

GENDER, NATIONAL IDENTITY, AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE: MAKING SENSE OF
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

by

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ABSTRACT

This project investigates the gendered nature of war through a critical analysis of the public discourses surrounding the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in the post-9/11 era. I argue that the Iraq question has brought (and continues to bring) issues of gender to the forefront of public discussions regarding the moral principles underlying military combat operations, the protection (and disciplining) of “women’s rights,” and the ideological boundaries between male and female, masculinity and femininity, and the “West” and the “Middle East.” Specifically, this project analyzes three gender-related controversies surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom. First, I examine public arguments regarding justifications for the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, arguing that the representations of Iraqi women’s oppression constructed Iraq as a barbaric and culturally “backward” nation state and justified the U.S. invasion as necessary for the preservation of “civilization” in general and for the protection of women in particular. Second, I provide a critical reading of the public and popular culture discourses concerning the capture and rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch in March 2003. I posit that the depictions of Lynch as the victimized Woman/Child reiterated the masculine prowess of the U.S. military and facilitated new attacks against military integration and feminism. Finally, I investigate the public

discourses surrounding Pfc. Lynndie England's sexual abuse of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 as well as the discourses surrounding her court martial in October 2005. This case study analyzes the gendered depictions of England as well as the explanatory narratives that attempted to make sense of her conduct and to rehabilitate the pristine image of the U.S. military. In the conclusion of this project, I argue that although these three cases merit their own critical analysis, they also function in tandem with one another as reiterations of a larger narrative regarding national identity and militarism. These cases illustrate the symbiotic relationship between discourses of gender, militarism, and national identity as well as the normative gender expectations that are seemingly inherent to the nature of war itself.

INDEX WORDS: Gender, Feminism, Performativity, Military, National identity, Iraq, Jessica Lynch, Abu Ghraib

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the post-9/11 era, the debates over U.S. militarism have become increasingly complex, and public discussions continue to reflect ongoing controversies surrounding the War on Terrorism, “rogue” nations’ acquisitions of weapons of mass destruction, and U.S. response to conflicts in the Middle East. In particular, the complexities regarding the U.S. invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq continue to fuel public debates over the practicality of U.S. military intervention and democracy promotion in the Middle East. Moreover, the current conflict in Iraq has brought issues of gender to the forefront of public discussions regarding the moral principles underlying military combat operations as well as the protection (and disciplining) of “women’s rights.” Indeed, public discussions of the war in Iraq often reference (both explicitly and implicitly) the relationship between military masculinity, national identity, and binary gender categories in ways that reiterate the normalcy associated with men’s protection of women both inside and beyond the frontlines of combat as well as the normative expectations associated with the “white man’s burden” (Cloud, 2004). That is, in public arguments concerning Operation Iraqi Freedom, gender is constructed in ways that reiterate the ideological boundaries between male and female, masculinity and femininity, and the “West” and the “Middle East.”

Although the complexities of war have been studied from various ethnic, political, economic, and even religious paradigms, this project takes seriously Susan Jeffords’ (1989) postulation that “an important way to read war, perhaps the most significant way when we think about war itself, is as a construction of gendered interests” (p. xi). This project engages in a

critical discussion of three gender controversies associated with the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq as a means for investigating how normative gender (and cultural) expectations shape public notions of national identity and military practices and justify the disciplining of women's behavior. Specifically, I focus on the discourse concerning the justifications for going to war and for sustaining a U.S. military presence in Iraq. Moreover, I am also concerned with discourses surrounding the role of female soldiers and the maintenance of the "all-male" combat zone. I argue that investigating how the frontlines of combat continue to demarcate the boundaries between male and female bodies and to situate competing masculinities in a hierarchical relationship to one another is a productive way of assessing how national (masculine) identities are rhetorically secured both domestically and abroad during times of war.

In general, this project provides a critical reading of the ways in which women's bodies (both within and beyond the frontlines) have been used (and continue to be used) as a means for securing and for disciplining masculine and feminine identities during times of war. My purpose is two-fold. First, I am interested in how the selective representation of gender contributes to the ongoing disciplining of particular identities and behaviors as well as to the maintenance of normative characteristics of citizenship. That is, my purpose is not only to identify recurring gender-related themes that emerge in public arguments concerning the war in Iraq but also to assess the ways in which the *context* surrounding those representations thwarts alternative ways of thinking about gender, culture, and national identity. Additionally, by examining how the visibility of female (and feminine) otherness makes possible the invisibility and normalcy of maleness, particularly as it pertains to military culture, I hope to introduce issues of masculinity into scholarly discussions regarding militarism and national identity. Cynthia Enloe (1989) explains that "making men visible" is necessary for exploring how masculinity is constructed

along cultural and ethnic lines both domestically and internationally (p. 13). Paradoxically, although the cases discussed in this project explore representations of women, it is my conclusion that these representations serve the greater purposes of (re)masculinizing U.S. national identity in general and the U.S. military in particular. Thus, “women’s issues” come to the forefront of public debates during wartime not as a means for protecting women per se, but rather as a way to give meaning and stability to men’s identities as the nation’s actors and protectors.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I situate my project in relationship to the ongoing scholarly discussions regarding gender, militarism, and national identity. Additionally, I explain how my project is shaped by and contributes to the rhetorical tradition and to critical cultural theory, particularly the body of scholarship concerning gender performativity, public argument, and media representation. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the case studies included in this project, arguing that these cases serve as sites of critical inquiry for investigating what is at stake in public discourse surrounding the gendered framing of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Militarism, Masculinity, and Women’s Bodies

The relationship between masculinity, power, and militarism forms a bedrock for national identity and, in many ways, constitutes our sense of “self” both domestically and abroad. Enloe (1994) argues that the masculine potency associated with a nation’s military “is as much a factor in international politics as the flow of oil, cables, and military hardware” (p. 219). Indeed, the relationships between militarism, masculinity, and national identity are illustrated through the political valorization of “strong active males collectively risking their personal safety for the good of the wider community,” the gendered rationales for initiating and sustaining military

aggression abroad, and the policing of gender norms domestically (Klein, 2003, p. 113). Although national and military identities are inherently associated with masculinity, the controversies of war often call into question the seemingly innate relationship between maleness and masculinity and the tragedies of war often destabilize the masculine prowess upon which military and national identities rely. Additionally, when national or military identity crises ensue, often such crises are followed by the ubiquitous circulation of images designed to rehabilitate the masculine identity associated with national supremacy. For example, Jeffords (1989) explains that in the post-Vietnam era, American culture experienced an increased popularization of masculine icons such as “Rambo” and *Miami Vice*’s Sonny Crockett, characters who epitomized the “hard body” masculine ideal and who revealed their “‘secret’ Vietnam pasts” (p. 168). Additionally, Robyn Wiegman (1994) explains that during the First Gulf War, “much of the postwar analysis of the ‘Showdown in the Gulf’ . . . quite astutely turned to the war’s significance for appeasing a national ego still overwhelmed by the legacy of the Vietnam War” (p. 174). Indeed, as illustrated in the aftermath of Vietnam, the visibility of strong male bodies often accompanies efforts to restore the public’s faith in their national identity and to revitalize “American manhood” (Farmanfarmaian, 1992, p. 2).

Although the division between masculinity and femininity often is demarcated by the boundaries of the all-male sphere and symbolized through images of the hard bodies of male soldiers, the functionality and intelligibility of military masculinity depends upon the presence and absence of the feminine Other who can be distinguished and segregated from the masculine arena (and from male bodies). Put simply, it is the symbol of the civilian woman that makes the male soldier possible. The civilian woman, who resides both behind and beyond the frontlines, constitutes the Other and thereby, legitimates the normalcy of the male soldier, especially during

times of war. That is, images of female otherness provide value to male masculinity by contrasting it to female weakness. Jeffords (1989) argues that “this posture of protection/exclusion is indeed typical of the masculine as it perceives itself in relation to the feminine” and “in effect, maintains the feminine as distinct and separate in order to insure its own constitution, its own continued viability” (p. 61).

More importantly, female otherness, which often is signified by images of physically frail, psychologically distraught, and highly vulnerable female bodies, functions in tandem with images of female victimization. Perhaps the most highly visible symbols of femininity that emerge during times of war are images of female victims and dependents (Nantais and Lee, 1999, para. 4). Enloe (1994) writes, “Womenandchildren rolls so easily off network tongues because in network minds women are family members rather than independent actors, presumed to be almost childlike in their innocence about the realpolitik of international affairs” (p. 214). Frequently, these images are accompanied by rhetoric espousing the need for men to protect *their* women from malign male enemies who may infiltrate the borders or by rhetoric purporting the need for an external masculine force to intervene on behalf of women who are being victimized in a foreign nation. According to Cynthia Nantais and Martha Lee (1999), the military’s protective role assumes that “the act of protecting is associated with men and masculinity while the position of the protected is associated with women and femininity” (para. 4). This rhetoric of protection reiterates the themes of female vulnerability in order to distinguish the warrior from the prey or victim and to reaffirm women’s dependence on men (Steihm, 1982). Enloe (2000) explains

When it is a patriarchal world that is “dangerous,” masculine men and feminine women are expected to react in opposite but complementary ways. A “real” man will become the

protector in such a world. He will suppress his own fears, brace himself and step forward to defend the weak, women and children. In the same “dangerous world” women will turn gratefully and expectantly to their fathers and husbands, real or surrogate. (p.12-13)

Although war often is couched in nationalistic discourse (e.g. a threat against any of our citizens is a threat against the entire country), the dangers of war are almost always interpreted, in part, through a masculine lens. Because the role of the protector depends upon the vulnerability of those he is protecting, the circulation of highly visible symbols of “womenandchildren” gives meaning to military masculinity.

During wartime, representations of innocent, dependent women reify the norms of military (male) masculinity in two ways. First, although male dominance is often interpreted as a signifier of virility (both literally and figuratively), representations of vulnerable or victimized women are often articulated within discourses regarding the clash of civilizations. That is, international crises are often depicted through narratives and images of female victimization because so frequently masculinity is evaluated in terms of *how* men act upon female bodies. Enloe (1989) explains that the depictions of women in “enemy” countries as vulnerable and ignorant not only construct women as victims of international politics but also justify the demonizing (and potential invasion) of “enemy” nations who permit and even encourage the abuse of *their* women. These representations frame war as a battle between competing masculinities, a battle between “good” and “evil” men vying for control over an innocent female population. Thus, military conflict is often justified as a means for securing the civility of vulnerable women who are dependent upon the presence of a benevolent masculine guardian.

Second, representations of female otherness and dependency reify the gender boundaries within national borders, particularly those boundaries associated with militarism and citizenship

during times of war. Although, in most cases, a nation's masculine potency is measured against the behavior and images of civilian women residing both inside and beyond its borders, war often prompts political controversies regarding who has the right to defend the nation. Indeed, as women enter the U.S. military in greater number, the debate over the combat exclusion has intensified, and the widely-circulated representations of vulnerable women continue to influence public perceptions of military women. Enloe (1994) argues that not only has the combat exclusion denied women significant opportunities for advancement within the U.S. military, but the exclusion also reifies a masculine (and male) definition of citizenship because historically citizenship has often been defined in relationship to one's duty to *his* country (and, of course, *his* willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for *his* freedom). Enloe notes, "If, however, winning 'first-class citizenship' depends on American women gaining full acceptance in the military, what does that suggest about the very meaning of citizenship? . . . The implication is that the military defines citizenship" (p. 218). Thus, representations of female otherness and dependency reiterate the notion that military women are uniquely ill-suited for combat operation and are thus, second-class soldiers as well as second-class citizens.

In sum, the relationships between gender and cultural identity, militarism, and national identity are multifaceted, and the visibility of vulnerable women gives meaning to masculine identities. Indeed, the reiteration of normative gender assignments (e.g. the prescriptions for how "civilized" men and women *should* behave) reinforces traditional narratives regarding the innate sex/gender differences between men and women as well as the inherent cultural differences between the "West" and the "Middle East." In the following section, I will discuss the ways in which this project contributes to scholarly discussions regarding the constitutive nature of gender and the ongoing disciplining of normative gender assignments.

Gender as Performative

When Simone de Beauvoir (1953) stated that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” she suggested that gender is not a mere description of “what we are” but rather, the process of *becoming* that is made possible through the reproduction of constitutive acts that “civilize” the relationship between the masculine and the feminine (p. 249). Although Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* was the first text to theorize gender as a constitutive practice and to hypothesize the gender/sex distinction, interdisciplinary scholarship concerning the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality did not take the “performative turn” until the 1990s (Sloop, 2004). Inspired by the 1990 publication of Judith Butler’s book *Gender Trouble*, the theory of gender performativity suggests that “gender is only real to the extent that is performed” (Butler, 1990, p. 278). Additionally, in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” Butler (1990) explains, “Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede (sic); rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a styled *repetition of acts*” (original emphasis, 270). Put simply, gender is constituted by what we *do* rather than predetermined by our biological essence; the gendered subject becomes that which she or he performs (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Sloop, 2004). Moreover, because enactments of gender are not *expressions* of an abiding gendered self but rather, contingent acts that produce identities, the notion of an essential sex or a true or false gender is no more than a fictional attempt to conceal the inherent instability of binary categories of sex and gender. For Butler, the political project of troubling gender entails exposing the illusory appearance of the gendered self and rendering the binary gender categories unintelligible through the performance of transgressive acts that call into question the arbitrary relation between the gendered body and the performative.

Although much of Butler's scholarship imagines new avenues for challenging the intelligibility of binary gender categories and suggests new means for "undoing" gender, both gender and sex are normative categories, and their binary divisions are heavily regulated and constantly reiterated (Butler, 1993; Butler, 1999; Sloop, 2004; Butler, 2004). Unlike Beauvoir who suggests that the process of *becoming* gendered reflects the Sartrean choice of the autonomous agent who "purposefully assumes or embodies" a category such as Woman, Butler describes a more complex relationship between performed gendered acts and the performer, a relationship governed by, although not completely determined by, regulatory norms and disciplinary practices (Butler, 1987, p. 23). First, she argues that the self is always "irretrievably 'outside,' constituted by social discourse" and that "one is compelled to live in a world in which genders constitute univocal signifiers, in which genders are stabilized, polarized, rendered discrete and intractable" (Butler, 1990 p. 279). Thus, even as the self uses gender, the self is also constantly used by the normative gender practices that call it into being (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004). Second, gender is made intelligible through the process of iterability. Indeed, gender is not constituted through a singular, theatrical "act," but rather, gender is a "ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint. . ." (Butler, 1993). Not only do these constraints discipline transgressive performances, but also they often thwart one's ability to imagine the possibility of performing gender(s) in ways that challenges normative categories. John Sloop (2004) explains, "Bi-gender heterosexual norms become materialized, naturalized, as if they were essential rather than contingent. As a result, individuals 'perform' gender to a great extent without reflection, simply behaving in ways that 'make sense,' given their own gender identification" (p. 6). Similarly, in *Undoing Gender*, Butler (2004) concludes, "If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's

willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint” (p. 1). Thus, gender is always produced through a series of acts that works both with and against the regulatory and disciplinary boundaries of the binary gender system and from within the battle between the possible and the inhibited.

Although the disciplining of gender is constant and infinite, this project examines the ways in which particular gender controversies associated with Operation Iraqi Freedom are constructed in public argument. My purpose is to assess how the representations of femaleness and femininity often reiterate seemingly natural sex/gender binaries for the purpose of making sense of potential disruptive gender performances and for securing the gender boundaries underlying national and military identity. In the following section, I explore how public argument functions as a disciplining mechanism and briefly discuss this project’s theoretical assumptions regarding public discourses related to war.

Containing Meaning: Public Discourse during Wartime

In recent decades, rhetorical scholars have becoming increasingly interested in the constitutive effects of rhetoric and public argument and in the ways in which rhetorical practices produce, at least in part, the materiality of identity, governing structures, and power. Scholars such as Michael McGee (1982) and Ronald Greene (1998) urge rhetorical critics to investigate the purpose, meaning, and function of rhetoric and to assess how public arguments function both vertically and horizontal throughout given populations as a means for making particular practices and identities, “in advance, *understandable*” (Sloop, 2004, p. 21). Significantly, public discourse often functions in normative ways both by prescribing behavior (and identity) and by disciplining potentially disruptive behaviors and identities that might threaten existing power structures. Greene notes, “Rhetoric is not epiphenomenal to a governing apparatus but

absolutely *necessary* to its organization since the ability to make a given population visible in order that it might calibrate its own behavior is dependent on how rhetoric contributes to a panopticism as a technology of power” (emphasis added, p. 31). That is, the maintenance of power relations is often achieved through the constant reiteration and circulation of dominant narratives and representations, discourses that, once internalized by given populations, reproduce power by disciplining everyday behavior and self-perceptions. This is not to say that rhetoric, like power, is only a disciplining mechanism. Indeed, rhetoric functions in both disciplinary and productive ways and reifies as well as exceeds the normative characteristics associated with given power structures. However, because discourses of change are inherently tied to discourses of constraint, critical scholarship must take seriously the ongoing rhetorical (and material) tug-of-war that occurs as rhetoric attempts to exceed its own parameters and, conversely, as that excess is often recuperated back into seemingly stable and intelligible power structures (Condit, 1993; Greene, 1998; Sloop, 2004). Put simply, the circulation of public arguments represents the ongoing (and often unbalanced) give-and-take relationship between competing forms of power vying for the governance and maintenance of particular notions of “reality.”

Although power functions in both productive and disciplining ways, during times of crisis, mainstream public arguments are often more reflective of the constraining force of rhetoric. In particular during times of war, national leaders and public citizens become preoccupied with the pragmatic and political dilemmas of military operations and, perhaps more importantly, the public often experiences a national identity crisis as the very nature of war calls into question the fundamental character and ideological foundations of the nation. Additionally, the “classified” nature of war creates intense public angst because the public rarely has access to significant information concerning the scope of military action, the behind-the-scenes

discussions between national and international leaders, and the internal workings of military culture. According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1990), during wartime, the president not only functions as the Commander-in-Chief of the military but also serves as the primary source of communication between national leaders and the public.

Although I agree, to a certain extent, with Campbell and Jamieson's postulation, I also take note of Susan Jeffords and Lauren Rabinovitz's (2004) argument that "nonmilitary citizens have little access to military actions that are taking place at a distance," and thus "media not only can provide information about military engagements, but they can shape and influence those events themselves" (p. 9). Rather than privileging one form of discourse over another, this project suggests that public discourse, including presidential rhetoric, news media, and popular culture representations work in tandem with one another, each functioning as a fragment of a larger historic narrative regarding national and military identity.

In general terms, this project takes seriously the assumption that public discourse functions as a governing apparatus and, in Sloop's words, assumes that "people take on their understanding of their 'selves' and their worlds from available discourse" (p. 19). Although conducting a critical analysis of all available discourses is an impossible task due to the infinite amount of discourses available, I am interested in the ways in which particular discourses work in tandem with one another as part of a historical narrative regarding "civilized" gender expectations, expectations that appear to be particularly rigid during times of war. Thus, this project engages in critical readings of presidential rhetoric, national print media (including news articles and opinion columns), and popular culture artifacts in order to identify particular gender-related themes surrounding dominant representations of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq and, more importantly, to assess how these representations function as part of a larger narrative

regarding gender, militarism, and national identity. In the remainder of this chapter, I preview the three case studies in this project: the representations of Iraqi women's bodies, the capture and rescue narrative of Jessica Lynch, and the public explanations of Lynndie England's conduct at Abu Ghraib. In each section, I examine how gender identities (and, in some cases, gender deviance) are constructed in dominant discourse in ways that reiterate binary notions of gender and Western notions of civility. Although my analysis focuses on the limiting and constraining function of public discourse, my purpose in the project is to examine the inherent *instability* underlying dominant narratives regarding normative gender categories and national identity. That is, I examine how the "scene of constraint" is reproduced through public arguments for the purpose of making sense or rendering intelligible the specific gender-related controversies surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Women's Bodies, Militarism, and Masculinity: A Preview

Based on the assumption that war is a construction of gendered interests, this project analyzes three gender-related controversies surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom. Each case examines the ways in which female bodies beyond and within the frontlines "come to matter" in ways that insulate the binary divisions between masculinity and femininity by demarcating the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate exertions of masculinity and proper and deviant performances of femininity. In general, I am not concerned with discerning the "truth" of the representations discussed in each chapter, but rather, I am more interested in assessing how these representations function in relationship to one another as well as the ways in which they influence the political and ideological debates regarding citizenship, women's rights, militarism, and national identity.

