"WE JOIN TO BE CHALLENGED, WE DON'T JOIN TO BE VICTIMS"

MAPPING EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN THE U.S. MILITARY

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Capstone Project

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April 17, 2018

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THE FLETCHER SCHOOL

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

“There must be those among whom we can sit down and weep and still be counted as warriors”
-Adrienne Rich

Table of Contents

I. Introduction: The Coexistence of Victimization and Empowerment	**1**
II. Methodology and Participant Breakdown	**9**
III. Why Servicewomen Matter	**16**
IV. Standing Out on the Yellow Footprints	**25**
V. Modern Day Cassandras	**27**
VI. Pit Against Each Other: Women-Women Dynamics	**37**
VII. Over It: Invisible Veterans	**42**
VIII. Conclusion: We Exist	**52**
Appendix 1: Recommendations for Further Research	**59**
Appendix 2: Examples of Social Media Posts/Correspondence	**60**
Bibliography	**61**

I. *Introduction: The Coexistence of Victimization and Empowerment*

Coronado, California. December 2014.

I wipe away convulsions of tears from my face with the camouflage sleeve of my green battle fatigues. I know my eyes will still be red later; my sailors will know I've been crying. It is December in San Diego, and I am sitting at a picnic table behind my command's compound on Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, the Southern California sun warming my face, watching the tide roll out into the Pacific Ocean a few yards away. I am replaying every moment of the hellish preceding months.

I've just turned 28. I'm serving as a combat support enabler in Naval Special Warfare—the Special Operations Forces (SOF) contingent that includes the Navy SEALs. My boss has just been punished for sexually harassing me and another female officer, after I had reported months of abuse. I have just been informed that I will be taking his job instead of another more senior officer, standing on the edge of a "glass cliff"[1] and becoming the first female troop commander in Naval Special Warfare.

When my executive officer—the second in command, and my new immediate boss—informs me of the decision, he also asks, "LT Goldstein, don't you think you could have given him a chance to correct himself first before you ruined a man's career? I'm not sure you belong in this community. You need a thick skin to work here."

My commanding officer insists that my harasser was only fired on a "technicality"—attempting to sleep with another female officer in exchange for a position at the command, a story

[1] Bruckmuller, Susanne and Nyla R. Branscombe. "How Women End Up on the 'Glass Cliff'" *Harvard Business Review*. January-February 2011. https://hbr.org/2011/01/how-women-end-up-on-the-glass-cliff

he repeats to my entire department as he tells them I will be their new troop commander, promoting and undermining me in a single moment.

My story is not unique, and it captures the dualities constantly experienced by women in the U.S. military: I am a combatant and a victim; I am succeeding in a hyper-masculine organization, but viscerally aware that I am in a female body; I am constantly reminded of it.

To be a woman in the military is to live with coexisting identities that are dissonant with conventional gender roles.[2] It is to live with the greatest empowerment and the deepest violation at the same time, often on a daily basis. Women are promised they are joining a brotherhood at enlistment or commission, only to find that women are constant outsiders, faces pressed up against the glass of a room they can peer into, but to which they are not admitted. It is to feel isolated, invisible, and misunderstood by both the institution in which they serve, and by the society they are sworn to protect. It is why, when many women leave the military, they do not self-identify as veterans. "Self-identify" in this case has a broad definition, meaning considering oneself a veteran, actively claiming veteran status on employment forms, use of veterans-associated benefits, and maintaining active affiliation with military and veteran-oriented community, social, and professional organizations.

In the United States, many of the two million living women who served in the active and reserve armed forces (National Guard included) do not self-identify as veterans.[3] According to extensive testimony shared in a 2015 United States Senate hearing, "Despite their prominent role [serving] in the wars being fought overseas, fewer than 30 percent of women veterans self-identify

[2] While there are a number of similarities between experiences of LGBT servicemembers and women veterans, this article will specifically focus on the experiences of servicemembers who present as women during their service.
[3] Department of Veterans Affairs, "Women Veterans Report: The Past, Present and Future of Women Veterans." National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, February 2017. https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Women_Veterans_2015_Final.pdf

as veterans in their community and they are often unaware of the benefits and services that are available to them."[4] Recent quantitative research on this topic has found "issues of belonging, recognition, harassment, and assault faced by active-duty women impact social support levels and mental health outcomes in women veterans."[5] Qualitative research on the topic is minimal and often not easily accessible, buried in biomedical and public health journals. While this research sometimes reaches practitioners within the Department of Veterans Affairs, it doesn't reach the general public, including advocacy groups and women veterans themselves.[6] Furthermore, much of this research seeks participants who are enrolled in VA healthcare, which excludes women who received "bad paper" administrative discharges or voluntarily do not use VA healthcare.

Women veterans tend not to tell their stories, in part because many women veterans may think that their stories are not valuable: military history predominantly depicts men (despite the fact that women have always been integral to the military apparatus, including in direct combat)[7], and existing soldier-memoirs often glorify militarized masculinities forged in direct combat.[8] A handful of women veterans have written memoirs. Kayla Williams' *Love My Rifle More Than You: Young and Female in the US Army*, published in 2006, remains one of the best known, and stands out as an account that accurately and honestly captures the code-switching demanded of servicewomen;

I wanted to capture the terror, the mind-numbing tedium; and the joy and honor. Not overlooking the suicidal periods, the anorexic impulses, the promiscuity; and the comradeship and the bravery. The times we were scared out of our

[4] United States Congress. Senate. *Fulfilling the Promise to Women Veterans*: *Hearing Before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.* 114th Congress, 1st Session. April 21, 2015 https://www.veterans.senate.gov/hearings/fulfilling-the-promise-to-women-veterans04212015

[5] Thomas, Kate Hendricks, Ellen L. Haring, Justin McDaniel, Kari L. Fletcher, and David L. Albright. "Belonging and Support: Women Veterans' Perceptions of Veteran Service Organizations." *Journal of Veterans Studies* 2, no. 2 (2017): 10.

[6] Monthly Email Newsletter, "Center for Women Veterans Research Update"

[7] Bell, Jerri, and Tracy Crow. *It's My Country Too: Women's Military Stories from the American Revolution to Afghanistan*. University of Nebraska Press, 2017; Goldstein, Andrea N, "Forgotten Pioneers" *U.S. Naval Institute.* November 1, 2016. http://www.usni.org/magazines/navalhistory/2016-12/forgotten-pioneers.

[8] Woodward R., Duncanson C., Jenkings K.N. "Gender and Military Memoirs". In: Woodward R., Duncanson C. (eds) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Militar*y. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2017.

minds. The times we were bored out our minds, too. No one has ever written that book—what life is like for the 15 percent.[9]

Williams' memoir, along with the recent additions Laura Westley's *War Virgin* and Kate Germano's memoir *Fight Like a Girl* are in the minority of books that capture this vulnerability. All three are by white women, the latter two are by officers. The two most well-known books about women serving in post-9/11 conflicts: Gayle Tzemach Lemmon's *Ashley's War* and Kristen Holmstedt's *Band of Sisters* were both written by journalists who are familiar with the military community but are not servicewomen themselves. Pam Campos-Palma, a Latina enlisted Air Force veteran who now leads a progressive political advocacy organization, regarding many of the existing memoirs by women veterans, observed, "There's very little to no collectivism. The stories that *are* out there are this very individual hero narrative which is such a fucking farce."[10] Pam noted that she was energized to write her own story and op-eds, but was discouraged from doing so, "I just had too many tone-deaf exchanges with blah editors telling me I was 'too much', 'too slanted', 'too much on the race and gender thing.' That I was like nope, don't have time for this B.S." Army veteran M.B. Dallochio, who is a Pacific Islander details these same challenges in her memoir *The Desert Warrior*, and that this pushed her to publish independently.

There is minimal social science research that accurately, qualitatively, captures "what life is like for the 15 percent."[11] The field of feminist security studies is burgeoning with researchers who study gender and women in the military: the work of Carol Cohn, Robert Egnell, Cynthia Enloe, Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, Megan Mackenzie, Laura Sjoberg, and Annick T.R. Wibben were foundational to my literature review. While many of these and other researchers have significant exposure to the military (Egnell is a reserve officer in the Swedish army; Enloe and

[9] Williams, Kayla, and Michael E. Staub. *Love My Rifle More Than You: Young and Female in the US Army*. WW Norton & Company, 2006: 15.
[10] Twitter direct message conversation with Pam Campos-Palma, 1 April 2018.
[11] Williams, *Love my Rifle More than You*.

Lemmon are both from military families), none of them are women veterans themselves. The result is that in scholarship, servicewomen and women veterans are often being characterized as an "other"; a field built on inclusivity treats servicewomen with suspicion. Cynthia Enloe observes that militarization, "usually has been conducted without creating alliances with those feminists working with wartime rape victims, with military prostitutes, with women refugees, or even women living as military wives."[12] When feminist scholarship constantly seeks to build bridges between women to dismantle hegemonic, patriarchal systems of oppression, servicewomen and male allies are left out, written off as being complicit, rather than potential allies who can understand these frameworks and dismantle from within.[13]

Servicewomen and women veterans are doubly silenced by living in an ecosystem of hegemonic masculinity[14], and by lacking vocabulary to describe their shared experiences. There is an entire body of research and field of academia, as well as practice more familiar in the humanitarian sectors that they don't know exists. Before joining the military, I studied women soldiers who disguised themselves as men to fight in the American Civil War, and I was aware that debates over women's capabilities in combat were patently ridiculous and were more about *men* and proving masculinity than about women.[15] I didn't learn of the concept of gender mainstreaming until my first semester of graduate school, despite the fact that I led initiatives with this intent in my military unit before leaving active duty. Nor had I heard of basic policies, such

[12] Enloe, Cynthia. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Univ of California Press, 2000: 286.
[13] Peterson, V.S. and Runyan, A.S. (2014) *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium.* Fourth Edition, Boulder, CO: Westview Press; Duncanson C. (2017) Anti-Militarist Feminist Approaches to Researching Gender and the Military. In: Woodward R., Duncanson C. (eds) The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military. Palgrave Macmillan, London
[14] Connell, Robert William, and Raewyn Connell. *Masculinities*. Univ of California Press, 2005.
[15] MacKenzie, Megan. *Beyond the Band of Brothers: the US Military and the Myth that Women Can't Fight*. Cambridge University Press, 2015; Goldstein, Andrea. "Why Are you Trying to Destroy the Last Good Thing Men Have?: Understanding Resistance to Women in Combat Jobs." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol 20: Issue 2: April 2018.

as UN Security Council Resolution 1325, related resolutions, nor was I aware that the United States released its first National Action Plan in 2009, the same year I joined the Navy. I'd never heard of major theoretical frameworks and concepts like "intersectionality".[16] Within weeks of matriculating, graduate coursework in feminist security studies, gender, and human security gave me a vocabulary to describe the world I had lived in, and validated my lived experiences as part of wider, well-studied phenomena. Where I had been silenced, I could now sing.

Over the course of the last year, I engaged with hundreds of current and former American servicewomen, through formal interviews, informal conversations, and through reading social media pages open only to servicewomen and women veterans, seeking amplify their voices.[17] Both men and women join the military for similar reasons: calling to service, travel, economic, vocational, and educational opportunity, accelerated pathways to citizenship, and escaping adverse home and social circumstances, and these reasons were mirrored in the experiences of the women I interviewed.[18] Most women reflected positively on their service; across branch and era of service, most served in units marked by inclusive camaraderie and professionalism, which made negative experiences and persistent and subtle gender bias, which will be extensively explored further on, even *more* remarkable.

My objective with this research is to combine both my perspective as a woman veteran and social science researcher to capture the totality of what hundreds of women told me over the course of a year of conducting both formal and informal interviews: "nobody understands us." Not the

[16] Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color." Stanford Law Review, 43 (1991): 1241–1299.
[17] While the era of service from the women I interviewed ranged from the Cold War to the present, all women quoted in this chapter served in post-9/11 conflicts, unless otherwise specified.
[18] Yeung, Douglas, Christina Steiner, Chaitra M. Hardison, Lawrence M. Hanser, and Kristy N. Kamarck, Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views from the Field. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1538.html; Dichter, Melissa E., and Gala True. "'"This Is the Story of Why My Military Career Ended Before It Should Have" Premature Separation From Military Service Among US Women Veterans." Affilia 30, no. 2 (2015): 187-199.

