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FULLY WARRIOR: Cooperative Unity

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Abstract

Before delving into the issue of women in combat which this essay is about, I would like to first name my social location. I am a young, middle-class, heterosexual, Greek-Hispanic, educated female and disabled veteran. Having served six years in the Army National Guard, I acknowledge both the contributions I can offer and the limitations I have when engaging in this particular topic. With that said, I would like to offer the following to my reader: what I write is written with my voice and my particular experiences in mind. I use a combination of rational theory, emotions, rhetoric, my lived experiences, and a particular theological perspective to compose this essay. I do not claim to be objective, nor do I consider this a flaw on my part. I believe it is not possible for any author to be fully objective on any subject matter, no matter how much an author might claim to be. We all hold particular political interests informed by our culture and environment which subconsciously and consciously operate through our language and actions.

Introduction

The controversy ensues over whether or not women can stand the rigors of ground combat and if their physical presence is detrimental to the overall readiness of direct ground-combat units, leaving us with what seems to be an insoluble problem. *Fully Warrior: Cooperative Unity* addresses this conflict-ridden subject specifically in the context of women in the Active, Guard, and Reserve components in the United States Army. In the army organization, women are barred from serving in traditional male combat military occupational specialties (MOS) such as infantry, armor, cannon field artillery, and combat engineers (WREI, 2005).

Throughout American history and even today, many women have been exposed to “slices” of the ground combat environment. Their narratives have been consistently silenced, marginalized, and minimized because of how power and politics operates in the military system—that is to say the system benefits the white, male leadership. Many women who have been in ground combat have not been “permitted” to name their experiences, and from a public policy perspective, have been denied the chance to prove they can endure

courageously, train efficaciously, survive and overcome mentally and physically, and die in direct ground combat as a “legitimized” unit (WREI, 2003). However, the realities of war have permitted female soldiers of various occupational specialties to demonstrate that when given the chance, they will be lethal if they have to be.

So why should anyone who is not a female wishing to be in a combat role read any further? The exclusionary policy impacts the way our military soldiers train, fight, bond, evolve, win and experience losses not just collectively but also individually during both war and peace time. The policy affects every soldier whether s/he is male or female, junior ranking or senior ranking, black or white, officer or enlisted, middle-class or working-class, spiritual or atheistic, translesbigay or “straight”. General Schoomaker, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, stated:

...in a conflict of daunting complexity and diversity, the Soldier is the ultimate platform...the American Soldier is irrefutable proof that people are more important than hardware and quality more important than quantity” (Schoomaker, 2004, p. 12).

The soldier *herself* is the authentic core of the military.

Not granting women full access to all MOSs contributes largely to the social demotion of the female warrior to a second-class citizen status before she even enters the military institution. The military leadership establishment, in controlling the spatial and geographic locations of women, does not accept the notion of the female warrior as normative. Collectively, women soldiers deviate from the heteronormative soldier-the tall, white, male soldier with bulging muscles and a booming voice-the dominant image that pervades American culture. This social classification as "other" causes a disconnect which many female soldiers experience in their military careers. While some might assert that female soldiers are less oppressed than they were twenty years ago in the services, I contend that, unfortunately, it is merely a new kind of corset-one that is more invisible, but just as suffocating and femicidal. I recently returned from a Coast Guard Academy Conference on gender where female junior officers and senior officers were shocked at listening to each others' stories-not because they were horrific tales of sexism in practice-but because they were similar in degree and kind despite the quarter-century lapse.

Fully Warrior: Cooperative Unity explores why the female *body* is perceived to be an obstruction or an obstacle to some sort of military organizational purpose or mission, specifically within the most "manly" or the "ultra-masculine" domain of combat. Why is it that the female *body*--her *womb*, her *flow*, her *breasts*, her *hair*, and her *femininity*-is believed to slow men down? Can the female *body* vigorously handle the physical stresses required in being a ranger infantry "man" or field artillery "man"? Can the female *body* still be a warrior even though she has a womb and menstruates? Does the idea of a mother engaging in direct ground combat with the intent to seek out and destroy the enemy challenge moral and/or social values and beliefs? All these questions are deeply

rooted in the female physicality. It is the female *body*, rather than the idea or metaphysical concept of the female, which is somehow threatening to the "good order" of the androcentric reign within the combat arms.

This critical analysis will argue that ideological assumptions rooted in the dominant discourses of white-male-theologies and theory-based-scientific ideologies are foundational to the rationalities of the exclusionary policy in relation to the female body. Once these assumptions have been stated, they will be critiqued using a hermeneutics of disruption with the tools of warstory-telling, feminist theory, and feminist theology and ethics. Throughout this paper, I will reconstruct, reclaim, and resacralize the female body making the case that collectively women can, *already have* (for centuries now), and will continue to be effective combat warriors. While the full integration of women in the combat arms may threaten masculinity codes, it certainly does not serve as a threat to military organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, if integration is conducted in a right manner, it can improve the lives of individual soldiers (men and women) as well as organizational effectiveness.