The first case study examines public arguments regarding the justifications for the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003. My analysis suggests that, in February 2003, the rationales for war began to shift from arguments purporting the need to prevent Iraq's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction to arguments that framed the conflict in Iraq as a humanitarian crisis. Specifically, I argue that the representations of Iraqi women's oppression simultaneously constructed Iraq as a barbaric and culturally "backward" nation state and justified the U.S. invasion of Iraq as necessary for the preservation of "civilization" in general and for the protection of women in particular. In this case study, I examine public arguments surrounding the Bush Administration's rationales for unilateral military action in Iraq, paying close attention to the speeches that he delivered between February 26, 2003 and March 19, 2003 as well as to the national news coverage of those addresses. I argue that the depictions of the mutilated bodies of Iraqi women, including female bodies victimized in Saddam Hussein's "rape rooms" and during public beatings and executions, became the ultimate signifiers of the "evil" endemic to Iraqi culture. Additionally, I note that the rationales for "rescuing" Iraqi women also attempted to rehabilitate the benevolent yet potent image of the U.S. soldier who willingly assumes the responsibilities associated with "white man's burden" by laying down his life for the sake of a vulnerable feminine (and female) population.

In the second case study, I provide a critical reading of the public and popular culture discourses concerning the capture and rescue narrative of Private First Class Jessica Lynch. I investigate how Lynch's narrative intersects with the larger debate regarding the combat exclusion statute and how her rescue continues to reiterate the gender boundaries associated with the frontlines of combat as well as the naturalness of sex/gender differences. Specifically, this

chapter interrogates the representations of Lynch in Rick Bragg's biography, *I am a Soldier, Too*, Lynch's exclusive interview with Diane Sawyer, and the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch*.

In sum, this case study investigates how Jessica Lynch's body "comes to matter" through public discourse and explores how the selective representations of Lynch galvanize public debates over women's roles in combat. I argue that the depictions of Lynch as the victimized Woman/Child preserve the masculine prowess of the military and continue to facilitate new attacks against proponents of military integration and feminism. I conclude by arguing that the public representations of Lynch thwart the political debates over women in combat by constructing Lynch as *the* representative of military women and by essentializing the definition of Woman through presentations of Lynch as a feminine ideal.

The final case study of this project investigates public discourse surrounding Private First Class Lynndie England's sexual abuse of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003 as well as the discourse surrounding her court martial in October 2005. In my analysis, I argue that England is depicted in national print media (including headline news stories and editorials) as being ambiguously gendered, a representation of gender gone awry. Frequently referred to as the "anti-Jessica Lynch," England is often framed as the polar opposition of Lynch, and, when the competing representations are read in tandem, the polarization of these two high profile female soldiers leaves little room for other military women who attempt to perform masculinity in ways that challenge the combat exclusion. Perhaps more significantly, I also analyze the explanatory narratives that attempt to make sense of her gender deviance, arguing that in many mainstream articles and editorials, coed training practices in particular and feminism in general are constructed as being the primary culprit in the "sexual confusion" that occurred at Abu Ghraib. What I find most interesting about the public discourse surrounding England's involvement in

the prisoner abuse controversy is the way in which her disruptive (and disturbing) gender deviance is situated so easily in many mainstream media accounts within dominant gender binaries.

In the conclusion to this study, I argue that that the ways in which we talk about gender greatly influences our notion of a national “self” as well as the norms and expectations associated with citizenship and militarism. Additionally, I explain that the discourse surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrates how the context of war (and subsequently, military culture) often constrains public understanding of gendered identities and behaviors. When situated within a military context (particularly during times of war), the discourse surrounding gender-related controversies rarely challenges compulsory gender norms but rather recuperates behavior (at times, even the most transgressive behavior) back into the two sex/gender schema. That is, the discourses of gender, militarism, and national identity are mutually reinforcing, and the gendered representations of the events surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom often contribute to and reinforce the normative gender expectations that are seemingly inherent to the nature of war itself. Thus, although the three cases discussed in this project merit their own critical analysis, I take seriously their relationship to one another, arguing that each case functions, in many ways, as part of a larger narrative regarding the gendered frontlines between the “West” and the “Middle East” and of masculinity and femininity.

CHAPTER TWO

A RATIONALE FOR WAR: GENDER, MILITARISM, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The ongoing conflict in Iraq is wrought with complexity, and the American occupation of Iraq continues to bring issues of preemptive war and Middle Eastern democratization to the forefront of public discussions. Perhaps more importantly, in the post-9/11 era, questions concerning U.S. national identity have accompanied the ongoing crises associated with the containment of al Qaeda and the reconstruction of Iraq. The faceless threat of terrorism and the mysterious locations of weapons of mass destruction in “rogue nations” challenge our ability to define ourselves as the eminent hegemonic superpower within the international arena. Describing the crisis of national identity, Samuel Huntington (2004) explains the irony associated with the flag-waving phenomenon that transpired in the United States in the aftermath of September 11, 2001:

Probably never in the past . . . was the flag as omnipresent as it was after September 11. It was everywhere: homes, businesses, automobiles, clothes, furniture, windows, storefronts, lampposts, telephone poles. In early October, 80 percent of Americans said that they were displaying the flag, 63 percent at home, 29 percent on clothes, 28 percent on cars. Walmart reportedly sold 116,000 flags on September 11 and 250,000 the next day. (p. 4)

This newly-emergent flag-waving phenomenon may seem to suggest that American citizens have rallied around a particular national identity in the wake of the tragedy of 9/11; however, as Huntington (2004) concludes, “The post-September 11 proliferation of flags may well evidence

not only the intensified salience of national identity to Americans but also their uncertainty as to the substance of that identity” (p.8). As a nation that historically has defined itself in binary opposition to its enemies, the post-Cold War era continues to create much angst among the American public, and the national identity crisis has become increasingly more convoluted as Americans grapple with the fear and anxiety associated with unknown enemies who have become the target of the War on Terrorism.

Although the ubiquitous flag waving that took place in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 has waned to a certain degree in the past four years, the surfacing of new signifiers of patriotism, most notably, the ever-popular “Support our Troops” magnets have helped to give meaning to national character during the ongoing military crisis in Iraq. Ribbon magnets first debuted in 2003, and since then, Magnet America has sold more than two million of the classic yellow magnets and each week, continues to ship over 100,000 “Support Our Troops” magnets in a variety of styles and shapes (Held, 2004; Vogel, 2004). Indeed, one may find difficulty walking through the downtown streets of any city in the United States without observing, at least casually, several of these patriotic emblems. Although some American citizens proudly display their ribbons as a continuous reminder of their familial relationship with a particular soldier stationed in Iraq, the displaying of a ribbon is rarely a simple expression of concern for an individual. For a majority of Americans, the displaying (or, in some cases, donning) of the ribbons signifies the participation in a collective, national “us,” an “us” defined in relationship to “our” troops. However, as Huntington suggests, the formation of this collective “us” depends upon answering the following question: “If we are a ‘we,’ what distinguishes us from the ‘thems’ who are not us?” (p. 9).

My purpose in this chapter is to examine how national identity (a collective national “us”) is constituted in relationship to the normative gender and cultural expectations associated with the pristine image of the U.S. soldier, specifically within the context of U.S. military action in the Middle East. In particular, I examine how the rationales for the U.S. preemptive strike on Iraq in 2003 are articulated in relationship to both a feminized, vulnerable Other and in relationship to a malign masculine foe. First, I survey the history of U.S.-Iraqi relations in the post-Cold War era and discuss the historical context surrounding the ongoing conflict in Iraq. Moreover, I explore how the identity of the West has been (and continues to be) shaped by discourses promoting a bifurcated understanding of international relations, a worldview that is made possible, in part, through a gendered understanding of cultural differences. Finally, I investigate the gendered rationales for the U.S. invasion of Iraq, specifically focusing on the ways in which Iraqi women’s bodies were articulated in relationship to “Operation Iraqi Freedom” in public discourse.¹ In sum, I argue that the circulation of representations of victimized Iraqi women’s bodies functioned not only as a means to construct Iraq as a dangerous masculine foe (thus legitimizing the emasculation of Iraq through military intervention) but also as a means to justify the war according to the moral imperative to protect women (and women’s rights) beyond the frontlines.

American (Pre)Occupation in Iraq

Although the Middle East has been defined and positioned in relationship to Western European interests and identities for centuries, the post-World War II world has witnessed the ascendancy of U.S. diplomatic, economic, and often military dominance in the region. In particular, for the past several decades, U.S. foreign policymakers have been confounded by the Iraq question, and the U.S. obsession with Iraq has proliferated during the post-9/11 era as the

War on Terrorism has become the focal point of foreign policy objectives. In this section, I will explore the turbulent history of U.S.-Iraqi relations from the 1960s to the present and survey the events that led to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

In the decades following World War II, Iraq became of strategic interest to the United States due to its rich petroleum resources and political influence within the region. Ismael and Haddad (2004) explain that in 1960, Iraq played a pivotal role in the founding of the Organizations of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) by “introducing a new element in the radicalization of the relations between the oil-producing states and the global oil industry and thus challenging foreign domination in the region” (p. 2). However, despite Iraq’s impressive economic development during the 1960s and 1970s, the concentration of political, economic, and military power at the center segued to an increasingly more dictatorial style of government, eventually culminating in Saddam Hussein’s rule.

During the 1980s, the Iraq-Iran War exacerbated U.S. security and economic concerns in the Middle East and intensified the concentration of power within Iraq (Polk, 2005; Ismael and Haddad, 2004; Israeli, 2004). Within eighteen months of the Khomeini Revolution in Iran, Saddam initiated the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980, rationalizing the invasion as a necessary requirement of the terms of a 1975 agreement that he had signed with the Shah of Iran (Majid, 1988). Although Iraq’s initial invasion was relatively successful, resulting in Saddam’s seizing control of the vast majority of Khuzistan within the first few weeks of the war, the Iranian army’s impressive retaliation halted the Iraqi forces and dashed Iraq’s hopes for a quick victory (Khadduri, 1988; Majid, 1988). Eventually, the stalemate provoked a military response by the United States, which had become increasingly more wary of Tehran in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in general and after the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979-1981 in particular. In

1982, the U.S. increased its support of Iraq, supplying Saddam with economic aid, military weaponry, and vital military intelligence including satellite images revealing Iran's military positioning (Israeli, 2004; Sirfy and Cerf, 1991). After eight grueling years of battle, Saddam's forces emerged victorious (albeit seizing only a few insignificant portions of Iranian territory); however, such victory was achieved at a heavy price. The war-torn state of Iraq had experienced tens of thousands of casualties and had endured exorbitant international debts that only exacerbated the woes of its already devastated economy (Polk, 2005; Finlan, 2003; Sirfy and Serf, 1991).

Although the initial outcome of the Iran-Iraq War allayed Western fears of an Iranian monopoly over the Gulf region, the U.S. alliance with Iraq helped insulate and strengthen Saddam politically and militarily within both regional and international spheres. Saddam's political status in the international community declined quickly, however, and during the 1990s, Saddam's military build-up and aggressive backing of Palestinian independence prompted renewed international attention to issues regarding Iraq's proliferation of advanced weaponry and military adventurism (Polk, 2005, p. 159). Intensifying international anxiety over the Iraq question, Saddam's invasion of neighboring Kuwait in 1990 sent shockwaves through the United States and its allied countries, resulting in a concerted international condemnation of Saddam. According to Ismael and Haddad (2004), "The Iraqi question was formulated yet again to be one of the containment of Arab radicalism and the equating of Iraq, and its 20 million people and vast resources, with one individual" (p. 3).

The First Gulf War

At the break of dawn on August 2, 1990, the Iraqi infantry traversed the Kuwaiti border, establishing its occupation at strategic posts throughout the country, including the Emir's place.

Within the first twenty-four hours of the invasion, Saddam's military had driven the royal family and much of the Kuwaiti Air Force into nearby Saudi Arabia and had established its dominance over its southern neighbor. The Western response to the Iraqi invasion was immediate, and within hours of Iraqi troop deployment, the U.S. secured a unanimous 14-0 vote for the passage of U.N. Resolution 660, which demanded Iraq's immediate withdrawal of force from Kuwait (Polk, 2005; Cornish, 2004; Finlan, 2003). More significantly, on August 6, 1990, the United Nation's Security Council passed Resolution 661, which called for a boycott on Iraq's overseas trades and issued comprehensive military and trade sanctions on the country with the exception of medical supplies, food, and other strictly humanitarian imports (Polk, 2005; Aaronovitch, 2001). By January 1991, approximately 250,000 U.S. troops and at least 1,000 aircraft and 30 naval ships had been strategically deployed in the Gulf region (Polk, 2005, p. 150). With the coalition armed and positioned for military intervention, on January 17, 1991, The First Gulf War commenced, authorized by President George H. W. Bush who declared that Iraq's failure to comply with UNSCR 678 justified the use of "all necessary means" for extracting Iraq from Kuwait (Clarke, 2004; Israeli, 2004). The First Gulf War, also known as Operation Desert Storm, was short-lived, lasting less than one month as a result of the massive U.S.-led air and ground campaign. By February 25, the Iraqi forces began retreating *en masse*, and on February 27, Bush issued a ceasefire, stopping short of pursuing Saddam and his military into Baghdad.

In the months following The First Gulf War, much of the international community exhibited a concerted attempt to restore international order and to prevent any future military rebuilding in Iraq. On April 3, 1991, the U.N. Security Council issued a formal ceasefire, which upon Iraq's acceptance, demanded the restoration of Kuwaiti independence, extended economic sanctions against Iraq, demanded payment for war reparations, and established the U.N. Special

Commissions on Weapons (UNSCOM), an inspection regime designed to monitor Iraq's compliance with the stipulations prohibiting the development of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons (Polk, 2005; Anderson, 2004; Cornish, 2004). Additionally, in 1995, the U.N. Security Council established the Oil for Food program which supplemented and extended the 1991 sanctions regime, froze Iraq's assets, restricted both sea and air transport, and authorized the Council to determine when (and if) food, medical supplies, and other humanitarian items could be imported to Iraq (Polk, 2005; Cornish, 2004; Falk, 2004).

Unfortunately, the Oil for Food program was a dismal failure, resulting in a humanitarian tragedy in Iraq (even conservative estimates suggest that the sanctions regime contributed to the deaths of over one million Iraqis over a ten-year span). Additionally, despite international pressure and economic restrictions on Iraq's imports, the Iraqi dictator spent millions on military rearmament (much of which was achieved by smuggling oil and weaponry outside of the sanctions regime, particularly to Syria) (Clark, 2004; Herring, 2004; Falk, 2004). In autumn 1998, another military conflict between Iraq and the United States and Britain ensued, resulting from Saddam's refusal to comply with weapons inspectors and the inspectors' subsequent withdrawal from Iraq. From December 16 to December 18, 1998, U.S. and British forces engaged in a massive bombing campaign over Iraq, codenamed Operation Desert Fox (Rai, 2004; Clarke, 2004). Although the air campaign was the largest, most concerted aerial assault to date with regard to Iraq, the attack was unsuccessful in coercing Iraqi compliance with the U.N. resolutions. In contrast, Clarke (2004) argues that "each international crisis gave [Saddam] the opportunity again to shore up his domestic power-base, to the point that serious contenders simply no longer existed by the time al-Qaeda mounted its spectacular attack against the United States in 2001" (p. 29).

Expanding the War on Terrorism: The 2003 U.S. Invasion of Iraq

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 significantly altered the political landscape in the United States. More specifically, the events of 9/11 became articulated in relationship to the ongoing questions over Iraq, creating a rhetorical moment in which to justify the invasion of Iraq as necessary to the success of the War on Terrorism. After years of failed U.N. resolutions, international turmoil regarding the sanctions regime in Iraq, the ousting of weapons inspectors, and two U.S.-led military campaigns against Iraq (not including the persistent aerial assaults that accompanied the U.S. and British policing of the “no-fly” zones), another U.S.-Iraq military conflict seemed inevitable (Clarke, 2004; Israeli, 2004).

Following the U.S. military attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan in October 2001, U.S. political leaders turned their attention to the quandary of Iraq’s potential support of al-Qaeda and alleged acquisition of WMD. Despite the contentious battle within the U.N. Security Council over Iraq’s noncompliance with several U.N. resolutions, including UNSCR 687, Bush outlined the Iraqi threat for the American public on October 7, 2002, arguing that “Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy—the United States of America” and thus “confronting the threat posed by Iraq is crucial to winning the war on terror” (para. 15-16). Later that month, the U.S. Congress passed The Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq. In November 2002, the Security Council passed another resolution, UNSCR 1441, which demanded “the immediate and complete disarmament of Iraq and its prohibited weapons” as well as Iraq’s full compliance with the newly formed inspections committee UNMOVIC and the IAEA (*UNSCR 1414*, 2002). According to the resolution, noncompliance with UNSCR 1441 would be met with “serious consequences” (*UNSCR 1414*, 2002). Despite the rhetorical potency of UNSCR 1441, when faced with Saddam’s noncompliance with yet another U.N.

resolution, the Council splintered with three veto-holding members, France, Russia, and The People's Republic of China, refusing to authorize preemptive military action against Iraq and demanding the extension of the inspections period. By March 2003, the U.S. and Britain were preparing for a unilateral invasion, which they asserted was authorized under UNSCR 1441, despite the staunch opposition expressed by the remaining permanent members of the Security Council.

On March 17, 2003, President George W. Bush delivered a national address regarding Iraq's imminent threat to American soil and to stability in the Middle East, issuing, without U.N. authorization, what would be the final ultimatum. In his address, Bush demanded that "Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within forty-eight hours" or endure an inevitable military conflict with the United States, which would "commence at a time of *our* choosing" (Bush, 2003d, para. 13, emphasis added). Anticipating Saddam's noncompliance, at 10:15 pm (EST) on March 19, Bush addressed the nation once more, indicating that "American and coalition forces [were] in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq" (Bush, 2003e, para. 1). Less than two hours after the deadline for Saddam's evacuation of Iraq had expired, the first concerted military strikes on Iraq began, inspired by what Bush referred to as a "target opportunity" to strike military bunkers in southern and western Iraq. Although the initial strike did not resemble the strategic "shock and awe" prophesized by many political figures in the United States and Britain, within the first forty-eight hours, 13,000 cruise missiles and bombs bombarded hundreds of military facilities in northern Iraq, most of them located in and around Baghdad. Simultaneously, a coalition of 40,000 ground troops advanced through southern Iraq as Army airborne units and Marines attacked the command posts near Nasiriyah, "softening the way for

more troops to move north up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers toward Baghdad” (DePalma, 2003, p. B1).

The U.S. preemptive attack on Iraq in 2003 exacerbated international anxiety and confusion over the Iraq question by creating political rifts both domestically and abroad and by further complicating relations among the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Despite the economic and political complexities surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom however, public discourse within the U.S. often simplified the political quandaries regarding the war by situating military intervention within a moral framework of good versus evil, a framework often constructed through the reiteration of the “us/them” dichotomy that had polarized the international landscape for centuries. Moreover, in January 2003 the Bush Administration began justifying the war on the grounds that humanitarian intervention in Iraq was necessary for rescuing the Iraqi people from their malign (masculine) dictator and for protecting the “civilized” world. The following section investigates the ways in which “Operation Iraqi Freedom” constituted a rhetorical shift in public discourse regarding the rationales for U.S. military action in Iraq.² First, I explore how the rhetoric of the “clash of civilizations” constructs international boundaries by demarcating the divisions between civility and savagery, divisions that are often articulated in tandem with the ideological boundaries between masculinity and femininity. Additionally, I argue that the rhetorical shift that accompanied Operation Iraqi Freedom feminized the Iraqi citizens by depicting them as helpless victims and that the circulation of representations of victimized Iraqi women’s bodies served as the signifiers of the “evil” endemic to Iraqi culture. Thus, the narrative of Operation Iraqi Freedom constructed an ideological, gendered rationale for the “benevolent” intervention of a masculine savior—the U.S. military.