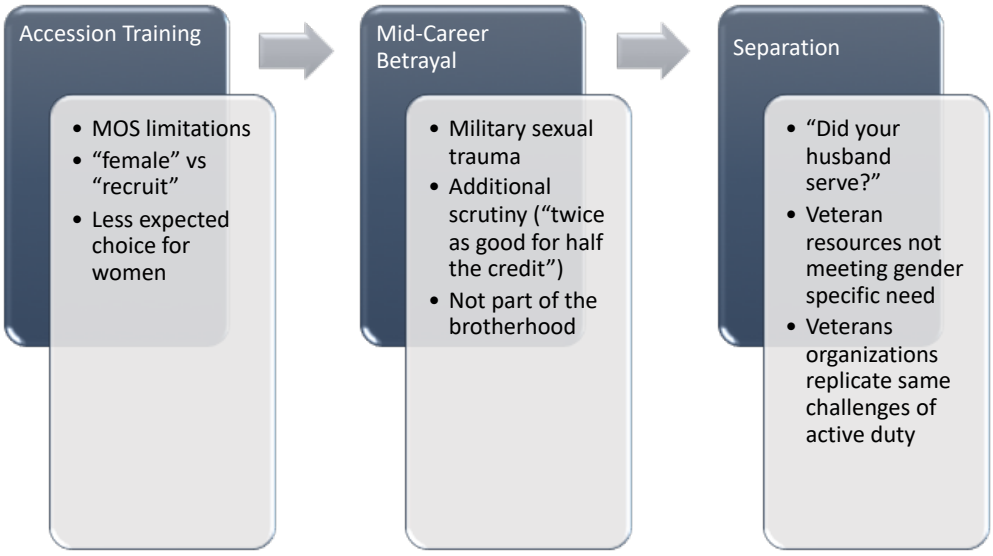
public. Not our doctors. Not our partners. Not even the men we served with and nearly died next to. Only we do—this was a factor that led many the women I interviewed to volunteer to participate. The *monachopsis*[19] we live with—the constant and persistent feeling of being out of place—feeling misunderstood, that invisibility, the constant need to explain one's presence and veterans' status, the impossible desire for belonging that often only results in disappointment, is why women opt out of trying to do so. Nearly a quarter of the women I interviewed identified as lesbian or bisexual, and each served for part or all of her military career under "Don't Ask-Don't Tell", the law that effectively banned gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans from serving openly. Lieutenant Commander Allison Adams-Jones, a currently-serving reserve officer, recalled having to sign paperwork when she joined the Navy that forced her to explicitly lie about her sexual orientation. Two other enlisted women, who left the military before the ban was repealed, remarked that having to lie about their sexual orientation and hide their personal relationships were factors in their decisions to leave the military. As demonstrated by these accounts, women's feelings of isolation are only amplified by intersections of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and even rank, branch of service, and military occupational specialty. They nonetheless exist with remarkable consistency despite the intersectional backgrounds of the servicewomen.

My interviews have mapped three key milestones of women's military service that communicate to them that they are still considered outsiders: boot camp, a mid-career betrayal, and experiences after separation that reinforces previous experiences of "otherness" and creates confirmation bias regarding misunderstanding of women veterans. In between those "milestone" events are dozens of daily micro-aggressions that remind women that they are part of an institution designed and by men: "unisex" uniforms made for men that poorly fit women; being confused for

[19] Thank you to Michelle M., an Army officer, for sharing this concept through her blog in a social media community for servicewomen: https://thenefelibata.com/2017/10/01/monachopsis

a military wife at medical appointments; mandatory pre-deployment pregnancy tests, and other minor but persistent reminds of being an outsider. A servicewoman becomes a veteran the day she receives her "DD-214" discharge paperwork, which means more attention needs to be given to her time in service to understand her identity as a veteran.[20] I will specifically examine these "milestones", unpacking experiences of servicewomen during service as a means of understanding how they come to characterize and reflect on their service.

Figure 1-Major Milestones of Exclusion for Servicewomen



[20] Maiocco, Gina, and Mary Jane Smith. "The experience of women veterans coming back from war." Archives of psychiatric nursing 30, no. 3 (2016): 393-399; Mattocks, Kristin M., Sally G. Haskell, Erin E. Krebs, Amy C. Justice, Elizabeth M. Yano, and Cynthia Brandt. "Women at war: Understanding how women veterans cope with combat and military sexual trauma." *Social science & medicine* 74, no. 4 (2012): 537-545; Thomas et al. 2017

II. *Methodology and Participant Breakdown*

My research initially intended to answer why women veterans do not self-identify, with the intent of tracing how experiences on active duty had an effect.

As a member of the culture that I researched, every day is fieldwork. My days are filled with reading Facebook posts in private groups that are only open to servicewomen and women veterans and engaging in text message conversations with my friends who are current and former members of the armed forces (See Appendix 2). I regularly attend conferences and social events for servicewomen. Saturation with the concerns of servicewomen and women veterans—because my friends and I were living them—helped me hone the kinds of questions I wanted to ask.

But I also knew I needed to reach far beyond my own social network to be truly inclusive. As a former active duty, now reserve officer in the U.S. Navy, my network of military women is predominately (but not entirely) white and college-educated officers who served during the same era.

i. Formal Surveys and Interviews

I was able to reach over 100,000 women through a posting on the American Women Veterans Facebook page. In a matter of hours, I had a roster of 70 women—the maximum allowed by my institutional review board—to interview. I sent all of them an informed consent form. Of this number, 37 returned the informed consent form and took a Qualtrics survey to gain baseline demographic data, as well as branch and era of service, and military occupational specialty. Of those 37, 25 women completed either a face-to-face or Skype interview lasting up to two hours. Figure 1 (below) shows a breakdown of participants by branch of service. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of participants by rank. "Both" represents that the participant enlisted and later earned an officer commission.

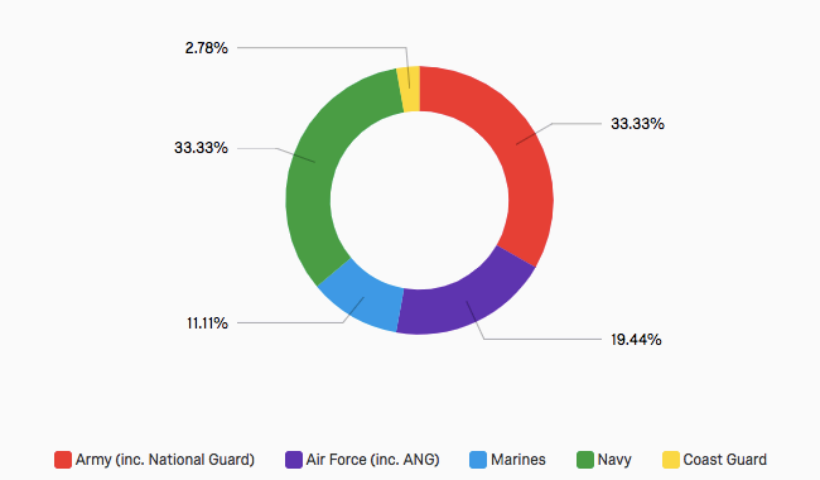


Figure 2-Participant Breakdown by Branch of Service

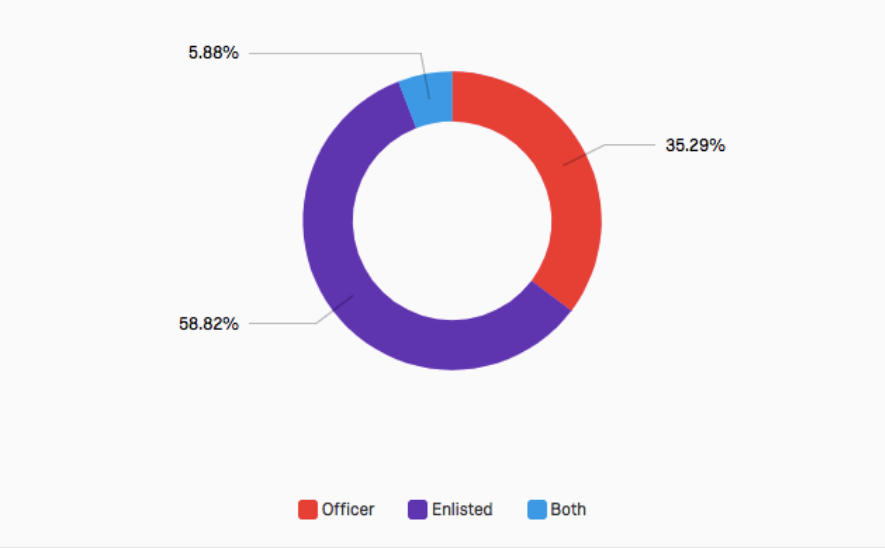


Figure 3-Officer/Enlisted Breakdown

Of the participants, 77.42% were no longer serving on active duty, and 22.58% were on active duty. The average length of service was 10 years either on active duty or active (drilling) reserves. Of the participants who were no longer serving, 61.29% identified as veterans, 16.13% did not. Of note, not all of the women who identified as veterans in the Qualtrics survey met the defined criteria for "self-identify."

80% of the participants were married/had a domestic partner or had been married; 78% of those who were or had been married were married to another service member/veteran. 40% did not have children but wished to have children in the future, 16.67% did not have and did not want children, 20% had children (including stepchildren and adopted) that they had during service, 16.67% had children (including stepchildren and adopted) after service. 6.67% were in other circumstances, including infertility and loss of custody of stepchildren following a divorce.

74% of all participants are legally classified by the Department of Veterans Affairs as "combat veterans"[21], 19.35% of these participants also have combat-related decorations. 38.71% of participants were receiving compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for service-connected disability with an average of 60-70% disabled. 65% of participants used some kind of veterans-related resources, predominately VA healthcare and the GI Bill, with a handful of participants belonging to Veteran Service Organizations/Veterans Interest Organizations such as the American Legion and Team RWB.

For other demographics, participants were given the option of filling in their identity in a short answer form.

Participants were permitted to enter their own response for sexual orientation. 22% of women identified as queer/lesbian/gay/bisexual, and 78% percent identified as straight/heterosexual.

[21] "Military service documentation that reflects service in a combat theater, receipt of combat service medals, and/or receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits."

While transgender veterans were invited to participate, none did. All participants identified as women during and after service.

64% of participants identified as white/Caucasian. Of the 36% of participants who did not identify as Caucasian, participants were split evenly between identifying as Hispanic, Black, and Bi-Racial. The research population included more Caucasian women than the active duty force, which is 53% white, 31% Black, 13% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 7% "mixed/other".[22]

ii. Informal Interviews

I interacted with servicewomen and women veterans on a daily basis on social media and by text message. Some were my friends and colleagues; some were strangers who reached out to me directly. I am somewhat known in the military/veterans' space because I have been writing for *Task & Purpose*, a major veterans blog with over four million readers per month, since it started in 2014. Readers regularly reach out to me on Twitter and Facebook via direct message.

These interactions often served to provide additional data to the questions I posed, as well as point to topics for further research. In addition, I scoured both public and private Facebook groups that were of interest to servicewomen and women veterans for supporting data. The figure below shows an example of a public Facebook post that provided useful data.

[22] Patten, Eileen and Kim Parker. "A Snapshot of Active Duty Women." Pew Research Center. December 22, 2011. http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/22/a-snapshot-of-active-duty-women/

Figure 4-Screenshot from American Women Veterans Facebook page, which has over 100,000 members

I also attended frequent conferences supporting servicewomen and women veterans. During these conferences, fellow women veterans and I would discuss our shared experiences. I would often discuss my research, and on several occasions, other women veterans not only consented to have their stories included, but specifically requested it.

Finally, while some of the women I interviewed requested to be anonymous, others specifically asked to be named. Women who requested to be anonymous are initially referred to by a pseudonymous first name with an asterisk next to it. Those who consented to have their name used are first introduced by their full name. Some participants are still serving on active duty or the reserves, while others are retired. These participants are all first identified by their rank. After the initial identification, the choice to use women's first names rather than last is deliberate. One's first name is one of the very first personal sacrifices servicemembers make in the process of militarization in basic training. "Andrea" becomes "Officer Candidate" Goldstein, or simply just "Goldstein." One's subordinates *never* call you by your first name; it's considered unprofessional to refer to a servicemember by his or her first name in front of someone of a junior rank. One's

first name becomes the deeply personal, the bit of humanity that one holds close. During my time on active duty, I also noticed that while there was inconsistency as to whether or not male peers used first or last names with one another and female peers, female peers *always* used first names with one another. It was a mark of shared understanding of humanity and vulnerability. Therefore, I've chosen to primarily use first names because I hope to create a deeper understanding of the complex and often contradictory experiences of women veterans.

III. *Why Servicewomen Matter*

Researching women serving in the military is significant both from the perspective of developing actionable policy recommendations focused on servicewomen and women veterans, and also for addressing persistent questions in feminist scholarship.

The U.S. military needs women in order to fill its ranks. Since the U.S. military became an all-volunteer force in 1973, the military has developed increasingly innovative means to recruit and retain personnel, particularly in light of endless, fractious, hybrid conflicts of Post-9/11 "New Wars"[23]. Since 1990, the number of women in serving on active duty has increased from 11% to 15% overall, with slightly higher numbers in the Reserves; nearly one in five members of the Air Force and Navy are women.[24] Nearly 25% of all new recruits are women, and because "high school completion, substance abuse, criminal justice system involvement, and fitness being the major limiting factors," only 25% of 18-24 year olds are eligible to serve.[25] Only 19% of Americans in this age range have a *propensity* to serve.[26] And women leave the military prior to the 20-year retirement mark at a higher rate than men—in the US Navy, at twice the rate.[27]

Women have served in every single American conflict dating back to the Revolutionary war; Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a man to fight in George Washington's Army, became America's first female disabled combat veteran in the 1780s.[28] In the more than a century

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[23] Kaldor, Mary. *New and old wars: Organised violence in a global era*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.
Duffield, Mark. *Global governance and the new wars: The merging of development and security*. Zed Books Ltd., 2014.