The Policy and the Female Body

In 1992, a Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces convened. This commission explored the subject of women's entrance into the ethos of the military--combat. The following reflects the current policy which remains in place today and what was recorded as an outcome of the session:

- o *All of the definitions of combat stress physical proximity to and violent conflict with the enemy.*
- o *The Department of Defense currently defines "combat mission" as "A task, together with the purpose, which clearly*

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requires an individual unit, naval vessel, or aircraft to individually or collectively seek out, reconnoiter and engage the enemy with the intent to suppress, neutralize, destroy or repel that enemy.” (CF 1.5)

o *The Army definition adds: “Direct combat takes place while closing with the enemy by fire, maneuver, or shock effect in order to destroy or capture, or while repelling assault by fire, close combat, or counterattack.” (CF 1.5)*

o *In military history, personal accounts, and testimony before the Commission, repeated emphasis was on the extreme physical demands and violent nature of combat.*

o *A number of Army and Marine Desert Storm combat veterans said women should not be assigned to ground combat because the physiological requirements over time are extreme, and the group is only as good as its weakest member.*

o *The ground combatant relies heavily on his physical strength and stamina to survive, fight, and win.*

o *The Armed Forces should not assign women to combat.*

(Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Force, 1992)

The subjective reasoning of this hearing denotes that these members who were in concurrence with the findings held similar presumptions with regard to the female body. The following summarizes what is implicit in the commission's findings: the body is intrinsically weak and obstructive. Women, *because* of their bodies, cannot close with an enemy as aggressively and as effectively as a man. In the time leading up to battle and during battle, women *because* of their bodies, cannot withstand the physical requirements critical to winning wars in the way men can withstand the same physical stresses, thus impeding the military's ability to fight and win wars. Women, *because* of their bodies, cannot share the identity of the warrior with men as it must remain exclusively male. Women, *because* of their bodies, cannot transcend their physicality and ascend into the realm of the warrior spirit. Thus, women

remained chained to their bodies.

MP (War)story Telling

The military police corps is a combat support branch tasked with area security missions. With the exception of the ambush, technically, these area security missions (i.e. reconnaissance, cordon and search, or convoy security) do not involve a primary mission to initiate direct ground combat. However, many MPs have encountered direct ground combat situations and experienced segments of what infantry personnel are tasked to do. The military police corps, in a general sense, is one of the branches since Operation Just Cause and Operation Desert Storm that has been placed in an increasingly combat arms-type role. The following semi-narratives (re)present female military police soldiers engaging in ground combat.

Operation Just Cause: Members of the military police were given missions to secure enemy objectives. One platoon led by Lieutenant Kimberly Thompson received sniper fire and returned fire with enemy personnel in an urban setting. Her platoon was responsible for the shootings which killed three men in a speeding van that refused to halt. In another event, Captain Linda Bray was given a mission to secure a suspected Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) stronghold where intelligence reports estimated anywhere from twelve to thirty members of the PDF infantry (Bird Francke, 1997). The assault is depicted as follows:

Orangey-yellow bullet trails were crisscrossing the darkness from the M-16s of Bray's company and the Panamanians' AK-74s from the surrounding woods. The thunderous explosion of a U.S. 203 round soon rocked the compound gate while another 203 round fired by the platoon still concealed in the woods fired a direct hit on the building's front door. Crawling through a drainage ditch, Bray came upon one of her soldiers just as he had fired his M-60 machine gun in the direction of the real

sniper fire. Bray grabbed her 9mm pistol and shot in the same direction. . . Bray estimated that twelve of her female soldiers had been in combat. . . Because of the Army's combat exclusion policy, these women and at least 150 others like them in Operation Just Cause would not receive the combat medals that are the emblem of a soldier's profession (Bird Francke, 1997, p. 49).

The account tells of soldiers both male and female who closed in on an enemy through fire and maneuver with the intent to kill the enemy in order to secure the PDF compound. These female MPs engaged in combat with the PDF as it is defined by the Department of Defense and the Army.

In 1994, the situation in Haiti accentuated the importance of a heightened MP presence within the U.S. Army (Enloe, 1993). Additionally, military police units operated alongside infantry and armor units during the Bosnian conflict (Bell, 2003). Many of these soldiers were women. In Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, female MPs were and are once again conducting area security missions.

Operation Enduring Freedom: Sergeant Stephanie Blazo, formerly of the 972 Military Police Company, was "assigned" to the 82nd Airborne Division where she partook in conducting dismounted combat patrols amongst infantry men. Along with several other female soldiers, she was requested by the infantry for the purpose of conducting weapons searches on Iraqi women. Although the mission for these women was not to assault or kill, they had to be prepared to do so if the situation arose (Critser, 2002).

Operation Iraqi Freedom: Lieutenant Dawn Halfaker, along with her platoon of MPs, was conducting a reconnaissance patrol in Barqouba, Iraq when they were ambushed. Lieutenant Halfaker lost her right arm to a rocket propelled grenade during battle. In *USA Today*, she states: "Women in combat is not really an issue. It is happening" (Moniz,

2005).

