathematics than boys because they are supposed to be less good at it.⁶⁴ They are also less likely to receive the encouragement that leads to better results.⁶⁵ Women might be perceived as less good leaders or even have more problems to lead because their credibility is damaged by the idea that women cannot be good leaders. Research on these issues often differs on whether there is a qualitative difference between genders; and if there is a difference, it is unclear to what extent this difference is essential or socially constructed. Even demonstrating the differences are socially constructed, however, does not solve the issue because it does not provide a clue as to how immediately rectifiable the situation is. In other words, while we can reasonably assert that there is more myth than intrinsic truth to these conceptions about gender differences, it is very hard to conclusively argue that the topic can be solved solely by disavowing the prejudices. There is, however, a second fundamental problem with 'statistical women'.

Non sequitur in the argument following the propositions

The fundamental problem with arguments based on the average woman lies in excluding *all*

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2012. Available at <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/12/156664337/stereotype-threat-why-women-quit-science-jobs?ft=1&f=1007> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].
- 62 Herbert, M. *Camouflage isn't Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (London, New York University Press, 1998), pp. 1-2.
- 63 Pfeiffer, I. 'Visit to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Italy', in Robinson, J. *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers* (Oxford, Oxford Paperbacks, 2001), p. 5.
- Ghanem, S. 'No more virginity in Saudi if women drive, says council'. *Bikyamas* (online), 2 December 2011. Available at <http://www.bikyamasr.com/50109/no-more-virginity-in-saudi-if-women-drive-says-council/> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].
- 64 Bryner, J. 'Girls Get Math: It's Culture That's Skewed', *LiveScience* (online), 1 June 2009. Available at <http://www.livescience.com/5482-girls-math-culture-skewed.html> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].
- Welsh, J. 'Do the Math! Sex Divide is Cultural, Not Biological', *LiveScience* (online), 12 December 2011. Available at <http://www.livescience.com/17429-math-gender-differences-myths.html> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].
- 65 Parry, W. 'Girls Have a Math Problem: Teacher Bias', *LiveScience* (online), 9 April 2012. Available at <http://www.livescience.com/19552-girls-math-teachers-bias.html> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

women because *some* are deemed not capable. The most-discussed example of discussion based on averages is probably the issue of physical strength, which is why we will use this example to demonstrate the problem with thinking in averages. Analogous critiques can obviously be applied to all other arguments in this category.

Men are in general stronger than women.⁶⁶ Moreover, the strongest men are stronger than the strongest women (although this does not depend on them having a higher average). The Armed Forces want the very best soldiers they can get and therefore they would rather go with the best men than with the best women. This, in turn, is the claimed justification for the exclusion of *all* women from combat. This reasoning is obviously flawed. Most women might not be strong enough for combat – for the purpose of debate we will here accept the dubious premise that military standards correlate exactly to military needs – but some will be. As a matter of fact, probably *most American men* are not physically suitable for combat, but that does not mean men are automatically excluded from trying. Women are the only category *a priori* excluded. No similar automatic exclusion on the basis of strength exist for other groups, although the same reasoning on averages could easily be applied to them. Take ethnic Asians, for instance. Isn't the average male ethnic Asian weaker than the average male ethnic Caucasian? Yet combat positions are open to *all* male soldiers. Suppose for an instance that Californians are on average more obese than Texans. Should we exclude all Californians, just to be sure? It is also interesting to note that there are other criteria for the military in which women score better on average than men. They have for instance less behavioural and disciplinary problems and are higher educated.⁶⁷ One could easily argue that discipline is as

66 There is much more to this discussion, for instance which types of strength and physical fitness are tested in the military; whether these tests correlate with the actual needs of the military and the exercise of assignments; and whether the tests that are used systematically advantage men. These discussions are important as they further demonstrate how combat exclusion rules are often based on tradition and myth rather than on the strategic needs of the military, but we will leave them aside here they are not necessary to demonstrate the problems with the 'principle of average'.

67 SAMHSA. "Female Veterans Aged 20 to 39 Less Likely to Use Most Substances than Male Counterparts," *Data Spotlight* (November 11, 2010). Available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/spotlight/FemaleVeterans.pdf> [Last

crucial in the military as strength. So why not exclude all men, on the basis that they cause more disciplinary problems? Or, sticking to physical qualities: all pilots need to have perfect vision. Why not a priori exclude males as they are more than ten times as likely to be colour blind than their female counterparts?⁶⁸ The answer is obvious: because the Armed Forces would miss out on perfectly qualified people. The Forces implicitly acknowledge this by only applying the statistical myth to women. If the Armed Forces really want the best people they can get, excluding people because of averages is highly problematic – *especially* if these averages turn out to be sheer prejudices. Even where the averages are true, however, the Forces should strive to put the best people in the best positions. It is maybe not likely the very best person for the job will be a woman. But it is very likely that the first woman will be better than the twentieth man – and this debate is about thousands of positions. If the Armed Forces truly want the best people, then, they have two clear interests. The first one is to make sure they assess all possible candidates. The second one is to make sure that the tests correlate as closely as possible not with masculinity, but with the *actual job* the soldiers are to perform (which requires not only sheer physical strength, but also aspects like endurance, discipline and obedience). Unfortunately, it is not pointing out the obvious for the Armed Forces to say that even if there is a correlation between masculinity and job capability, job capability is a better variable to assess job capability than the proxy of masculinity.⁶⁹

The proper woman: appropriateness

This type of argument is no longer very popular, probably because its flaws are too obvious

accessed 1 September 2012].

68 Howard Hughes Medical Institute, *Color Blindness: More Prevalent Among Males*. Available from <http://www.hhmi.org/senses/b130.html> [Last Accessed 1 September 2012].

69 The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly held a parallel view when it said that gender cannot be used as a proxy for capability, *even* assuming stereotypes might contain some truth. Vojdik, V. 'Beyond Stereotyping in Equal Protection Doctrine: Reframing the Exclusion of Women from Combat', *Alabama Law Review*, 57:303 (2005), p. 307.

and its general premise – the formal regulation of what is appropriate behaviour for women – ever less accepted. All arguments that centre on how women ought to behave and what constitutes proper gender roles belong to this category. Women ought to (want to) be protected by men; they ought to stay home for their families; women should not die in battle; they should not be so unfeminine as to wear uniforms and go to the front. They should try to please soldiers and encourage them; or they should represent and defend peace.