[24] Parker, Kim; Anthony Cilluffo and Renee Stepler, "6 Facts About the U.S. Military's Changing Demographics." Pew Research Center, April 13, 2017. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/13/6-facts-about-the-u-s-military-and-its-changing-demographics/

[25] Carter, Phillip, Katherine Kidder, Amy Schafer, Andrew Swich. "AVF 4.0: The Future of the All-Volunteer Force." *Center for a New American Security,* 28 March 2017. https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/avf-4-0-the-future-of-the-all-volunteer-force

[26] Ibid

[27] Interview with member of N1D, Chief of Naval Operations Diversity and Inclusion Cell, August 2017.

[28] Goldstein, Andrea N, "Forgotten Pioneers" *U.S. Naval Institute.* November 1, 2016. http://www.usni.org/magazines/navalhistory/2016-12/forgotten-pioneers.

that women have legally served in the U.S. military, the armed forces have also significantly evolved from the attitude that women's role in the military is to serve in noncombatant jobs in order to "free a man to fight." Indeed, "'Combat', however, is usually left conveniently vague in definition."[29] Historically, U.S. law and military policy have changed the definition of "combat" both to obscure the nature of the U.S. military's foreign involvement, and in order to say that women "aren't" actually in combat.[30] Yet these obfuscations became increasingly absurd as the nature of warfare has changed from having a clearly defined "front lines" to being nearly borderless; during post-9/11 conflicts, in areas declared to be combat zones "green on blue" attacks by partner forces or locally employed personnel that occurred "inside the wire" were one of the greatest threats. In 2012, such "insider attacks" were responsible for 15% of coalition deaths in Afghanistan.[31] The fact of the matter was that women are already *in* combat, women *have* served in combat for centuries, and that policy restrictions were hampering the operational needs of the military. The result was that in late 2015, having reviewed data and input from across the force that indicated opening all roles to women could potentially increase mission effectiveness, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that "without exception", all positions in the U.S. military would be open to any service member who could meet set standards.[32] Since then, women have entered several ground combat military occupational specialties that had since been closed to them, including the infantry.[33]

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[29] Enloe, Cynthia H. *Does Khaki Become You?: the Militarization of Women's Lives.* South End Pr, 1983: 13.
[30] Goldstein, Andrea. "Why Are you Trying to Destroy the Last Good Thing Men Have?: Understanding Resistance to Women in Combat Jobs." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol 20: Issue 2: April 2018.
[31] Roggio, Bill, Lisa Lundquist. "Green on Blue Attack in Afghanistan: The Data." Real Clear Defense. 21 March 2017. https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/03/21/green-on-blue_attacks_in_afghanistan_the_data_111015.html
[32] Perrelin, Cheryl. "Carter Opening All Military Occupations, Positions to Women." Department of Defense. December 3 2017. https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/632536/carter-opens-all-military-occupations-positions-to-women/
[33] Women have served on combatant ships and aircraft since 1992; while women were part of the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, which subsequently branched into the Central Intelligence Agency and Special

Despite the fact that the military needs women, there remain persistent challenges to creating a culture that values them. The epidemic of sexual violence within the military is now well-known. According to data from the Department of Veterans affairs, 25% of women veterans report experiencing military sexual trauma (MST), defined as "sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment."[34] The number of actual experiences of MST is likely higher, due to lack of trust in reporting mechanisms, and lack of knowledge of what constitutes sexual trauma. In order to improve retention, the experience of servicewomen must be improved, and that points to internal cultural changes that might reshape the entire institution. These changes will have ripple effects to improve the situation of servicewomen when they become veterans. As veterans, women are 250% more likely to commit suicide than women who have never served, comprise the fastest growing population of veterans, and the fastest growing homeless population in the nation.[35] Yet women veterans also have enormous potential, having served in leadership and technical positions in the military, and access to enormous educational resources through the GI Bill. Four women veterans currently serve in Congress[36]; and over more are currently running. If "the future is female", enabling women veterans to succeed in civilian life has enormous potential.

Just as the military and policy-making world has consistently grappled with the "woman question", feminist scholarship consistently grapples with asking whether women's military service and expansion of roles should be celebrated as a feminist act at all, or the degree to which it means complicity with militarization and militarism. This represents an inherent contradiction

Operations Forces (SOF), women have been assigned or attached as "combat support" enablers with SOF since the 1980s. The latter have held non-combat specific military occupational specialties while attached or assigned to ground combat units.

[34] Department of Veterans Affairs, "Women Veterans Healthcare: Facts and Statistics about Women Veterans" https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/latestinformation/facts.asp. Accessed 10 December 2017

[35] Goldstein, Andrea. "5 Things Women Veterans Want Everyone to Know." *Task & Purpose*. 10 November 2017. http://taskandpurpose.com/5-things-women-veterans-want-everyone-know/

[36] Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Rep. Martha McSally (R-AZ).

in the examination of the construction of gender in the military. As Claire Duncanson examines, "It is something of a puzzle, then, that anti-militarist feminists insist that militaries are incapable of change. If one institution, gender, is socially constructed and therefore capable of change, the same must be true of militaries."[37] Cynthia Enloe argues "If women who seek freedom from traditional sex roles begin to see military decisions to recruit women soldiers as triumphs for women's liberation, then they too have become open to ideological militarization."[38] Because Enloe's work is so foundational to the field of feminist security studies, many subsequent scholars have been quick to name servicewomen as complicit in systems of patriarchal oppression. In this framework only individual "exceptional" women can succeed, and most women and men who are not at the top of the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity are left behind.[39] Claire Duncanson and Rachel Woodward explore this discourse:

> In decades-old debates over women's military inclusion, particularly in combat roles, feminists have focused less on whether women are capable of performing military roles, the preoccupation of mainstream analyses, but rather on whether women should seek inclusion, asking whether this would be process for women, for gender equality and for feminism.[40]

It would be much more useful to accept that the US military is not going to go away any time soon, nor is it likely to cease being a powerful and well-regarded institution.[41] Furthermore, as Duncanson and Woodward further note, "there are situations in which militaries are the only organizations that can facilitate security."[42] If scholars are working on this assumption, it then becomes possible to have a more productive discussion regarding actionable means of disrupting

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[37] Duncanson, Claire. Anti-Militarist Feminist Approaches to Researching Gender and the Military. In: Woodward R., Duncanson C. (eds) The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2017.
[38] Enloe, Cynthia H. *Does Khaki Become you?: the Militarisation of Women's Lives*. South End Pr, 1983: 10.
[39] Carter, April. *Should women be soldiers or pacifists?*, Peace Review, 1996: 8:3, 331-335
[40] Duncanson, Claire, and Rachel Woodward. 2016. "Regendering the Military: Theorizing Women's Military Participation." *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 1: 3-21.
[41] Newport, Frank. "Americans' Confidence in Institutions Edges Up." Gallup. 26 June 2017. http://news.gallup.com/poll/212840/americans-confidence-institutions-edges.aspx
[42] Duncanson and Woodward, 13.

systems of hegemonic power. Rather than write off servicewomen as anti-feminist, this process creates an opportunity between theory and practice. Contradicting herself, even Cynthia Enloe sees this possibility, "Perhaps more than in any previous era, we are living at a time when women can draw on their own experiences with the military to expose the military for the contradictory and vulnerable patriarchal institution it is and always has been."[43] There is a substantial opportunity to incorporate feminist theory and ideals as the military increasingly considers retention and mission effectiveness, and possible need for cultural change to meet these objectives.

The military and feminist scholarship have often created divisions from one another, yet need one another: it's time to build bridges. Robert Egnell, who has lived and served both in academia and the military observed:

> […A] new interdisciplinary approach is necessary—one that connects gender perspectives and feminist scholarship with military theory and discussions of military effectiveness in both war and peace support operations. By marrying two previously separate fields of analysis and inquiry, this article not only makes an argument for the implementation of gender perspectives in the armed forces, but also addresses the more challenging question of how this process of change should be approached. The result of such processes is not only likely to lead to improved conditions for women around the world, but also increased effectiveness of military organizations employing force, or the threat of such force, to achieve political objectives.[44]

Egnell recognizes that for actionable change to actually take place, institutions have to be willing (albeit convinced) to take part in changing themselves. External pressure through public opinion and civilian control of the military certainly play a large role, often creating a catalyst, but ultimately, and perhaps ironically, the most powerful force to begin to change the culture of the military will be members of the military community itself, through marginalized servicemembers who are empowered to self-advocate, through leaders and allies who understand the value of a diverse force, and through veterans who return to other roles in government or advocacy. Megan

[43] Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*: 220.
[44] Egnell, Robert. "Gender perspectives and Military Effectiveness: Implementing UNSCR 1325 and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security." *Inclusive Security*. March 2016. https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/gender-perspectives-and-military-effectiveness/

Mackenzie, observes that because the military needs women, the military needs to create a culture in which women feel included and empowered. Addressing the hegemonic, militarized, and often toxic masculinity that undermines military culture, she writes:

> And the truth is, maybe women will change or undermine particular aspects of masculine culture within the military. However, there is no reason to treat this as a negative outcome, and there is no evidence that such a cultural shift would decrease the effectiveness of troops. Women might make the military less misogynist, and less about proving one's masculinity, and that might not be a bad thing.[45]

I witnessed this phenomenon in action. In the 18 months following my promotion to troop commander, the special operations unit I served in went from being a bastion of toxic masculinity to professional, inclusive, and mission-effective. Focused on task cohesion rather than social cohesion, we became cohesive *because* we were successful, rather than the other way around, a phenomenon that is well-documented in literature.[46]

A large part of that change can be attributed to a change of command at that unit, and a new commanding officer who fostered a climate of inclusivity. That commanding officer, Commander Mike Wisecup, a US Navy SEAL, explained that he worked to create an inclusive environment not for inclusion's sake, but because it brought out the best in people in the unit and improved decision making. He explained:

> Everyone has something to offer and I have to uncover that...One of the ways you do that is engaging with people on your team, understanding how they think, what bothers them, understanding where they are personally and professionally. Inclusion itself is making sure you can tap into the absolute best in people, and sometimes that means uncovering that for them where they don't know they had the potential.[47]

Over time, the male leaders I worked with began to see connections between gender equality in our unit, inclusive leadership, and operational effectiveness. They began to ask questions about how to improve our culture in the unit, and took active roles in seeing necessary changes realized, from making sure women weren't talked over in meetings, to having no tolerance for sexual

[45] MacKenzie, *Beyond the Band of Brothers*: 154.
[46] Ibid, 145.
[47] Interview with Commander Mike Wisecup, 6 March 2018

harassment, to ordering female-specific combat gear, to ensuring we had the means to work with local women's groups (including in security forces) while deployed overseas. And much of it took place because the leader of our organization had set the tone. Fitting with Robert Connell's theory of "change among the gatekeepers", these men saw how changing our culture to be more inclusive of women benefitted *everyone*.[48] What might happen if this phenomenon was replicated across the U.S. military? While some of the gender-based workplace dynamics might sound familiar to civilian workplace experiences, particularly male-dominated fields, the military has, out of necessity, been at the forefront of social change for generations, from racial integration to recognizing same-sex partnerships after the repeal of "Don't-Ask, Don't-Tell", and before federal marriage equality. In spite of President Donald Trump's continued efforts to ban transgender troops from serving openly, military leaders have repeatedly pushed back.[49] And if the slow-to-change, but well-respected U.S. military can figure it out, it just may help transform civil society, and, perhaps the culture, decision-making, civil-military relations, and employment of the military itself.

While many of the stories women shared with me reflected institutionalized sexism and both conscious and unconscious bias towards servicewomen, the majority of women I spoke with were proud of their service. Only one woman I interviewed, who was sexually assaulted four times in a nine-month period, wished she had never served. Others were ambivalent. Lucy*, an Air Force veteran lamented, "I guess I'm still in this point where part of me wishes I had never joined the military, and part of me thinks it's the best thing I've ever did."[50] For many, negative experiences

[48] Connell, Robert W. "Change among the gatekeepers: Men, masculinities, and gender equality in the global arena." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1801-1825.
[49] Dozier, Kimberly; Spencer Ackerman. "Military Pushing Back on Trump's Trans Troop Ban" *The Daily Beast.* 27 July 2017. https://www.thedailybeast.com/military-pushing-back-on-trumps-trans-troop-ban
[50] Interview with L.H, July 1, 2017.

stood out in particular because many of the women were aware of what the military could feel like if it were inclusive. When I asked women about leaders whom they admired, many spoke of men they worked for who actively mentored and sponsored servicewomen and worked to create inclusive environments. They described what Claire Duncanson sees as transformation through reconstruction of relational identities: "men and subjects in general need to construct their identities through recognition of similarity, respect, interdependence, empathy, and equality with others."[51] In order to understand how these reconstructions can occur both in the military and in veteran-facing communities, it's necessary to understand the extent and prevalence of the challenges faced by servicewomen. Creating an inclusive, respectful military and veteran culture is possible—the many of the women veterans I interviewed lived it; I lived it. Therefore, it's necessary to unpack the barriers that pervade both on active duty and replicate in the veteran community after service.