Protecting the Feminine: Rationalizing the U.S. Invasion of Iraq

In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington (1996)

explains that the international arena is often conceptualized as a divisive landscape in which collective groups are believed to be bifurcated into “us and them, the in-group and the Other, our civilization and those barbarians,” particularly during times of conflict (p. 32).³ Not only is the demarcation between “us” and “them” often constructed along religious, economic, political, and cultural lines, but also, the “us” and “them” are articulated in binary opposition to one another and situated in a hierarchical order with the “us” occupying a position of dominance, power, and supremacy over the Other. Although the bifurcation between “us” and “them” has shaped international politics for centuries, in the post-Cold War era, the delineation between groups has been formulated less in relationship to geographical boundaries but instead, has been constructed through the reiteration of differences that distinguish cultural groups from one another (Cloud, 2004; Huntington, 2004; Huntington, 1996). According to Huntington (1996),

In the post-Cold War world, states increasingly define their interests in civilization terms. They cooperate with and ally themselves with states with similar or common culture and are more often in conflict with countries of different culture. States define threats in terms of the intentions of other states, and those intentions and how they are perceived are powerfully shaped by cultural considerations . . . Publics and [and their representatives] are more likely to see threats coming from states whose societies have different cultures and hence, which they do not feel they can trust. (p. 34)

Although public and political conceptions of international politics appear to be guided by particular perceptions of cultural differences and by the valences assigned to them, in the wake of 9/11, the conflation between cultural differences and geographical location has intensified,

specifically in regards to the ongoing struggle between the West and the “Middle East.”⁴ The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center not only spawned a renewed mode of discourse purporting the divisive relationship between the civilized and the savage but also prompted more public anxiety regarding Middle Eastern otherness. This mode of thinking and speaking about otherness, which has been coined *Orientalism* by Edward Said, is based upon “an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” and constitutes the process by which Western privilege and authority over the Middle East is authorized and secured (Said, 2003, p. 2). Although Orientalist discourses may appear to be merely descriptive of a definitive geographical region, the vocabulary and imagery of “backward otherness” with regard to Middle Eastern cultures continues to reproduce a hierarchal relationship of power between the West and the Middle East. Thus, as Said (2003), concludes, “Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient” (p. 6).

Paradoxically, although the “us/them” dichotomy, which continues to influence Western perceptions of the East, particularly the Middle East, is often reiterated through a simplified narrative detailing the battle between good and evil, “our” way of living and the Other, the articulated delineation between the “civilized” and the “savage” is quite complex and often inseparable from other ideological notions of identity, particularly gender. As J. Ann Tickner (1983) explains, although international and ethnic conflicts have often been “obscured by the East/West rivalry . . . the clash of civilizations defy [sic] traditional statist categories and balance-of-power or interest-based explanations, and they demand additional understanding of the changing collective identities and the role of culture in defining both identities and interests” (p.1). Thus, a thoughtful exploration of the complexities associated with the construction of the

“us/them” distinction, particularly as it pertains to U.S. national identity in the aftermath of 9/11, must take into account the various ways in which gender identity and gendered bodies influence collective concepts of masculine national and military identities. Indeed, the delineation between civility and savagery is often determined by how men exercise their masculine dominance over the feminine. During international crises, particularly conflicts that emerge as cultural conflicts, allegations of barbarism are often leveled by one nation against another in an attempt to distinguish “us” from “them” (Enloe, 2000). These depictions of barbarism are complemented by feminized representations of an oppressed culture, representations that frequently depict violence committed against a seemingly vulnerable and naïve foreign populace. Not only do the depictions of a barbaric masculine enemy energize the heroism of an opposing country’s own masculine national identity, but also images of the masculine enemy’s ruthless exploitation of its own feminized people have been used as a justification for military intervention and war.

According to Robert Ivie (1980), tales of savagery committed against a vulnerable populace are often invoked for the dual purposes of justifying the military containment of a foreign oppressor and for securing feelings of cultural and military superiority domestically. Echoing Ivie, Dana Cloud (2004) explains, “Images of the oppressed in an ‘inferior’ civilization can prompt a paternalistic response alongside an aggressive one. Descriptions of the people of an enemy society as ignorant, abject victims of an enemy regime warrant intervention on the allegedly humanitarian grounds of saving people from themselves” (p. 286). Thus, the feminization of a foreign population not only renders intelligible and visible the presence of a malign masculine enemy but also calls into being the heroic masculine rescuer whose moral responsibility is to emasculate the male enemy and to civilize and protect the vulnerable feminine Other.

In the post-9/11 era, the circulation of public discourse espousing the cultural divide between the West and the Middle East significantly influenced public perceptions regarding the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, a conflict that was often articulated as an example of the quintessential struggle between “the West” and “the Middle East.” From November 2002 to April 2003, the U.S. found itself becoming increasingly more entangled in the War on Terrorism quagmire in general and the conflict in Iraq in particular, entanglements that were further complicated by the lack of evidence supporting the Administration’s claims that there was “no doubt” that Saddam’s regime was concealing “some of the most lethal weapons ever devised” and that Iraq had “aided, trained, and harbored terrorists, including operatives of al Qaeda” (Bush, 2003d, para. 4-5). Additionally, the U.S. military’s inability to locate Osama bin Laden and Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction exacerbated public fear, thereby creating an imperative to establish particular criteria for identifying terrorists and for justifying a preemptive attack on Iraq.

Although the term “Operation Iraqi Freedom” did not emerge in public discourse until April 2003, the ideological underpinnings of the cultural war with Iraq were established several months prior to Bush’s renaming of the war. The discourse surrounding “Operation Iraqi Freedom” frequently equivocated terrorism and proliferation with the cultural savagery of Iraq thus creating an ideological rationale for going to war in addition to (or in most cases, as a substitution for) an evidence-based justification for disarming Saddam’s WMD program and for eliminating Iraq’s state-sponsoring of terrorism. Particular signifiers of savagery such as the regime’s dictatorial rule and its exploitation and abuse of the civilian population were used not only to justify the war with Iraq but also as a means to foreshadow the inevitable and imminent danger that Iraq posed to the “civilized” world. The rhetorical framing of the conflict between

the U.S. and Iraq hinged largely upon the vilification of Saddam; however, this vilification was articulated within a gendered framework that situated competing forms of masculinity (as signified by different cultural and national identities) in opposition to one another. Additionally, the juxtaposition between benign and tyrannical forms of masculinity necessitated the presence of a feminine culture upon which both masculine nations acted. Thus, the war in Iraq was justified as the only alternative for rescuing an oppressed nation from the destructive rule of (masculine) tyrants.

The feminization of Iraqi culture entailed framing the citizens of Iraq as the vulnerable casualties of a dictator who was entirely culpable for the destruction of innocent populations. The circulation of this international “damsel in distress” narrative not only afforded the West the ability to assign full responsibility to Saddam but also created the impetus for the West’s heroic rescue of the Iraqi people. In his 2003 State of the Union Address, Bush reiterated this narrative by juxtaposing the identity of Saddam’s regime with the identity of the U.S. using the well being of the Iraqi citizenry as the litmus test for evaluating how masculine power should be exerted. First, Bush detailed Saddam’s noncompliance with the U.N. resolutions for disarmament, noting that not even “isolation from the civilized world” induced Iraq’s compliance, and he argued that “trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein” was no longer an option (para. 62-75). Progressing through the narrative, Bush graphically detailed the abuse committed by Saddam against his own citizens, abuse that left thousands “blind, dead or disfigured” in the “torture chambers of Iraq” (para. 76). In contrast, Bush framed the U.S. as the benevolent protector of liberty, the sane and compassionate champion of freedom that would unshackle the Iraqi people from Saddam’s malign forces. Addressing the citizens of Iraq, Bush (2003a) declared, “Tonight I have a message for the brave and oppressed people of Iraq: Your enemy is not surrounding

your country—your enemy is ruling your country. And the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation” (para. 77).

Rather than relying solely on arguments purporting that a U.S. invasion was a necessary action for disarming Iraq, Bush’s State of the Union Address began redefining the pending invasion as a response to an ideological battle between good and evil, an obligatory battle for protecting the rights and values innate to civilized people and for “civilizing” those who threaten “our” ideals. Additionally, such rhetoric infantilized the Iraqi people, creating a paternalistic relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. As Cloud (2004) argues, “The idea of the ‘white man’s burden’ is a core element in the belief in a clash between white, Western societies and inferior Others requiring policing and rescue” (p. 286). Thus, similar to the protective father who civilizes his daughter by exerting his benign, yet authoritative power for the sake of “her best interest,” the narrative of Operation Iraqi Freedom constructed the U.S. invasion as a necessary form of protection and discipline afforded to those who cannot protect (and civilize) themselves.

Bush rearticulated this narrative in the months preceding the U.S. invasion, each time framing the war in relationship to both the masculine foe (Saddam) and the feminine victims of his barbarism (the Iraqi people). For example, in his February 9th Address at the “Congress of Tomorrow” Republican Retreat Reception, Bush (2003b) posited that the removal of Saddam was necessary for securing freedom, “the value that *we* hold dear to *our* hearts” and for emancipating those who can not defend their own God-given liberties (emphasis added, para. 35). Asserting that the rationale for U.S. engagement in Iraq was predicated not on self-interest but on “compassion,” he explained, “The first to benefit from a free Iraq would be the Iraqi people, themselves. Today they live in scarcity and fear, under a dictator who has brought them

nothing but war, and misery, and torture. Their lives and their freedom matter little to Saddam Hussein—but Iraqi lives and freedom matter greatly to us.” (para. 10-11). As exemplified in this statement, the cultural delineation between the U.S. and Iraq was situated in relationship to each country’s treatment of innocent Iraqi citizens.

Similarly, on March 17, Bush addressed the Iraqi people once more, this time foreshadowing the military “rescue” of the Iraqis that would commence in the days that followed. Reiterating his commitment to the Iraqi citizens, Bush (2003d) explained

Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated radio broadcast, and I have a message for them. If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you. As our coalition takes away their power, we will deliver the food and medicine you need. We will tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbors, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near. (para. 14)

He concluded, “Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty” (para.24). Even in sentence structure, Bush’s rhetoric continued to set in opposition the ideological values of the U.S. and Iraq and reified the hierarchal relationship between “us” and “them,” good and evil, by holding the Iraqi citizens in the balance. Thus, the rescue narrative articulated by Bush not only framed the war as the last-resort solution to a dangerous situation but also functioned to bolster the American public’s identification with their own national identity, a civilized identity committed to the liberation of Others who were held captive under conditions of savagery (Ivie, 1980).

The implications of this well-versed rescue narrative were two-fold. First, the narrative legitimated the U.S. invasion of Iraq on the grounds that such action was a “civilized” response to acts of barbarism, a response brought forth by the most civilized nation in world politics. Despite the atrocities that inevitably accompany both war and the foreign occupation of an invaded country, the destructive nature of war became justified by the prophesy of a productive end, that of liberating Iraq. Thus, this “end justifies the means” rationale enabled the Administration and public supporters of the war to justify the war as vital to protecting the rights and ideals of civilized people. Additionally, by detailing the abuses committed by Saddam against an infantilized, vulnerable citizenry, the supporters of the war could advance the argument that the devastating consequences of war were necessary for civilizing the region, and more importantly, that the danger posed by the malign masculine threat would eventually surpass any momentary chaos that might accompany the short-lived military conflict between the U.S. and Iraq. Put simply, the narrative equivocated war and peace by framing the former as a necessary precursor to the latter.

Second, the narrative rearticulated U.S. cultural and military supremacy by framing the invasion as an example of triumphant heroism. According to Bush, “We are a peaceful people—yet we’re not a fragile people” (2003d, para.20). Additionally, he explained, “Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation, the American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war, and every measure will be taken to win it” (2003d, para.17). Drawing upon the equivocation between war and peace, the paradox of a peaceful, compassionate nation engaging in military aggression was reconciled in the narrative as some forms of violence were not only deemed acceptable but also necessary for the greater good. The narrative of the heroic rescue of Iraq not only positioned the U.S. as the most culturally supreme nation, the defender of

innocence and liberty, but also as the supreme victor in the conflict between good and evil. As Stables (2003) notes, this narrative became particularly salient during The First Gulf War as supporters of the war argued that Saddam's brutality "forced" the U.S. to intervene on behalf of the "helpless nation of Kuwait" (p. 94). Once again, as Bush's rhetoric suggested, sole responsibility for the war could be attributed to Saddam, whose violence provoked a military response from the U.S.; however, the rescue narrative embedded in Operation Iraqi Freedom provided a dénouement to The First Gulf War by prophesizing the eventual U.S. military success in Iraq, thus restoring the potency of U.S. national identity and military masculinity.

In sum, "Operation Iraqi Freedom" constituted a rhetorical shift regarding the rationales for a U.S. preemptive attack on Iraq. Additionally, Bush's rhetorical framing of the war as a heroic rescue narrative became even more salient for many public audiences when reiterated within an already existing and emotionally charged framework regarding gender relations between men and women both at home and abroad. Depictions of tortured Iraqi women's bodies amplified the feminization of Iraq and heightened the necessity for immediate and sustained U.S. intervention. The following section analyzes the ways in which the Iraqi rescue narrative was situated in relationship to Iraqi women in many mainstream media accounts. I argue that the depictions of gendered violence, particularly rape, became prototypical examples of the otherness of Iraq and were used as a primary justification for military intervention.

Saving "Their" Women

Although depictions of oppressed feminine populations or ethnic groups often intensify public anxiety regarding the peril associated with a malign masculine presence abroad, depictions of savagery are even more significant for Western audiences when they are accompanied by allegations that a nation is committing violence against its female citizens. Such

allegations not only contain a vast amount of emotional appeal but also imply that a country is performing masculinity in an “inappropriate” way. For example, during The First Gulf War, U.S. military officials highlighted the Iraqi exploitation of Kuwaiti women by circulating photographs and stories depicting violent acts such as looting, torture, and rape. Indeed, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait became known as “the rape of Kuwait” (Nantais and Lee, 1999, p. 184). The feminization of Kuwait in general and the circulation of images featuring victimized Kuwaiti women in particular lent credibility to U.S. intervention in Kuwait. According to Enloe (1994), “U.S. intervention in the Gulf would have been harder to justify if there were no feminized victim” (p. 214). Similarly, in 1999, U.S. and NATO forces justified a series of aerial assaults against the Serbs in Kosovo by arguing that the mass rapes committed against Albanian women constituted “a unique brand of violence” that was distinct from “normal” acts of violence (Stables, 2003, p. 103). More recently, although the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was premised on fighting the War on Terrorism, the Bush Administration and many media accounts rationalized the war by disseminating images of veiled Afghani women. As Dana Cloud (2004) explains, the visual frames vilified and infantilized the Afghans by suggesting that they were incapable of “civilizing” themselves without U.S. intervention (p. 293).

In a similar vein, national identity is also predicated on gender relations within and between national borders. During times of war, gender norms often serve as a benchmark for defining a nation’s masculine dominance both nationally and internationally. Frequently, women’s behavior, dress, and sexuality become highly visible because particular notions of femininity serve as national currency. Enloe (2000) explains

Men in many communities appear to assign such ideological weight to the outward attire and sexual purity of women in the community because they see women as 1) the

community's—or the nation's—most valuable possessions; 2) the principal vehicles for transmitting the whole nation's values from one generation to the next; 3) bearers of the community's future generations—crudely, nationalist wombs; 4) the members of the community's most vulnerable to defilement and exploitation by oppressive alien rulers; and 5) most susceptible to assimilation and cooptation by insidious outsiders. (p. 54)

Paradoxically, although women's lived experiences are frequently ignored during peacetime, during times of conflict women become highly visible symbols that are used to demarcate civility from savagery, benign masculinity from masculine aggression and violence (Stables, 2003). Gender-specific issues such as women's attire, ideological commitment to the nation, and sexual purity are often focal points for nationalist men; however, the concern over specific "women's issues" during times of international conflict rarely translated into more gender-inclusive practices within the community. Instead, many gender-specific controversies reflect a larger ideological struggle between competing masculine nations, each vying for the cultural currency assigned to particular female bodies. Indeed, a nation's ability to determine the attire and social and sexual practices of its own or another community's women signifies a particular masculine potency (Jeffords, 1989). Thus, during times of conflict, the controversy over gender norms is often waged not as an attempt to improve the lives of women but rather, as part of a turf war in which the masculinity of two competing communities, and subsequently, the men fighting for those communities, is called into question.

Finally, the cultural delineation between civility and savagery is often constructed via the displaying of juxtaposing images of women, images that are often perceived to be representations of the internal working of their respective countries. These juxtaposing images have been circulated frequently in the U.S. as a means for justifying U.S. involvement in foreign

countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, in her analysis of The First Gulf War, Enloe (1994) explains that the circulation of images that contrasted Kuwaiti and Saudi women's oppression with American women's liberty situated Operation Desert Storm within a gendered dynamic that positioned the U.S. as the ultimate defender of women's rights both domestically and abroad. Such contrasts suggest that "the United States is the advanced civilized country whose duty it is to take the lead in solving the Persian Gulf crisis" (Enloe, 1994, p. 217). Additionally, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001-2002 was justified, in part, through the circulation of images contrasting the oppression of Afghani women living under Taliban rule (as signified by the veil) with photographs that featured the cosmetic alterations in the "newly liberated" Afghani women's burquas post the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan (Cloud, 2004, p. 293). That is, the signifiers and markings on Afghani women's bodies became read as evidence of the U.S. triumph over the Taliban. Contrasting images of women's liberation and oppression affirm the masculine (military) presence of the West, particularly the U.S, and "serve to assure the self-satisfied Western man that his society is more 'civilized'" (despite the political battles over gender equality on the home front). Thus, the masculine West can be confident that it is "within [its] natural rights in colonizing the Middle East" (Enloe, 1994, p. 293).

Similar to the First Gulf War, the gendered framing of Operation Iraqi Freedom, particularly as it related to protecting women abroad, promoted the benevolence and the supremacy (both ideologically and militarily) of the United States. The exploitation of women in Iraq functioned as an illustration of yet another form of the regime's "reckless aggression" which had resulted in the oppression and the endangerment of the lives of Iraqi citizens and of Iraq's neighbors, especially the most vulnerable segments of the foreign populations (Bush, 2003d, para.5). In fact, in April 2003, the White House explicitly connected the War on Terrorism to

the universal fight against sexism when First Lady Laura Bush declared that “the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women” (Foster, 2003, p. 06J). Although President Bush’s discussions of gendered violence in Iraq were limited to his frequent referencing of rape and his occasional mentioning of conversations he had with Iraqi women, the circulation of texts depicting the victimization of Iraqi women increased significantly prior to and during the U.S. invasion. Iraqi women’s lack of freedom regarding issues of dress, education, and employment became focal points of public discussions as the war became justified as a liberatory mission. Additionally, the frequent circulation of terms such as “rape rooms” and “Saddam’s Iraq” framed the victimization of Iraqi women as perhaps the most egregious form of savagery occurring in Iraq. For many public supporters of the war, the images of tortured and oppressed female bodies functioned as the quintessential signifier of Saddam and his regime’s barbarism and the ultimate justification for military invasion.

During the months of January through April 2003, many mainstream newspaper accounts of the cultural conditions in Iraq focused on Iraqi women’s denial of “women’s rights.” Discussions of Iraqi women’s employment and educational opportunities, political rights, and cultural practices were circulated in many mass media accounts, illustrating the salience of “women’s issues” during times of war. For example, in an article published in *USA Today*, Isobel Coleman noted that in 2003, less than one-quarter of Iraqi women were literate compared to the 55% literacy rate for men (2003, p. 15A). Other national newspapers such as *The New York Times* and the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* featured articles lamenting the decline of education in Iraq, particularly for women, and suggested that the U.S. take a more active role in boosting the educational opportunities afforded to women (Dowd, 2003, p. A27; “War,” 2003b, p. A22). Additionally, some news accounts noted that although Iraqi women were often able to

secure some type of work-related experience, women were frequently unable to gain access to particular forms of employment due to cultural restrictions or their lack of education. Mike Williams (2003) of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* explained that in Iraq, driving was considered a well-paying yet exclusive profession because “the car is an extension of the Iraqi male ego, as very few women drive” (p. 4E). This renewed public concern over Iraqi women’s employment, education, and social mobility paralleled the public discussions that circulated during The First Gulf War regarding Saudi and Kuwaiti women’s denial of opportunities. According to Enloe (1994), during The First Gulf War, images of liberated U.S. women and Victorian lady travelers were frequently framed in opposition to images of Saudi women who were deprived of opportunities such as pursuing an education, gaining employment, or even obtaining a driver’s license. Enloe (1994) concludes, “Women of both countries [were] being used as currency with which men attempt[ed] to maintain the unequal relations between their societies” (p. 217). Additionally, the specific (and selective) focus on Iraqi women’s rights in the months preceding the U.S. invasion functioned as a means to further demonize Saddam in particular and Iraq culture in general, thus rationalizing a “civilized” intervention by the West.