These arguments are obviously entirely invalid in a liberal democracy. In a liberal democracy, people are free to do what they want unless legislated otherwise for a compelling reason. Appropriateness is not a compelling reason. We do not make laws that force citizens to stay home and we also do not make laws that exclude citizens from combat so that they stay home instead. Moreover, on principle liberal democracies do not recognise citizens as being constituted by their race, creed, social status or indeed gender. Liberal democratic principles insist that the state be blind to these differences and enact no legislation on the basis of them. Of course, this principle is often broken in practice, but in almost all cases *positively*. That is, liberal states occasionally confer additional benefits upon people in order to mitigate a recognised disadvantage. Though often a subject of dispute, this is widely considered acceptable. The alternative, disadvantaging or closing off opportunities to certain individuals on the basis of some distinguishing feature, is almost universally condemned.⁷⁰ In other words, not only do liberal democracies not usually make laws based on what is appropriate; even if they were to, these laws would *have to* be ungendered. All arguments against women in combat based on appropriate roles for women, therefore, might be food for thought in individual decisions, but they can never be a basis for laws or combat exclusion.

⁷⁰ For instance the 'Jim Crow laws' in the United States or the infamous 'marriage ban' in the Republic of Ireland, both now consigned to the more embarrassing sections of history.

The biological woman: Pregnancy and population

Women can become pregnant. This leads to two arguments against women in combat. Women should be protected from the danger of the battlefield because they are needed to reproduce the population of the nation. Men are much more expendable, as of course a few remaining men can father more children than a few remaining women could bear. Secondly, pregnancy itself means women should be excluded from combat, as it disrupts the morale of soldiers and means women soldiers are not available for duty for a long period of time. This is especially important in dangerous assignments like combat assignments, because units get trained together and ideally work together blindly. Replacing a soldier for six months or a year is not an easy option in these circumstances.

Reproduction of the population

There are excellent historical examples of peoples that protected their women and children first to literally ensure the survival of that people. The Indian tribe of the Comanche was a perfect example of this when fighting white settlers in the 1840's in the region of what is today Texas.⁷¹ Then there are situations where this argument does make absolutely no sense. The current United States fall into this category. The percentage of (women) soldiers compared to civilians is negligible; and *if* the population growth were an issue – which it clearly is not – there are better ways to encourage families to have children than limiting women's choices until they become mothers rather than soldiers – see above for the liberal argument applicable here as well. The only (unlikely) way in which this could become relevant were in the case of a draft and massive war. However, first of all, being excluded from armed forces has traditionally *not* prevented women from being drafted into the military effort whenever necessary – indeed, the exclusion of women ironically often is *inverted* to the

⁷¹ Gwynne, S. *Empire of the Summer Moon* (New York, Scribner, 2010).

risks the military is facing.⁷² Secondly, if the situation would get as dire as to really threaten the population level of the nation, it would be very easy to not extend the draft to women in the national interest for that reason. In the current situation and in a professionalised volunteer military, however, this population argument is moot.

Pregnancy in the Armed Forces

As far as pregnancy in combat goes: it is not as difficult to deal with this as some suggest. The Army, combat units included, regularly deals with long absences when soldiers get injured or worse. The likelihood of pregnancy – like most risks related to women – also tends to be inflated. It is for instance worth keeping in mind that in a 1943 American slander campaign, more women were rumoured to have become pregnant than there were women actually sent overseas.⁷³ The most important argument, however, is that pregnancy is avoidable. To name but one kind of contraception: *Implanon* can be implanted in the arm for three years and is more than 99.9% effective.⁷⁴ At the moment, pregnancy is *not* a cause for dishonourable discharge, which often leads to resentment as it always gives women a ‘way out’ of the military that men do not have. Neither pregnancy nor an honourable discharge if it happens are unavoidable. One could allow women into combat roles and forbid pregnancy. Of course, in the rare case where a woman would still get pregnant, *any male soldier involved should be discharged in the same way as her*. Some might argue that it is the right of every person to decide whether they want children. This is in principle true, but on principle people are free to decide what haircut they want, where they live, what they do with their day and how they react to orders. Military service works under the assumption that those who join make

72 Segal, M. 'Women's Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present, and Future', *Gender & Society*, 9:6 (1995) pp. 760-761.

73 Murdoch, M. et al. 'Women and War: What Physicians Should Know', *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 21:S3 (2006) pp. S5-S10.

74 Patient, *Contraceptive Choices*. Available at <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Contraceptive-Choices.htm> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

sacrifices and give up their freedom to decide on a large number of issues. This is acceptable.

The woman amongst men: it is not you, it is me

Compatibility

Arguments about intrinsic qualities of women have been proven wrong over and over again. As such, it is not surprising that many have abandoned these arguments and have started defending the combat exclusion via a different type of justification: compatibility. These arguments are not about the women themselves; they are arguments about women's compatibility with men and their task, in this case combat soldiers and combat. They have the obvious advantage that they do not need to prove that women are intrinsically unsuited: they just need to explain how women do not fit into combat. A wild variety of reasons for combat exclusion here as well: women will make men sexually, or having women around makes men more protective, which in turn makes them less effective soldiers, as they will invariably 'babysit' the female soldier.⁷⁵ The main argument in this category, however, is 'bonding'. Bonding – behaving, feeling, identifying like a team – is crucial in combat, where trust in and reliance on your partners is literally 'vital': important to survival.⁷⁶ Allowing women into combat units is presumed to inhibit bonding in these units, and thus to endanger the entire unit.

Of course, if mixed-gender bonding really were the one unsolvable issue, there would be a radical but doubtlessly effective solution: separate units. It is far from clear, however, whether mixed-gender bonding really is that insurmountable an issue – it is not even clear *why* it

75 Liptak, K. 'Santorum explains opposition to women in combat', *CNN Politics* (online), 10 February 2012. Available at <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/10/santorum-explains-opposition-to-women-in-combat/> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

76 Both German and Dutch have a word that means 'very important' and literally reads 'of life importance': lebenswichtig and levensbelangrijk. 'Vital' in English, French and Spanish obviously has its roots in the Latin word 'vita', but the direct association to life is less prominent.

would be an issue.

Systematic and conclusive research on mixed-gender bonding in American combat units for obvious reasons does not exist. What does exist is a wide variety of research as well as commonly shared experience on how people bond and perform in a wide variety of contexts. Bonding is a deeply shared human characteristic, regardless of class, gender, race or creed. Infants bond with their parents, romantic and sexual partners bond with each other, people bond with their family, friends and colleagues. This profound need for human connectivity is extremely well documented and supersedes almost every other need. It is superfluous to point out the obvious reality of intergender bonding.