Brigadier General Raymond E. Bell wrote the following about the military police corps:

It is now time, however, to recognize that the Military Police of the U.S. Army are also combat soldiers. It is time for MP unit leaders engaged in combat operations...to put on the green shoulder tabs that denote commanders of combat formations. . . They are as much in the midst of battle as any combatant. The firepower of a military police combat support company lacks only mortars to approach that of a light infantry battalion... Women have held leadership positions in the military police support companies for years (Bell, 2003, p.12).

With the current operational tempo where the United States is simultaneously deployed to numerous theatres of conflict and with an evolving style of warfare known as asymmetric, the military police corps resembles one pathway where many female soldiers find themselves in combat situations. In other words, the military police corps functions in "slices" as a combat arms branch, and secondly, women are in it.

The Body and Physiology

"But no science is ever perfected; science too has its history" -Luce Irigaray, 1985

Scientific data can be interpreted in many ways and is always evolving. Science can be biased in that people can use it in a way which benefits their political interests. Gary Wells, President of the American Psychological-Law Society, uses the analogy of a plant to reveal how science can be a tool to hinder progress: "A biologist can determine variables which cause a plant to lose its leaves during the winter, but cannot accurately predict when a leaf will fall from the tree" (Wells, 2005). If the purpose of the biologist's study is to determine when the leaf will fall, the biologist is misusing science. If,

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however, his study focuses on finding ways to prolong the life of the leaf, then science is being utilized in a manner which can recommend and shape better ideas (Wells, 2005).

We can apply this analogy here. If one predicts the female body will struggle and hinder combat readiness, and then goes on to make the recommendation to deny women in heavy combat jobs based on variables discovered through supposedly "objective" scientific research, it is a similar misuse of science. A constructive use of science would involve researching the physiology of the female body in a way which poses the following questions: Can females attain, through smart training methods and low cost initiatives, the physical strength and stamina that would benefit the organization and *themselves*? Does physical strength and stamina have a direct correlation to confidence in one's abilities as a member of society and as a soldier? How can we work to close the gap between men and women's physical capabilities without causing injury to the body?

Dr. Everett Harman, physiologist and researcher at the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine in Natick, MA, conducted a study on the effects of a specifically designed physical training program on the load carriage and lifting performance of female soldiers. Forty-six women were studied to determine if their physical ability could improve enough in order for them to perform very heavy Army jobs which included infantry and field artillery. The training regiment was designed by experienced athletic strength coaches, and it was conducted within the parameters of normal Army work-time constraints. Before the training regiment only 24% of the female participants qualified for very heavy (combat arms) Army jobs, and at the conclusion, 78% qualified (Harman, 1997).

The purpose of the study was to determine if women could meet the physical requirements of most, if not all, Army MOSs. Women on

average have less strength than men in terms of lifting capacity, cannot lift as rapidly as men can, and are said to walk at a slower rate than men when carrying substantially heavy loads. Dr. Harman ascertained that there has been little research to determine whether or not women can increase their lifting strength and power and the effects of this (Harman, 1997). The question he asked was: can women be trained to successfully perform heavy Army jobs within the time constraints of initial active duty training?

The female volunteers in the study were civilians who worked at the Natick Research Center. The only prerequisites for participation were they had to be in good physical health with no medical problems and under the age of thirty-seven. A male control group also participated in the study; those selected "enjoyed testing their physical capabilities ...and were in large part individuals somewhat bigger, stronger, and more athletic than average males" (Harman, 1997, p.70).

The training took place over the course of twenty-four weeks and involved five days a week of one and one-half hours per day of physical training. The training encompassed weightlifting, walking, running, load carriage, and specialty drills. At the conclusion of the training, the average weight lifted onto a two and one-half ton truck was one hundred and eighteen pounds, and the females completed a seventy-five pound forced march at a four and four tenths mph rate of speed. At the conclusion of his study, Dr. Harman concluded in his report that if the twenty-four week study could be extended for several weeks, they would only become stronger. The study demonstrated that physically conditioned women, *because* of their bodies, *can* meet standards to handle the rigors of direct combat roles (Harman, 1997).

The results of Harman's study calls for a review in the way the Army currently trains its soldiers. According to this study, woman's lifting capacity increases by only 8-12% by the completion of Basic Combat

Training and Advanced Individual Training. When it comes to males, how much of a male soldier's physical capacity is developed from initial active duty training? How much of their physical abilities develop from actual time spent in work-out facilities and sports conditioning in the years prior to enlistment? Sedentariness is a phenomenon still more common in young girls than in boys in today's society which makes it reasonable to assume that six months of training cannot make up for 18 plus years of a less active lifestyle, "especially in regard to the non-contractile elements of the musculoskeletal system" (Harman, 1997, p. 75).

Opponents to the integration of women into combatant roles stress that females have a tendency to be more susceptible to injury. As basic trainees, female injuries occur at 51%; whereas male injuries occur at 25%- over a decade old statistic (Presidential Commission, 1992). Although research still indicates women have a higher risk for injury, the reason has less to do with gender differences than it has with a lack of preparedness and physical conditioning. How can one fairly judge the female body if the male body has had an advantage and been socially conditioned to be physically active since early childhood?