The political, educational, and employment-related restrictions to Iraqi women were often articulated in relationship to the general cultural “backsliding” that followed Saddam’s rise to power. For example, in an article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Robert Collier (2003) discussed an interview he had with a recent female graduate from Baghdad University, Reem Abu Shawarb, who detailed the gendered politics in Iraq. In her discussion of the social problems in Iraq, she focused specifically on issues related to the eligibility for marriage and to the lack of availability of marriageable men. According to Collier, although Shawarb appeared to be “the picture of the modern Iraqi woman . . . outgoing, fluent in English, dressed stylishly in

form-fitting pantsuits,” her concerns regarding marriage and her support of polygamy in Iraq illustrated how Iraqi women had become “transformed by the country’s shift in recent years toward religious and social conservatism—a trend partly orchestrated by Saddam Hussein’s government” (p. A1). He concluded, “It’s a far cry from the 1970s and 1980s, the heyday of women’s rights in Iraq, when women advanced rapidly in the professions and could walk down the street in miniskirts” (A1). Collier posited that Saddam’s influence in Iraq had resulted in the redefining of women as “housewives and mothers” (p.A1). As illustrated in these excerpts, the denial of women’s rights was yet another illustration of the “backwardness” of Iraq under Saddam’s rule. The public discourse regarding women’s rights accentuated the “us/them” dichotomy between the U.S. and Iraq, positioned the U.S. as the nation with the highest moral principles, and suggested that U.S. intervention in Iraqi was necessary for rescuing women from their own “false consciousness,” which had been instilled in them by Saddam.

Although public discourse regarding the political and cultural liberation of Iraqi women intensified the masculine struggle between the U.S and Iraq, the circulation of tortured, mutilated, and sexually violated Iraqi women were among the most frequent illustrators of oppression in Iraq and of the regime’s barbaric rule. Indeed, over three hundred articles published in national newspapers between January and April 2003 referenced the raping of women in Iraq. For example, in her article in *USA Today*, Coleman (2003) explained that despite some progress made by Iraqi women within the past decade, “Iraqi women have suffered enormously under Saddam Hussein’s regime—as victims of political rape and torture, as mothers unable to provide for their children, as wives who have lost their families” (p. 15A). Additionally, an article featured in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* described Saddam’s use of rape as a means for extracting confessions from Iraqi citizens. The article recalled the coerced

confession of one of Saddam's top party officers who was threatened with the rape and murder of his wife and daughters (Shane, 2003, p. A11). Drawing on Bush's frequent use of the term "rape room," sexual violence was often described as a systematic form of oppression that functioned both as a means for ethnic cleansing and as the most cruel form of intimidation and oppression ("War," 2003b, p. A22; Keen, 2003, p. A1). According to Stables (2003), by articulating rape as a "unique brand of violence" committed by a "radical evil" that violates the moral principles that are highly cherished by more "advanced" societies, sexual violence becomes perhaps the most worthy justification for war (p. 103). Depictions of sexual violence committed against Iraqi women and the frequent use of the term "rape room" not only reiterated the Administration's referencing to gendered violence in Iraq but also depicted sexual violence as a reprehensible form of violence and as a lynchpin of tyranny, thus justifying a preemptive attack on the men committing such atrocities.

Additionally, discussions of Saddam's pattern of sexual violence were often circulated as a means to amplify the threat the regime posed to Iraqi women and to construct a historically driven rationale for invading and occupying Iraq. National newspapers frequently referenced Saddam's "rape" of Kuwait, arguing that Saddam's treatment of Kuwaiti women paralleled his treatment of his own female citizens. In an editorial featured in the *San Antonio Express-News*, one Texas resident argued that the atrocities committed by Saddam such as "the murder and rape of Kuwait in 1990" had created an imperative for the U.S. military "to go into Baghdad and finish the job" (Tarpley, 2003, p. 5H). References to "the rape of Kuwait" not only reiterated the gendered rationale for going to war but also created a logical connection between the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Through reasoning by comparison, one must concluded that if Saddam's tyranny in Iraq mirrored his tyrannical rule over the Kuwaitis, then a

U.S. response to his aggression in 2003 should also mirror the U.S. response to his invasion of Kuwait in 1991. In similar vein, in an article published in *The New York Times*, Maureen Dowd (2003) analogized the need for U.S. intervention and occupation of Iraq with the crisis in Afghanistan, arguing that the U.S. abandonment of Afghanistan in 1989 enabled the Taliban's rise to power which resulted in the "harassing and beating [of] women over dress and behavior" and in attacks on schools that accepted the enrollment of young girls. She concluded, "If [U.S. forces] leave Iraq to its own devices, the whole thing will blow up" (p. A27). As Goodnight (1996) explains, analogies are rhetorically potent because they "provide a common ground for institutional action" (p. 24). The articulation of the similarities between Saddam's victimization of his own female citizens and the sexual exploitation of Kuwaiti and Afghani women framed the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq as the only logical response to the crisis. Additionally, the emotional connotations associated with images of sexual violence and abuse committed against civilian Iraqi women (in addition to the past atrocities committed by Saddam against female populations in neighboring countries such as Kuwait) heightened the public response to the crisis. Not only was the prevention of gendered violence framed as a primary justification for going to war, but also such violence was conceptualized as being endemic to "Saddam's Iraq." Stables (2003) concludes, "With a plausible scapegoat, one that can be articulated through the topoi of savagery, the brutal actions of another nation leave the United States without any alternative to war. This symbiotic relationship positions the productive and destructive masculinities in tension, often with the fate of the female subject in the balance" (p. 94).

Protesting Women's Rights: Anti-war Protestors under Attack

The issue of women's well being became a focal point in the discourse surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom, including discourses that justified the war as well as discourses that

attempted to contain U.S. dissent regarding military action in Iraq. The referencing of sexual violence committed against Iraqi women often occurred amidst a laundry list of other atrocities committed by Saddam (e.g. looting, murder, torture, dismemberment, etc.); however, the condemnation of sexual violence was most explicit when coupled with rhetorical attacks against anti-war protestors. Many of the scathing attacks leveled against the anti-war movement (which was often articulated as *the* representative of the Left) chastised protestors for being politically ignorant and callous with regard to the cruelty endured by women in Iraq. Indeed, the majority of the mainstream newspaper articles that discussed the raping of Iraqi women positioned those abuses in relationship to the anti-war movement. For example, in an editorial published in the *Tampa Tribune*, one Florida resident wrote

I just do not see how anyone, including especially the reflexive leftists, can hold up Iraq as a model of women's rights on the theory that it is a secular state. It is a country with rape rooms, which I - even in my conservative ignorance - would assume to be a bad thing and worth eradicating. The rape rooms get used; as a non-Neanderthal conservative Republican, I believe that such atrocities are worth the deployment of our military and moral authority. (Meyer, 2003, p. 12)

Additionally, in an editorial published in the *Columbia Dispatch*, another respondent stated

I've seen the pictures of dead mothers with babes in their arms—and, according to a recent Glenn Beck radio broadcast, [Saddam] continues to rape Iraqi women at whim. And yet, rather than protesting any of this abomination and seeking to liberate the Iraqi people, the Hollywood crowd, anti-American-capitalism college faculty, liberal media and Democrats and those poor, misguided 63 students at Eastmoor Academy. . . protest to

keep Saddam in power and his atrocities securely in place. What a shame. (Pottenburgh, 2003, p. 12A)

Several other articles articulated the ignorance of the anti-war protestors by situating their condemnation of the war in relationship to Iraqi women's victimization. This framing created a persuasive double bind for the anti-war movement. By reiterating the paradoxical "we must engage in war to secure peace" narrative, which was accompanied by graphic portrayals of tortured Iraqi women, supporters of the war were able to redefine the protestors as merciless opponents of liberty (despite their claims to be committed to pacifism) and as individuals who misused their own rights as citizens (i.e. the right to demonstrate) to the detriment of "civilization."

In particular, women protestors of the war became the target of much criticism, and the oppression of Iraqi women was juxtaposed to the freedoms exercised by women in the U.S. In an editorial subtitled "Young Women Should Think before Protesting," one advocate of the war stated, "I can't believe that female college students are protesting the American military in Iraq. Let's think about this for a minute. If they were living in Iraq, they wouldn't have the freedom to protest anything" (Hesprich, 2003, p. 16A). Contrasting the lived experience between U.S. women and Iraqi women, the writer continued, "In Iraq, some women are second-class citizens, are not allowed to get an education, are forced to marry and must also keep their bodies covered. You won't see too many of them wearing hip-hugger, flared jeans with a midriff top and a belly button ring" (p. 16A). In a similar vein, some women protestors in the U.S. were described as "teenage and twenty-something women with pink hair and leather jackets" or "thirty-something mothers in Old Navy sweatshirts pushing baby strollers" (Fernandez, 2003, p.A11). Others were described as rambunctious groups of "girls" donning "college sweatshirts and faded denim skirts,

content with shouting, ‘We support the troops! We don’t support the war!’ and forming a hand-to-hand chain around the block, drawing honks from bus drivers and motorists” (Oppel, 2003, p. C01). Certainly, these descriptions of women protestors create a stark contrast between Iraq, a nation of tyranny and oppression, and the U.S., the oasis of freedom and liberty, and more importantly, these images depicted women protestors as juvenile and silly, thus undermining the seriousness of the anti-war messages. By contrasting the images of women at home and abroad, supporters of the war reified the supremacy of the U.S. by situating gender oppression and violence exclusive within the “Other” country thus, rationalizing “our” obligation to rescue “their” women. Paradoxically, however, these contrasts also helped to dilute the potency of the protestors’ demonstrations, particularly the demonstrations by U.S. women, by framing them as being politically incompetent. The juxtaposition suggested that not only were young women at home politically naïve and juvenile but also that their exercising of their own rights as citizens was eroding the international mission to secure women’s rights abroad.

The prominence of public discussions related to women’s rights, particularly the protection from sexual violence, greatly influenced the framing of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and functioned to solicit political and emotional support for military action. Specifically, references to rape and sexual assault not only provided an ideological rationale for going to war, but they also helped to insulate supporters of the war and the Bush Administration from criticism emanating from the anti-war movement. Additionally, the contrast between politically oppressed and sexually violated women in Iraq and liberated female protestors in the U.S. functioned as a means to silence the opposition and as a means of illustrating “just how great American women have it.” Thus, this juxtaposition created a false dichotomy for members of the anti-war movement, particularly women. Arguments against the war were articulated as arguments in

support of (or at the very least, arguments of indifference toward) Saddam's tyrannical oppression of Iraqi women. Moreover, the contrasting images enthymematically constructed the logical conclusion that Americans (particularly women) should "stop complaining" and support the protection of freedom for others and that the U.S. is the most capable nation to liberate the Iraqi people and to establish a framework of women's rights in Iraq. Put simply, if women's rights flourish within U.S. borders (as illustrated by women's ability to protest and their freedom of self-expression, however misguided), then one may rationally conclude that U.S. leadership abroad can confer the same rights and liberties to women who have been denied their basic rights, including their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Conclusion

In sum, Operation Iraqi Freedom constituted a rhetorical and ideological shift in public discourse that justified the U.S. invasion of Iraq as a humanitarian response to Saddam's savagery. Additionally, the clash of civilizations between the U.S. and Iraq was constructed within a gendered framework that reified the ongoing struggle between benevolent and malign forms of masculinity; however, this cultural struggle between competing masculine powers was made possible only through the presence of a feminized Other upon which those powers act. Specifically, the circulation of discourse featuring a vulnerable Iraqi citizenry, desperate to be liberated by the freedom fighters of the West, as well as depictions of victimized Iraqi women's bodies, exacerbated the cultural tensions between the U.S. and "Saddam's Iraq" and created a moral framework for intervention. The prophecy of Iraqi liberation, as featured in the Iraqi rescue narrative and in U.S. proposals to restore women's rights to Iraq, reframed U.S. national identity as compassionate, altruistic, and peaceful, despite its engagement in military conflict. Additionally, public discourse surrounding the oppression of Iraqi women (and their eventual

liberation post the U.S. invasion of Iraq) heightened the emotional and ideological stakes of going to war and, to some degree, insulated the rationales of the defenders of war by articulating Operation Iraqi Freedom as a just cause for protecting the most vulnerable portion of the Iraqi population. Not only did these images serve as evidence of the moral underpinnings of the military mission in Iraq, but also they were used as a means to challenge the moral integrity of the anti-war movement.

The gendered discourse surrounding the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 is significant for several reasons. First, public discourse surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom heightened the moral stakes regarding the preemptive attack against Iraq by articulating the Iraqi rescue narrative in relationship to ideological notions of gender. As mentioned above, although the frequent rearticulation of the term “rape room” in national newspapers echoed the rhetoric used by the Bush Administration, the Administration rarely detailed the gender-specific oppression in Iraq. Nonetheless, in many mainstream media accounts, Bush’s Iraqi rescue narrative was depicted in relationship to the feminization of Iraq in general, and in relationship to Iraqi women’s bodies in particular, as a means for justifying U.S. intervention in and the reconstruction of Iraq. Thus, the narrative of Operation Iraqi Freedom materialized through a series of conversations that reiterated the seemingly natural relationships between national identity, militarism, and gender (and cultural) binaries. According to Campbell and Jamieson’s (1990) insightful discussion of presidential war rhetoric, the Commander-in-Chief is initially responsible for defining and rationalizing the motives for engaging in military conflict.

Although my analysis supports their claim to a certain extent, noting that Bush’s feminization of Iraq was often rearticulated in media accounts of the war, this analysis suggests that war rhetoric is also constituted through the process of rearticulation that occurs within multiple dimensions of

public argument. That is, presidential war rhetoric functions in tandem with the circulation of media representations and cultural narratives regarding the ideological underpinnings of militarism and national identity. Additionally, the rationales for war do not emerge through the circulation of single texts that “address” the public in specific moments of crisis. Instead, I argue that war rhetoric is always situated in relationship to previous articulations of war and to the historical and ideological perspectives that shape national identity.

Second, the emergence of public discussions regarding “women’s issues” in Iraq prior to and during the war suggested that gender-specific issues become salient for the vast majority of the American public only during times of war and serve an ideological function other than the alleged need to protect women. Certainly, I am not suggesting that the depictions of tortured and oppressed Iraqi women’s bodies that circulated through public discourse were merely fictional tales of peril, lies concocted by the Bush Administration or a neo-conservative segment of the public. Instead, my analysis questions the selective representation of “women’s issues” during times of war and suggests that the renewed public concern over the living conditions of Iraqi women functioned primarily as a means to reify U.S. supremacy (both ideologically and militarily) over Saddam and the Iraqi people. That is, my analysis begs the question, why do “women’s issues” become focal points of public discussions *only* during times of crisis?

According to organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Action Center, for over a decade, Iraqi women have struggled against their own oppression, making little progress with regard to improving their social conditions. More importantly, most of these organizations attribute Iraqi women’s abysmal living conditions, in large part, to U.S. and U.N. imposed trade sanctions on Iraq which, although dubbed “targeted” sanctions, resulted in the denial of vital imports such as chlorine, medical supplies, and

equipment necessary for rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure. Thus, sanctions were directly connected to the deaths of millions of Iraqis and adversely affected Iraqi women's health, particularly during pregnancy and childbirth (Bahdi, 2002; Cordesman, 1999; Simons, 1998). Furthermore, the sanctions regime, particularly the Oil for Food program, resulted in the further centralization of power in Iraq and tightened Saddam's grip on the Iraqi people. However, public discourse surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom rarely mentioned the humanitarian disaster caused by the sanctions regime nor the decades of gender-specific violence that accompanied Saddam's rise to power. Rather, by framing the issue of women's oppression as a representation of a recently emerging form of barbarism in Iraq (despite Saddam's history of sexually exploiting women in countries such as Kuwait), supporters of the war were able to eschew any U.S. responsibility for the ongoing oppression of Iraqi women and the historical overlooking of gender-specific issues during peace time.

Finally, in a similar vein, the "us-them" dichotomy articulated in the Iraqi rescue narrative polarized the relationship between masculine powers, leaving no room for alternative explanations for the crisis or for compromise. By defining the conflict in terms of a battle between good and evil, the cause of war could be attributed to the irreconcilable ideological differences between the West and Iraq. As a result, the narrative absolved the U.S. from responsibility for the war by rationalizing the U.S. invasion as a necessary consequence of Saddam's cruelty to his civilian population and as a means for bringing a civilized peace to an otherwise chaotic region. Additionally, the narrative resolved any historical misdeeds or hypocrisy committed by the U.S., such as the United States' political, economic, and military backing of Iraq during the 1980s, by eschewing pragmatic discussions regarding the means by which Saddam came to power. More importantly, the narrative suggested that it was not *our*

military hardware that resulted in the devastation of the Iraqi population; rather, the blame should be attributed to the evil tyrant who chose to use in destructive ways those otherwise peaceful tools of liberation. In this all too familiar “guns don’t kill people; people kill people” scenario, the dichotomy between the U.S. and Iraq was not defined in terms of economic wealth, geographical location, or military capability but rather, in terms of fundamental differences regarding ethics, principles, and morality. That is, like most military operations, Operation Iraqi Freedom was justified in terms of overarching ideological principles rather than by concrete expediency. Additionally this battle between productive and destructive masculine powers was articulated as an all-or-nothing conflict in which the civilized became the quintessential defenders of freedom by militarily “bringing to justice” those who threaten the livelihood and liberties of vulnerable feminine (and female) populations.

In sum, the rhetoric surrounding the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 helped to shape domestic perceptions of U.S. national and military identity by invoking a narrative that reiterated the ideological supremacy of the U.S. The rearticulation of the Iraqi rescue narrative by both the Bush Administration and mainstream media simultaneously constructed Iraq as the barbaric enemy of freedom and democracy and lauded the West for its willingness to vindicate oppressed Iraqi citizens, particularly women. Although the rationales for war are complex and multitudinous, this chapter suggests that for some public audiences, the narrative of Operation Iraqi Freedom helped to resolve some of the political and ideological tensions underlining the war with Iraq and helped to resurrect a supreme national identity based on its ideological commitments to civilization and the protection of women.

Notes

¹ For the purposes of this analysis, I conceptualize public discourse as being compromised of official governmental communication including presidential rhetoric as well as media accounts including headline articles and opinion columns featured in national newspapers.

² Although public discourse surrounding Iraq had been influenced by representations of Otherness for decades, my analysis focuses on the discourse circulated during the months of January through April as a means of examining how the war became framed ideologically in the wake of “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” Presidential speeches were gathered from www.whitehouse.gov and searched chronologically according to the parameters of this analysis. Additionally, using the Lexis-Nexis database, I searched the full text of articles in national newspapers featuring the terms, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraqi women, gender, and rape rooms, and protest. I retrieved over 600 hundred articles; however my sample is limited to the first two hundred which were sorted by relevance.

³ My purpose is not to elide the cultural differences that influence lived experience throughout the world, nor am I suggesting that perceptions of differences are purely fictions of the public’s imagination or lies circulated by the political elite. However, I am suggesting that our epistemological commitment to notions of a bifurcated “us/them” greatly influences our own sense of self as that dichotomy becomes naturalized through the process of rearticulation. Additionally, it is through the articulation of difference that otherness is assigned a particular valence which makes possible the understanding of “our” normalcy.

⁴ Although the Middle East is often used as a descriptor of one of the twenty-one nations geographically located within or near the Gulf region, Huntington (2004) explains that cultural references to the “Middle East” and “Arab nations” in public discussions in the West are often predicated not only on a geography ignorance of the region (as illustrated by public discussions that reference India and Pakistan as “Middle Eastern” nations) but also on monolithic representations of Islamic radicalism. Thus, in my theoretical discussion of the demarcation between the West and the Middle East, I use the term “Middle East” as it is conceptualized and articulated within a dominant Western worldview.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DANGERS OF PLAYING DRESS-UP: POPULAR REPRESENTATIONS OF JESSICA LYNCH AND THE CONTROVERSY REGARDING WOMEN IN COMBAT

The March 23, 2003 capture of Private First Class Jessica Lynch reignited the controversial debate over military women's ability to perform effectively in combat operations and precipitated new attacks against feminism. After Lynch was rescued from an Iraqi hospital by U.S. forces on April 1, 2003, local and national newspapers published over one thousand articles in an attempts to explain the intricacies surrounding the Iraqi ambush of the 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company and Lynch's capture near the city of Nasiriyah, the Iraqis' treatment of Lynch during her captivity, and Lynch's rescue. Unfortunately, the inconsistent reporting of the events sparked even more controversy, further complicating the situation. As a result, another media frenzy ensued as reporters, biographers, and film producers competed for interviews with the Lynch family, members of the 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company, high-ranking military officers, and Lynch herself, all seeking the rights to the story of Jessica Lynch. On November 7, 2003, *NBC* aired a docudrama titled *Saving Jessica Lynch*, a movie portraying Lynch's nine days in captivity as told from the perspective of Mohammad al-Rehaief, the Iraqi lawyer who alerted U.S. forces to Lynch's whereabouts. Although the docudrama was marketed as a true story, in an interview with Diane Sawyer, aired by *ABC Primetime* on November 11, Lynch denounced the movie's false portrayal of both her and the events that took place and provided additional information detailing her experiences. The airing of Lynch's interview

coincided with the publication of her biography title *I Am a Soldier, Too* as told by Lynch to writer Rick Bragg. Finally, the public had access to the “real” Jessica Lynch story.