A number of arguments to exclude women from combat are based on the assumption that intergender bonding is only possible with a romantic or sexual connotation which inhabits mixed-gender *group* bonding – *fraternization* might be possible, and indeed according to some inevitable, but group cohesion or platonic bonding can never be reached. This idea is flatly proven wrong by all ties that can and do exist between siblings and in-law siblings, cousins, neighbours, befriended pairs, colleagues, teams, classes... It also overlooks the issue of homosexuality: romantic or sexual ties are *not* by definition intergender. On this account, it is also worth noting that even the idea of fraternization being bad for group cohesion is not a given: in the antiquity, homosexuality amongst soldiers (armies were fully male) was thought of as highly desirable as it was reasoned that this would strengthen bonds between soldiers. Others would argue that mixed-gender bonding is impossible in the military as military culture is male-dominated. They overlook the too-obvious fact that our entire society is male-dominated and that no-one would argue men and women cannot bond at all.

A rebuttal to this is the reasoning that all is a matter of *degree*. Men and women can bond in superficial ways, but they cannot bond to the extent that is necessary for combat. Bonding in

the military is problematic because the military is more explicitly masculine than civilian society.⁷⁷ To convince, however, any such argument would need to explain *how* this makes a difference. Usually the short-cut of stressing the importance of the matter is used – it is common knowledge that people will be less inclined to question the effectiveness of a solution if its importance is undoubted – but this of course does not make for a good argument. Saying that people are at risk of dying if bonding goes wrong does *not* provide any better indication as to why women would harm bonding. Until a fuller argument is developed, then, we can only assume that there is no reason why bonding in combat units should be special. This is without mentioning the existing indications that mixed units are likely to work out fine: when the Army *actually* experimented with mixed groups in the Second World War, the results were positive but (unsurprisingly) kept quiet.⁷⁸ Non-combat units also function in mixed-gender groups, as of course do combat units in other countries. Why would the Armed Forces' combat units be different from all other units in society, in the Armed Forces, and in combat units in other armed forces?

The final weapon and most absurd argument in this category is that there simply is not much research available on mixed-gender bonding in combat units – fact – and that one therefore cannot take the risk of this bonding going wrong – false. Such reasoning effectively comes down to a challenge to disprove to existence of risk, which obviously is impossible. It is beside the question: this type of argumentation could be used to prevent *any* kind of change at *any* place in *any* time. It is crucially flawed because it focuses on the impossibility to disprove all risks on one side of the weighing while ignoring all possible harms on the other side and while also disregarding all possible benefits. We can reasonably put such short-sighted lack of proportionality aside.

⁷⁷ Bonus question: is today's military more explicitly male-dominated than civilian society at *all* given times when men and women bonded?

⁷⁸ Campbell. 'Women in Combat', p. 302.

Symbolism

A related, last type of arguments are those based on the symbolic value of women. This line of thinking argues that women in uniform emasculate the Armed Forces, *especially* in the archetypal soldiering role of combat. This will make the Armed Forces less attractive to men, who no longer relate to the military as the place where they can prove themselves a man.⁷⁹ The most ambitious and masculine men consequently will no longer look to the military to prove themselves. There are two variations of this reasoning. The first one is that allowing women to join will lead to lesser standards in the Forces. Men will therefore no longer join the military because they no longer have the chance to become 'all they could be'.⁸⁰ The second one is that even if the standards remain the same, men will be demotivated by having women in war to do the job with them. As a former Marine Corps Commandant put it: 'The male wants to think that he's fighting for that woman somewhere behind. ... It tramples the male ego. ... You have to protect the manhood of war.'⁸¹ Allow women into combat, and the Armed Forces will finally lose their identity, which already they have needed to keep alive in combat and other roles where woman are not allowed, the last bastions of masculinity and the ultimate sources of military pride. After all, like other formerly exclusively masculine roles, military service 'does [no longer] bolster one's manhood if women can do it'.⁸² The symbolic meaning of women in combat roles, in other words, would lead to the demoralization and devaluation of the troops.

The idea that men join the Armed Forces to become 'all that they can be' is highly optimistic. In reality most soldiers come from low backgrounds with few opportunities. They join for

79 Van Creveld, M. 'Less Than We Can Be: Men, Women and the Modern Military', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 23:4 (2000).

80 Van Creveld. 'Less'

81 Pettman, J. *Worlding Women: A feminist international politics* (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 105.

82 The original quote refers to fire fighters, but it applicable here as well.

Mills, A. et al. *Organization Behaviour in a global context* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 327.

economical reasons and because armed forces, in many societies, are typically a place where anyone can be someone. It would be more truthful to acknowledge that the military has a social function of taking care of underprivileged young men, and to read 'all they can be' as a lack of other good options rather than as a desire to be a war hero – although the militarization of civilian life and the high status the military has in American society doubtlessly add to the glamour of the deal. And of course, to the extent that the Armed Forces *do* provide status, this should be accessible to women as well. These 'symbolic' reasons as to why women should not join, are also based on the idea that military women pose a threat to masculinity and military identity. This aspect will be further addressed in the next chapter, which further establishes the idea of femininity as a threat.

CHAPTER FOUR The future of the Armed Forces: A Boys with Toys Story.

'Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi.'
(*Il Gattopardo, Giuseppe di Lampedusa*)⁸³

'La guerre, c'est du sang, des larmes, de la merde, des gosses égorgés, des mères qui pleurent, de la viande partout, des femmes violées, des chiens qui bouffent les cadavres... Mais faut surtout pas communiquer là-dessus !'
(*Les Guignols de l'Info, Canalplus*)⁸⁴

'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.'
(*The Leopard, translated by Archibald Colquhoun*)⁸⁵

'War is blood, tears, shit, butchered sons, crying mothers, flesh everywhere, raped women, dogs devouring bodies... But one certainly shouldn't communicate that!'
(*Les Guignols de l'Info, Canalplus*)

The purpose of this chapter is to approach the question of women in the Armed Forces by looking at the Forces. Research about women and combat – like this dissertation so far – has often focused on either characteristics of women or on the compatibility of women and the Military.

One assumption that underlies this approach to the debate is the idea that the Military – feminist issues aside – is overall suited to perform its tasks in the best possible way as it is. Indeed, one of the reasons why militarization as well as the violence and discipline that characterise an army, are so difficult to challenge, is the recognition – or assumption – that these characteristics are necessary for the Armed Forces to perform well. Military culture might not always be pretty, but as an unfortunate necessity, its characteristics are rarely challenged. Yet that is precisely what this chapter aims to do. It argues that the Armed Forces' attitude towards women is symptomatic of a hypermasculinized and hypermisogynistic

83 Tomasi di Lampedusa, G. *Il Gattopardo* (Milan, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1958), p. 32.

84 *Les Guignols de l'Info: Vendre la guerre en Irak*, Canal+, 5 December 2002.