The current generation of young-adult females is, overall, a lot stronger than previous generations. This is partly due to increased involvement in sports at a young age and to a time period when belonging to a gym is culturally accepted or becoming more the norm. Despite the social challenge, many women are progressing to the weightlifting arena as it is encouraged by health experts. The next generation of women will be stronger than the current one. Only twenty-five years ago did women first enter into marathons, and, in that time, women have reduced their finish times by well over one and a half hours. In another twenty years, women may actually catch up to men's speeds in races of other lengths because they are increasing their fastest times more rapidly than men (Lorber, 2003). Aside from

marathons, younger generation females are increasingly more active in their youth than their predecessors were, and improvements in all areas of physical fitness are the trend of the future.

Aside from Dr. Harman's research project, other studies have recently been conducted to disprove the common-held myths about the female physiology and occupational risks to the body. In studies conducted by the Defense Women's Health Research Program (DWHRP), the following findings were recorded: "[H]ormonal changes through the menstrual cycle were far less important to acute health risks and performance than predicted; increasing levels of exercise did not increase risk for amenorrhea and consequent bone mineral loss" (Friedl, 2005).

Other studies even show that women actually have physical advantages over men. DWHRP conducted a study on the effects of ranger training on women's bodies. In Norway, during a five day training exercise involving minimal sleep and food, the women performed better than their male counterparts. The study demonstrated that women can survive better during extended periods of energy deprivation because of metabolic differences which allow for more efficient fat storage (Friedl, personal communication, 2005). In addition, the female soldiers were more alert and possessed a higher level of physical stamina *because* of their bodies.

Another study conducted by DWHRP explored the effects of testosterone levels on the brain in men while in hostile environments. It was concluded that women were likely to remain calmer and more collected than men in the midst of hostile action since testosterone levels are lower in women. While this does not mean *all* women will remain calmer in the heat of battle, it does point out a tendency amongst women that is based on physiology.

While women have an advantage in certain aspects of fitness over men, and men have advantages over women in other aspects, some women do have stronger upper bodies

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than other women and some men do have weaker upper bodies than other men. Although there are inherent physiological differences between men and women, they are average ones that differ on more levels than only between men and women. Women's bodies are not monolithic. Ultimately, these average differences create a balance and a diversity of physical abilities.

Aside from the research studies conducted by USARIEM and DWHRP, little research has been conducted to explore everyday women in fitness. The tendency to take what “we see” in basic training and other military training environments and to use it to affirm societal beliefs about natural categorical gender differences is essentially what those arguing against women in combat are doing (Dworkin, 2003). In doing this, we ignore what looking beyond what “we see” can do. For example, at the conclusion of Harman's study, the women were asked to fill out a questionnaire. When asked how they felt about their physical appearance, 85% had positive scores indicating they felt their physical appearance had improved. When asked how they felt about their self-confidence, 85% indicated their confidence level had improved. When asked about their level of self affection, 82% indicated that their level of liking themselves improved over the course of the training program. When asked about their feelings towards other women, 56% indicated that their general attitude towards other women improved. And lastly when asked about social skills, 56% indicated they felt their social skills improved as a result of their training. Other than one person who indicated negative feelings towards her physical appearance, there were no negative responses to any of the questions (Harman, 1997). The lessening of the gap between men and women's physical capabilities produced many more positive manifestations, which are depicted in how these women answered the questionnaire.

Finally, I want to make one last point about the physical strength “issue”. The greatest assumption made about ground combat is that

it solely involves brute (physical) strength. As a matter of fact, the whole military culture tends to enforce the notion that the most difficult and “manly” way to accomplish any given task is the most efficacious one. This assumption ignores the importance of tactics and techniques and the impact of creative thinking. To illustrate my point, I will relay a tale I recently heard at a military conference: A military woman, who weighed about 100 pounds soaking wet, was given a task to accomplish in 10 minutes by her male superior, who happened to be a misogynist with an agenda to prove that women were not competent physically and mentally in the military environment. He told her to weigh 10 large bags with heavy material in them each weighing over 150 pounds, and he motioned to the scale that was located on the opposite end of the room. He came back in 10 minutes, disappointed to find that all 10 bags had been weighed. How did she do it? She brought the scale to the bags and rolled the bags on the scale! (Coast Guard Academy Conference: Celebrating Women, 35th Anniversary, 2006)

Military occupations call for all kinds of mental and physical abilities and deftness. Thus, recruiting based on a “one size (or one kind of body) fits all” mentality only prevents the military from improving its ability as a combat fighting force. The military should embrace these bodily differences because it allows for a variety of creativities, strengths both physical and mental, and dexterities. As Colonel Karl Friedl states “If everyone is the same, then the army becomes predictable and easy to beat. Instead, a flexibility of response and a diversity of skills promote a multitude of ways to defeat the enemy on the battlefield” (Freidl, personal communication, 2005).