In her recent essay, Deepa Kumar (2004) argues that the “rescue” of Lynch has been framed in public discourse not as “a step forward for women” but rather, as a narrative that differentiates the “West” from the “Middle East.”(p. 297-298). Kumar concludes that the Lynch narrative “serve[s] the aims of war propaganda” by advancing an “emotional/nonrational pro-war argument” based on traditional notions of white femininity (p. 297). Kumar’s discussion of the relationship between Lynch’s racial and gendered identity, colonialism, and the maintenance of the “war machine” is especially enlightening and reiterates many of them themes discussed in the previous chapter. However, this chapter takes the implications of Lynch’s experiences, as constructed by mass media, in a somewhat different direction. I shift the focus of analysis from the international arena and from the U.S. justifications for going to war to domestic debates over the role of women in combat in order to illustrate the ways in which the reiteration of gender ideology operates in another context: domestic battles over the “proper” role of women in the U.S. military. As the archetype of (white) femininity, the representations of Lynch in popular culture rearticulate gender binaries and the innateness of femaleness, subsequently calling into question military women’s ability to perform effectively in combat operations. Although a considerable body of scholarship has been dedicated to exposing the gender hierarchy within military culture, few scholars have analyzed how media representations of military women influence the ongoing public debates over women’s participation in combat. Thus, this project investigates how Jessica Lynch’s body “comes to matter” in public discourse and explores how the selective representation of Lynch, as depicted in both popular culture and in national print media, influences political debates over women’s roles in combat.

Rather than advancing an argument in support of full military integration, this case study functions as a critical interrogation of the ways in which gender performativity and the material body are disciplined by their cultural contexts, particularly when those contexts are historically and ideologically founded upon binary notions of sex/gender. First, I discuss the history of official and unofficial practices of gender disciplining within military culture. Second, I discuss the theoretical premise of gender performativity and explore the discourses of female otherness and victimization as constructed in relation to the masculine sphere of the military. Finally, I provide a critical reading of the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch*, Bragg's biographical account of Lynch's capture and rescue, and Lynch's interview with Diane Sawyer. I conclude by arguing that the representations of Lynch in popular culture obfuscate the political debates over women in combat by metonymically framing Lynch as *the* representative of all military women, thus deflecting attention away from the thousands of women who perform effectively in the military (and, conversely, the thousands of men who do not).

Excluding Female Bodies: A History of Combat Exclusion

According to Madeline Morris (1996), "The masculinity that is definitive of the military in-group is, not surprisingly, defined in contrast to the 'Other' –in particular, in contrast to women" (p. 716). Throughout history, the military and the American public have been (and continue to be) reluctant to consider women as "active" or legitimate members of the military, even when they perform the same roles as men. (Quester, 1982; Milko, 1992; DePauw, 1998; Ransom, 2001). The official and unofficial practices of gender segregation in the military reify the ideological dichotomy between masculine soldiers and feminine civilians, thereby insulating the masculine identity of the U.S. military while simultaneously using the contributions of servicewomen to help sustain that supreme identity. Moreover, the combat exclusion statute,

which was codified into law in 1948, continues to create a “khaki ceiling” for servicewomen seeking combat experience and, more importantly, for servicewomen struggling against their second-class citizenship status within military culture (Blumner, 2005, p.1p).

Military women have a rich history of service, and their efforts both on and off the battlefield have been integral to achieving and sustaining military strength and readiness for over two centuries. For example, during both the American Revolution and the Civil War, women became the primary suppliers of food, clothing, medical equipment, and gunpowder, and women were often “recruited” as nurses and camp followers for military units (Young, 2003; Blanton, 2002; Brookey, 1998). In 1901, Congress established the Army Nurse Corps (which was followed by the establishment of Navy Nurse Corps in 1908), which officially accepted women enlistees, although enlistment was restricted to include only white women (Ransom, 2001).¹ Although these service units were the first to officially enlist women, servicewomen were relegated to performing “feminine” roles such as caregivers, nurturers, and domestic organizers of camps and were considered “auxiliary” personnel despite the inherent dangers faced by military nurses, especially the thousands who were deployed overseas during World War I (Reeves, 1999). Although servicewomen were often disparaged by male soldiers for their roles as nurses and camp followers, military officials acknowledged the advantages gained by “feminizing” the nursing corps (Enloe, 1983, p. 100). Enloe (1983) explains, “If military manpower strategists could keep women nurses ideologically peripheral to the combat-masculinity core of the military, they could expand their medical services without diverting scarce male combat or technical power to medical units” (p. 100). During the 1930s and 1940s, Congress increased the “feminization” of the nursing corps in response to the need for medical units during World War II by establishing several more service organizations such as the Women’s Army Corps (WAC),

the Navy's Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (Waves), and the Coast Guard's Semper Paratus: Always Ready (SPARS) (Milko, 1992; Ransom, 2001). Similar to the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, however, these new organizations distinguished themselves both in name (which stressed the secondary status of these units by defining them as *women's* services) and in terms of the tasks assigned to the military women who served in these organizations, tasks that continued to emphasize women's roles as nurses, domestic providers for male soldiers, and organizers of supply stations.

Prior to the mid-1940s, gender segregation in the military was a ubiquitous yet mostly *unofficial* practice that occurred within military units, usually in the form of task assignment. In 1948, however, congressional passage of the Women's Armed Services Act codified certain restrictions on women's military participation, advancement, and benefits in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Most notably, the Women's Armed Services Act instituted the combat exclusion statute, which prohibited women from participating in combat and from occupying military positions associated with the frontlines. According to Ellington, et. al. (1998),

This new legislation provided that the Air Force and Navy/Marine Corps could not assign women to combat aircraft or vessels but that the Secretary of the Army could prescribe appropriate regulations governing the assignment of women. The statute limited the number of women who could enlist in the military and placed a cap on the highest rank a woman officer could attain. The statute also restricted the entitlements that women could receive for their dependents, where no restrictions existed for men. (p. 765)

Not only did this legislation legally restrict military women's service, but also it reified women's second-class status (both as citizens of the United States and as military professionals) by restricting privileges of full citizenship (such as employment benefits, compensation, and

political power) based on biological sex (Enloe, 1983). As a result, the act stymied the recruitment of women and resulted in a massive turnover among enlisted servicewomen. Indeed, by the end of the Korean War, women constituted less than 1.2 percent of all uniformed personnel (Reeves, 1999; Van Creveld, 2001). According to Enloe (1983), between 1946-1972, American femininity was conceptualized in conservative ways that complemented Cold War national security goals. Women's patriotism became defined not in terms of servicewomen's dedication to their units but instead, in terms of women's roles as wives and mothers who preached against the evils of communism.

In 1973, the military climate changed, however. Nixon abolished the draft, creating a military crisis that required the federal government and military officials to reconsider women's role in the military. As Browne (2001) explains, "Not surprisingly, in the aftermath of the unpopular Vietnam War and hostility to the draft, the military encountered difficulties finding enough male recruits. The services made up for the shortfall by increasing the number of women" (p. 53). In response to the shortage of military personnel, Congress passed a series of bills calling for the full integration of women in the military. During the late 1970s, Congress forced military academies to accept women applicants, and women were integrated into the chain of command and given the authority to command uniformed men (Van Crevald, 2001; Ellington et.al., 1998). Women's bases were closed, women's quarters were created, and men and women frequently resided on separate floors of the same building. Not only did the new legislation attract public attention because of its significant restructuring of the military, but also it became a rallying point for liberal feminists advocating the passage of the ERA (Quester, 1982, Milko, 1992; Frevola, 2001). Despite the political significance of the legislation, however, the debate over full military integration waned quickly during the 1980s due to the political fallout in the

aftermath of the Vietnam War and the failure of the ERA in 1983, which stymied the political power of liberal feminists advocating the equal treatment of women in all employment arenas, including the military.

During the 1990s, the issue of women in combat gained public attention once more due to severe resource scarcities resulting from the extensive military operations conducted in the Persian Gulf. Because the U.S. response to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in January 1990 overstretched troop capacity, new recruits were vital for sustaining military readiness. Thus, the Gulf War marked a turning point for women's participation in the military. Of the 539,000 troops deployed in the Gulf, 32,000 were women, and new positions of leadership were opened to women for the first time (Milko, 1992). Although the combat exclusion prohibited women from participating in "direct ground combat," many women were assigned to supplementary combative roles, and many women sacrificed their lives during acts of combat. Almost univocally, military personnel, field commanders, and government leaders such as Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney commended women for their contributions during the Gulf War.

Operation Desert Storm shed light on women's military capability and also put into motion a series of military reforms. Within the first years of his presidency, President Clinton lifted most of the restrictions that prohibited women from serving on warships (with the exception of submarines and patrol craft) and permitted women's service in the headquarters of Special Forces groups and air defense battalions (Priest, 1997; Dominguez, 2003). Additionally, on January 13, 1994, a policy memorandum written by then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin established the "Aspin Rules," which modified the combat exclusion by replacing the "risk rule" with a new definition of ground combat. The policy memorandum states, "Women are barred from units that engage the enemy on the ground with weapons, are exposed to hostile fire, and

have a high probability of direct physical contact with the personnel of a hostile force” (Schmitt, 1994, p. A1). Thus, under the new policy, the mere “exposure to risk” was an insufficient rationale for excluding women from an assignment (Peach, 1996, p. 158). However, although the policy’s redefinition of combat provided servicewomen with additional opportunities for limited combat experience, women continued to be barred from almost all assignments involving offensive combat and ground fighting and were excluded from positions in armory, infantry, and field artillery units, the three specialties that comprise the core of combat (Peach, 1989; Schmitt, 1994).

Despite the gains made by servicewomen within the past decades, the debate over full military integration is a contentious political battle that has gained significant public attention in the wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Currently, 14,000 U.S. servicewomen are deployed in Iraq, and throughout the past four years, 600,000 U.S. military women have served in Afghanistan and Iraq, many of whom have sacrificed their lives for their country or have been severely injured during combat (Walters, 2004). Nonetheless, debates over the combat exclusion continue to take place on Capitol Hill and within public arenas. Interestingly, as the physical boundaries of the frontlines continue to become more unstable due to the changing nature of war, the political debates over women in combat are intensifying. That is, as military women earn opportunities that move them closer to the geographical frontlines of combat, proponents of the combat exclusion are becoming more steadfast in their defense of the all-male combat zone. This phenomenon suggests that debates over the combat exclusion have less to do with servicewomen’s *ability* to perform in combat but instead, are debates ideologically driven by the gender hierarchy that defines the military’s role both domestically and internationally. Not only

do the “frontlines” demarcate the boundaries of national identity, but also they demarcate the boundaries between male and female bodies within military culture.

The following section explores how the “frontline” serves not only as the physical boundary that separates soldiers from civilians but also as an ideological boundary that separates masculinity from femininity (and femaleness). Drawing on Butler’s theory of gender performativity, I explore how sex/gender binaries are rearticulated in relationship to the body, which often materializes as a signifier of authentic gender identity. Moreover, I examine how both gender identity and the sexed body are positioned in relationship to military culture in ways that reify the sex/gender boundaries upon which military masculinity relies.

Gender Performativity and the Material Body

As a cultural ideology, gender is both performative and regulatory. In her preface to *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) argues that the gender matrix consists of a complex system of regulatory categories and sustains itself through the constant rearticulation of behavioral norms designed to naturalize sexual differences (p. 30). Although Butler describes gender as a potentially fluid performance, she explains that the compulsory reiteration of regulatory gender norms interpellates individuals into the ideological (and ontological) narrative of a two-sex/gender, heterosexual schema in an attempt to stabilize the gender hierarchy (Sloop, 2004; Butler, 1993). The mundane enactments of gender norms (e.g. language use, dress, style, etc.) often create the illusion of “an abiding gendered self” as those performances become perceived as signifiers of a natural, unmediated, static sexual essence, an essence innate to the authentic self and represented by the material body (Butler, 1993, p. 270).

The materiality of the body is in many ways a product of both the forced articulations of normative gender assignments and the policing of gender boundaries. In *Bodies that Matter*,

Butler (1993) argues that the materiality of sexual differences never exists *a priori* to discourse as “a simple cast or static condition of the body” (p. 2) but, rather, the process of signification “produces as an *effect* of its own procedure the very body that it nevertheless and simultaneously claims to discover as that which *precedes* its own action” (p. 30). In his analysis of the Joan/John case,² Sloop (2004) explains that certain behaviors such as dress, personality traits, or urinary practices are often purported to be visible markers “on” the body that reveal the sexual essence “in” the body (p. 30). For example, Joan/John’s refusal to wear feminine clothing as a child and her/his desire to urinate standing up was interpreted by some biologists as signifiers of Joan/John’s inherent maleness. Although, as Sloop discusses, Joan/John (later David Reimer) identified himself as a man, Sloop posits that perhaps Joan/John’s decision to be reassigned as male should be interpreted as his refusal to be disciplined as female rather than as a sign of his inherent maleness. In other words, the compulsory nature of Joan/John’s first sex and gender reassignment, including the recommendation of the painful and laborious construction of a vagina, could have contributed to his refusal of femaleness. According to Sloop, the Joan/John case illustrates how the reiteration of normative gender categories naturalizes gender by conflating the gender signifiers (dress and urinary practices) with the signified (sex difference), thus creating an intelligible and irreducible bodily materiality.

Although Butler argues that gender and sexuality are performative acts rather than innate characteristics of the body, she notes that each performance of gender is interpreted in relationship to previous performances. Additionally, the repeated performance of regulatory gender norms can culminate in the materialization of a seemingly fixed gendered body that then becomes the litmus test for evaluating the authenticity of subsequent performances (Butler, 1993). According to Butler (1990), “If one thinks one sees a man dressed as a woman or a

woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the ‘reality’ of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks ‘reality’ and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance” (p. xxii). For example, during many drag performances, the readability of the body can limit the transgressive potential of the performance and even encourage the audience to read the performance as a charade. In his essay “Dragging out the Queen: Male Femaling and Male Feminism,” Terry Goldie (2002) argues that some gay men (who do not perceive themselves as transsexual) perform drag in a manner that both enacts femininity and emphasizes their gay maleness because “to achieve the status of being unreadable would be to embody the female in a counterproductive way” (p.133). The audience’s ability to read the body as a representation of an *a priori* gendered self (who happens to be performing another gender) reveals the falsity of the performance, thus heightening its inauthenticity and reifying the audience members’ faith in the gender signifiers that enable them to “know” the truth.

Not only are subversive performances complicated by the relationship between the material body and the individual’s performance, but one’s ability to perform gender in opposition to regulatory norms is also complicated by the cultural and situational constraints surrounding the performance. According to Sloop (2005), when the marked female body is articulated in relationship to a context historically and ideologically associated with masculinity (and maleness), normative gender assignments become more “rigidly binding.” Furthermore, the governance of exclusively masculine territories “requires that particular behaviors and populations become visible so that a program of action can intervene to improve the happiness, longevity, and material welfare of a population” (Greene, 1998, p.31). When situated within a masculine context, the female body often is defined almost exclusively by its “feminine”

characteristics and becomes a visible sign of otherness. Consequently, the disciplining of female bodies is often rationalized as necessary for sustaining the intelligibility (and potency) of the all-male sphere and for protecting women by prohibiting their presence in “dangerous” territory.

Military, Gender, and the Female Body

As the prototypical masculine institution, the United States military has historically defined itself in relation to the gendered body, especially during wartime. Drawing on the work of Judith Stiehm, Susan Jeffords (1989) argues that “the exclusion of women from combat is designed to ensure the maintenance of the masculine as a representational and functional category” (p. 160). Because the military’s masculine potency is signified by the presence of male bodies, the existing combat exclusion, which is premised on traditional assumptions regarding female otherness and vulnerability, preserves the all-male combat zone and sustains a masculine national identity. As Wiegman (1994) concludes, “Female integration in the military intensifie[s] the stakes of masculinity’s articulation by raising the specter of a national feminization at the scene of battle,” thereby undermining war’s ability to reify or to restore the warring country’s masculine potency (p. 176).

One way in which the military secures its masculine domain, especially during times of war, is through definitional boundaries that demarcate status based on behavioral gender norms. The discourse of female otherness dichotomizes the experience and activities of men and women and constructs boundaries between the masculine center and the feminine margin. According to Morris (1996),

The military definition of the “nonmasculine” as the “other” is, of course, rendered problematic by the existence of military women. One response to this dilemma has been to endeavor to maintain essentially masculine group identity and, necessarily then, female

otherness. Consistent with this approach, official efforts are made to maintain the “femininity” of military women. (p. 718)

Even in contemporary military culture, military women are often assigned to jobs labeled “non-combat” despite the risk associated with jobs directly related to military combat operations (e.g. managing supply convoys). For example, although the 1994 “Aspin Rule” broadened the role of women in the military, enabling them to fight in some combative situation, the memorandum still maintains a definitive boundary between “direct, offensive combat” and defensive “at risk” zones. Thus, women’s participation in combat is often dismissed because, by definition, their service is categorized as merely defensive and hence, not “really” combative. The redefinition of military women’s service as “non-offensive” not only secures the sanctity of masculine combat operations but also defines femininity as non-aggressive. Segal (1995) explains that the labeling of military women’s achievements as “non-combative” results in a “cultural amnesia” that occurs when “women’s military activities are reconstructed as minor or even non-existent” (p. 761). Furthermore, this disciplining of gender results in the creation of a glass ceiling for uniformed women and exacerbates patriarchal attitudes within the military and the public spheres (Rogers, 1990). The consequences are cyclical. Morris (1996) explains, “To the extent that women are, because of remaining combat exclusions, less likely to become military leaders and more likely to remain in lower echelons, their value in changing the gender norms of military culture is thereby limited” (p. 738).

Additionally, the reiteration of female otherness insulates male-dominated arenas through the devaluation of the female body. Opponents of military integration frequently comment on military women’s “lesser physical capabilities” and assert that women’s biological cycles will impede their ability to fight in combat (D’Amico, 1990; Browne, 2001; DeCew, 1995; Rogers,

1990; Tuten, 1982). Other opponents of military integration argue that the inherent femininity associated with the female body is antithetical to the warrior instincts of the masculine soldier (Rogers, 1990; Browne, 2001). Similarly, female otherness is codified through the reiterations of male camaraderie. Proponents of the combat exclusion assert that “women have negative effects on male combatants performance” because of the sexual differences between men and women (Rogers, 1990, p 173). According to Francine D’Amico (1990), such arguments assert that men share an innate “bond” or “spirit” that enables them to endure the tragedies of war (p. 7). The naturalness of masculine military power is associated exclusively with the male body while its feminine antithesis (and nemesis) is associated exclusively with the female body. Thus, these arguments suggest that performing masculinity effectively requires a potency that is symbolized by the presence of the male body and by the absence of the female soldier. As stated by Jeffords (1989), “While the masculine feels most ‘itself’ in its own presence, it is able to do so only in the knowledge of what it is not, that it is not feminine” (p. 62).

The rhetoric of female otherness is often articulated in conjunction with the rhetoric of female victimization as a means to secure the paternalistic relationship between the male soldier and the female civilian residing behind the frontlines. Consistent with the categorization of men and women into “protector” and “protected” classifications, military culture has often defined its masculine prowess through the mantra, “We must protect our daughters and wives from the dangers and horrors of combat” (Rogers, 1990, p. 175). Thus, the rhetoric of female vulnerability, which often entails the conjuring of images of mutilated female bodies, is rhetorically potent because it taps into cherished ideological definitions of masculinity and femininity. Although the desire to protect individual women is echoed in statements such as “America is not ready to see its wives and mothers return in body bags,” the discourse of female

victimization serves the primary function of protecting military masculinity. Heimark (1997) argues, “One of the real concerns, hidden behind the rhetoric, is not only the protection of femininity but the protection of masculinity” (p. 233). The presence of female bodies on the frontlines threatens to dislodge the taken-for-granted relationship between maleness and masculinity in one of two ways. On one hand, the abuse or death of a female soldier serves as evidence of the protector’s failure because military men’s primary responsibilities have traditionally been associated with protecting women, including servicewomen, from a male enemy’s aggression. On the other hand, military women’s successful performance in combat illustrates that effective performances of masculinity are not intrinsically linked to maleness nor is vulnerability intrinsically linked to femaleness. As Van Crevald (2001) explains, “If [women] *could* fight then much of the war’s purpose would be lost” (p. 37).