[51] Duncanson, Claire. "Hegemonic masculinity and the possibility of change in gender relations." *Men and Masculinities* 18, no. 2 (2015): 231-248

IV. *Standing Out on the Yellow Footprints*[52]

Newport, Rhode Island, 2009

I was motivated to join the military by a calling to serve my country, a desire to work in the intelligence community, and admittedly, because perhaps it was as close as possible to being in the *Star Wars* universe in real life.[53] I arrived at Newport, Rhode Island, for Navy Officer Candidate School (OCS) five months after graduating from college. I was 22 years old and had spent the summer combing internet message boards for advice, connecting with fellow future candidates over Facebook, and training myself to meet a higher than required standard on the Navy's physical fitness test. I knew my long hair shall be chopped to above my ears, to complement my male classmates' shaved heads. One consistent piece of advice prevailed on message boards: keep your head down and try to blend in, so as to be less likely to be picked on by the Marine drill instructors and Navy recruit division commanders who trained us. It would be the only truly bad advice I ever received in my military career. My OCS class that began with nearly 100 candidates had fewer than 10 women; with high voices and without shaved heads, we all stood out.

My experience was typical: the first time service women are informed that they are outsiders is at the outset accession training (boot camp, Plebe summer at the service academies and Reserve Officers' Training Corps [ROTC], and OCS). Recent high school or college graduates (depending on the training pipeline) are psychologically and physically militarized, reconditioned

[52] At the beginning of Marine Corps boot camp, all recruits line up before dawn in formation on yellow footprints. Referring to the "yellow footprints" is a colloquialism in the military, particularly in the Marine Corps, for the beginning of a service member's career.
[53] Reality: *Spaceball*

to be able to react in combat, give and follow orders, memorize codes of conduct, and commit violence if necessary.

These training programs are gender-integrated in the Army, Navy, and Air Force; recruits and officer candidates have sex-specific berthing areas but often live close together and train together. In these environments, where uniformity is key, and individuality is most extremely suppressed for military indoctrination to take place, recruits are often referred to by their last names, by nicknames (I was often referred to as "Einstein" by drill instructors), or simply as "you", "recruit", or "candidate." Lacie Bentley, an enlisted Navy veteran, noted that female recruits were specifically singled out for their gender, "[at boot camp] They're always shouting "Female, female, female recruit, females!"[54] Male recruits were simply called "recruit", while "Women are largely seen as 'odd' bodies in the military, as they historically and symbolically do not belong in the male 'normal.'"[55] Mary*, an active-duty Army officer, reiterated the narrative in initial training that male is the standard; female is the "other". She recalled:

> When I was in ROTC—I have a very high pitched, kinda silly voice—and I remember the senior instructor saying before I commissioned saying maybe I should do something about my voice prior to commissioning, or maybe do speech therapy. I just brushed it off.[56]

Institutionalized misogyny in basic training is even more pronounced in the Marine Corps, which has the smallest percentage of women (7%) and persists in conducting gender-segregated accession training.[57] Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Kate Germano said the very first time she was made aware of her gender was at sex-segregated OCS, "We were kind of separate from the men. We trained with them as a platoon, but that was the first taste of being different. I'd grown up playing sports, and my parents said I could do whatever I wanted if I worked hard enough. OCS

[54] Interview with Lacie Bentley, 21 May 2017
[55] Dyvik, Synne Laastad. "Women as 'Practitioners' and 'Targets' Gender and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 3 (2014): 418
[56] Interview with M.H, 30 July 2017.
[57] U.S. Marine Corps, "Concepts & Programs Almanac" (2017),http://marinecorpsconceptsandprograms.com .

was the first taste that we weren't equal."[58] Kate's last assignment on active duty was as the commanding officer of 4th Recruit Battalion at Parris Island, boot camp for female Marine recruits. Upon assuming command, Kate was shocked to find that female recruits were held to and subsequently performing a lower standard than male recruits at nearly every performance metric—and had been for years, without anyone questioning why. Anna*, who served as an enlisted Marine, experienced this difference in standards for women with frustration:

> I was actually told [at boot camp at Parris Island]—I'm taller than the general population—I was told that my running would get me awarded or get me in trouble because I was running faster than men. You don't usually run with males in Parris Island. I was told not to perform too well because it would bring too much attention. It was such a contradictory message. Especially in boot camp.
>
> And then on the rifle range, they say women do this, do that, instead of doing "this, this is the standard. This is the score." At the end, you're aware that you're a "side" of the Marine Corps, not really the Marine Corps.[59]

Kate Germano sought to reverse this phenomenon—and succeeded, but undermined deep-seated, sexist assumptions. Kate's initiative and aggressive pursuit of high standards rubbed some accustomed to (and seeking to protect) the status quo the wrong way, and she was fired.[60] This incident is consistent with a phenomenon that Carol Cohn observed, wherein male service members cited that lower standards for women meant that they should not have parity with men in the military—but were intent on maintaining that inequality in order to maintain their privileged and powerful position.[61] Kate was fired shortly before all service chiefs were required explain to the Secretary of Defense whether or not they could support opening all occupational specialties to women, and if not, provide an explanation for requesting an exception, and Kate herself speculated that the timing of her firing was not a coincidence, which she considers in detail in her memoir of

[58] Interview with Kate Germano, 26 Nov 2017
[59] Interview with A.R., 7 Aug 2017.
[60] Chivers, C.J. "Lt. Col. Kate Germano on the Marines and Women" *The New York Times, At War Blog*. 28 July 2015. https://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/28/lt-col-kate-germano-on-the-marines-and-women/?_r=0
[61] Cohn, Carol. "'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, no. 2 (2000): 131-151

her time on Parris Island.[62] The Marine Corps would be the only service branch to request and exception, which was denied.[63] Many, including Kate, consider that the previous subpar performance was the basis for the Marine Corps' continued, nearly-petulant insistence that women could not be integrated into ground combat units.

The "otherizing" of women in accession training has ripple effects that affect the entire military: from the very outset of their military careers, every servicemember is essentially trained that women might be in the military, but do not belong in the military. Jennifer G. Mathers observes "[The] treatment of military women can be seen in part as a logical consequence of the woman-hating techniques used in the training of new recruits in the military."[64] This is internalized by both men and women, who often chant violent, sexist, or homophobic running cadences at basic training.[65] Boot camp and officer training set a tone for marginalizing servicewomen, ranging from sexual violence to more subtle forms of discrimination.

[62] Germano, Kate and Kelly Kennedy, *Fight Like a Girl: The Truth Behind How Female Marines are Trained*, Prometheus Books, 2018.
[63] Perrelin, "Carter Opening All Military Occupations"
[64] Cohn, Carol, ed. *Women and wars: Contested histories, uncertain futures*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013: 141
[65] McCoy, Alexander. "More Than Just Marines Behaving Badly." *The New York Times*, 8 March 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/opinion/more-than-just-marines-behaving-badly.html

V. *Modern Day Cassandras*

Baghdad, Iraq, 2009

It took years for Lucy, a lesbian who deployed to Iraq with the Air Force, to recognize that she had been sexually assaulted. Serving in the years before Don't Ask-Don't Tell's 2011 repeal, a male colleague spied on her, found out she was gay and learned her girlfriend's name. He blackmailed her into performing sexual favors for him so he would not reveal her secret and destroy her career.

Like Cassandra of Troy, whose refusal to submit to the sexual advances of the god Apollo made him curse her with prophecy that would never be believed, many women told of being marginalized, overlooked, undermined, and betrayed by their own units, to the detriment of mission effectiveness. Many had an experience where they felt betrayed by their units, often on account of gender. At its most severe, this meant sexual assault and harassment, which while widespread across the military, disproportionately affects women.[66] As Kate Germano observes in her memoir, the culture of sexual violence in the military is often so pervasive that women can't see it themselves. [67]

Unit cohesion is "The peer-bonding that occurs during training events…grounded in the service member's ability to trust other members of their unit and the general ability to function and work as a team"[68] This bond is considered fundamental to military operational effectiveness, and survival: servicemembers fight for one another before any other cause. It's based on the trust that

[66] Thomas, Kate H., Justin T. McDaniel, Ellen L. Haring, David L. Albright, and Kari L. Fletcher. "Mental Health Needs of Military and Veteran Women: An Assessment Conducted by the Service Women's Action Network." (2017).
[67] Germano and Kennedy, *Fight Like a Girl*.
[68] Mobbs, Meaghan C., and George A. Bonanno. "Beyond war and PTSD: The crucial role of transition stress in the lives of military veterans." *Clinical Psychology Review* (2017): 138

their teammates will always have their back in situations of life or death. Reflecting on the continued fractious conflicts of "forever war" since 2001, essayist Phil Klay described the declining morale of the American military community:

> "We fought for each other," I've heard plenty of veterans claim about their time in service, and no wonder. If your country won't even resource the wars with what its own generals say is necessary for long-term success, what else is there to fight for? But if you think the mission your country keeps sending you on is pointless or impossible and that you're only deploying to protect your brothers and sisters in arms from danger, then it's not the Taliban or al-Qaeda or ISIS that's trying to kill you, it's America.[69]

Women veterans often find that the "they fought for each other" mantra does not include them. For the hundreds of time when it is true, it only needs to be a lie once to be devastating, causing cascades of destruction in its wake. For retired Lieutenant Commander Heidi Lenzini, it was being barred from being able to make a second attempt at earning her warfare qualification as a surface warfare officer. First-time failure is relatively common—as is permitting a second attempt, something she was never given the opportunity to do. She explained:

> My commanding officer said, "I was waiting for you to prove me wrong, I don't like the way you think, and I'm not going to qualify you" It's like running a marathon and getting kicked before the finish line and not being allowed to crawl over the finish line.[70]

For other women, it was being professionally minimized and ignored, and the effects could be lethal. For others, it was retaliation for reporting sexual assault. All of these experiences mark a betrayal of trust in the very values that servicemembers stake their lives on.

At worst, a reporting discrimination or sexual violence can mean subjecting oneself to humiliation and retaliation. Retaliation against servicemembers—both men and women—who report sexual violence is increasingly a well-documented epidemic, thanks to the 2012 documentary *The Invisible War,* which explored the topic, and the subsequent work of several legislators working on military justice reform, including Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Sen. Claire

[69] Klay, Phil. "The Plunging Morale of the American Military." *The Atlantic*. May 2018. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/05/left-behind/556844/
[70] Interview with Heidi Lenzini, 13 July 2017.

McCaskill, and Rep. Jackie Speier. While many service members and veterans, including the author, concur that training and action in sexual assault prevention and response, including trust in reporting mechanisms, has substantially improved in the last decade, the rate of sexual trauma and retaliation is still horrifyingly high. The epidemic is so acute, it even rose to the attention of the United Nations Human Rights Council.[71] In 2016, it's estimated that there were nearly 15,000 cases of sexual violence in the military, and over half of those who reported these incidents experienced retaliation.[72]

Nearly 45% of the women with whom I conducted structured interviews experienced military sexual trauma. Elena Giordano, a Navy veteran, was sexually assaulted four times in the nine months she was on active duty. She did not report the first three incidents, and initially had tried to push the fourth incident, which occurred during deployment on an aircraft carrier, from her memory:

> After that I couldn't deny this one. I was left with injuries, I couldn't ignore that. Hours afterwards, I'm pacing around the berthing [debating] what I was supposed to do. I was debating going to Medical because I have injuries and I know that was what I was "supposed" to do. But I worried it wouldn't turn out well for me, so I didn't go, which I regret. I committed to not thinking about it and pretending it didn't happen, not thinking I would have to keep working with this person…
>
> I had to see him after that. I don't remember much of the next week or so. I was sort of just out of it. My performance went from 4.0 [a high-performance rating] to absolutely horrible very quickly, so people are going to notice. I couldn't sleep anymore. It was just affecting me worse than any of the other times. I couldn't block this one out. I had to keep seeing him until we got to pick our schedule. I waited until I saw where he was and then picked the opposite shift, which was nights, which sucked. So, I was working a ridiculous amount of hours and then seeing traumatic things as an MA [master-at-arms].
>
> That's what sent me over the edge… I was on duty with this guy, and we saw a light overboard, so we called a "man overboard". They have to do an all hands muster. When that happened, we got a call from dispatch saying there was a female Marine who had tried to commit suicide by taking all these pills—I don't know if she made it or not—but she wouldn't have been found until the next day and definitely wouldn't have made it. So we had to secure the passageway to medical and saw her taken out of the berthing on a litter. She already looked dead. I thought, "Oh my God, I'm 19, I'm not supposed to see these things", especially after what had just happened. It would have been 11 days before.