The Body and Sociology

Judith Lorber brilliantly smashes normative socio-biological assumptions made regarding men and women's bodies. She asserts that we treat gender as dichotomous, ignoring, the evidence of intrasexed and transgendered persons. Furthermore, the manifestations of polarized-type behavior between the

“masculine” and the “feminine” or rather the assumptions made about “the biological differences between men and women have led us to construct a world that reinforces those very assumptions” (Lorber, 2003, p. 14).

Common Social Constructions

One of the common responses about women's bodily capabilities that I hear from males who are opposed to the full integration of women in the combat arms is usually the 'hunter-gather' one. This hegemonic social construction is typically used to reinforce the grandnarrative which views the female body as intrinsically weak. The narrative says this: women are the gatherers and men are the hunters-end of story. Or is it? Here is the sequel:

The assumption is that men from the very beginning were solely hunters and did the “tough” and “risky” work, while women never hunted and held the more passive, delicate, and weaker role as the gatherer. In reality, the gathering, which women did, accounted for roughly eighty percent of the food intake. The hunting occurred during one week in the month, and some months not at all, since meat was considered a luxury (Grant de Pauw, 1998). Women were not always excluded from hunting roles and sometimes, for survival purposes, had to participate in the hunting activity. Similarly, men, when not hunting, helped in the gathering process in order to ensure food for their survival. Furthermore, the practice of gathering required women to “carry heavy loads, find and collect food for their families, all the while carrying and nursing their infants” (Zihlman, 1997, p. 93). In essence, the hunter-gatherer society in the Neolithic period was quite egalitarian rather than gender hierarchical. Men and women shared a cooperative unity where the male and female body was viewed as mutually whole and valuable.

Another traditional socio-cultural construction which I refer to as the 'mother-warrior paradox' imposes the mother/female and warrior/male roles as inherently non-

interchangeable pairs. “The use of warrior as a male identity corresponding to the female identity of mother is evident in many cultures”(Grante de Pauw, 1998, p. 15). The dictionary defines the warrior as one who is engaged aggressively and energetically in an activity, cause, or conflict to include battle. Mother is defined as someone who gives rise to or exercises protecting care over someone else (dictionary.com, 2006). The womb and the phallus are the symbolic bodily features at the root of this paradox. The womb becomes associated with the term mother and the phallus becomes associated with the term warrior.

The metanarrative that this construction reinforces is that somehow “combat” is the defining aspect of masculinity just as “mother” is to femininity. Thus, a dilemma is herein born; what is at stake if women appropriate the warrior identity? “If women could qualify as both mothers and warriors, then there would be no unique identity for men”(Grant de Pauw, 1998, p. 12). However, this construction contains two problematic, implicit assumptions. First, that the mother and warrior identities are antithetical to each other, and secondly, that these identities are predetermined, unchanging, and fixed.

In reality, what the body is subjected to when it is in the role of the warrior or the mother is not fixed; in both, the body experiences, courage, doubt, fear, suffering, victory, defeat, and sacrifice. In the following excerpt, the similarities and amalgamation of the bodily experience of the mother and the warrior are illustrated:

You're like a soldier in a trench who is hot and constricted and hates the food, but has to sit there for nine months. It gets to the point where she yearns for the battle [delivery of the child], even though she may be maimed or killed in it...Pregnancy is the greatest training disciplining device in the human experience (French, 1978, p. 69-70).

The paradoxical nature of the mother and the warrior is blurry, complex, similar yet different, and imbued with fluidity. Both bodily

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experiences can involve blood, pain, elation, death, trauma, aggression, and an *embodied* transcendence.

Just as the female undergoing labor is (re)presented to us through warrior language, males in the primary role of the warrior can be (re)presented as maternal/paternal. (The words “maternal” and “paternal” are interchangeable like a “his” and “hers” towel set. It is still the same towel.) To be a mother/father in an existential sense requires exercising a level of authority and influence over someone for the purpose of his or her general well-being. Similar to the role of the warrior, it involves placing other(s) before yourself.

When I was in reserve officer training, I had an instructor whom I considered to be a warrior. He had been deployed twice to the Persian Gulf, experienced extreme hardship overseas, and as a result he developed a stoic look about him. One day after a long and laborious field training exercise, my instructor spoke to us (my platoon) about why he had been so hard on us during the training exercise. By the end of the exercise, we were hungry, sleep deprived, worn down, and we had nothing left but hate in us. He delivered an emotional, heartfelt, yet stern and powerful speech about how on the real battlefield human lives are at stake. He was being hard on us for our own benefit-so that we might live past our 21st birthdays and that the soldiers under our command would too. If that isn't paternal/maternal, than I don't know what is? One could challenge his methods, but nonetheless, he was doing what he felt was best for us-not for himself. The mother/father role, just like the warrior, is selfless, protecting and sacrificing.