85 Tomasi di Lampedusa, G. *The Leopard*, trans. Archibald Colquhoun (London, Fontana, 1963), p. 29.

culture, and, crucially, that the enactment of this culture has become a liability rather than a source of strength for the Forces.⁸⁶

We will proceed in a few steps. First, we establish that the acceptance of a separate military culture, with the military curtailing the freedom and rights of individuals, must depend on the strategic necessity to do so. Next, we discuss to what extent masculinity is indeed a strategic necessity. This in turn brings us to the crucial puzzle on women in combat: how come women in combat are a problem, if all the arguments brought forward to explain them being problematic are so unsatisfactory? After all, even if the values necessary for military service are traditionally masculine, this does not imply these values need to be enacted by men. Yet for those defending the combat exclusion this obviously *is* necessary and the idea of women taking on the jobs is not up for debate. I argue that herein lies the real rub with regards to women in combat. Most arguments brought to the debate miss one important point: that the debate itself might be the real annoyance. Debate about women and war complicates war – and it is imperative that war be easy. I argue that armed forces may try to keep women out as a means to a very specific but barely-recognised problem: they complicate war. However, I also argue that these means have become outdated and problematic to the reality of today's Armed Forces and that ultimately, the Armed Forces would be better off by letting women in.

The necessity of a separate military culture

Military culture is problematic when judged by civilian Western liberal democratic standards. The lack of individual liberty, the use of violence, the interference with the personal life of soldiers and their (often civilian) family, the misogyny, the extreme duress under which

⁸⁶ An argument mainly based on two books:

Burke, C. *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2004).

Herbert. *Camouflage*.

soldiers regularly work... would all be deemed highly problematic. The solution the Armed Forces and society have adopted is to *not* judge the military by civilian standards. The military, as Gene Hackman put to Denzel Washington in *Crimson Tide*, is here to preserve democracy, not to practice it.⁸⁷ This is true to the extent that the curtaining of freedom is necessary for the Armed Forces to do its duty. In other words, where military culture is at odds with democratic values, this must be justifiable on *military strategic* grounds.

This acceptance of different standards is based on the premises (a) that the task of the military is of such importance that it is justified to create a separate zone where normal standards do not apply and (b) that for the military to perform its task, it needs this separate zone and separate standards. Thus, a different military culture is (a) justifiable and (b) necessary. It is easy to argue the (a) part of this reasoning: in order to preserve the security and freedom of all, some give it up. Overall this is beneficial for society and therefore accepted. The (b) part is the more problematic part; but it is also the least discussed part. The military as a concept and the military culture as it is are seen as inevitable and intrinsically interwoven. But is the culture the military has really necessary to its task?

The necessity of masculine values for war

On war

War is a very often misunderstood phenomenon. It is neither primitive (in the sense of basal, which is the commonly implied sense) nor illogical (this does not mean it cannot be stupid). Quite the contrary: war is highly symbolic, highly social, and highly abstract. War, as Clausewitz wrote, is the continuation of politics by other means; politics themselves are a social conversation on how we want to organise society.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Scott, T. *Crimson Tide* (Burbank, Hollywood Pictures, 1995).

⁸⁸ Clausewitz, C. *Vom Kriege* (Berlin, Ferdinand Dümmler, 1832-4), no page number.

This sounds counter-intuitive to many people, who feel and conceptualise war as that what happens when politics fail. War then, 'is the state of chaos and destruction that results from this breakdown; war is not a logic but the absence of a logic; war is not guided by rules but by the absence of rules'.⁸⁹ This is not true. War is not a breakdown of international politics, is it a way of resolving issues that, while bloody and destructive, is neither irrational or illogical nor unrestrained by rules of social interaction.⁹⁰ War is part of a cultural and strategic logic. It 'occurs over and over again and is unsurprising; it is unsurprising because we understand the logic that leads to it, even though we might disagree with that logic'.⁹¹

War is not only a highly advanced social phenomenon, it is quite a difficult one to that. It relies on people consciously risking very concrete harms for often highly abstract principles and concepts (which is why armed forces traditionally attract poor and low-class people, for whom they can comparatively easily provide concrete benefits). It relies on people overcoming an innate restraint that characterises *all* mammals to kill others.⁹² It necessarily relies on passion and dehumanization to do so; but at the same time armed forces must be able to restrain and control the passion and violence they generate.

Armed forces and their capacity for effective war thus depend on a number of values and concepts. Armed forces necessarily glorify violence, for they cannot sterilize war. Theoretically one could wish for soldiers to be driven by noble and abstract principles only; to shoot dispassionately and justly; to leave behind all tasteless jokes and see the opponent as a

89 I wrote this sentence in an earlier essay, although the wider context and argument of that essay were very different from the argument in this chapter (namely whether the military or civilians should have primacy during war).

90 As clearly shows in those cases where war is waged against peoples who do not have these shared conventions about what is acceptable in war; for instance the outrage that came with native Americans scalping their victims, which was considered unnecessarily and outrageously cruel and unacceptable.

91 I wrote this sentence in an earlier essay, although the wider context and argument of that essay were very different from the argument in this chapter (namely whether the military or civilians should have primacy during war).

92 Quite probably other kinds of animals too (take birds), but zoology has never been my speciality and I can't vouch for all of them (insects, anyone?).

human being.⁹³ Reason, however, is never as effective a motivator as passion (as all orators and politicians know), and it certainly is not good enough to sustain a military and to convince it to do its wretched job. Armed forces cannot kill people without wanting to kill them. The identity of the military, then, is one of high pride; strong discipline; value placed on loyalty, perseverance, strength, obedience and sacrifice; glorified violence; of ultimate importance.

The link with masculinity

All these values and functions of the military are traditionally performed by men. Indeed, the military is not only composed of men: it is traditionally the institution that *makes* men.⁹⁴ As Army Captain Shang puts it in the Disney film *Mulan*, those who arrive to the army are 'the saddest bunch [he has] ever met'; but luckily '[one] can bet before [they]'re through, Mister, [he]'ll make a man out of [them]'.⁹⁵

The link between masculinity and war is so strong, that any feature necessary to the functioning of armed forces *becomes* masculine. This is true to surprising measures. Take for instance caring – a quintessential female value. Female caring, however, is remarkably close to what men in the army do for and about each other. They stick together, they help each other, they rely on each other, they provide for each other, and they feel for each other. Yet if it is *soldiers* who do the caring, caring is no longer a feminine value. On the contrary, women are portrayed as a threat to bonding. Likewise, obedience and the capacity to take orders would be feminine in civilian society; but they become masculine qualities in a military

93 There are enough examples of military songs and habits, for instance the song from the Vietnam era with the following lyrics: *See the kiddies in the street, / Cryin' and lookin' for som' to eat. / Drop trick toys that look real neat, / Blow up in their face and make 'em all meat.* The catch phrase of the song, which in total is much longer, is 'Yo, oh! Napalm, it sticks to kids'.