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[71] McLaughlin, Jenna, "The US Military's Sexual Assault-Problem is so Bad the UN is Getting Involved" *Mother Jones.* May 14, 2015. http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/05/un-human-rights-council-us-military-do-better-victims-sexual-violence/

[72] Reuters, "Sexual Assault Reports in the U.S. Military Reach Record High: Pentagon" NBC News. 1 May 2017. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/sexual-assault-reports-u-s-military-reach-record-high-pentagon-n753566

I went from being extremely angry and enraged to extreme depression. I thought "why did she want to kill herself?" Was the same thing happening to her that was happening to me? I couldn't stop thinking about it. Anger is an empowering emotion because it kept me going. This is when my behavior changed, I couldn't sleep, I couldn't stop thinking about what was going on with her…

[A few] days after that, I slept through a muster, failed an inspection, which I had never come close to doing before. I didn't want to say what was wrong but eventually I did because I couldn't deal with myself anymore. [My rapist] was treating me horribly and I had to see him at shift change. He tried to attack me physically, and nobody said anything. It's mind blowing how many people were privy to knowing something was wrong and didn't say anything.[73]

Elena reported her own sexual assault a few days later but was blamed for her own attack because she had been in a room alone with a member of the opposite sex. The institution betrayed her: her command retaliated against her by kicking her out of the Navy through an administrative discharge, a "bad paper" discharged that impacted her ability to earn benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Marine veteran Anna also experienced hostility and retaliation after she reported being raped:

When I got assaulted, I was very naïve. It was at the beginning, my first command, I remember reporting that. I was immediately taken aside by my SNCO [senior non-commissioned officer] and Adj [Adjutant, administrative officer] saying I was lying, making a false official statement. I reverted to my childhood, thinking if someone was going to accuse me of lying, they had to do it standing. My CO threatened me with court-martial, I was in his office. I took my chevrons off, I was a lance corporal, and I threw on his desk, and said "Sir, you can keep it if you think I'm lying." I didn't realize at the time that they could court-martial me for disrespect, but I felt I had nowhere to go, and literally someone from my command would kill me or make me disappear.[74]

In order to get out of the unit that was killing her at home in California, Anna volunteered to deploy to Iraq. Cynthia Enloe draws a connection between military sexual trauma and the overall status and perception of the military and a whole:

[W]omen in the ranks may provide a platform from which feminists can raise fresh questions about the legitimacy of state-sanctioned masculine privilege. The rape of a female soldier by a male soldier and the subsequent cover-up by the rapist's commander can tear away the legitimizing camouflage that has sustained that military as a symbol of national pride and security"[75]

Wendy*, an enlisted Army veteran, was able to draw a direct line through her series of multiple sexual assaults over a decade-long career to the heart of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Wendy

[73] Interview with Elena Girodano, 22 May 2017.
[74] Interview with A.R., 7 Aug 2017.
[75] Enloe, *Maneuvers*: 287

was sexually assaulted during a previous deployment by a soldier who participated in the sexual abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib in 2003. After attacking her, he was disciplined, but neither held on criminal charges nor discharged from the military. Wendy shared that poor discipline was rampant in her unit, and that the prison scandal was only partial manifestation of it. She also felt that it was not just her direct unit's responsibility, and that the entire chain of command going up to President George W. Bush had not set clear standards of behavior. She connected her devaluation as a soldier and a person with the lack of accountability for the military, particularly in the early days of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> The day I woke up and remembered I'd been raped, in 2006 . . .it would be the same situation. The moment you realize you were being violated by people in the military…Those are times when I felt like I wasn't being valued as a person in the military. And I was being distracted from reaching my goals. It doesn't mean I was always a saint. I did drink, I did hook up with people. But there's a big difference between people in positions of power.[76]

While not every servicewoman experiences sexual trauma, the threat of gender-based violence is omnipresent, a dark cloud constantly threatening to envelop and strangle on a night in port with your own squadron or while walking to the latrine trailer on a forward operating base in Afghanistan. The specter of sexual violence and retaliation haunts every servicewoman. Mesok observed: "women who presented as 'too feminine' were dismissed as unworthy comrades or worse, sexually objectified, harassed, and assaulted."[77] While it is challenging to gauge how the constant awareness of sexual violence within the ranks might otherwise limit servicewomen's careers, it remains a significant factor in every servicewomen's experience, whether or not she experiences it herself.

Sexual violence is not the only gender-based threat to service women's physical safety; the military finds other ways to marginalize and subtly threaten women, from "unisex" (male)

[76] Interview with R.Y. 24 May 2017.
[77] Mesok, Elizabeth. "Affective Technologies of War US Female Counterinsurgents and the Performance of Gendered Labor." *Radical History Review* 2015, no. 123 (2015): 75

uniforms, to ill-fitting body armor, to subpar training. Regarding training and equipping of servicewomen, Megan Mackenzie observed, "Presuming that women would not be in direct combat meant that the military did not offer female-only teams the same training as combat units, again, putting them, and their fellow soldiers, at an unnecessary risk."[78] Indeed, sometimes, servicewomen found their safety was deliberately or inadvertently put in danger because of gender bias. Kate Kranz Jordan, a former Naval Aviator, recalled an occasion where a senior officer's sexism put her and three other US service members' lives in danger:

> The way our operating bases worked in Afghanistan, there are six or seven different bases within the city limits of Kabul. I was on Camp Phoenix and we often traveled to ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] HQ to work directly with our NATO counterparts. Our organization had a number of up-armored SUVs that we traveled in. There was a qualification to be able to drive the vehicle or be a Truck Commander (TC), so you took responsibility for the vehicle and people in it in order to travel between the bases. I was qualified as both a driver and TC. There was a meeting I had to go to one day with two of the women who part of our organization but were on our FOB in Kandahar. They were up for a week and had some things they needed to accomplish at ISAF. One was qualified as a driver. We had a full crew. I could be TC, other could be driver, and other could be a passenger in the back. We went to go fill out the paperwork to go move from point A to Point B. We were getting to go, and it was 10-15 minutes before we were supposed to leave and got called back to the JOC [joint operations center]. And told this O-6 [Colonel] wanted to see the TC. I thought it might be a threat. He basically said, "You can't go with this configuration in the truck." And he said we needed to take someone else to sit in the front seat. And I said "Sir, that doesn't make sense."
>
> He said, "I can't send three females in a truck over to ISAF." Basically, he wouldn't let the truck go without a guy. He was so insistent on that that he was ready to let someone go who wasn't qualified to go. And he insisted on this person driving or in the front seat. And I reminded him of the instruction with specific instructions on who did what in the configuration.
>
> As TC, you want me to sign off on this truck because you want me to sign off on this because you want a man in the truck? It doesn't say that at all in the instruction?
>
> "I know what you're saying, and I know you're all qualified, but a pretty girl is a pretty girl."
>
> At the end of the day, I ended up violating the instruction, and taking the guy along. And I still don't know what I should have done. I was afraid of taking it up the chain of command and people would agree with him. It was a bad day because I still look back and think "What else should I done?" What's the point of having women in the military if we always need a guy protecting them. That's not right.

Kate was put in an impossible situation, where she knew a senior officer was making a poor decision based on gender bias—and felt both compelled and powerless to ameliorate the situation. Lieutenant Colonel Malia K. DuMont, an officer in the Army Reserve, had a similar experience

[78] Mackenzie, *Beyond the Band of Brothers*, 57.

around the same time, noting it was the only experience in her nearly twenty-year career where she was viscerally aware of being a woman in uniform:

> [D]uring our morning shift change brief, one of the higher-ranking officers said, "Oh by the way, they need volunteers to go downrange to Kandahar and Heart to work with the ANSF, so we're looking for volunteers." It was four weeks or something, and I was very interested. In my memory, I raised my hand and said, "I want to go", and was very eager to do this. The answer was "No, you can't go because you're a woman."
>
> It was just said very matter of factly, from an American officer in front of other American officers and the whole analysis cell. I don't know if he realized the import of what he was saying, it didn't seem to strike him as odd or wrong that he would say that. I was just shocked into silence. Somehow, I learned either right then or afterwards that the ANSF wouldn't work with a woman. They were only asking for male volunteers.
>
> It just seemed so wrong to me on so many levels. On a policy level, if we're trying to help them, we don't discriminate in our own force they shouldn't enable them to discriminate. If they want our help they should take whatever help we want to give them. I was very capable, I was one of the better analysts there. They're going to reject me for something completely irrelevant.
>
> It was the wrong answer for the US. And it was the wrong answer for that officer, he didn't realize that he was helping propagate this completely wrong and unfair policy. And on a personal level, nobody had ever said something like that before under any circumstance. I guess I can say I was lucky that I wasn't overtly discriminated against in any other circumstance. It was absolutely shocking. I was enraged for the next day.[79]

Malia recalled that the equal opportunity officer said that she had valid grounds to file a discrimination complaint but felt that she did not have the time or energy to do so in the daily grind of deployment—a decision she still considers with ambivalence. Most frustratingly was that the incident revealed hypocrisy in the mission: part of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force and now NATO's Resolute Support is to promote the role of women, including in the ANSF. Rather than taking the opportunity to stand by these ideals, the officer who publicly overlooked Malia also openly undermined part of the mandate of the mission.[80] Malia's ambivalence about filing paperwork regarding the incident reveals some of the hidden costs of gender bias.[81] Dealing with it on a daily basis can be exhausting or even terrifying for servicewomen (and, indeed, women in any career field), yet many wonder if others who follow

[79] Interview with Malia K. Dumont, 10 October 2017
[80] NATO, "Women key to peace and security in Afghanistan: NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace, and Security said in Kabul" 22 April 2015. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_118968.htm?selectedLocale=en
[81] Zillman, Claire. "The Hidden Victim of Sexual Harassment: Women's Careers" Fortune, 30 November 2017. http://fortune.com/2017/11/30/matt-lauer-fired-sexual-harassment-jobs/

them are left vulnerable if they *don't* speak up, creating a double-bind. Reporting, at a minimum, is time consuming in a career field that already expects its members to be at the ready 24/7.

Circumstances like Malia's are one of many that tell women that their intellectual capability—for which they may have been selected for special units in the first place—are less valued. After learning four American soldiers were killed and two wounded in Niger in October 2017, I had a panic attack. My heart raced, my head pounded as my vision blurred with nausea, and every arthritic joint in my body flared. Loss of life is always devastating, but this was the first incident that I could recall that induced such a reaction. I canceled all of my remaining commitments for the day and I went home to sleep. Some time in my evening, one of my former teammates, another female intelligence officer, texted me two words, the name of a little-known mission gone horribly wrong. I had taken the SPOT report that day, an emergency intelligence report that bypasses normal approval chains in order to get the word out as quickly as possible of potential threats. It was the first time I had felt that way: it was the feeling of "I was ignored, people may die because of it, and I am powerless to stop it."

While actual numbers are not easily accessible, the U.S. Special Operations community, which is currently tasked with shouldering a plurality of the nation's conflicts, employs a significant number of female intelligence officers. I spoke with ten during this project, four who participated in formal interviews, and another six whom I knew personally or through mutual friends and communicated with via text message or social media. One of them has my old job and sent me a text message from deployment in Baghdad, "I'm not ready to tell you how bad things are here, but everything you warned me about is true." A common pattern emerged: many of the teams they were part of were built on mutual respect and the diverse capabilities that could be brought to the team to achieve the mission. But if there was one combat operator—in our

conversations, typically SEALs—who was toxic, nobody would stop him, and it would poison the whole unit. As one of them put it, "I'm not saying that they didn't listen to me and people got killed, but people could." Her unit, one of the most elite in the entire U.S. military, endured a high-profile death in 2017. And that experience, the one toxic one, rendered all the positive experiences irrelevant. In these units, credibility it built on how much the "dominants"—in the previous example, the SEALs—like you. And many of these women, felt pressed up against the glass into a room they could see into and not enter, seeing the door opened for male intelligence officers over and over again, but not for them.

Cassandra was daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy and priestess to the god Apollo. As the story is often told, Apollo gave her the gift of prophecy, expecting sex in return. When Cassandra refused, he cursed her to always speak the truth, but never be believed. She foretold the fall of Troy over and over again and was ignored, watching her country escalate towards conflict and engage in a decade-long war. During the fall of Troy, she was raped by the lesser Ajax in the temple of Athena, was subsequently enslaved by King Agamemnon, and murdered beside him.

We hear echoes of the story of Cassandra in those of the female intelligence officers, and the other service women veterans who spoke their truth and were not believed. Instead of a person of myth or legend, what if we think of Cassandra as an intelligent woman who was punished for rejecting patriarchal power structures by refusing to be silenced? And though her assessments were true, cities burned when she was ignored, and the very power structures—and individuals who benefit from it—that caused the destruction in the first place continue to endure.