History has demonstrated that women's biological ability to bear children does not make them less lethal than men. Although, cultural normativities place woman in fixed categories such as the nurturer or peacemaker, women have the ability to be lethal and fatalistic (Grante de Pauw, 1998). Women have always contributed to warfare

all around the world whether as soldiers, instigators, perpetrators, or camp followers. Current scientific knowledge has concluded that ones propensity towards violence and the urge to kill is not a biological or genetic characteristic attributed to one gender; instead, it is a social construct assigned to masculinity codes. The American Psychological Association and the American Anthropological Association (1986) concluded scientific theories had been misused in order to justify violence and war as an exclusively male bastion. Human females are not genetically programmed to be passive and antiwar. Likewise, “[m]ales are not born killers. Females are not born nurturers and peacemakers”(Grante de Pauw, 1998, p. 16).

Social programming molds the female to assume the “exclusive” role of the mother while men are conformed to assume the “exclusive” role of the warrior; however, the mother and warrior identities, while different in certain respects, are not exactly polar opposites. Alongside those who transgress socially imposed gender boundaries, I contend that “femininity” and “masculinity” can be natural to both men and women; however, society programs us to nurture one over the other, sometimes even at the expense of the other. When this occurs, we are depriving our bodies. Our emancipation comes as we create “a society in which an individual might chose from both “masculine” and “feminine” virtues and then act freely without being confined to either masculine or feminine roles”(Grant de Pauw, 1998, p. 109).

The Body and Theology

“Seek God where you lost God” -Penny Nixon, 2006

Aside from the cultural programming which exists through the means of scientific theory-based research, cultural programming also transpires vis-à-vis patriarchal, theory-based theologies. American culture as well as

military culture is deeply rooted in western judeo-christian ideologies. The Protestant and Catholic religious institutions and the U.S. military institution are two core systems that heavily influence and structure both state and society in America (Katzenstein, 1998). The Catholic Church, specifically, and the U.S. military remain the only two institutions where women legally are not granted full access. These two institutions are similar in many respects with regard to their rigid, enclosed hierarchical structures and with their ideas about tradition and gender.

The air Americans breathe is influenced by interpretations of judeo-christianity, even agnostics and atheists can not fully escape these influences. Furthermore, christianity is not neutral about gender and has a rather bleak disposition towards the human body which penetrates military ideology as it relates to the warrior (Nixon, personal communication, 2006).

Institutions are characterized by a set of normativities, values, and beliefs among a given population (Katzenstein, 1998). Religion is embedded in the military institution more than the average civilian person might think. In basic training, trainees are encouraged to attend religious services. The idea, which supports the notion that it is possible for a soldier in a fighting position during a time of war to not believe in God, is unpopular in military culture. Prayer, bible studies, and the mentioning of "God" are all largely accepted and encouraged, especially during training events and overseas deployments. Thus, judeo-christian theologies become normalized, accepted, and even encouraged in military environments whether one is a church-goer or not, a believer or not. While this can have positive material consequences in the day-to-day lives of soldiers, especially during times of war, it can also unintentionally foster oppressive attitudes towards the human body where often the female body becomes scapegoated. Dominant theological discourses implicitly and explicitly degrade the female body as demonic, seductive, and weak. Hence, these notions become systemic within the

ideologies of the military institution. This normalization can be explored in a social-historical context.

During the Crusades, women who followed the Christian armies as nurses, prostitutes, or wives were stigmatized with immorality, seduction, and carnality (Grant de Pauw, 1998). With the development of European imperialism and the creation of America, many of these social norms and tendencies transferred to the American military. We can see the effects of this in the way the military "manages" issues around sexuality. For example, policies on sexual violence are non-existent or non-enforced or both. Workplace romance is largely stigmatized, and women can often unjustly be categorized as "easy" or a slut. "Homosexual" conduct whether female or male is also hugely a taboo.

How is it that the female body is degraded and viewed as an obstruction in judeo-christianity? How does this impact military warrior ideology? There are many answers to the first question, not to mention many answers to *why* this is so, but I will mainly focus on only a few of the how's, specifically on the role of a co-opted scripture and tradition. Then by using a judeo-christian, feminist embodied ethic, I will address how the problematic influences of dominant christian notions of the human body impact what I refer to as the military's 'warrior spirit ideology'. Finally, I will attempt to resacralize the female body as it relates to the warrior.

Scripture

The central female figures in christianity are Eve, Mary the Virgin Mother, and Mary of Magdala. Woman (Eve) because of her weakness and lack of intelligence was more likely to be tempted by the Devil; thus, Eve, infused with the spirit of the Devil seduced Adam, which resulted in a world of sin, suffering, and mortality (Swidler, 1979). Mary, the virgin Mother, unlike Eve is presumed to have been able to transcend to a holy status only because she maintained her virginity. Mary of Magdala is (re)presented as the whore who was pardoned by Jesus Christ

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and freed from persecution. These three women are (re)presented to us in “legitimate” scripture through the lenses of men who wielded some amount of power. We do not know the full story to any of these women’s lives nor do we have a more accurate depiction of their religious, leadership roles. As a result, the (re)presentations or (mis)representations of these females have operated to relegate the female body to a repressed physical being in which passivity, submissiveness, sensuality, and dependency are attributed to it (Swidler, 1979).