For a wider analysis of this, see Burke. *Camp All-American*.

94 Asking why and how the link between masculinity and militarization became so strong, is trying to uncover the roots of the patriarchal system (in any society, those groups who are part of the monopolized coercive force also hold the political power in that society) and, as it is not crucial to our argument, would bring us too far.

95 Bancroft, T. and Cook, B. *Mulan* (Burbank, Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1998).

context.

The necessity of men performing masculinity

Qualities that are described as masculine are thus necessary in the military. The next question is whether it is necessary that they be enacted by men only. After all, while masculinity and femininity are often perceived as immovable and deeply fixed, gender scholars have thoroughly disproved this notion and demonstrate how gender roles only exist by virtue of constant enactment/performance and reconfirmation. As the variation of gender roles and expectations over time and place moreover demonstrates, the 'masculine' values expected by the Armed Forces could very well be enacted and embodied by biological women as well.

The gender role of masculinity, on the other hand, is not easily maintained. Part of a dichotomous system, it is constructed in contrast to femininity and dependent on not being feminine.⁹⁶ Masculinity fundamentally relies on a number of principles: force, action, dominance, visibility and present, whereas femininity is weak, soft, passive, subordinate and invisible. This means that soldiers who want to be military and therefore need to be masculine, need to distance themselves from femininity.⁹⁷ As it turns out, this often takes the form of dismissing and diminishing everything female.⁹⁸ Likewise, that which is not military enough is by definition feminine. Men who are not up to a standard are 'pussies' or 'girls'; and in the earlier-mentioned Disney song Shang wonders whether 'they sent [him] daughters, when [he] asked for sons?'⁹⁹ Herein, of course, lies the tension with women. As long as militariness is defined by masculinity, female soldiers are an oxymoron. This explains Herbert's statement that 'gender ideology that views military service as the domain of men and

96 For the fascinating philosophical discussion on whether the feminine is best construed as the other side or as a non-existing aspect of our communication and thought system, see Butler J. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon, Routledge, 1990).

97 Herbert. *Camouflage*, p. 9.

98 Herbert. *Camouflage*, p. 8.

99 Bancroft and Cook. *Mulan*.

that affirms masculinity as one mechanism by which men become soldiers', 'is much more effective in limiting the participation of women in the military than either specific institutional or interpersonal constraints'.¹⁰⁰ Women as a concept are excluded by armed forces as a concept, and as such it is not strange that real women encounter troubles in the real Armed Forces.

The military thus is a strongly gendered institution, with gender 'present in [its] processes, practice, images and ideologies, and distribution of power'.¹⁰¹ The archetypal relationship between men and women is parallel to the archetypal relationship between soldiers and civilians. Masculine values are the values of protectors, and feminine values are the values of the protected. Indeed, in the archetype, these are the same and interchangeable, as all men are soldiers and all women civilians. But soldiering and masculinity are not synonymous, even though these roles are related. In reality, soldiers and men are neither the same nor interchangeable, for not all men are soldiers and not all soldiers are men. The dichotomy between men and women can therefore no longer be used to symbolize the dichotomy between soldiers and civilians. Rather, masculine-military values ought to be recognized and perceived as *military* values, not as masculine ones. Their construction as such – which is a different and more suitable interpretation of the same archetype – makes it possible for (military) women to enact these values.

War is necessarily easy

All of this, obviously, is the longer analysis of what everyone knows as the basic paradigm: usually men fight and women do not. Also, usually soldiers fight and civilians do not. As a basic paradigm, these are fairly interchangeable, for men who do not fight and women who do

¹⁰⁰Herbert. *Camouflage*, p. 6.

¹⁰¹Acker, J. 'Gendered Institutions', *Contemporary Sociology*, 21 (1992), p. 567, cited in Herbert. *Camouflage*, p. 7.

are but a small detail in the grand stereotype of things. Yet, as said, this stereotype holds less and less true, so why not simply change the paradigm? The problem with trying to point out that these are no(t) (longer) interchangeable, is that it complicates the identity of military and war by challenging the stereotype.

Herein the rub might lie. The Armed Forces have a *much* bigger issue with officially allowing women into combat (changing the stereotype) than with practically allowing them into either combat or danger more generally (changing the practice). Why is that? Because occasional, or even frequent but unrecognised, trespassing of gender borders does not cause as much up-stir as changing these gender borders. Gender borders are thought to lie parallel with military borders, which means that questioning gender in the military is questioning the identity of the military. *Questioning*, then, might go without saying in an academic context, but it is hugely problematic in a military context. War does not bear well under scrutiny. It is extremely hard to argue in favour of soldiering, or to be capable of killing another human being, without involving passion and *certainty*. One has to know one is fighting for the right cause, one cannot sit around wondering about it. The military is known for being conservative in general; and it has a specific interest in avoiding too much debate about what soldiering is. Women in the military are walking question marks about the link between military, masculinity, gender and gender roles. As such, they threaten the certainty armed forces want and indeed need for their troops.

The necessity of change: ineffective means are meaningless

Why does this nevertheless not mean that women should indeed remain out of combat, in order for the military identity to remain easy and for war to remain possible? The answer is that times have changed, and this is not a normative but a practical observation. As a matter of

fact, women are not about to withdraw from the Armed Forces and the Armed Forces would not even be able to afford such a loss of people. Women have become indispensable.¹⁰²

Yet the reality these women face is daunting. Almost one third of female veterans reports being raped or assaulted during their service – and the number is rising.¹⁰³ Female soldiers are more likely to be raped by their own Forces than killed by enemy forces.¹⁰⁴ According to estimates by the Pentagon, 80 to 90 percent of these attacks on women go unreported; and there is a general feeling that it is not safe, legitimate and/or useful to report rape.¹⁰⁵ This is little surprising because, as the *Time* summed it up: 'Anonymity is all but impossible; a Government Accountability Office report concluded that most victims stay silent because of 'the belief that nothing would be done; fear of ostracism, harassment, or ridicule; and concern that peers would gossip.' More than half feared they would be labelled troublemakers. ... Women worry that they will be removed from their units for their own 'protection' and talk about not wanting to undermine their missions or the cohesion of their units. And then some just do the math: only 8% of cases that are investigated end in prosecution, compared with 40% for civilians arrested for sex crimes. Astonishingly, about 80% of those *convicted* are honourably discharged nonetheless.'¹⁰⁶

Women in the military have less access to confidential advisers and less possibilities to avoid their assailants than civilian women.¹⁰⁷ At the moment, military medical insurance does not cover abortion – without even mentioning the problems with getting access to appropriate

¹⁰²In the short and medium term, of course, in the long run they could be excluded if the U.S. population were to wish so.