Perhaps the most effective arguments used in support of gender segregation in the military are arguments that depict women’s vulnerability to rape. Not only is rape conceptualized as a form of abuse associated with female victimage, but also rape represents the final symbolic expression of the humiliation of the male opponent. Ruth Seifert (1995) concludes that rape “communicates from man to man, so to speak, that the men around the woman in question are not able to protect ‘their’ women. They are thus wounded in their masculinity and marked as incompetent” (p. 58). In war, rape is a literal and symbolic attack on male prowess and masculinity. For example, Ella Shohat (1994) explains that “it’s no accident that the metaphors of ‘the rape of Kuwait’ were used” during Operation Desert Storm, metaphors that were often accompanied by “the insinuation of the possible rapes of American female soldiers by Iraqi captors” (p. 153). The threat of rape invokes fear of humiliation that extends far beyond the sexual assault of female soldiers, particularly when the threat is premised on “dark

rapists” assaulting white women (Shohat, 1994, p. 153). The threat of female victimage calls into question the masculine potency of the military because violence against military women has the potential to destabilize the categories of the protected and protector and to symbolically erode the masculine prowess associated with the victimized country’s national identity.

In sum, the rhetoric of female otherness and victimization perpetuates the devaluation of military women’s worth and insulates the all-male combat zone from female intruders. Military women’s inability to pass as “real” soldiers illustrates that before women enter the military as soldiers, they have already been marked as female. In the following section, I investigate how the military’s regulatory norms of gender are rearticulated through the representations of the body of Jessica Lynch as presented in popular culture accounts of her capture and rescue narrative.

The Capture and Rescue Narrative of Jessica Lynch

Throughout the past three years, the narrative of the capture and rescue of Private Jessica Lynch has received national and international publicity. In the initial months following Lynch’s capture and rescue, many national and regional news sources lauded Lynch for allegedly “firing her weapon until it ran out of ammunition and [for] shooting several enemy soldiers” during the ambush (Heslam, 2003, p. 006). Additionally, many proponents of military integration were hopeful that Lynch’s “triumph” during the ambush would help dispel the myth that servicewomen are incapable of performing effectively in combat or of surviving insurgent attacks. However, within weeks of Lynch’s return to the U.S., the military released several inconsistent accounts of the ambush and suggested that her weapon had jammed during the attack, leaving her vulnerable. Additionally, new medical reports revealed strong evidence suggesting that Lynch had been raped during her captivity. After seven months of conflicting reports detailing the nature of the ambush, Lynch’s treatment in the Iraqi hospital, and her

general medical condition, in November 2003, the “real” Lynch story was circulated in popular culture. Rick Bragg’s biographical account of Lynch’s narrative, Lynch’s exclusive interview with Diane Sawyer, and the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch* made their premieres, and the anecdotes and images of Lynch’s experience as presented in these texts have seeped into the public’s memory (at least temporarily), further complicating the debate over the combat exclusion.

This section examines how the representations of Lynch in popular culture reify the ideological divisions between military masculinity and civilian femininity and fuel resistance against feminism. The representations of the Lynch narrative in these texts warrant a critical analysis for two reasons. First, unlike the initial newspaper coverage of Lynch’s capture, these popular culture artifacts proclaim to reveal the truth about Lynch’s capture and rescue and attempt to resolve the confusion created by the inconsistent reporting circulated in the months immediately following her rescue. Second, and more importantly, the dramatization of Lynch’s capture and rescue, as presented in these artifacts, not only heightens the emotional stakes surrounding the debate over women in combat (as the audience comes to identify with Lynch and then “witnesses” the capture of the military’s sweetheart) but also frames Lynch as the ultimate victim. Although Lynch’s narrative has been featured in thousands of newspaper articles across the nation, the central focus on Lynch in Bragg’s full-length biography, in Diane Sawyer’s “exclusive” interview, and in the made-for-television movie not only exposes a wide audience to the “true” story of Jessica Lynch but also frames Lynch as the quintessential poster child (both literally and figuratively) of all military women.

Innate Femininity: Jessica Lynch and Female Otherness

The representation of Lynch's body as innately female is a dominant theme in the texts that proclaim to reveal the truth about Jessica Lynch. The readability of Lynch's body as a signifier of intrinsic femaleness inhibits her ability to pass as a legitimate (masculine) comrade to her male counterparts. As a quintessential signifier of the naturalness of the two-gender/sex binary, Lynch's body becomes an icon of female otherness and conversely, sustains the codes of hypermasculinity as represented by military culture.

In the book *I Am a Soldier, Too*, the capture and rescue narrative of Lynch is prefaced by a sixty-page explanation of "Jessi's" girlhood, an explanation that accentuates Lynch's ultrafeminine body and personality and infantilizes Lynch by using a diminutive of her name. The first sixty-pages of the book are saturated with feminizing anecdotes that depict Lynch as an embodiment of an *a priori* female essence, a gendered body that is both natural and immutable. According to Bragg, when she broke her arm in the third grade, she insisted on matching her shoestrings with her pink arm cast (p. 24), and in high school, she refused to remain on the cheerleading squad after the school omitted "the little pleated skirt" from the cheerleading uniform (p. 27). Additionally, he describes her flawlessly curled hair, her preoccupation with her own "cuteness," and her altruistic love for children and her family. In this preface, Bragg compares Lynch to "any pretty young woman from the hills, any woman with solid Bs and perfect hair" (p. 32), and frequently refers to her as "The Princesses" or the "doll-like girl" from Palestine, West Virginia (p. 14). Portraying both her psychological and physical fragility, he quotes Lynch's kindergarten school teacher as stating, "Of all of the children, she was the tiniest . . . She was shy. I would carry her around as she held on to my hair" (p. 24). Not only does Bragg dramatize Lynch's fervent conformity to traditional notions of (white) femininity, he

also suggests that her performance of femininity is a natural outcome of her innate femaleness. Bragg explains, “Almost from the time she could walk, she had an idea of how she should look—not so much out of vanity as a sense of order, of coordination” (p. 23). This excerpt suggests that not only is Lynch the model of femininity, as illustrated by her almost obsessive concern with her outward appearance and gentility, but also that the feminine markers of coordination, impeccable fashion, and exterior feminine beauty on her body signify her authentic feminine self.

Because the preface encourages the audience to read Lynch’s body as a signifier of innate femininity, the immutability of Lynch’s femaleness creates a stark juxtaposition to the image of Lynch as a soldier. In his description of Lynch’s entrance into basic training, Bragg writes, “Her fatigues swallowed her like a big frog . . . She looked like a child who has sneaked into her daddy’s closet and tried on a uniform to *play* soldier” (emphasis added, p. 37). The equivocation between Lynch’s military persona and the image of a female child “playing dress up” illustrates the conflicted (and absurd) relationship between Lynch’s marked female body and its performance of masculinity. Furthermore, Bragg emphasizes the otherness of Lynch’s body by contrasting her poorly performed imitation of a soldier with the “real” masculinity of the drill sergeant who “towered over her” and the “short Hispanic sergeant who was built like a potbellied stove and screamed like a cat in the sack, right into her ears” (p. 37). In Bragg’s description, the readability of Lynch’s femaleness undermines her performance of masculinity, and, despite her attire, her “authentic” gender exposes itself through the feminine markings on her body. Similar to the male drag queen who simultaneously performs femininity and emphasizes his maleness, the image of Lynch’s female body cloaked in a masculine wardrobe does little to blur the binaries between gender categories. Ironically, her performance as a

soldier highlights her femininity and draws attention to her incongruous presence in the U.S. military.

Similar to Bragg's depiction of Lynch as a hyperfeminine icon, the *ABC* sponsored exclusive interview with Lynch frames her performance as a soldier in relationship to her gendered body. In her interview with Lynch, Sawyer describes Lynch as "a young girl with a body full of broken bones [who] was carried on a stretcher out of Iraq" (p. 2). After briefly explaining Lynch's ordeal in captivity, Sawyer turns to Lynch and asks, "You thought you were just a girl from Palestine?" Immediately, Lynch responds, "Yeah. I was just, you know, one of the country girls from a little, small town that no one ever heard of our name before" (p. 2). Additionally, this question-and-answer sequence is followed by a series of visual images featuring Lynch's bedroom in Palestine, West Virginia. As the camera pans the neatly organized room full of pictures and high school memorabilia, the voice over explains

This is her bedroom. It's a kind of shrine to the Army and to her comrades who died in the ambush at Nasiriyah. The room was built by the family she knows and loves from the hills and hollows of West Virginia. The mountains invited a little girl with blonde hair and glasses to play hide and seek, and imagine a world beyond. (p. 2)

As Lynch nostalgically describes her simple life in West Virginia, clips of previously conducted interviews flash on the television screen. The audience returns to Lynch's childhood as they listen to her family portray Lynch as "preppy" and "prissy" but always genteel (p. 3). During the segment, her former softball coach describes Lynch's pleasant demeanor and beautiful smile, despite her lack of physical coordination and strength. According to her former coach, although "scrawny 5'3" Lynch could *never* hit the ball, "she gave everything and had a big smile on her face all the time when she was trying to do it" (p. 3). These depictions of Lynch's body as

delicate and athletically inept and the descriptions of her mind as genteel, passive, and nonaggressive feminize Lynch's "authentic" self and encourage the audience to filter its reading of her masculine performance through those representations of feminine authenticity.

Although Lynch's feminine childhood is not featured as a focal point in the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch*, the movie juxtaposes the image of the hypermasculine soldier with images of Lynch's former feminine self in two ways. First, Lynch's passive interactions with her sergeant and the other male soldiers in her company and her almost debilitating fear of being abandoned accentuate Lynch's physical and psychological otherness. In the opening scene of the movie, one of the Humvees from the 507th Ordinance Maintenance Company breaks down in the middle of the Iraqi desert, and several male soldiers file out of the truck in order to assess the damage, discern their location, and radio for help. After all of the soldiers have dismounted the vehicle, the camera closes in on a frightened female face, the face of Jessica Lynch, and the audience hears her high-pitched voice anxiously inquiring about the status of the vehicle and the rest of the company. Lynch's feminine facial characteristics and vocal quality mark her as unmistakably female. Not only do Lynch's facial and bodily characteristics mark her as female, but also her bodily movement and speaking style signify her femininity. For example, when the convoy falls under attack by Saddam loyalists in the city of Nasiriyah, Lynch's shrieking screams and hysterical questioning sharply contrast against the rational, authoritative dialogue between the male soldiers heard in the background. Despite her commanding officer's orders to "stay calm" and "stay focused," Lynch is unable to control her emotional outbursts. Hiding her eyes, she hands her sand-filled gun to another male soldier and watches helplessly as the vehicle comes under attack. She screams, "We're trapped . . . We can't get out of here" as several U.S. male soldiers begin returning fire. Contrasted to the rationality reflected in the male soldiers'

voices and their impeccable control of their bodies, Lynch's frantic speech and disorderly bodily reactions to the violence seem disruptive and inappropriate. Thus, in this scene, the divisions between masculinity and femininity materialize in the juxtaposition between male and female bodies.

Additionally, Lynch's physical and psychological otherness is exacerbated by the disjunction between Lynch's performance as a soldier and her memory of her former feminine self. During times of crisis, Lynch experiences intense disorientation, and her mind flashes back to images of herself as a daughter, sister, and girlfriend and of her dream of becoming a kindergarten teacher. Throughout the movie, the audience is constantly reminded of Lynch's femaleness as these images disrupt the coherence of any narrative depicting Lynch as "just another soldier." Prior to the insurgent attack on the convoy, Lynch *intuitively* senses the presence of danger, and her mind begins to race. The scene of the Iraqi desert is interrupted by Lynch's first flashback in which she imagines herself in her school attire with her hair pulled back into a long ponytail, remembering that she promised her family that she would return home safely. As her father begs her to "remember where she came from," the camera cuts once again to a close-up of Lynch's terrified eyes as she awaits the inevitable attack. In a similar scene, Lynch is lying in an Iraqi hospital bed, fading in and out of consciousness. As she fearfully ponders her fate, her mind flashes back to the moment that changed her life, the day she decided to enlist in the Army. As Lynch and her female schoolmate saunter through their neighborhood with their books in hand, her friend attempts to convince Lynch to acquire a part-time position at Wal-Mart instead of enlisting. Lynch reminds her friend that employment is scarce in Palestine but attempts to allay her friend's anxiety by stating, "I don't want to be in the Army for the rest of my life. I want to be a teacher." Not only do these flashbacks draw attention to Lynch's

female essence, as represented by both her body and her feminine ambitions, but they also shift the representation of reality. Ironically, flashbacks are often depicted as hallucinations or imitations of reality; however, in Lynch's case, these flashbacks *signify* reality. Although the audience might conclude that the convoy *really* is under attack, Lynch's retreat to her authentic female essence exposes her performance as a soldier as being a bad imitation at best. Thus, the flashbacks become signifiers of the "real" Jessica Lynch while her decision to attempt to "play soldier" during wartime is presented as the product of a naïve girl's active imagination.

The representations of innate femaleness as reflected by and through the body of Jessica Lynch sustain notions of female otherness and expose Lynch's performance of masculinity as an unconvincing and absurd performance enacted by a readable female body. The absurdity of the performance becomes tragic during Lynch's captivity as her body becomes a signifier of female victimization and an illustration of the unique vulnerability of the infantile female form.

The Assailing of a Woman/Child

The representation of Lynch as an infantile female victim of war reifies the gender boundaries between the roles (and bodies) of the protector and the protected. Once Lynch's body becomes marked as female, the audience is encouraged to read her victimization by the Iraqi insurgents as both an illustration of the innate vulnerability of the female body and as a rationale for the military's exertion of its masculine potency, a justification for the war. As a representation of both a victimized female and an assailed child, Lynch's body materializes as a justification for preserving the masculine prowess of her male protectors and the patriarchal power of the institution that they represent.

The representations of Lynch's body during the Iraqi ambush and during her captivity, as presented in both Bragg's biography and Sawyer's interview, create an infantilized

representation of Lynch's female essence and construct Lynch's body as a highly visible signifier of female victimage and dependency. In his description of the attack, Bragg writes, "Some of the U.S. soldiers raced to cover and fought back; others clawed frantically at M16s that had been jammed with grime. Inside the Humvee with Lori, a sergeant and two other soldiers, Jessica watched the bullets punch through the windshield, and she lowered her head to her knees, shut her eyes and began to pray" (p. 12). Although the original news reports argued that Lynch fired her weapon until she ran out of ammunition, Bragg explains that Lynch was unable to remove the sand that had seeped into the barrel of her rifle and instead, handed the rifle to her sergeant who tried to fix it but "just threw it back to her in frustration" (p. 68). In her interview with Diane Sawyer, Lynch confirms both Bragg's description of her reaction to the insurgent ambush and his explanation of her weapon's malfunction. She states, "It was scary. It was so scary. I just put my head down and I just prayed. Just prayed away" (p. 19).

The paradoxical image of a frail woman dressed in military fatigues lying in the floor praying while her convoy is under fire has several implications. First, the depiction of Lynch's inability to "stay in character" during times of crisis illustrates the tension between Lynch's attempted performance of masculinity and her innate femininity. Her bodily instinct to retreat from the violent battlefield is coded as both a sign of her body's resistance to her performance of a soldier and as a sign of her inability to control her body's *natural* responses to the crisis. Second, the image of Lynch lying in the vehicle curled up in the fetal position collapses the distinction between the two members of the protected class: women and children. Hence, Lynch's body materializes as the Woman/Child, the ultimate signifier of the childlike innocence of the womenandchildren described by Cynthia Enloe. Although Enloe (2004) explains that the image of womenandchildren is often a product of the mainstream media's conflation of women

with children, in both the biography and the interview, Lynch emerges *as* the Woman/Child because she actually embodies both categorical images. Finally, these excerpts illustrate one of the risks associated with permitting an infantile female body to “play war” with the “real” soldiers. Lynch’s dependency on her commanding officer and the other male soldiers during the battle and her physical and psychological retreat from the battle not only put her life at risk but also endangered her comrades. Thus, these representations suggest that the presence of women in and around the combat zone dilutes the masculine potency of the military and inhibits male soldiers’ ability to perform their own duties as the nation’s protectors.

As both Bragg and Sawyer attempt to reveal the truth about Lynch’s experience in the Iraqi hospital, images of Lynch’s infantile female body materialize again, often through the depiction of assailed female innocence. In his biography, Bragg describes the pain experienced by Lynch who had suffered severe injuries to her body. His depiction of her broken female body not only solicits the sympathy of his audience, but also suggests that the injuries suffered by Lynch were more severe than the injuries suffered by her comrades (even those who died during the ambush) because Lynch’s body was uniquely vulnerable to physical abuse. Furthermore, because medical reports suggested that some of Lynch’s bodily injuries were almost assuredly signs of sexual assault, the magnitude of her victimization increases dramatically as the audience reads Lynch’s broken body as representing the ultimate violation of her (female) personhood. As Bragg depicts the bodily injuries of Lynch, he also describes her emotional distress regarding her fear of abandonment by her male comrades. As quoted by Bragg, Lynch stated, “I just wanted it to all be back like it was” (p. 99). Immediately following Lynch’s statement, Bragg describes a flashback in which Lynch imagines her former childlike life in Palestine, West Virginia. Bragg writes, “As a girl, she could hide all day in a refrigerator box. Maybe she could

dream a box, or a Heidi movie, something green and happy with children in it, and disappear until things got better” (p. 99). Similarly, in the interview with Diane Sawyer, Lynch, who continues to suffer from amnesia, explains the humiliation she experienced when she learned that she had been sexually violated. Although Lynch’s discussion of the assault is limited to a single statement in which she begs America to “forget about that,” earlier in the interview Lynch explains that during times of crises, she frequently “went to her happy place” in order to escape reality (p. 2). The discrepancy between Lynch’s bodily condition and her mind’s retreat to a utopian childhood reconstitute the image of the Woman/Child. On one hand, the description of Lynch’s injuries and Bragg’s depiction of her “broken body” mark Lynch as an adult woman, especially in relation to her tragic sexual assault. On the other hand, Lynch’s flashbacks reflect the thoughts of a naïve child. Thus, Lynch becomes an icon of the child trapped in a woman’s body.

Finally, the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch* reiterates the infantile nature of femaleness through its comparisons of Lynch and the young daughter of Mohammad. After Lynch is captured by the Iraqis, the camera fades, and the audience sees a young Iraqi girl, approximately eight years of age, walking with her father through the streets of Nasiriyah. Suddenly, Iraqi soldiers storm the dirt road, dragging a mutilated body of an Iraqi woman who had allegedly waved at an American helicopter. Instinctively, Mohammad shelters his daughter’s eyes from the violent scene and assures her all is well. Immediately following that scene, Mohammad visits his wife in the Iraqi hospital and sees Lynch lying in the bed, her body completely bandaged and blood seeping from a few of her wounds. Outraged, Mohammad explains to his wife that the Iraqi’s treatment of Lynch “is an injustice” and exclaims, “She is just a girl. A child When I look at that girl in the hospital bed, I think of our daughter. Would you want her

treated that way?” Compelled to protect Lynch as if she were his own female child, Mohammad seeks out the U.S. soldiers stationed at the outskirts of the city. When the soldiers ask him why he would risk the lives of his own family for the sake of one American girl, he explains, “I not knowing what they are planning to do to her (sic). She looks so helpless. So very young. I have a daughter myself When I see her, my heart is cut.” The comparison between Lynch and Mohammad’s young daughter influences the audience’s reading of Lynch’s capture and rescue narrative in several ways. First, not only do these representations infantilize Lynch, but they also universalize female vulnerability and feminine dependency through their cross-cultural and cross-generational comparisons. Although the actual lives of women vary based upon their social location within different cultures and various structures of power, the parallels constructed in the movie essentialize the experience of women and the essence of femininity. Second, the docudrama reinforces the binary gender relations reflected in the protector/protected categories by contrasting vulnerable, dependent women and children to their invincible, autonomous male rescuers. Similar to *Saving Private Ryan*, the film for which the Lynch docudrama was named, *Saving Jessica Lynch* has little to do with Lynch’s experiences and instead is a narrative depicting the heroic tale of her rescues. Throughout the hour and half long film, Lynch is seen for approximately thirty minutes, all of which feature her as a *female* victim of war who is contrasted to her *male* heroes. Thus, even the brief scenes that feature Lynch as the primary character serve the purpose of sustaining the heroic myths surrounding military masculinity.

The representations of Lynch as the embodiment of both the vulnerability associated with the adult female body (as illustrated by the sexual assault) and the innocence and helplessness associated with a child construct Lynch as the ultimate victim. Lacking the mental and physical capacity to defend her adult female body, her attempted performance of masculinity places her in

grave danger. Thus, her endangered presence in the male-dominated combat zone legitimates her masculine protectors' exertion of their phallic power. The reification of the protector/protected categories is facilitated by Lynch's embodiment of the Woman/Child. Her iconic representation of infantile female vulnerability leaves the audience questioning whether women should be afforded *any* role in the U.S. military.