The bible is infiltrated with misogynist tendencies. In Jeremiah 51:30, it reads: “The warriors of Babylon given up, they remain in their strongholds; their strength has failed, they have become women...,” indicating the warrior role as exclusively male and that women are inherently weak (Meeks, 1989). Such contextual findings affirm the attitudes which view the female body as powerless and inadequate.

The non-silenced scriptural passages promote a foundation for these derogatory and oppressive notions about the female body. The fact that the cultures from which scripture sprang from were extremely patriarchal and filled with sexism helps us to understand why (, 1979). Thus, the Bible which is referred to as the Word of God is more accurately the “word of *man*.” (I use non-inclusive language here on purpose.) This is not meant to discredit scripture, but merely to point out that the “objective” Word of God is masked with subjective human perspectives and interpretations. “Gone from modern religious worship is the precritical notion that each word of the bible was whispered in the inner ear of the inspired writer by God” (Swidler, 1979, p. 81). Furthermore, meaning is born between the interaction of the reader and the text which is contrary to the notion that scripture contains a one, absolute Truth (capital T). How a white male, who grew up with no sisters and a father who hated women, may interpret a specific passage, and how a white male, who grew up with three sisters and a mother

who was abused by her husband, may interpret the same passage can be quite different because of particular social and historical contexts.

For example, Leonard Swidler, a biblical scholar, interprets Jesus as a kind of proto-feminist. He asserts that: “Jesus clearly felt the need to reject the baby-machine image of women and insist again on the personhood, the intellectual and moral facilities being primary for all” (Swidler, 1979, p.193). He goes on to say that scripture reports that Jesus would not turn away women at the dinner table even though it was customary to not eat at the same table with women during that time period. Instead, Jesus encouraged women to partake in spiritual growth and fought for them; they responded by following him on the day of his crucifixion to his death. They stood by him and watched him as he was bound, nailed, beaten, and maimed, while the male disciples deserted him (Swidler, 1979).

Tradition

Scripture is not the only tool used to control the perceptions about women’s bodies. Tradition is another component of judeo-christianity which can be used to foster patriarchal normativities. For example, a long standing tradition in the Roman Catholic Church is that a woman cannot be accepted as a spiritual leader. Although in many Protestant denominations, a woman can be ordained, they are still not seen or treated as equal to male priests (Rambo, personal communication, March, 2005). Essentially, the woman cannot achieve a spiritual leadership status because she is too tied to her body in all its sensuality and evil.

Instead of challenging these negative views of the female body because of the oppression they create, a common misconception arises that this is simply the way things ought to be. Because these beliefs are so ancient and deeply rooted in our beliefs today, we infer that they must be “natural” and “just.” Similar to the Catholic Church where apostolic succession justifies

a tradition and acceptance of male-only apostles and priests, the military institution's mentality of the male-only warrior sounds "right" and "comfortable" since women were never fundamentally a part of the structure as a sanctioned unit.

In 1896, the *Gospel of Mary*, a silenced scriptural text which had been written around 150 of the common era, was discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt (King, 2003). This manuscript details how Mary of Magdala received a prophetic vision when Jesus Christ appeared to her three days after his death. Mary went and preached to the disciples what she had learned, but she is challenged by Peter: "Did he, then, speak to a woman in private without our knowing about it? Are we to turn around and listen to her? Did he choose her over us?" (King, 2003, p.17). The *Gospel of Mary*, in granting Mary apostolic authority, challenges the notion which affirms that maleness equals spiritual achievement. Dr. Karen King asserts:

The historical importance of the Gospel of Mary lies in letting us see the contours of some of the crucial debates over the apostolic tradition, prophetic experience, and women's leadership (King, 2003, p. 190).

In other words, simply because tradition has dictated that only men can achieve spiritual leadership, the equally substantial reality shows that women are as mutually whole to possess the authority of priesthood, transcendence, and prophecy as depicted in the *Gospel of Mary*. Similarly, while societal tradition has dictated the warrior role as "masculine," the equally substantiated reality is that women are as mutually whole in both body and soul to possess the spirit of the warrior.

Just as women have always held priestly leadership roles, women have always served in combat since the first evidence of institutionalized warfare despite common held assumptions which regard warfare as an exclusively male domain (Grant de Pauw, 1998). In the United States, women, vis-à-vis

disguises and the nature of war, have served in ground combat positions and hostile action situations since the Revolutionary War, and female soldiers are still serving in "almost" combatant type roles even as these words are written. In the post-Cold War era, the asymmetric battlefield, the gradual erosion of female-barring obstacles, and the intense operational tempo have given more American female soldiers the chance to be both successful and unsuccessful in ground-combat environments.

An Embodied Ethic to the Warrior Spirit Ideology

How do we come to understand the warrior identity given our cultural influences as they relate to the body? How come women are hindered in the quest to achieve this warrior spirit status in today's society?