¹⁰³Gibbs, N. 'Sexual Assault on Female Soldiers: Don't Ask, Don't Tell'. *Time Magazine US* (online), 8 March 2010. Available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1968110,00.html> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

¹⁰⁴This is mentioned not to give an idea of the number of rape victims (after all, it is relatively rare for soldiers to be killed in battle), but to further illustrate the difference between perceived risks women face and actual risks.

Dick, K. *The Invisible War* (New York, Docurama Films, 2012).

¹⁰⁵Gibbs. 'Sexual Assault'.

¹⁰⁶Gibbs. 'Sexual Assault'

¹⁰⁷Gibbs. 'Sexual Assault'

medical service, especially in places like Afghanistan – although the Shaheen amendment to the Military Access to Reproductive Care and Health for Military Women Act addresses exactly this problem and should come into force in 2013, after having failed as recently as 2000, 2004 and 2011.¹⁰⁸ This will bring the military's health insurance policy in line with civilian federal health insurance.¹⁰⁹

The problem in the Military, however, is wider than these very high numbers of outright violence. *All* women experience some form of gender harassment. The problem and link with military culture is clear: military culture focuses on masculinity to construct the military identity; as a direct side-effect, femininity is aggressively dismissed and indeed attacked. This kind of military culture might have worked fine as a medium for bonding and sustaining group identity when the military was an all-male group. Bonding over similarities between yourselves, and what differentiates you from every one else, is common. However, when the military is a mixed-gender group, bonding over misogyny is highly problematic. It is problematic both because it makes it harder for women to fit in and because of the concrete harms this misogyny brings to women.

The crux of this problem is that the Armed Forces have come to a point where women are *more* necessary to military success than the dominant military culture of fusing masculinity and military. That culture's purpose is to provide a common identity that enables the military to do its job – but it does not. It cannot provide a common identity with so many soldiers

108Hodgson, N. 'Women raped while in the US military are denied abortions. End this now', *The Guardian* (online), 28 May 2012. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/may/28/women-raped-us-military-abortion> [Last accessed 3 September 2012].

Stand With Servicewomen, *What is the March Act?* Available at <http://www.standwithservicewomen.org/marchact.html> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

McRobie, H. 'Abortion access in the US military - time for the MARCH act', *50.50* (online), 15 July 2012. Available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/heather-mcrobie/abortion-access-in-us-military-%E2%80%93-time-for-march-act> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

109McRobie, H. 'Abortion access in the US military - time for the MARCH act', *50.50* (online), 15 July 2012. Available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/heather-mcrobie/abortion-access-in-us-military-%E2%80%93-time-for-march-act> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

being women. The problems with men and women in the Armed Forces must also necessarily influence their job performance.

Luckily, however, the current military culture is not necessary for the Forces to do their job. It is highly unlikely that the Armed Forces can sustain themselves without priding themselves on their traditional values, including difficult ones like the dehumanization of the enemy (although efforts should be made, both from a strategic and from a moral point of view, to exclude for instance civilians in counterinsurgency situations from this conception of the 'enemy'). These values, however, can be framed as *military* values, rather than *masculine* values. This more gender-neutral perspective intrinsically offers more leeway for women to be considered a soldier – for the opposite of a soldier is a civilian, not a woman. The Australian Forces have already realised that soldiers do not need to be men, as do the German Forces. By opening all positions to women, they send the clear message that women are full soldiers, both in practical and in symbolic terms. There is no good reasons for the Armed Forces not to follow them. Military culture tries to exclude women. Taking this case at its best, it does so to protect the Military and its capacity for action: a fairly reasonable argument can be made for this. Even then, however, it is fighting a wrong and lost battle: because women have become so important to the Armed Forces, group cohesion built on misogyny is no longer an option. The means of military culture, in other words, no longer provide a meaningful solution to the problem they try to address.

This does not mean that repealing the combat exclusion will necessarily *solve* the entire problem. It does mean, however, that the combat exclusion actively sustains and contributes to the wider problem of military misogyny, and that abolishing it is a must as this misogyny is not only damaging for the women (and arguably men) involved, but also for the Armed Forces as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE Should women want to serve? A feminist dilemma.

'Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings.'
(Cheris Kramarae)¹¹⁰

'Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition.'
(Timothy Leary)¹¹¹

So far, this dissertation has focused on whether women ought to get access to combat from a societal and military point of view. Feminists, however, are also divided over whether women themselves should *want* to serve. This chapter, therefore, will look at the question from a perspective of women's interests.

The positions

This feminist debate knows broadly two positions: the first one is that women ought to strive for access to combat roles because it would make them more equal to men, which, given men's stronger position in society, would logically also be overall better for women.¹¹² The dissenting stance is that women ultimately will not benefit from the repeal of combat exclusion, either because of the practical reason that women will inevitably continue to serve in lower positions and will always be used rather than empowered by the military, or because of the much more fundamental argument that striving for combat roles means reconfirming and reinforcing patriarchal and masculine values.¹¹³

The affirmative position: liberal feminism

The position described here as liberal feminism is also referred to as feminist egalitarian

110Attributed to her, but also occasionally to other people like Paula Treichler and Rebecca West.

111Cash, C. *Sometimes Being the Queen is All We Have to Hold Onto* (S.L., Connie Hall-Cash, 2005), p. 35.

112Feinman. *Citizenship Rites*, p. 1.

Feinman, I. 'Women Warriors/Women Peacemakers: Will the Real Feminists Please Stand Up!', in *The Women & War Reader*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (London, New York University Press, 1998).

113Feinman, I. 'Women Warriors/Women Peacemakers'

militarism.¹¹⁴ We can be rather short about it, because it can largely be inferred from the second and third chapter of this dissertation. Women ought to strive for access to combat roles because it would make them more equal to men. All the direct and indirect benefits from serving, especially in combat, would be conferred onto women if they would also serve. These benefits include the right to (those military) jobs, career possibilities, social status... but also more intangible benefits such as the association with strength and loyalty, with activity rather than passivity; such as the symbolic value of being one who legitimately can kill and the real implications these norms and ideas have in society. In other words, a military position is a strong position and women would be better off if they have access too.

The critical position: radical feminism

Other authors challenge the premise of liberal equality as beneficial; they question whether militarization like men is worth striving for for women.¹¹⁵ This radical view is also referred to as feminist antimilitarism.¹¹⁶ There are at least two lines of counter-argumentation. The first one is that women, even when allowed to serve, will always serve in inferior positions and ways to men, and that as such, they are used rather than empowered in military service.¹¹⁷ The second one is the more fundamental objection: the assertion that it does not benefit women to live up to male standards, for the standards remain male. Women, then, should not aspire male accomplishments, for by doing so, they indirectly reconfirm that male standards and values are indeed superior to female standards and values.¹¹⁸ To put it rather bluntly: if women want

114For instance by Feinman. *Citizenship Rites*, p. 1.