Ultimately, many of these experiences led servicewomen to confront their isolation. While their male peers often had one another to turn to on their bad days, women were often the only, or

one of few women in their units—with whom they may or may not have gotten along. A number of the women I interviewed noted that even in units where they felt accepted, they knew they would never truly be "one of the guys," there was still always a barrier to true acceptance. While this might not have necessarily affected the effectiveness of the unit, it took a personal toll.

Many servicewomen also observed that having just one or two other women in their unit, even of the same rank, didn't necessarily alleviate the challenges; some remarked that men in their units often would deliberately make sure that women were divided from one another.

VI. *Pit Against Each Other: Women-Women Dynamics*

Coronado, CA, December 2015

Christine*, one of my junior officers, stormed into my office, exasperated, and exclaimed, "I have no time for weak females!"[82] Christine, a prior enlisted intelligence specialist who was now an officer, was one of the most well-respected combat support enablers—male or female—in the SEAL teams. She was now training in preparation for deployment with a detachment to Iraq. One of the women assigned to her team was underperforming, and she had come to my office both to vent, and to seek advice. In the military, there's a saying that 10 percent of your people take up 90 percent of your time, but when that 10 percent is female, it can be pointed to a failure of *all women*, and not only that individual. Across professions, women are consistently penalized for failure at a higher rate than men.[83] The sailor was in particular need of Christine's mentorship and guidance, but Christine's instinctive reaction was to distance herself.

Christine feared that an underperforming female collector on her team would affect her own credibility. She was keenly aware that "Women were visible as category members . . . loaded all of their acts with symbolic consequence, and gave them the burden of representing their category, not just themselves."[84] When a woman in our field failed, it reflected poorly on all the other women, and gave the special operations teams we supported another reason to marginalize us. In that context, "rejection of one's kind" was a learned behavior of self-preservation, "detaching oneself from the stereotypical characteristics associated with one's social category."[85]

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[82] A previous telling of this story appeared in Goldstein, Andrea N. "How We Changed the Negative Perception of Female Sailors in my Unit" *Task & Purpose.* 18 March 2017. https://taskandpurpose.com/changed-negative-perception-female-sailors-unit/

[83] Sarsons, Heather. "Interpreting Signals in the Labor Market: Evidence from Medical Referrals". 23 November 2017. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/sarsons/files/sarsons_jmp.pdf

[84] Kanter, Rosabeth Moss, Men and Women of the Corporation, New Edition, 1993: 214

[85] Carreiras, Helena. *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracie*s, 2006: 177

I empathized. Christine and I had become professionally close because we both respected each other's competence and were able to support and validate one another when we ran into sexism and obstructions. Yet the previous troop commander—the one who had been fired—had once tried to divide us from each other. Before I was promoted, she and I had different rank, but were equal in positional authority. The previous troop commander had ordered me to write her a letter of instruction regarding a need to improve her performance. While the letter and course correction were justified, having a peer and not a superior deliver it was not. At the time, I had been one of five officers at that level, and the only other woman. Selecting me to deliver the remediation was a deliberate means of pitting us against one another. It was rare and fortunate that we were able to recognize it and recover trust.

Neither of us were sufficiently self-reflective as to understand how distancing ourselves from other women was a means of survival. Nor did we realize that sowing discord among women in the workplace was a deliberately constructed—albeit internalized—strategy to perpetuate myths about women's capabilities. If women couldn't get along, that supported arguments to limit numbers to a handful of "exceptional" women. Only after observing numerous toxic relationships *between men* we worked with, did we begin to realize ourselves that "competitiveness and conflict between men is often dismissed as "boys being boys," whereas the same behavior among women is seen as dysfunctional."[86] Calling this "problematization", Leah Sheppard and Karl Aquino view this as a self-perpetuating invention of a problem that doesn't really exist in the first place in order to legitimize a gender hierarchy.

As pioneers, and the only two female officers with operational roles in the command, Christine and I were also often looked to as gatekeepers. In a "two-token" scenario, we "developed

[86] Sheppard, Leah D., and Karl Aquino. "Sisters at arms: A theory of female same-sex conflict and its problematization in organizations." *Journal of Management* 43, no. 3 (2017): 692

a close alliance and refused to be turned against each other."[87] We also felt we had a responsibility to ensure that the path for the women who followed us was not as rocky as our own. Publicly voicing concerns about an underperforming female colleague or subordinate might be dangerous, because, "[w]omen's negative views of female coworkers are often seen as an objective assessment—more credible than the views of men. When women voice gender bias, they legitimize it."[88] I reminded her of this, and we developed solutions to remediate the underperforming sailor in a means that did not involve in gendered distancing.

Service women and women veterans agreed that either participating in or being on the receiving end of "rejection of one's kind" was a common experience. Stefanie Peskosky, a Navy veteran, attended the U.S. Naval Academy and served as an intelligence officer with a special operations unit. She reflected:

> If you succeed in this male-dominated organization, then you will find yourself, for better or worse, judging every other military female by those same misogynistic standards the men held you to. Your own thinking is twisted because now you see those women who are overweight, don't try, use their femininity as an excuse, or are just plain stupid as now giving all military women a bad name, including you.[89]

Kate Germano noted that this experience might be exacerbated in the Marine Corps, which has the lowest percentage of women of all the branches of service. Kate reflected, "I think the worst part about our service is that we [women] don't find ways to band together and find champions…we're so competitive with each other."[90] Kate also shared in her memoir how the culture of misogyny in the Marine Corps often causes women to either distance themselves from one another, or be openly hostile to one another.[91] In the days following the publication of her

[87] Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation:* 238
[88] Sandberg, Sheryl. *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. Random House, 2013: 165
[89] As told to the author (writing under a pseudonym) in Granville, Anna, "Cautionary Lessons on Leading as a Woman in the Military." *Task & Purpose* 18 February 2015. *https://taskandpurpose.com/cautionary-lessons-leading-woman-military/*
[90] Interview with Kate Germano, 26 Nov 2017
[91] Germano and Kennedy, *Fight Like a Girl*.

memoir, Kate herself came under criticism by junior enlisted female Marines who recalled a speech she gave them before they graduated from boot camp that they felt blamed victims for their own sexual assault. Kate's perspective was to warn them how the Marine Corps would treat them, rather than placing blame themselves, but has been self-reflective that the vocabulary she was equipped with at the time (including official training the Marine Corps required her to deliver) may have communicated a message that sowed mistrust amongst junior female Marines.[92]

This phenomenon of dividing women from one another has been well observed in the civilian workplace: "in the two-token situation in organizations, dominants several times behaved in ways that defeated an alliance between the two women."[93] These manifested in situations like mine, where one woman was required to give criticism to the other. In others, men (the dominants) categorized women as either having positive or negative categories; and women who were accepted by dominants as "not being like other girls" felt relieved to have been chosen as part of the in-group. Air Force veteran Lucy recalled this phenomenon:

> Another, had a female E-8 [senior noncommissioned officer] in Iraq. She was in charge both Iraq deployments, and I absolutely hated her while I was out there. I've learned now, but at the time I didn't realize that the time it was internalized hatred of women…I remember talking badly with my guy friends about her! "I bet she's on her period" "I hate having women in charge because you never know what she's going to be like"—and that was me trying to be one of the boys. And here she was rocking it and I was fighting it and giving her no support.[94]

Lucy was not the only veteran who admit to badmouthing a female superior in order to feel included with male peers, and who eventually understood that she was being mentored—she and the E-8 are now friends. Wendy echoed the sentiment that female leaders seemed to be tougher on female subordinates in order to help them succeed. Wendy echoed this sentiment:

> I feel like some female drill sergeants were meaner to the women because they wanted to push them further. We called this one the Devil. Maybe some women who are hard on women think that women get away with doing less or think that women can excel more so they push you more.[95]

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[92] Twitter correspondence, 3-11 April 2018
[93] Kanter, 1993
[94] Interview with L.H, July 1, 2017.
[95] Interview with R.Y. 24 May 2017.

Ultimately, these dynamics emerged as part of servicewomen's desire to simply want to feel valued in an organization and institution where proudly served. Wendy asked, "Why can't we all be potential soldiers who have different needs and can make different contributions without putting a freaking spotlight on me but not also failing to provide the support I need?"[96] This sentiment continues into civilian life: while women veterans have unique needs, they still fight to be recognized as veterans. Rather than continue to seek to be recognized as a teammate as they did on active duty, many women veterans simply opt out.

There are fora starting to emerge for servicewomen to interact, swap stories, best practices, and mutual support while on active duty. Joint Women's Leadership Symposium is held annually in June. The 2017 conference hosted over 800 servicewomen from all ranks and all branches and was the largest gathering of military women in the world.[97] While all require chain of command support to participate, these events and the dialogue surrounding them takes place is steadily growing. Servicewomen are starting to form large, unofficial social media groups, and have mentoring socials. Junior female leaders are asking—some might even say demanding—that senior female leaders provide gender-specific mentorship—mentorship that those senior leaders did not have themselves. This may ultimately improve outcomes for women when they leave the service and become veterans.

[96] Ibid
[97] Joint Women's Leadership Symposium 2018 Website, www.sealeader.org. Accessed 11 April 2018.

VII. *Over It: Invisible Veterans*

Virginia Beach, VA, January 2017

My friend Kristen and I are sitting in lawn chairs that we have brought out to a snow-covered beach in January, and we are drinking whiskey. I am in Virginia Beach nearly a year after active duty and a semester into graduate school, visiting the familiar military town on Reserve orders. Kristen and I had deployed on a SEAL team together a few years earlier. One of the best intelligence officers in the entire Navy, she's now assigned to the special operations unit responsible for the Osama Bin Laden raid. She has just resigned her commission and will leave active duty in six months.

"I'm exhausted," she says, "I'm so tired of having to pretend to be someone I'm not. I'm one of the best our community has, and I'm tired of being questioned because I don't have a dick. I'm not valued here."

We proceed to spend the next hour talking about all of the small ways our military careers fulfilled us through the challenges we were able overcome, but also the tiny and persistent undermining moments that eroded our confidence and patience.

In their totality, combined with significant moments of betrayal, it was often small, every day reminders of being an outsider that created a powerful loneliness for servicewomen. Lieutenant Amy Schultz recalled an evening where she was literally outside the group:

> So there I was on Saturday night in Bahrain the Wardroom {officer's club]. This particular day I was in civilian clothes, and went to get my hamburger, and sat down with my computer and was working. There was no one else there except for five or six guys on the other side of the wardroom. One of the guys comes over and says 'excuse me, I'm sorry, I have to ask, is your husband an officer? Because this room is for officers only."[98]

[98] Interview with Lieutenant Amy Schultz, 10 October 2016

When women in the military—the millions who have served—are presumed to be an exception rather than the rule, they are constant outsiders in an institution that needs them, betrayed by an institution that claims to have their back.

As a woman in the military, it is impossible to truly be oneself. Even if a servicewoman's male teammates do not overtly single her out, she is powerfully aware of her visibility. Kate Kranz Jordan felt this intensely on every mission that she flew:

> The plane that I flew in, we did most of the talking when the aircraft was flying. The guys could recognize all our voices, but with guys you can't always noticed. I knew when I opened my mouth, people always knew it was me talking. So I was afraid of saying something stupid. Everyone knows it's me.[99]

Servicewomen often felt like they needed had to suppress parts of their personality and identity in order to survive, let alone perform well in their units, especially the more hyper-masculine units like special operations and infantry. This can only be further exacerbated along lines of race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Sarah*, who is African-American, and a prior-enlisted officer in the Army National Guard explained:

> [I have] to censor myself a lot. It takes an extraordinary amount of energy to be mindful of the men, the men in the room. The inequities around the different ethnicities in the military. A lot of patience dealing with that "infantry" mentality, where if you say anything, bring attention to it, people tell you to "stop being the PC police", but you still want to relate to those guys. It takes a toll on me to not correct every soldier for that shit that soldier said. And my superiors are going to see that I can't work with them, and can't be part of that team, that team is constructed in that image. I think that's every day in the military, and that's what makes it difficult.

Sarah and Kate both observed the phenomenon that for most servicewomen, the greatest isolation occurs in small ways on a daily basis. Phenomena now studied extensively as reasons women leave STEM fields (which the military arguably is): feeling isolated, having to constantly prove oneself over and over again, and having to balance masculine and feminine characteristics, create internalized exhaustion.[100] Among the women I interviewed, this isolation was doubly

[99] Interview with Kate Kranz Jordan, 6 November 2017.
[100] Williams, Joan C. "The 5 Biases Pushing Women Out of STEM." *Harvard Business Review*, 24 March 2015. https://hbr.org/2015/03/the-5-biases-pushing-women-out-of-stem

compounded for queer women who served under Don't Ask-Don't Tell, who had to hide their sexuality in order to serve. An enlisted Air Force veteran who identifies as a lesbian explained, "I had to hide a lot, being gay . . . I was one person at work and one person behind closed doors."[101] The more substantial events only highlight the insidious and pervasive nature of bias.