The soul and body dualism, originally a hellenistic prototype, in western christianity is a socio-theological construction which tends to value the soul or the mind over the body. The body becomes aligned with the temporal, the feminine, and the dark; whereas, the soul becomes aligned with the masculine, the light, and the strong. Bodily shame, whether male or female, has been our nemesis in America (Nixon, lecture, 2006). However, the female body then becomes scapegoated or becomes the body which must take the "fall." It becomes inconsequential and must be constricted.

The ideal body or the normative body becomes one that is male, muscular, virile, and warrior-like. It is the body which becomes valued the most, albeit the soul is still more valuable than even the "best" of the bodies. Thus, the bodies that do not fit into these masculine categories become marked bodies. They deviate from the norm and their worth or value is somewhat less (Nixon, lecture, 2006).

The soul exemplifies the divine and the immortal-usually assigned to maleness; whereas the body represents sin, temptation, and weakness-usually assigned to

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femaleness. Within the context of the warrior spirit ideology, the male is able to transcend his body through a “mind over matter” will or desire—a phrase commonly enforced in both male and female basic trainees. In essence, one honors the warrior spirit or the will which drives the body of the man; the spirit or will of the warrior, not so much the body, is what allows the man the ability to acquire the warrior spirit (Rambo, personal communication, April, 2005). The warrior spirit ideology also assumes that to achieve the warrior spirit, one has to transcend the body and leave it behind. Emphasis is placed on transcending the body to reach a pneumatic place—as if the body were excess baggage.

However, the female cannot transcend her body and achieve this warrior spirit or “mind over matter” will; she is too tied to her body or chained to it. Must her body be freed from societal bondage for her to find her warrior soul? Or is it really necessary to unchain oneself from the body whether male or female in order to attain the warrior spirit? Our bodies are the location where we experience glory, pain, and suffering; they should not be disregarded or devalued, but need to be resacralized. The human body must reclaim its importance within the warrior-spirit ideology. After all, it is the body which carries the rucksack, the weapon, and the soldier to victory or defeat. The battles of our world are fought on our bodies. War is always waged on the battleground of the body (Nixon, lecture, 2006).

This idea of a disembodied transcendence is problematic for both men and women because it fails to bring the warrior to redemption. The warrior becomes disenchanting and broken when s/he discounts the role the body has in the combat experience—the impact of the trauma and the physical pain. Instead, bodies are often overused, abused, and hyper-recycled in the military. Injuries are often ignored and trainers often cross the line promoting sadistic practices that have no bearing on organizational effectiveness or combat-

readiness. The military establishment and the individual soldier need to recognize the value of the body, whether it is a male or female one, in the craft of soldiering. We must seek God where God has been lost—in our bodies.

Not My Final Words

“Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity” -Iron Jawed Angels, 2004

Lory Manning (2006), a retired Navy captain, of the Women's Research and Education Institute in Washington D.C. recently characterized the military's handling of women in combat as a method dominated by emotions. Those who do not want women in combat are allowing their emotions to drive their rhetoric. What she said struck a chord with me because it rang close to home. This is most definitely an emotional issue for many men and even some women.

The first edition of this paper was presented at the Women in the Military Today 2005 Conference in Arlington, Virginia—an academic conference sponsored by the Women's Research & Education Institute. The tone of my first paper was written more for an audience who was opposed to women in combat—the language somewhat “gentler” and less provocative, while the tone of this paper is more for anyone willing to be open to new ideas.

In the earlier edition, my conclusion contained a short narrative of a dialogue between myself and an army infantry lieutenant colonel. This infantry lieutenant colonel was adamantly opposed to the idea of women in the combat arms, and he and I also happened to work in the same office. The purpose of referring to him in my paper was purely for political reasons. I was permitting myself to name in an open and legitimate forum that he, as an infantry male, and I were not so different from each other in terms of our wants, desires, and capabilities.

After I presented the paper at the conference

which this lieutenant colonel was aware I was going to, I came back and thanked him for his input even if we agreed to disagree. I presented him with a copy and asked him to read it. Three days after he read it and approximately 3 weeks after I presented it at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, he violently raped me. After I went forward and reported the assault to the Judge Advocate General (JAG) officials, an informal administrative investigation by an out of state JAG investigator convened. The lieutenant colonel and I both had to present evidence to support our testimonies. I produced my clothing with semen and blood stains on it, medical documents, and testimonies of other females he had sexually harassed and/or assaulted. One of the items he produced as "evidence" to the investigating officer was the first edition of this paper. Apparently, he wanted to demonstrate my mental instability and my "craziness". I believe his words to the investigating officer were that I was "out of control". He was right. I certainly was out of his control.

We can analyze my experience on a collective level and an individual one. I invite my reader to reflect on this collectively. In other words, my actions represent a sort of feminist infiltration into the power pool of masculinity, which the lieutenant colonel represents.

I will end for now on this note. Despite all the rationalities, the difference of opinions, and the facts and statistics, when all is said and done, "it" is an emotional venture and "it" is all about power. I was just one more woman of many from the past and present who dare(d) to be bold, dare(d) to defy, and dare(d) to venture out of our cage.

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