Jessica Lynch: A Representation of "Everygirl"

The framing of Lynch as an exclusively gendered body not only suggests that Lynch's innate femininity prohibited her effectively performance in combat but also reifies an essentialist definition of the category "woman." The representations of Lynch's capture and rescue narrative, as depicted in Bragg's biography, Sawyer's interview, and the made-for-television docudrama, reduce Lynch's identity to its seemingly natural *female* signifiers, thus avoiding discussions of the ways in which gender identity is complicated by issues of race and class. The depiction of Lynch as *the* representative of "womanhood" is made possible through the reification of women's innate biological similarities and through the erasure of their dissimilar identity markers. By defining Lynch's identity solely in terms of her femaleness, the representations of Lynch in popular culture construct Lynch as the synecdochic representative of all women by reducing femininity to a common denominator, the marked female body. Paradoxically, however, although Lynch's body is depicted in these texts as an un-classed, un-raced, female body, it is Lynch's embodiment of traditional notions of white, "middle-class" femininity that makes Lynch the ideal representative of "woman." Thus, these popular culture representations tap into emotionally charged cultural mythologies regarding the need to protect white, heterosexual, middle-class women while simultaneously framing Lynch as "Everygirl."

Although, as Deepa Kumar (2004) explains, Lynch emerges as the iconic representative of American casualties in Iraq because she embodies the norms of white femininity, Lynch's whiteness is often elided in these popular culture texts. First, the invisibility of servicewomen of color not only literally erases racial differences but also symbolically suggests that Lynch (a white female) represents all servicewomen and is the archetypal casualty of war. Although both African-American Shoshana Johnson and Native American Hopi Lori Piestewa suffered severe injuries during the attack at Nasariyah, neither servicewoman received significant attention in the three texts.³ In both Bragg's biography and in Sawyer's interview, Johnson is never mentioned and Piestewa is mentioned briefly, albeit always in reference to her feminine relationship with Lynch. Similarly, in the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch*, Johnson is featured only twice for several seconds as one of the many soldiers injured during the ambush. Although Piestewa, the driver in the supply convoy, received more attention, her injuries and eventual death were mentioned only in passing. The invisibility of Johnson and Piestewa in these texts not only constructs a selective representation of the ambush of 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company (which is ironic considering that these texts proclaim to reveal the "true" nature of the ambush) but also essentializes Lynch's femininity (and subsequently, the category "woman") by focusing on the female signifiers located on (and within) her race-neutral body. Put simply, the absence of women of color makes possible the presence of Lynch's whiteness while simultaneously framing Lynch as seemingly unmarked by race.

Additionally, signifiers of racial difference are also rendered invisible or insignificant in these popular culture texts through cross-racial and cross-cultural comparisons of femininity. As explained in the previous section, the cross-cultural comparisons between Lynch and Mohammad's young daughter essentialize the category of "woman" by obscuring racial and

cultural differences, thus erasing the signifiers of Lynch's Western whiteness. Additionally, both Bragg's biography and *Saving Jessica Lynch* frame the relationship between Piestewa and Lynch as a familial relationship hence, obscuring the issue of race by depicting their relationship as biologically both literally and symbolically. For example, although Bragg mentions Piestewa's Hopi lineage, he defines her almost exclusively as "a single mother of two" whose children "were her life" (p. 50). Describing an afternoon in which Piestewa's children visited their mother at Fort Bliss, Bragg writes, "They played in the barracks, and Jessi—who could never resist children—let them ride her like a dime-store pony. . . Jessi became, by degrees, part of that family, just one more person Lori looked after" (p. 50). Similarly, in an opening scene in *Saving Jessica Lynch*, Piestewa is featured driving a Humvee toward Nasiriyah, staring longingly at the photographs of her children as she describes the joys of motherhood to Lynch. Similar to the comparisons between Lynch and Mohammad's daughter, the representations of Lynch and Piestewa's biological relationship (i.e. mother and child) reify Lynch's juvenile femaleness, which is contrasted to both her male comrades' performances of manliness and Piestewa's performance of motherhood. More importantly, these depictions suggest that the biological similarities between women eclipse their racial and cultural differences. Thus, the cross-cultural and cross-racial comparisons constructed in these popular culture texts define femininity and the category "woman" as almost exclusively biological, as illustrated by the reciprocal love between mother and daughter.

Issues of class also are obscured in popular culture representations of the Lynch narrative. Depictions that equivocate Lynch's female markers with the category "woman" suggest that women are governed by their innocent and juvenile idealism, making them uniquely unsuited for the military. All three texts frame Lynch's enlistment not as an economic necessity, but

primarily as a result of her naiveté. For example, Bragg writes, “She could have worked part-time and gone to college or married, even married money. . .She wasn’t content with that. . .She didn’t see [the military] as a last chance. She did it for adventure. She did it to see the world” (p. 32). Additionally, although Lynch acknowledges the employment scarcity in Palestine, West Virginia during her interview with Diane Sawyer, the interview portrays Lynch as an adventurous little girl who desired to travel the world. After describing Lynch’s first visit to a “real” mall at the age of seventeen, Sawyer asks Lynch, “So, when you were sitting around dreaming of seeing the world, what did you dream it would be like?” (p. 5). Lynch replies, “I mean, I just think of places like Hawaii, the beaches. . .And the water is just so clear. And that was what I wanted to do, to get away. I’ve never been to a beach or anything my whole life” (p. 5). The depictions of Lynch’s idealism and romanticism, particularly when contrasted to the consequences of war (as signified by images of her “broken” body) suggests that Lynch’s false sense of “reality” inspired her enlistment, thus deflecting attention away from the economic reasons underlying her decision to enlist. In a similar vein, the representations of Lynch’s flashbacks as depicted in *Saving Jessica Lynch* contrast Lynch’s almost idyllic life in the hills of West Virginia and her dreams of world travel with images of the barren deserts in Iraq. Such contrast construct a dichotomy between the romantic fairytale dreams of military servicewomen and the realities of the frontlines, suggesting that military women simply “do not know what they are getting themselves into” when enlisting in the military. In all three texts, Lynch’s enlistment is portrayed as idealistic and emotionally-driven, thus recuperating her military performance into traditional binary notions of gender that are premised on the distinction between the Rational Man and the Emotional Woman. Additionally, by equivocating her irrationality with her biological femaleness, the complexities surrounding the category “woman” are erased in favor of

a totalizing category in which all biological females can be confined and disciplined. Rather than interrogating the economic limitations that prompt the enlistment of individuals from disadvantaged socio-economic groups (that include both men and women), the depiction of Lynch as only female frames her enlistment as a mere choice made by a naïve girl, thus suggesting that women enter the military not out of necessity but out of misguided romanticism.

In sum, the popular culture representations of Lynch construct a selective definition of “woman,” and these representations eschew issues of race and class and simultaneously affirm particular notions of middle-class white femininity. In these texts, Lynch comes to represent “Everygirl,” an ideological category that defines femininity exclusively in terms of the female signifiers written on all women’s bodies and erases the ways that race and class always already construct the experience of femininity. Not only does this erasure of race and class obscure political discussions of categories of identity and material constraints, but it also makes possible Lynch’s iconic status in popular and political culture, particularly in relation to debates over the combat exclusion.

Fueling the Attacks on Feminism

Although feminist ideology has always been a prime target for many right-wing conservatives and, in recent years for postfeminists who dismiss feminism as either a dangerous political project or an outdated political platform, the Jessica Lynch narrative has fueled a new round of attacks against feminism by news columnists and the American public in general. When Lynch’s story first hit the front pages of newspapers across the country, opponents of the combat exclusion and some feminists hoped that Lynch’s heroic story would dispel the mythology of women’s biological and psychological otherness and create an impetus for reevaluating the political and social implications of combat exclusion statute. Unfortunately, as

the story unfolded, the narrative of Lynch's capture and rescue became a contemporary justification for the combat exclusion, a justification grounded in the same ideological myths that have barred women from combat operations for over half of a century. Furthermore, the publicity surrounding the premiere of *Saving Jessica Lynch*, the release of Lynch's biography, and her exclusive interview with Sawyer reinvigorated the anti-feminist claim that women are biologically and psychologically different from men and thus, should be banned from the front lines. This section argues that as Lynch's body materialized as a signifier of women's biological and psychological otherness and vulnerability, new attacks against feminism were being launched by members of the mainstream public and social conservatives, and these attacks have received a significant amount of coverage in national print news coverage.⁴

According to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* deputy editorial editor Jay Bookman (2004), the Lynch story provided right-wing conservatives such as Rush Limbaugh a new round of ammunition for their assault on the feminist argument that women and men are fundamentally equal. In the editorial, Bookman details Limbaugh's frustration with the military's refusal to release medical information detailing the severity of Lynch's injuries. Paraphrasing Limbaugh, Bookman (2004) writes, "He wanted to know if Lynch had been raped, he said, not out of voyeurism but because it might shut up those feminists who are always griping about letting women serve alongside men in the military" (p. 9A). Although the scathing criticism of conservatives such as Limbaugh may seem predictable, the frequent censuring of feminism by some national print journalists and members of the mainstream public suggests that anti-feminist sentiments extend beyond the realm of right-wing conservatism. Drawing on the representations of Lynch's frail, female, victimized body, several newspaper articles and editorials deride feminists for their willingness to martyr young girls for their political cause. Twelve of the

thirty-six articles that mentioned feminism in relationship to Lynch explicitly assert that feminism is responsible for the torture and rape of young military women such as Lynch. For example, an article featured in the *Sunday Times*, veteran war reporter Kate Adie is quoted as stating, “Women don’t have the right stuff for the front line” (Driscoll, 2004, p. 9). When asked about her interpretation of the Jessica Lynch story, Adie replies, “The politically correct argument says that you don’t need physical body weight, you don’t need to be able to strangle people or whatever, but things are not going like that if you look at the kinds of things that American soldiers are running into in Iraq and Afghanistan. It’s pretty basic stuff” (Driscoll, 2004, p. 9). According to Adie, the tragic narrative of Jessica Lynch illustrates that assigning women to combat in the name of “political correctness” will result in a decrease in military readiness, disrupt the bonding between male soldiers, and endanger the lives of many women soldiers. Another article featured in the editorial section of the *Chicago Sun Times* explains that Private Jessica Lynch “is no Sergeant York or Audie Murphy, men of valor and the most decorated veterans of World Wars I and II, respectively. Even Lynch seems to recognize the difference” (Hart, 2003, p.32). Criticizing the selective attention paid to Lynch by feminist advocates, the editorial continues

Much of this can be laid at the feet of feminists who want to use Lynch as their poster girl for the “I can do anything better than you” feminized military. There are other “poster girls” they don’t want to talk about. Single mom Casaundra Grant, who lost her legs in Iraq after they were pinned under a tank, for one. And Lynch’s friend, Lori Piestewa, another single mom who lost her life. (Hart, 2003, p.32)

This passage assigns culpability to feminists in three ways. First, the rape and mistreatment of Lynch in the Iraqi hospital is depicted as a direct consequence of feminists’ insistence for equal

opportunity, even the equal opportunity to die alongside men in combat. Second, the editorial charges feminism with obscuring the violence committed against women in combat by selecting Lynch as the “poster child” survivor of the atrocities committed against her rather than increasing public awareness about the many women who lost their lives in combat. Third, the editorial implies that feminists have committed a two-tiered assault on motherhood by risking the lives of mothers selected to fight in combat operations and by encouraging mothers (and potential mothers) to serve in combat operations instead of fulfilling their *natural* roles in childbearing and childrearing. In a similar vein, in an editorial published in *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Elaine Donnelly (2003) states, “Feminists continue to celebrate the capture of the three brave but unfortunate enlisted women as a ‘victory’ for equal rights. On the contrary, approval of gender-neutral violence signals a breakdown in civilized values” (p. G6).⁵ The editorial suggests that because sexual assault and rape “have been used as weapons against women but not men,” the feminist ambition to overturn the combat exclusion would exacerbate “the uniquely cruel” treatment of women POW’s and “sacrifice cultural respect for women on the altar of ‘equality’” (Donnelly, 2003, p. G6).

Several other articles explicitly address the representation of Lynch in the docudrama, biography, and interview as evidence that the military’s decision to assign women such as Lynch anywhere near combat will result in more tragedies and, in general, feminize the U.S. military. For example, on November 19, 2004, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* published an article titled “Lynch: Soldier or girlie-girl?” that argued that Lynch’s narrative offered a “cautionary tale” regarding women’s role in combat. According to columnist Kathleen Parker (2003),

A 5-foot-4-inch, 100-pound woman has no place in a war zone nor, arguably, in the military. The feminist argument that women can do anything men can do is so absurd that

it seems unworthy of debate. That some women are as able as some men in some circumstances hardly constitutes a defense for “girling” down our military -- and putting men at greater risk -- so that the Jessica Lynches can become kindergarten teachers.

Lynch is not so much “a symbol of Bush administration propaganda,” as Frank Rich wrote in *The New York Times*, as she is a victim of the politically correct military career myth sold to young women through feminist propaganda. (p. 21)

Additionally, Parker concludes, “The book is not the story of a soldier. It is the hijacked fairy tale of a scared, ‘prissy’ little girl who wanted to be taken care of . . . and worried constantly about being left alone. Such that one is left numbed by the single question that needs asking: What the hell was Jessica Lynch doing in the U.S. Army?” (p. 21). In another article published in the *Star Tribune*, staff writer Neal Justin (2004) predicts that “damsel-in-distress movies such as ‘Saving Jessica Lynch’” may “incur the wrath of some feminists” who argue that the representation of Lynch in the movie reinforces notions of biological sexual differences between men and women (p. 23E). However, Justin poignantly asks, “How can anyone complain when they’re true stories?” (p. 23 E). As illustrated in these remarks, in many instances, the popular culture representations of Lynch’s immutable femininity serve as “evidence” of women’s innate biological and psychological difference from men, and the narratives of Lynch’s failed performance in combat are reiterated as the inevitable consequences of incorporating women in combat operations.

For many people, Lynch’s body has “come to matter” as an icon of female essence, a symbol used to sustain the gender binaries both inside and outside the military culture. As Sloop (2004) explains, the representation of gender as authentic or innate (as in the Joan/John case and the Jessica Lynch story) undermines feminism because evidence that appears to negate *some*

feminist claims that gender is a construction or fluid performance is interpreted by the mainstream media as a complete disavowal of *all* feminist projects (p. 48-49). Thus, the Jessica Lynch story “faults” feminism for another dangerous experiment. The conclusion is that the sexual assault and victimization of military women and the erosion of masculine prowess are the inevitably result of a failed politics that attempts to belie the reality that men and women are fundamentally different.

Conclusion

The popular culture representations of Lynch’s capture and rescue narrative, as depicted in Bragg’s biography, Sawyer’s interview, and *Saving Jessica Lynch*, not only attempt to “set the record straight” by documenting the intimate details of Lynch’s experience in Iraq but also attempt to provide an explanation for Lynch’s tragic capture by decoding the messages written on her body. The representations in all three texts suggest that Lynch’s biological and immutable femininity became a contributor (if not the sole cause) of her inability to effectively perform the role of a masculine soldier and subsequently, resulted in her capture and torture by the Iraqis. These texts draw attention to Lynch’s feminine otherness, as signified by her biological difference, feminine speech and style, and irrationality, thereby creating a sharp contrast between “real” masculine warriors and their feminine impersonators. Additionally, the texts’ framing of Lynch’s victimized female body suggests that Lynch’s presence on the battlefield created a double-liability for her unit. As the embodiment of the Woman/Child, Lynch signifies women’s dependency on men, and the depictions of her fragile, broken body reify the distinctions between the protectors and those in need of protection. Thus, despite her claim that “she is a soldier, too,” the texts suggest that Lynch’s biological femininity inevitably impeded her ability to perform the masculine role of soldier alongside her male comrades.

Moreover, the presentations of Lynch in popular culture as exclusively female essentialize the category “woman” and obscures the ways in which Lynch’s body materializes in relationship to other identity categories such as race and class. Finally, because these texts are presented in popular culture as true accounts of Lynch’s ordeal in Iraq, mainstream media and the public are able to use these texts as unbiased evidence that affirms the need for the combat exclusion statute. Not only do these texts enable opponents of military integration to stymie the debate over the combat exclusion, but also these texts have precipitated new assaults on feminism, the offending politic that continues to advocate the martyring of more Jessica Lynches under the guise of equality.

The popular culture representations of Jessica Lynch not only have constructed a selective representation of Lynch by equating her failure on the battlefield with her innately feminine body but also have galvanized the political debate over repealing the combat exclusion. Even if we assume that all of the texts’ claims are accurate, they are still selective and partial representations of both Lynch and military women in general. First, the media’s almost obsessive focus on Lynch (as illustrated by the numerous feature stories in print media, exclusive television interviews, and popular culture productions featuring the capture and rescue narrative) eclipses a thorough discussion of the plight of the other soldiers, in particular the male soldiers who were captured. Although most national newspapers paid lip service to the other eleven U.S. POWs in their initial reports and briefly explained that both Johnson and Piastewa had been severely injured during the ambush, most reports did not mention the male soldiers by name. Mass media’s early preoccupation with Lynch was exacerbated by the premieres of Bragg’s biography, the made for television docudrama, and Sawyer’s interview, all of which framed Lynch as the ultimate victim (and perhaps the only “real” victim) of the Iraqi ambush. Thus,

Lynch is more than an icon for American casualties; she has come to signify the primary casualty, a representation that encourages the audience to search for explanations for Lynch's unique inability to effectively perform as a soldier.

Second, in answer to the audience's demands for an explanation, all three texts suggest a causal relationship between Lynch's immutable, biological femininity (which by definition makes her a second-class soldier) and her capture in Nasiriyah. The texts' conflation of Lynch's capture with her femininity assigns a biological explanation for her capture and torture by the Iraqis and constructs Lynch as an *unnatural* fit for the military in general and for combat in particular. Similarly, all three artifacts contrast the masculine superiority of Lynch's male comrades to Lynch's feminine ineptness. Ironically, however, the biological explanation for both greatness and failure is selectively deployed. For example, none of the texts provide a biological rationale detailing the deficiencies of masculinity to explain the Iraqi's capture of the eight male soldiers. Additionally, none of the artifacts explain in detail the nature of the male soldiers' injuries, hence constructing the gendered markings on the male body as irrelevant to men's failures in combat. In sum, the texts' obsession with Lynch and her innate femininity not only deflect attention away from the male soldiers' failures in battle but also suggests that women's failures can be explained biologically while men's failures are the result of either individual flaws unrelated to gender or an unsuccessful heroic attempt (such as protecting a convoy and the women in it).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the representations of Lynch in popular culture galvanize the debate over women in combat by constructing Lynch as a synecdochic representation of all military women. All three texts frame Lynch's narrative as a contemporary version of tragic epic in which the heroine is unable to overcome her innate tragic flaw (in this

case her femininity) and hence, experiences her fall. Fortunately, in the denouement to this story, the heroine is rescued by her male protectors, although she can never be completely rescued from or by herself. Unfortunately, because Lynch's tragic flaw is constructed as being her immutable female essence, which identifies itself through the markings on her body, opponents of military integration can argue that the signs of femininity serve as predictors of the inevitability of future disasters on the battlefield. Thus, proponents of the combat exclusion can compare the gender markings on Lynch's body with the gendered markings on the bodies on other military women, thereby asserting that all military women are inescapably feminine and hence, unfit for battle. Such a strategy not only encourages the public to equivocate Lynch with all other military women but also places a simplified biological explanation of women's capabilities (or lack thereof) at the forefront of public debate over the combat exclusion. Ironically, although thousands of military women have performed effectively in military settings, including some combat operations, these texts suggest that the success of those women will be inevitably overshadowed by their innate feminine impulse, which will result in the victimization of more military women.

In their attempt to reveal the "true" story of Jessica Lynch, Bragg's biography *I Am a Soldier, Too*, the docudrama *Saving Jessica Lynch*, and Diane Sawyer's exclusive interview with Lynch also reveal a particular truth about the "real" gender of Jessica Lynch by framing her body as an *a priori* signifier of gender that exists prior to signification. Although this analysis does not dispute the factual validity of the claims presented in these texts, I hope to complicate their representations of Lynch's body as a static and immutable sign of her authentic gender and explore the ways in which such representations have skewed the public debate over women in combat. Understanding the ways in which Lynch's body materializes as a hyperfeminine icon,

and subsequently, a poor performer of military masculinity, may provide insight into the obstacles inhibiting military women's ability to be read as "real" soldiers and may complicate some of the most cherished gender norms that regulate and discipline gendered bodies in the military.