Presented collectively, it might appear that servicewomen and women veterans are aware that they are all going through these experiences concurrently. They are not. Nearly every single one of the 37 women I interviewed formally and hundreds of others I informally interviewed thought that they were alone in experiences that were close to universal. Many of us had come to believe that we were imagining that some of our circumstances were as bad as they were. Kate Germano mused, "That's really the thing that's holding the military back…you come through the military feeling alone and feeling like your experiences are unlike anyone else's." Many women veterans reflected that either they or other women veterans they knew did not self-identify because after separation, they could simply be themselves, rather than constantly having to justify their presence in a military space. Navy Lieutenant Amy Schultz Thomas, an active duty surface warfare officer considered:

> Maybe because women self-identify as different ways more predominately as "I'm a mom, I'm a wife"—these are roles that are more highly valued, whereas with men their job is more central to their main identity. That's how they do small talk…for me, being an officer is what I do, but it's not the part of my identity that's most important for people to get to know me…being part of the Navy is very important, but it's not the part of me that's most essential to my core, the part of me that's not going to change.[102]

Even after service, women veterans continue to have their service devalued. This continued isolation leads women to opt out participating in the veteran community after leaving the military. I do not believe the military divides us on purpose. But I do not think the military makes a deliberate effort to connect us, either. Yet despite the fact that there are more women in the US

[101] Interview with L.H, July 1, 2017.
[102] Interview with Lieutenant Amy Schultz Thomas, 10 October 2016

Army than there are Marines in the Marine Corps, women often end up scattered. If the military needs to recruit and retain more women in order to both meet personnel goals, and to draw from most diverse talent pool, it's imperative to make sure those women feel welcome in the organization. This cultural change will require an honest conversation regarding militarized masculinities[103], and a slowly-changing but deeply seated notion that "a traditional form of masculinity remains essential to the armed forces as an organization."[104] This is not only significant because of its impact on women while serving, but because many of these experiences either replicate or are anticipated once women become veterans.

Women veterans often do not self-identify as veterans in their home communities for interconnected factors that both connect to active duty, and the civil-military divide. First, as Navy veteran Grace* noted, "Society's picture of what a veteran looks like doesn't generally include women, and not queer women either."[105] As the women I interviewed agreed, from the beginning of military service, women hear comments, sometimes even from other members of the military, that suggest a lack of understanding of the diversity of the number of women that serve, or that women serve at all. Some of the comments the women I interviewed recalled hearing both during and after service:

> "You're too pretty to be in the Navy."
> "When I was a junior someone said to me 'Oh wow, you're not ugly!'"
> "You don't look like a veteran."
> "I didn't know there was a Women's Marine Corps." [there isn't…just the Marine Corps]
> "But you're a woman, you didn't go in harm's way, did you?"

[103] ""When it comes to debates on women in combat [military theorist] van Creveld's work should be treated as editorializing at best, with much of the content trending towards sexist polemic." Dr. Megan Mackenzie, Twitter direct message, 12 April 2018.
[104] King, Anthony C. "The female soldier." *Parameters* 43, no. 2 (2013): 14; Martin van Creveld, "Less Than We Can Be: Men, Women and the Modern Military" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23, no. 4 (2000): 12, 13.
[105] Interview with G.B. 23 May 2017.

The last question also addresses misperceptions about the nature of women's service. While 80% of the women I interviewed are considered combat veterans, and a fifth of those women earned decorations for serving in combat, the question devalues the nature of women's service with the misperception that women don't go in combat, so therefore they're not real soldiers.[106] As explored in a previous article:

> Female veterans often find themselves caught in a double bind when discussing their service due to the assumption that women are not combat veterans: disbelief if they are, and devaluation of their service, written off as not "real" veterans, if they are not. While the glorification of combat service as the only "real" service is problematic for many reasons – and most *male* veterans did not serve in direct combat – characterizing service in this way poses a particular challenge for female veterans. These women already face the obstacle that many, including male veterans from previous generations, do not think of women as veterans at all.[107]

For women who *did* see combat, they face a double burden of having to convince people that they did, while handling health effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Wendy said, "I don't think it's possible for someone to be deployed in a combat area and not have post-traumatic stress. The very nature of your daily existence is to stay alive."[108] Lucy explained that even in a guitar group she's in with other veterans, "There were times when the group leader would have to physically restrain me because the guys would say 'we all know about combat except for Lucy.'"[109]

For women who didn't serve in direct combat, the glorification of ground combat, further perpetuated by the popular success of books and movies that portray Navy SEALs and other male combatants, only exacerbates insecurity about speaking about their service. These women veterans find themselves in the bind of having their service devalued both because they are women, and because the nature of their service is not understood. Mariela* a Navy veteran explained:

> Sometimes women veterans are ashamed. Compared to some men. I get it sometimes—when I say I was in the Navy and not on a ship. I think a lot of female veterans, when they talk to people because they get ashamed

[106] Mackenzie, *Beyond the Band of Brothers*
[107] Goldstein, Andrea. "Women are the most visible servicemembers, and the most invisible veterans." *Center for a New American Security*. 8 March 2018 https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/women-are-the-most-visible-soldiers-and-the-most-invisible-veterans
[108] Interview with R.Y. 24 May 2017.
[109] Interview with L.H, July 1, 2017.

> because they can't compare to Army Reservists who deployed three times and are missing a leg. Like, oh, what did you do?[110]

Kate Germano shared a similar perspective:

> I think there is a sense of embarrassment that we don't fit a stereotype of what the public envisions for women veterans. We consider our service as less than because we haven't been in direct combat situations. The veneration that society places on the military is that "if you serve, you're a hero", but that's not really true. We serve because we volunteer. Women are much more self-conscious about that than men. And I think that can make it tough.

Feeling like the nature of their service is misunderstood or not valued is not unique to women veterans. Some, like Wendy, experienced combat because the nature of their jobs frequently took them "outside the wire" and made them more vulnerable to direct fire and improvised explosive devices. Others, like Lieutenant Commander Allison Adams-Jones, served on large, heavily protected bases that were attacked from the inside by Afghan National Security Forces members in "green on blue" attacks.[111] Others may not have seen combat simply because of when they served and when they were assigned, two factors servicemembers have little control over and do not reduce the value of their service. Michelle*, who deployed with an Army special operations unit to Panama in the 1980s shared her perspective:

> We're veterans. We served. We wore the uniform, and we were there to do our country's bidding and we did it. Nothing to do with gender… It's almost goofy, but you know that thing about how a veteran is someone who wrote a blank check, payable with their life? It's true, but you don't realize when you decide to serve in the military, you don't know what you get into. But you did. And you served, and it isn't easy.[112]

Women bear the brunt of the civil-military divide because they are less visible, their role less understood, and even recalling their service may be traumatic. While trauma is a constant passenger with many veterans, as a male combat veteran recently remarked at an event I attended, "I'm lucky people put my trauma on a pedestal." Elena Giordano shared:

> Considering how big the MST problem is, that can be a huge factor. A lot of it is that a lot of the programs out there for vets are geared towards men. A lot of the male vets will discount you if you hadn't gone through

[110] Interview with M.H, December 20, 2017
[111] Yousafzai, Sami, "Afghanistan: 'Green on Blue' Killings Explained" *Newsweek.* August 27, 2012. http://www.newsweek.com/afghanistan-green-blue-killings-explained-64561
[112] Interview with M.W. 20 September 2017

> what they went through. There's minimization of that service, and you're looking for that camaraderie and don't get it unless you're with other females.[113]

As explored earlier, women and queer veterans frequently experience isolation and non-combat trauma and identifying as veterans may cause them to have to recall their worst days over and over again. Several women felt their time in the service was cut short for reasons related to gender: Elena Giordano and Wendy left because of reasons related to sexual trauma. Grace and Lucy both left because they felt they could not continue to serve and hide being lesbians. Lieutenant Commander Heidi Lenzini and Lieutenant Colonel Kate Germano were both relieved from leadership in organizations they loved and had proudly served for two decades for reasons that might have been connected to gender bias. Previous work on the subject of women leaving the military earlier than they would have liked points to, "Gender-based conditions—such as harassment, caregiving demands, and a male-dominant culture."[114] Many others cited a combination of these reasons, or general exhaustion with feeling like outsiders as reasons for leaving the military. While outside the scope of this project, these factors point to institutional bias as a factor for reasons women primarily leave the military at a higher rate than men, particularly because stereotypical assumptions that women leave the military to have children have been disproven.[115]

Exhaustion with trying to fit into a male-dominated organization is also one of the reasons women often choose not to identify as veterans when they return home. While serving, every day

[113] Interview with Elena Girodano, May 22, 2017.
[114] Dichter, Melissa E., and Gala True. "'"This Is the Story of Why My Military Career Ended Before It Should Have" Premature Separation From Military Service Among US Women Veterans." Affilia 30, no. 2 (2015): 187-199: 197
[115]United States Department of Defense. "Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service: Annual Report 2017" December 2017. http://dacowits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/Reports/2017/Annual%20Report/DACOWITS%202017%20Annual%20Report_FINAL.PDF?ver=2018-02-28-222504-937

reminders, from ill-fitting uniforms, to accidentally being called, "sir", to subtle or overt sexism tell women that they do not belong. Kate Germano observed:

> We struggle to fit in when we're in, because we join on the premise to be part of a brotherhood and then struggle to fit in. When we leave, we no longer have to struggle to fit in anymore. 'I'm going to say goodbye to that chapter of my life.' It's unfortunate, but I think that's true.[116]

Commander Megan Hallinan, an active duty Navy officer, has blogged about her life and service for over a decade. She also echoed Kate's observation:

> Women kind of just want to go off in other things. Women have so much going on anyway, more so than men. You're a homemaker, you're taking on other responsibilities. I don't see myself getting involved. I don't need it. I have so many other things I want to do. I just want to get out and do something completely different.[117]

Mary, an Army officer, agreed:

> For me, I don't usually first talk about my military service, I talk about being a mom. Women may not self-identify because they identify as a mother, or a student, first, and see their time in service as a period of time in my life that was just a job.[118]

Even for women who had predominately positive experiences serving, dissonance between being feminine-identifying and serving in a hyper-masculine job field is psychologically taxing. I interviewed Margot*, an officer in the Marine Corps, while she was on terminal leave, in her last days of active duty before becoming a veteran. She reflected, "I think for some female veterans that's something they want to reclaim. They want to reclaim the ability to be a woman. When you tell people you're a veteran, you have a layer of your femininity stripped away."[119]

Many women simply feel like they do not *need* their veteran identity, even if there are proud of their service. Because of the privileged position of male combatants, many male veterans may need their veteran identity more than women, as if to say, "I was once a warrior; I proved my masculinity." Commander Mike Wisecup shared:

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[116] Interview with Kate Germano, 26 Nov 2017
[117] Interview with Commander Megan Hallinan, 2 July 2017
[118] Interview with M.H, 30 July 2017.
[119] Interview with M.S. 7 July 2017.

> Men selflessly serve, and then peacock when they're veterans. Men need gold stars. Men absolutely need veteran identity more than women. Men see these things as victories and accomplishments and want to search and uncover the world…Men want other men to know they were warriors once.[120]

A 2017 study from Columbia University that studied 140,000 servicemembers from enlistment to discharge coined the term "transition stress" to examine the intense challenge of military-to-civilian transition, beyond post-traumatic stress disorder. The researchers considered that separating from a closely-knit team in a military unit to civil society is itself a significant source of stress:

> The aggregate time spent together, forced interdependency, and the shared hardships potentially leads to unanticipated and complex levels of affective bonding between Service Members… the actual or perceived loss or weakening of these bonds during the transitional period and beyond may be associated with increased distress over the life span.[121]

Yet this conclusion overlooks the fact that many servicemembers, particularly women, may have been deliberately excluded or even harmed by that "affective bonding." If women were never part of the brotherhood in the first place, they may not seek out a substitute in a veterans' organization upon separation. Furthermore, the research team found that particularly for men, "The military's emphasis on masculinity as well as its potentially striking divergence from the arguably more diversified gender roles and norms that characterize civilian life seems a possible source of transition stress."[122] While the researchers acknowledged this might be somewhat different for women, they made no assessments as to why, noting that the research on the challenges of military to civilian transition are virtually nonexistent to begin with. The military gives men the opportunity to fulfill gender stereotypes, whereas it forces women to constantly code-switch. In light of the stories shared by servicewomen and women veterans, future researchers should consider how women are uncomfortable with their visibility as a minority while in the service may relish the

[120] Interview with Commander Mike Wisecup, 6 March 2018
[121] Mobbs, Bonanno. "Beyond war and PTSD: The crucial role of transition stress in the lives of military veterans.": 138
[122] Ibid, 141

ability to vanish into the fabric of society as civilians. This reaction may be further compounded by the preponderance of resources that are not gender-specific, which many women veterans will avoid, because of both experiences on active duty and in handling stereotypes after transition. Resources and events specifically aimed at women veterans, or clearly depicting women in promotional materials are likely to boost participation, and assuage apprehension of a replication of white, male, heterosexual, "vet-bro" culture.