115Feinman. 'Women Warriors/Women Peacemakers'

116Feinman. *Citizenship Rites*, p. 1.

117McCarron, J. 'Sexist attitudes mean female US military don't get recognition they deserve'. *Women's Views on News* (online), 15 February 2012. Available at http://www.womensviewsonnews.org/2012/02/sexist-attitudes-mean-female-us-military-dont-get-recognition-they-deserve/?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+WomensViewsOnNews+%28Women%27s+Views+on+News%29 [Last accessed 17 March 2012].

Pennington, R. 'Stalin's Falcons: the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment', *Minerva: Quarterly Report*, 18:3-4 (2000), p.76-101.

118Van Creveld. 'Less', p.1-20.

to serve as soldiers rather than as nurses, they (re)confirm that soldiering is superior to nursing. In the long run, this is harmful to women.

The first line of argumentation – that women will 'always' serve in inferior positions – is problematic if it is reached as a conclusion simply based on reality thus far. If women do indeed get discriminated against in the military (they do), simply 'not serving' – and avoiding the uncovering of a discriminating reality – is not a solution for the problem, for hiding the symptoms does not change the diagnosis. Moreover, the argument of proof through history is dangerous (arguably, history also used to 'prove' that longitude cannot be calculated at sea and that the moon is unreachable). This line of argumentation, however, does make sense once it is connected to the larger point of radical feminism, which is that women will never be able to gain an equal position in a male organisation or, on a larger scale, within the patriarchy because the male standards intrinsically and inevitably discriminate against women. Radical feminism, in short, argues that women cannot win and therefore should not fight battles on men's terms. In that sense, 'women who' merely 'seek to be equal with men' in the current system 'lack ambition' and women who strive to repeal the combat exclusion are wasting their energy on the wrong battle.

The problems

The problem with liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is always at risk of accepting male standards as they are. If women are indeed on average different – as said before, it is pretty obvious that they are, and to what extent this is a matter of nature or culture is ultimately irrelevant to immediate policy discussions – then this might cause misfits. Equality in a system tailored to a specific group of people is unlikely to be true equality, much in the same way that a job application that is

written to fit with a certain candidate's profile can be considered unfair, *even if* other candidates are interviewed and assessed fairly to exactly the same standards. Weapons, for instance, might be made to suit the average *male* soldier. Liberal feminism is at risk of accepting weapons as they are, expecting women to deal with it, although these weapons might be less suited for the average soldier and certainly for the average female soldier.¹¹⁹

The problems with radical feminism

The radical stance, however, has more fundamental problems. It is not radical – at least not in the way it aims for. It is prescriptive, more so for women than for men. It can only be logically coherent if it essentializes women, which is both argumentatively and strategically an untenable position. Ironically then – for radical feminism is in essence an effort to *rectify* many of these problems, which however it locates in liberal feminism – radical feminism provides great critiques on manifestations of liberal feminism, but it fails to critique its core ideas in a convincing way.

Radical feminism takes issue with a number of conceptual and practical topics in liberal feminism and emerged as a reaction against those. The conceptual critique that liberal feminism is not radical enough has the same roots as the practical critique that liberal feminism is an elite-feminism of white, rich, high-class women who want to be equal with their male peers. This feminism, then, ignores the plight of most women.¹²⁰ Having an elite of women capable of striving for the same elite positions as men reinforces the weaker position of those women who are not privileged.¹²¹ Moreover, the liberal focus and narrative of all

¹¹⁹I am not arguing women cannot handle weapons. I am arguing material, like weapons, might be based on the average strength of male soldiers, rather than the average strength of all soldiers

¹²⁰Phillips, A. *Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class* (London, Virago Press, 1987), pp. 1-14.
hooks. *Feminist Theory*.

¹²¹I wonder what hooks would say about the feminism pursued by the mother of the family in *Mary Poppins*, for instance.
hooks. *Feminist Theory*.

women victimized by all men does not necessarily ring well with underprivileged women – bell hooks speaks notably about black women – who feel that they are much less oppressed by the men they are surrounded by on a daily basis than by the elitism inherent in the ('white supremacist patriarchal') system.¹²²

The observation that this 'salon version' of liberal feminism is not radical enough to change the situation of most women, and that a more radical overhaul over society is needed to do so, is justified. However, much like the potential of democracy is not invalidated by its prior manifestation as a system that does not give women and poor voting rights, one needs to dehistoricize liberal (and radical) feminist theory in order to judge its intrinsic capacity for achieving equality.

The problem with radical feminism is that it tries to fundamentally change society by not only questioning the position men hold in society, but also by questioning the position male *values* hold in society (hence simply allowing women into a masculine institution like the Army will not do the trick). However, by simultaneously trying to promote female people and female values, radical feminism inevitably ends up linking them. As such, it necessarily essentializes women and has little capacity for overcoming genderedness.

The way out: Liberal feminism as a radical way forward

The question really is whether either feminism can break down genderedness, in this case the male privileges tied to the military. Given the different approaches they take, this question takes different forms for the two kinds of feminisms. For radical feminism, the question is *how* their non-participation is going to help women. For liberal feminism, the question is whether women can join the military in any other way than simply imitating and reproducing

¹²²hooks. *Feminist Theory*.

its existing norms and practices, including misogyny.

Can radical feminism provide a way forward?

The radical view is that, because militarization is so profoundly detrimental to women, women ought to not want to fight; indeed, the entire notion of power and status ought to be conceptualised differently.¹²³ Yet it is unclear how this would or could translate to practice and effectively change the lower position of women. The radical view is that liberal feminist implicit 'approval' of the Armed Forces, through advocacy for participation in those Forces, is negative for women; yet one can seriously wonder to what extent this alleged 'more explicit approval' would be perceived as such and to what extent it is necessary to consolidate the position of the Military in the United States. Radical feminism advocates non-participation of women in the armed forces, yet history clearly shows non-participation of women in militaries is not enough to advance the feminist agenda (quite the contrary) – and any more concrete plans of action are non-existing.

Can liberal feminism provide a way forward?

The question put to liberal feminism, however, remains: can women serve and benefit from it? Butler puts it this way: 'Are there forms of repetition that do not constitute a simple imitation, reproduction, and, hence, consolidation of the law (the anachronistic notion of 'male identification' that ought to be discarded from a feminist vocabulary)?'¹²⁴ Enloe talks about gay rights activists, not feminists, but makes an analogous point: 'It is the very centrality of the military in American popular culture that has made it so hard for gay rights activists to avoid having their own campaign militarized. Here is the resultant dilemma: how do you

¹²³Radical feminists occasionally seem to be unaware that doing something different from the original for it to be independent from that original does obviously not make sense, for the negative of an original is no less dependent than a copy.