VIII. *Conclusion: We Exist*

Boston, MA, March 2018

A year after we sat drinking together on a wintry beach in Virginia, Kristen and I were on opposite sides of the country. She was out of the Navy and had taken a management role with a tech giant in San Francisco. I was in my final semester of graduate school in Boston. She asked me how I was doing.

To anyone on the outside looking in, we were both thriving. We were independent and professionally successful. She confessed that a phone call from the Navy Reserve had caused a panic attack, and she said, "I think the Navy is my trigger."

We recounted to each other the missions we'd been part of the, the people who had made our lives miserable, most of whom have continued on to have successful careers in or out of the military, all of the pretending to be someone that fit in, and how only now it was starting to unravel.

"It adds up," I suggested.

"Yes," she agreed, "And I need to get the hell out of the Reserves."

Why does it matter if women veterans choose to self-identify? First, women veterans are more likely to engage with over women veterans—and that's not possible if they do not see them in their own communities. Maiocco and Smith found that "Social support is a protective factor for veterans in combating mental health problems, thus inadequate social support is associated with poor health, reintegration difficulties, and lack of resiliency"[123] Other evidence considers the best

[123] Maiocco, Gina, and Mary Jane Smith. "The experience of women veterans coming back from war." Archives of psychiatric nursing 30, no. 3 (2016): 397.

social support for women veterans to be other women veterans. Women veterans may either opt out of seeking resources because of reasons mentioned above, or find these resources simply do not exist where they live.[124] Actual numbers are hard to come by because many veteran-facing organizations simply do not collect sex- and age- disaggregated data on their membership.[125] Observation through participation reveals that women remain under-represented in veteran-facing organizations.[126] This exclusion can hinder reintegration and have detrimental health outcomes, including high rates of suicide and homelessness among women veterans.[127] While many women seek social support with women veterans online or by connecting with female friends they served with, this does not solve the issue of finding support in their own communities, particularly regarding access to information about resources.

Second, women veterans must participate in veteran-facing organizations if those organizations are to meet their needs and bring them benefit. This includes both public policy recommendations and career opportunities. I serve on my congressional district's non-partisan veterans' advisory committee. When I first joined, I was the only woman on a committee of eleven. Now there are five on a committee of fifteen, and concerns pertaining to women veterans are now central to every meeting—which was not previously the case. The high-level involvement of women in veterans' advocacy resulted in the introduction of the Deborah Sampson Act into the U.S. Congress, which includes significant reforms impacting women veterans, and has bipartisan

[124] Mattocks, Kristin M., Sally G. Haskell, Erin E. Krebs, Amy C. Justice, Elizabeth M. Yano, and Cynthia Brandt. "Women at war: Understanding how women veterans cope with combat and military sexual trauma." *Social science & medicine* 74, no. 4 (2012): 537-545

[125] Murphy, Patricia and Jay Price, "Established Veterans Groups Fight to Atract the Next Generation." *All Things Considered.* National Publc Radio. November 11, 2015 https://www.npr.org/2015/11/11/455352620/established-veterans-groups-fight-to-attract-the-next-generation

[126] A notable exception in NYC Veterans' Alliance, which is run by two Post 9/11 women veterans

[127] Maiocco and Smith 2016; Mattocks 2012; United States Congress. Senate. *Fulfilling the Promise to Women Veterans*: *Hearing Before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.* 114th Congress, 1st Session. April 21, 2015 https://www.veterans.senate.gov/hearings/fulfilling-the-promise-to-women-veterans04212015

support.[128] From the standpoint of career opportunities, many employers specifically want to hire and promote veterans, both for positive branding, and because it makes good business sense—veterans tend to be high performers and have better retention.[129] Retired Navy Commander Pat Cercio-Veira recalled that it took a male mentor to encourage her to self-identify as a veteran in the workplace because it would help advance her career:

> After I'd been out a few years, having had a couple of jobs in addition to doing my own thing on the side. I still didn't usually tell people I had been in the Navy. Then one day I met a guy who trained senior executives about telling their stories. I was working in Financial Stuff at the time. He nearly ripped my head off when he found out I had not only been a Naval Officer but had bought all the Tomahawk Missiles used during Desert Storm and managed $1.5 Billion budget. That was back when I was a young LT and a billion dollars was considered a lot of money, unlike now when they act like it is petty cash.
>
> His comment, "You work in a field where credibility is everything. You have a story that makes you instantly credible and you aren't using it."[130]

This story points to the third reason that the visibility of women in the military and women veterans is significant: they can change perspectives about women in leadership. Women veterans are more likely work in management roles in civilian employment than women who never served.[131] A number of women veterans running for Congress highlight both their combat service *and* motherhood in their campaign ads.[132] If women are seen as beyond mere tokens but as a normal part of the fabric and leaders in a field that is viewed as the last bastion of hegemonic masculine power, it may have a transformative effect across sectors.[133] It is not women's responsibility to transform organizations, but organizations may recognize they have to transform their culture

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[128] United States Congress. Senate. S. 681 "Deborah Sampson Act." 115th Congress. https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/681/text
[129] Corporate Executive Board, "Why Hiring Veterans Will Boost Revenues and Cut Costs" 11 November 2015. https://www.cebglobal.com/blogs/hr-why-hiring-veterans-will-boost-revenues-and-cut-costs/
[130] Email Correspondence with Commander (Ret) Pat Cerchio-Veira, 9 March 2018
[131] Department of Veterans Affairs, "Women Veterans Report: The Past, Present and Future of Women Veterans." National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, February 2017: 18-19.
[132] Amy McGrath, "Told Me" 1 Aug 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcjG2fK7kNk; MJ Hegar, "Doors" 20 Jun 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zi6v4CYNSIQ
[133] Duncanson 2015; Goldstein 2018.

whether it's to avoid negative press, improve recruitment or retention, or improve effectiveness through cognitive diversity.

Finally, while the fact that women serve in the military should no longer been seen as exceptional, it remains true that for a woman to become a veteran, she must first exceed cultural expectations that military service is masculine in order to decide to serve and then serve in an organization that may not fully accept her. Women veterans have a great deal to add to their communities, particularly because these experiences have often made them resilient leaders yet often feel invisible and struggle with how to tell their stories.[134] For many, it's simply because they do not have the validation that their experiences were shared by millions of other women veterans they do not know. While this project did not intend to provide that validation, it did just that—including for me. As we came to the end of each emotional interview, I asked the participants what they wanted to tell the world about women veterans. Kate Germano said:

> We are strong as all get out. It takes a special kind of person to serve, a certain kind of mental strength to know that you are part of an organization that doesn't necessarily accept you 100% of the time, and yet you're there to make sacrifices as those who do fit in every single day, that takes a lot of strength, the public should know we are strong...we join to be challenged, we don't join to be victims.

Anna said:

> That they're amazing. That they're usually talented—much more than the general public. That they're relentless and pursue whatever they choose to do and have the track record to prove that. There's a lot of women veterans join the military for very honorable, romantic reasons, to serve their country, to do what's right, do be heroes, because they are heroes.

Anna began to weep as she concluded. We sat in the middle of a crowded Whole Foods in New York City, and hugged each other. I knew how she felt.

Wendy and I spent the most amount of time together during our interview. Wendy survived multiple sexual assaults in the military, an improvised explosive device attack, led convoys, and

[134] Thomas, Kate Hendricks. "Military Women: The Surprising Health Benefits of Combat Integration" *Social Worker Helper.* January 1, 2017. https://www.socialworkhelper.com/2017/01/05/military-women-surprising-health-benefits-combat-integration/

witnessed the ambiguity of warfare in the earliest days of the Iraq invasion. She is now the mother of two, lives in the suburbs of a major city and works for the federal government. She had never shared her whole story before and asked for a recording of the interview to share with her children when they were old enough. She reflected, "I wanted to remember how strong I am. … It's like I used to be a superhero…I still have that experience and I don't want to lose that feeling of strength."

At the outset, when asking women to share their stories, I did not intend to tell my own. But as I conducted interviews and gathered stories together, and began to see patterns of experiences, I was overwhelmed. I was reliving my best days and my worst days in uniform: the days I felt like the work I was doing was changing the world. The times I feared for my own safety and then my own sanity, particularly when I was told that I was imagining the situation was as bad as I perceived—and it usually was. There are over 200,000 women serving on active duty in the military, and nearly three times as many in the National Guard and Reserves.[135] They deserve to have their experiences validated, and to know they're not alone. They deserve to have a vocabulary to describe the gendered ecosystem in which they live and work, because that understanding gives the power to disrupt and change.

I loved serving in military, as did the majority of the women who shared their stories. We join to be challenged on our own merits, not ostracized because we are women. The United States deserves a military that supports and defends the Constitution by harnessing the capabilities of those who desire to serve, and women deserve to be supported and recognized when they come home and continue to lead.

[135] United States Department of Defense. Defense Manpower Data Center. DoD Personnel, Workforce Reports & Publications. December 2017. https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp

Finally, women veterans most acutely experience societal and institutional challenges that face the entire military and veteran community, particularly the civil-military divide, because they are never fully understood in either world.[136] Yet this may also mean they have a unique perspective that can help bridge the two, and their moment for action is already here. The Authorized Use of Military Force (AUMF) of 2001 and 2003 continue to be used to justify protracted conflict without reconsideration from the U.S. Congress. Some of the sharpest proponents of Congress reconsidering the AUMFs and funding diplomacy and international development are Post-9/11 veterans. At least half a dozen women veterans are running for Congress for the first time in 2018[137]; a number of political advocacy organizations including progressive Common Defense and Beyond the Choir are led by women veterans. Asking a question that anti-militarist feminist scholars have been asking for decades, Phil Klay recently posed in *The Atlantic*, "What happens…to the bonds between soldiers and the citizenry for whom they fight, when we fail as a nation to treat our wars as a collective responsibility, rather than the special mission of a self-selected few?" Without a brotherhood in the military to retreat to, many women veterans have known the answer for a long time.

In 1983, Cynthia Enloe considered that women's experience with the military might create the opportunity to expose the military as a "vulnerable patriarchal institution."[138] Beyond that, the experiences of women who serve in the U.S. military can tell us that not only is it *possible* to change military culture to one of inclusion, but that doing so is a necessity that lives depend on. Most women interviewed proudly shared stories of male mentors and colleagues who were their

[136] Goldstein, Andrea. "Women are the most visible servicemembers, and the most invisible veterans." *Center for a New American Security*. 8 March 2018 https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/women-are-the-most-visible-soldiers-and-the-most-invisible-veterans
[137] Rossie, Matt. "Female Veterans Lead the 2018 Charge." *Harvard Political Review.* 8 December 2017. http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/female-veterans-lead-2018-charge/
[138] Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*: 220.

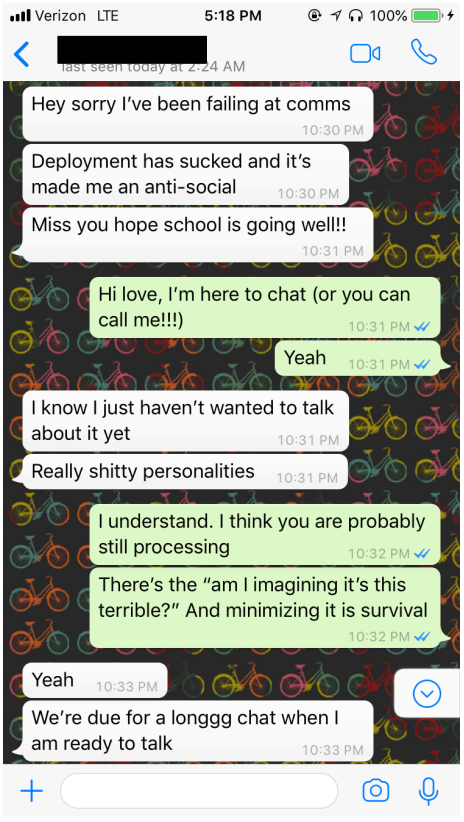
allies, showing that military leaders increasingly see values in transforming the culture and employment of the institution. Might other patriarchal institutions follow suit? If women veterans combine their experiences and credibility of having served in the military with a critical view, and community and political engagement, it may have the possibility to erode militarism itself.

Appendix 1: Recommendations for Further Research

Over the course of conducting research for this Capstone, I uncovered a number of topics that merit further exploration that were outside the scope of this project.

- The rate of reproductive cancers, infertility issues and birth defects in both active duty and veteran women. These were a persistent theme that appeared extremely frequently both in formal interviews and in social media posts. However, two women who participated in the study celebrated the births of healthy babies during the course of this study.
- Comparisons between reintegration of women veterans of state militaries and female combatants participating in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs for non-state armed groups.
- Linking the experiences captured in this project with effects on military retention
- Attitudes, health effects, and psycho-social experiences of queer women who served before and after the repeal of Don't-Ask Don't Tell.
- How women-women dynamics may differ between white women and women of color. A number of women cited the fact that black servicewomen in particular have a sense of solidarity that white servicewomen do not.

Appendix 2: Examples of Social Media Posts/Personal Correspondence



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