¹²⁴Butler. *Gender Trouble*, p. 42.

campaign to allow gay men and lesbians to participate in soldiering *without* fostering the notion that soldiering is an exceptionally valued activity?¹²⁵

The liberal feminist position has this capacity for radicalism when taken far enough; by considering all aspects of women's position as in need for equality with those of men. It is not enough to give them the same job opportunities in the strictest sense (for then indeed the standards might very well remain male and unattainable). However, conceptually liberal feminism has the capacity and is indeed only intellectually coherent when it also takes into account *any interest that women have* as much as any interest that men have. Making men's and women's priorities equal on all accounts provides the opportunity for overcoming genderedness that is the original goal of feminism.

Here is why: assuming no other shared interest by women than the interest of being equal citizens to *all other people*, men or women, liberal feminism *does not need gender* as a defining *or* differentiating factor. This means both that liberal feminism is fundamentally subversive and that liberal feminism is capable of integrating other aspects that are constitutive of identity – class, race, sexuality – better than any other form of feminism. Liberal feminism is feminist in the sense that it started with paying attention to women as a category; but through its free (*liber/libre* in the Roman language family) interpretation of what women are and what women want, it does not confine them to this category. Feminism, in that interpretation, truly is 'the radical notion that women are human beings'.

How does this liberal view offer the best perspectives with regard to women in combat? The liberal argument says women ought to be free to and ought to want participate in combat. By doing so, they would gain the status the military currently confers on men too. Through obtaining this (traditional notion of) power, women's interests would then become a factor to

125Enloe. *Maneuvers*, p. 15.

be reckoned with. *To the extent* that these interests or preferences involve less militarization, women's participation in combat might make demilitarization possible; but only if that is what they want.

Liberal feminism has more capacity for radical change and overcoming genderedness because it does not try to promote weak people through weak values (in the way that radical feminism tries to promote women through promoting female values and the other way around). Instead, it provides access to the common currencies of power – that is, the *traditional* currencies and conceptions of power – for all people, who then, to the extent that they want to, have the power to change the notion of power. This not only is likely to be much more effective; it is also an ungendered way forward because it does not link a certain type of people (male/female) to a certain type of values (masculine/feminine). Hence, liberal feminism has the far more convincing case when advocating women's access to combat.

CHAPTER SIX Conclusion

Brienne asked: 'What shall we do now, my lady?' 'Our duty.'
(George R. Martin, *Clash of Kings*)¹²⁶

This dissertation has argued that combat roles in the United States' Armed Forces should be opened up to women, and it has done so on two levels. After an introduction of the topic in the first chapter, the second and third chapter were devoted to the question whether women ought to serve in combat. They demonstrated that both in practical terms and on principle, allowing women into combat would be an improvement to the status-quo. Chapter two established positive reasons for repealing the exclusion and demonstrated the harms of the current situation as well as the benefits that would come from this policy change. It addresses both direct consequences, considering the benefits of giving women access to the *job* that military combat service constitutes, and indirect consequences, considering the advantages of giving women access to the symbolic stronghold that combat also is. These benefits were established not only for women, but also for men and for society as a whole. They range from very concrete benefits – improved chances for promotion after combat experience – to very principled arguments – Western liberal democracies should not make laws on the basis of gender if there is no good reason to do so. Chapter three subsequently debated whether there are good reasons to exclude women. It looked at negative – enabling but not compelling – reasons for repealing the exclusion. The arguments made against women were divided by type of argumentation – average women and men, appropriateness, the biological issue of pregnancy and compatibility – and proven insufficient to outweigh the positive reasons for allowing women into combat. The conclusion of the first three chapters therefore is that women ought to serve.

¹²⁶Martin, G. *Clash of Kings* (London, Voyager Books, 1998), chapter 46. Available at <http://users.telenet.be/jeffd/A%20Clash%20of%20Kings/chapter46.htm> [Last accessed 1 September 2012].

Chapter four and five further addressed the issue looking at the interests of respectively the Armed Forces and women. Chapter four argued that women are perceived as a threat to military culture because military culture is closely linked to masculinity. Indeed, from an archetypal point of view, soldiers and men are interchangeable because all soldiers are men and all men are soldiers. This intertwining makes women – who are the contrary of men – also the contrary of soldiers. It is impossible to solve this paradox by changing (many of) the core values of the military, for these values, while not pretty, are necessary for the Armed Forces to do their job. Ideals like strength, courage, perseverance and even a form of glorification of violence are unavoidable. These values are traditionally considered male/military (male and military being interchangeable). Theoretically, there is no reason why they should remain male and indeed gendered, for women can enact these values too. In practice, there is much resistance to moving away from the idea that military equals male. It is also understandable that the Armed Forces would resist such a change of paradigm, for questioning the paradigm means scrutinizing and indeed doubting war and the military identity. Doubt is problematic to military commitment. However, if the Armed Forces are putting up such a fight against women, they are fighting the wrong battle. It is the wrong battle because women have become necessary to the Armed Forces, and the military culture that should bond soldiers is dividing them into two non-interchangeable groups. This is why ultimately, it is rapidly becoming in the best interest of the Armed Forces to degenderize military values. Allowing women into combat would be a big step forward in that direction. Chapter five turns to women. Is it in their interest to serve? The liberal feminist view is yes, for all the benefits established in chapter two. Radical feminists, however, disagree, and say this is *not* the battle women ought to fight. Militarization and striving for combat access, with the implicit acceptance of the masculine dominance of the Armed Forces, can only

disadvantage women in the long run. Which is the more convincing case? Radical feminism tries to overcome the flaws it perceives in liberal feminism: that by accepting male paradigms, it is not radical enough and does not overcome genderedness. Yet in fact, liberal feminism does both of these while radical feminism doesn't. Radical feminism tries to promote both female people and female values; but as a result, it inevitably links them. It cannot overcome this genderedness of its ambition. Liberal feminism, on the other hand, argues that women should be treated like men. This initially means getting the same chances, but interpreted more widely, it offers radical perspectives. If women as people are as important as men, then so are their preferences. In other words, liberal feminism also promotes feminine value-preferences (like radical feminism does), but only to the extent that these preferences are important, to women or to men. Because women and feminist values are not intrinsically linked here, liberal feminism allows people and values to be *ungendered*. As such, it overcomes genderedness and has the capacity for radical change.

In short, opening up combat positions for women is not only practically and on principle the best way to go; it is also specifically beneficial for both main parties involved, that is the Armed Forces and women. For all these reasons, the combat exclusion should be repealed.

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