Notes

¹ African-American women were not officially admitted into the military until World War II due to the concerted lobbying by African-American civilian nurses. When first admitted, African-American nurses were only allowed to care for African-American soldiers. African-American nurses were not fully admitted into the Army and Navy Nurse Corps until 1945 (Enloe, 1983, p. 103-104).

² During the 1960s and 1970s, David Reimer and his twin brother were the subjects of Dr. John Money's gender reassignment experiment known as the Joan/John case. After David received a botch circumcision, the Reimer family solicited the medical assistance of Money who insisted that all children are "gender neutral" until they are two or three years of age. Money persuaded the family to raise David as if he were female, arguing that he would mature into a well-adjusted young woman. After an awkward childhood, at the age of fourteen, David discovered the truth about the circumcision and his first gender reassignment. Immediately, David insisted on being reassigned as male. Many medical professionals purported that the failure of Money's experiment regarding gender reassignment confirmed that gender is inextricably linked to sex and that sex and gender identity are determined by nature rather than by nurture.

³ Piastewa died in the Iraqi hospital shortly after the attack, and her body was transported back to the United States after Lynch's rescue. Johnson, who is now petitioning the United States government for additional disability benefits, continues to experience complications after being shot in the foot by a Saddam loyalist.

⁴ Using the Lexis-Nexis database, I gathered all of the national newspaper articles published in the past year that discuss Lynch's story in relationship to feminism. This section examines fifty-three articles including articles printed in the editorial and opinion sections of major U.S. newspapers.

⁵ Donnelly is a member of the 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces and is president of the Center for Military Readiness.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ENIGMATIC LYNNDIE ENGLAND: GENDERED EXPLANATIONS FOR THE PRISONER ABUSE SCANDAL AT ABU GHRAIB

In April 2004, four months after the Department of Defense ordered an internal investigation into allegations of prisoner abuse at the U.S.-controlled detainment facility at Abu Ghraib, a classified report, as well as a classified CD containing graphic photographs of physical and sexual abuse committed against Iraqi POWs by U.S. troops, was leaked to *60 Minutes II*. The photographs featured images such as naked Iraqi detainees forced to form a human pyramid or positioned in humiliating sexual positions, the intimidation of naked Iraqis by snarling dogs, and a detainee forced to stand on top of a cardboard box with electrical wiring attached to various parts of his body. Although the graphic abuse featured in the photographs was, itself, shocking to the American public as well as to the international community, the *source* of the abuse featured in two of the most widely circulated photographs became a primary focus of intense public inquiry and criticism: a petite female soldier named Lynndie England.¹ In one of the photographs featured on *60 Minutes II*, Pfc. England smiles at the camera as she points mockingly at the genitals of a hooded, naked Iraqi detainee and gives a disturbing “thumbs-up” sign. In another photograph, England, again smiling and giving a “thumbs-up,” holds the end of a leash that is connected to the neck of a detainee who is lying on the floor.

Although seven soldiers were court-martialled for their participation in the abuse, the photographs of England and her subsequent court-martial became a focal point of public discussions regarding the Abu Ghraib scandal.² For many members of the mainstream public,

the explanation that the perpetrators were just a “few bad apples” seemed to at least partially account for the conduct of the male soldiers at Abu Ghraib; however, the gendered deviance associated with England’s conduct induced extreme anxiety. Additionally, England’s claim that she “was just following orders” did not seem to quell the public’s fascination (and disgust) with her conduct at Abu Ghraib. The question that weighed heavy on many minds was “how could a *female* soldier commit such heinous acts of violence?”

Although the representations of Iraqi women and the narrative of Jessica Lynch rearticulate the dichotomy between active male warriors and passive female victims, the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib complicated public discussions regarding national identity, militarism, and gender. The photographs of Abu Ghraib, particularly the photographs of England, challenged normative assumptions regarding the association between femininity, nonviolence, and passivity and threatened the normative gender expectations upon which military masculinity relies. This chapter explores how dominant public discourse surrounding the Abu Ghraib crisis attempts to constrain the meaning of these acts of gender deviance by articulating them within the realm of normative gender categories and heteronormativity. Specifically, my analysis examines how dominant news media’s characterizations of and explanations for England’s transgressive behavior function to reify gender binaries and to limit the disruptive potential of the transgressive acts at Abu Ghraib. First, I discuss the theoretical concepts regarding the construction of intelligible gender/sex identities and conversely, the persistent disciplining of “excessive” or aberrant gender performativity. Second, I explore how England emerges in dominant public discourse as both a distinctly female body as well as an ambiguously gendered individual and as a sexual deviant. Finally, I analyze the explanatory

narratives that are circulated in mainstream media, narratives that both attempt to make sense of England's deviant behavior and attempt to rehabilitate the sanctity of military masculinity.³

Gender Transgressions and Intelligibility: Disciplining “Unfeminine” Women

Gender and sex categories are ideological (and ontological) in nature, and the maintenance of binary notions of femininity and masculinity is achieved through the regulation and disciplining of gender performances and through the prohibition of gender transgression. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1999) argues that the preservation of the two-sex/gender schema requires the constant rearticulation of “intelligible genders” which to a large degree “institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (p. 23). Furthermore, she explains that the seemingly natural and static divisions between sex and gender categories are reified through the invisibility and recuperation of performative acts that have the potential to complicate or to “trouble” the two sex/gender binary.

Butler (1999) writes

In other words, the specters of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the “expression” or “effect” of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice. (p. 23)

Paradoxically, although the rigid and persistent disciplining of potentially transgressive acts illustrates the inherent instability of gender binaries and of heteronormativity, those acts are often explained in ways that reassert the intelligibility of male-female sex differences (Sloop, 2000; Butler, 1993, 1999). Indeed, even the labeling of particular performances as transgressive or aberrant reifies the normalcy of the two sex-gender schema and constrains the disruptive

potential of performances that could potentially trouble the stability of gender categories.

According to Sloop (2004), “Gender trouble is always limited in its deconstructive potential, and public arguments involving cases of gender trouble are persistently ‘disciplined,’ contained within the realm of gender normativity” (p. 12).

Because the maintenance of normative gender and sex categories is often achieved through the disciplining of mundane performances of gender (e.g. dress, speaking style, interpersonal behavior, etc.), many transgressive acts are easily recuperated back into the two-sex/gender schema, drawing little attention to their disruptive potential. However, when particular acts of gender transgression, perceived to be extraordinary in nature, become highly visible in public discourse, the recuperation of those acts often entails the circulation and reproduction of elaborate narratives that explain the abnormality in accordance with the normative gender (and often sexual) expectations associated with male and female bodies. That is, dominant discourses usually operate in ways that increase the rigidity of gender categories rather than in ways that complicate those categories. Additionally, public accounts of transgressive acts frequently begin with the fundamental assumption that individuals are, by nature, sexed and gender bodies and then proceed to illustrate how even the most transgressive behavior operates in relation to “appropriate” sex and gender identities. As Sloop (2000) concludes, “In general, bodies are forced into male/female categories; once in these categories, they either need to properly perform (i.e., perform according to gender norms) or the search is on for the causes of their “malfunction”” (p. 182).

A considerable body of research has been devoted to investigating the ways in which “excessive,” ambiguous, or “abnormal” performances of gender, sex, and sexuality are constrained by regulatory practices associated with the maintenance of heteronormativity and

gender binaries. For example, scholarship regarding transgenderism, including the work of Susan Stryker (1998), Alan Hyde (1997) and Gordene MacKenzie (1994), explores the construction of transgendered and queer identities within dominant culture and provides critical insight into both the productive potential of those identities as well as to the constraining practices that limit that potential. Moreover, Kate Bornstein's (1994) *Gender Outlaws* discusses the transgender movement's struggle against "gender-defenders," a term that describes the discursive and material practices that attempt to maintain the rigidity of bi-gender, heteronormative intelligibility. Additionally, Suzanne Kessler (1990, 1998) and Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) have investigated popular and medical discourses that situate intersexed children's sex/gender identities within discrete categories of maleness and femaleness. More recently, in her historical account of the growing transgender movement, Joanne Meyerowitz (2002) explains that although the increased visibility of transgendered individuals has loosened normative gender expectations to a certain degree, dominant discourses and media representations regarding transgendered individuals frequently constrain rather than promote alternative understandings of the ways in which gender, sex, and sexuality function in relation to one another.

As a point of clarification, although examples of gender transgression frequently highlight acts involving "passing," cross-dressing, sex/gender reassignments, and the gendered, sexed, and sexual identity of intersexed or transgendered individuals, "aberrant" gender performances are not defined exclusively in terms of "extreme" acts of transgenderism. Rather, gender transgression is often associated, particularly in dominant discourse, with any behavior that has the potential to disrupt the heteronormative, bi-gender schema. For example, Leslie Feinberg's (1996) critical analysis of dominant representations of Dennis Rodman's cross-

dressing performances suggests that even partial gender-bending garners significant public inquiry and anxiety, prompting the circulation of dominant narratives that attempt to position those performances (and subsequently, the individuals responsible for those performances) within intelligible gender categories. In a similar vein, Judith Halberstam argues that the disciplining of female masculinity includes the regulation of gendered acts including lesbianism, bathroom practices, and women's participation in "masculine" activities as well as the often violent censoring of women who attempt to "pass" as men. Thus, my analysis takes seriously Sabrina Ramet's (1996) claim that a critical examination of "gender reversals" or acts that are articulated as violations of one's "appropriate" gender/sex identity must include discussions of gender performances, "whether total or partial, which [bring] a person closer to the other (or in polygender terms, *another*) gender" (p. 2). That is, this case study examines how the labeling of particular acts as "transgressive" or as "aberrant" and the disciplining of those acts function in relation to dominant society's "understanding of what is possible, proper, and perverse in gender-linked behavior" and in relation to the normative understanding of "how many genders there are" (Ramet, 1996, p. 2).

According to Halberstam (1998), although almost all acts of gender transgression induce some degree of public discomfort and inquiry, female masculinity (or "unfeminine" femaleness) is particularly disconcerting for the dominant public. She explains that "unlike male femininity, which fulfills a kind of ritual function in male homosocial cultures," female masculinity is often read "as a pathological sign of misidentity and maladjustment," a discontinuity that signifies that something has gone terribly wrong in the development of one's gender, sex, and sexual identity (p. 9). That is, female masculinity and "unfeminine" femaleness signify a particularly insidious form of deviance that often encourages extreme forms of "gender terrorism," the ideological and

material policing of seemingly natural gender, sex, and sexual norms and expectations (Halberstam, 1998, p. 9). Female masculinity not only threatens the natural association between femininity and femaleness but also calls into question the authenticity of male masculinity. Thus, the prohibition of female masculinity is persistently enforced as a means to make intelligible the relationship between maleness and masculine performativity. Halberstam (1998) concludes, “In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing” (p. 1).

In his analysis of the public discourse surrounding the Brandon Teena story, Sloop (2000) illustrates the rigidity of disciplinary practices that attempt to “make sense” of performances of female masculinity that might otherwise challenge the seemingly irreducible relationship between femaleness and normative femininity as well as heteronormative expectations.⁴ According to Sloop, mainstream media accounts often depict Brandon Teena as an unnatural (female) body who sexually preyed upon unsuspecting heterosexual (and presumably innocent) women in “deceptive” and pervasive ways (p. 177-178). The characterization of Brandon Teena’s sexual and gendered behavior as “inappropriately” masculine constructs him as innately female despite claims by several women that he was in fact “male” and that, regardless of his external genitalia, their romantic and sexual relationships with him were heterosexual in nature. Moreover, dominant discourses regarding the Brandon Teena story reiterate the innateness of femininity (which, in these accounts, is associated with the female body) by explaining Brandon Teena’s “deviant” behavior in pathological terms. Mainstream media reports posit that his gender and sexual deviance resulted from a chemical/physical imbalance or from the psychological and/or sexual abuse that he suffered during his childhood (Sloop, 2000, p. 182). These causal explanations suggest that although

Brandon Teena was “truly” female, he suffered from a psychological and physical condition that prevented his “normal” maturation into womanhood. Indeed, Sloop’s analysis of the Brandon Teena story illustrates that “there cannot be a blurring of gender/sexual categories when that blurring makes sense of a large array of subjectivities by understanding them as a form of deformation or when so many discourses continue to discipline transgenderism into a system of bigender heteronormativity” (Sloop, 2000, p. 184).

As explained above, the performativity of female masculinity involves more than a woman’s attempt to “pass” as a man; women who behave in “unfeminine” ways (e.g. dress, sexual practice, behavior, etc.) are often isolated as gender transgressors as well. For example, Halberstam (1998) argues that the circulation of cultural stereotypes of stone butch lesbians often contributes to the understanding of “masculine untouchability in women” as “immutably linked to dysfunction, melancholy, and misfortune” (p. 112). Although stone butch lesbianism rarely includes the desire to “pass” as a man, Halberstam concludes that stoneness often “becomes the literalization of castration anxiety,” and symbolizes a “dysfunctional rejection of motherhood by a self-hating subject” (p. 112). Additionally, other issues of women’s sexual practices and maternal desires (or, in some cases, the lack thereof) are often focal points in public conversations regarding female gender transgression. Notably, public discourse surrounding Janet Reno’s performances of female masculinity emphasizes Reno’s childlessness (which could be read as a signifier of her lack of heterosexual desire) as well as her masculine stature and her proclivity for masculine activities such as kayaking, drinking, swearing, and alligator wrestling (Sloop, 2004, p. 13). Paradoxically, however, dominant media representations also rearticulate Reno’s self-proclaimed love for men as well as her devotion to issues of child welfare including her “personal crusade” to protect the rights of Elian Gonzalez (Lorch, as cited in Sloop, 2004, p.

118). Hence, Sloop (2004) concludes that although “her body and activities continue to work against acceptable versions of femininity,” in many mainstream accounts, Reno is often securely situated within the boundaries of heteronormativity. Although these representations suggest that public confusion regarding Reno’s gender identity is understandable, many news accounts recuperate Reno’s feminine identity by accentuating her “proper” womanly desires, despite her inability to fully pursue those desires.

Additionally, women who engage in transgressive “unfeminine” (although not necessarily masculine) behavior also provoke intense public anxiety, particularly when that behavior challenges the time-honored association between femininity and “maternal instincts.” More significantly, public shock and outrage almost always accompany situations in which mothers display violent tendencies or commit violent acts. For example, public discourse regarding Andrea Yates’ murder of her five young children in 2001 situates Yates’ deviant behavior in relation to normative regulations associated with women’s roles as nurturing mothers.⁵ According to Barbara Bennett (2005), most news coverage of Yates’ acts of infanticide not include detailed descriptions of the events and of Yates’ history of mental illness, but also media accounts attempt to provide extended, rationale explanations regarding the question “How could a mother commit such an act against nature and all morality, ending the lives she had so recently borne and nurtured?” (Thomas, as cited in Bennett, 2005, p. 10). Similar to the public discourse surrounding the Brandon Teena story, public explanations for Yates “abhorrent and aberrant” behavior referred to Yates as a “traitor” to her sex/gender, a woman who assumed an array of gender identities and who successful “disguised” herself as a loving and nurturing wife and mother (Bennett, 2005, p. 15). Additionally, the representations of Yates as a monstrous

mother and as a female aberration work in tandem with explanatory narratives that attempt to explicate the psychological causes of Yates' gender malfunction. Sherry Colb (2003) concludes,

If Andrea was completely crazy, then the public could embrace the notion that because the mother in this case was out of her mind, it followed that, in some sense, Andrea's authentic self did not truly kill her own children . . . The public could hold onto its belief that a shockingly deviant force was at work, and people accordingly would not have to alter any of their deeply held assumptions about motherhood in response (p. 141).

As illustrated in the case of Yates, dominant discourse surrounding gender transgression often reconstitutes binary gender categories, and "in the social realm, extreme deviance, by its very nature, affirms rather than threatens the boundaries of the norm" (p. 141).

In sum, public discourse regarding extreme, gender-linked transgressive acts often attempts to constrain the excessive potential of those acts. The critical scholarship regarding public discourse surrounding both Brandon Teena and Andrea Yates are instructive for understanding *why* England's conduct at Abu Ghraib garnered significant public attention and, more importantly, for assessing how her abhorrent performance of both Woman and soldier continues to be situated within Western notions of femininity. Indeed, her seemingly contradictory performance of soldier and mother, caretaker and abuser produced considerable public anxiety, and, similar to both Brandon Teena and Yates, England is constructed as a violent gender-bender and her performance is often depicted in pathological terms. However, unlike Brandon Teena and Andrea Yates, England's conduct is constrained not only by normative gender expectations, but also by the norms associated with a highly masculinized culture, the U.S. military. Indeed, U.S. military masculinity is associated with the iconic "U.S. soldier," an individual presumed to be "appropriately" male and heterosexual by nature who is responsible

for the protection of feminine populations (particularly women) and who exerts force against his male enemies in a “civilized” manner. The abhorrent behavior of Lynndie England at Abu Ghraib not only challenges the gender expectations associated with innate femaleness and femininity (e.g. nonaggression, sexual purity, altruistic compassion, etc.) but also troubles the notions of “proper” masculine behavior that is fundamental to the ideologically understanding of “U.S. soldier.” Thus, in many ways, the intelligibility of U.S. masculinity (and “U.S. soldier”) required “making sense” of Lynndie England and of the prisoner abuse crisis at Abu Ghraib.

Lynndie England: An Icon of Gender Confusion and Sexual Deviance

On January 13, 2004, Army Specialist Joseph Darby, a military police officer stationed at Abu Ghraib Prison delivered an anonymous letter and a compact disc containing photographs that detailed the maltreatment of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib to Special Agent Tyler Pieron of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (Williamson, 2004, p. A16). In response to the photographs and to Darby’s letter, U.S. senior military officials appointed Major General Antonio Taguba to head an internal investigation of the detainment facility at Abu Ghraib. Following his investigation, Taguba presented his report to U.S. military officials, documenting “numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses” inflicted upon several Iraqi detainees (Taguba, 2004, p. 16). Although, for the most part, the American public remained ignorant of the crisis at Abu Ghraib throughout the investigation process (which, in large part, can be attributed to the secrecy surrounding the internal investigation and to the “classified” status of the Taguba Report), in April, public outrage ensued after a series of disturbing photographs were leaked to the media. Most shocking to most audiences were the photographs of Lynndie England actively abusing Iraqi detainees in seemingly perverse sexual ways, and

those photographs prompted a media frenzy regarding England's involvement in the crisis at Abu Ghraib.

The details surrounding England's involvement in the Abu Ghraib scandal and her subsequent court-martial are complicated and bizarre. England, a twenty-one year old Army Reservist from the indigent town of Fort Ashby, West Virginia, enlisted in 2001 as a means to fund a college education in hopes of becoming a meteorologist. In 2003, England was stationed in Iraq and assigned as a "paper-pusher" responsible for fingerprinting Iraqi POWs detained at Abu Ghraib (although she was not actually stationed at Abu Ghraib). During her station in Iraq, she became romantically and sexually involved with Charles Graner, the alleged ringleader of the prisoner abuse crisis, and later in October 2005, gave birth to his son. Shortly following the release of the Abu Ghraib photographs to the public, England was formally charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice with nineteen separate violations including conspiracy to commit maltreatment of Iraqi detainees, the maltreatment of detainees, and dereliction of duty. In May 2005, England pled guilty to seven counts; however, military judge Colonel James Pohl declared a mistrial on the grounds that he could not accept her plea of guilty under a plea-bargain due to Graner's unexpected testimony that he had asked England "to perform a legitimate function that he planned to use in future training" and that the images in the photographs illustrate reasonable use of force (Bowers, 2005, p. 03). At her retrial in September 2005, England was convicted on one count of conspiracy, four counts of maltreating detainees, and one count of committing an indecent act. She was dishonorably discharged and sentenced to three years in prison.

The disturbing images of Pfc. Lynndie England gained iconic status almost immediately after the photographs were released to the public. According to Enloe (2004), although the

public was outraged by the acts of abuse committed at Abu Ghraib, the image of a woman torturer was especially baffling. Indeed, thousands of headline articles and editorials were featured in print news sources nationwide, almost all attempting to provide an explanation for England's unfathomable behavior at Abu Ghraib. The following section explores how discussions of England's sexed and gendered identity frame the public's understanding of England as a violent gender transgressor and depict her behavior as the unfortunate (and dangerous) product of her innate gender confusion. Specifically, I analyze the ways in which England's body is both feminized and depicted as ambiguously gendered, and I argue that dominant representations of England's aberrant femaleness otherize England's performances of female masculinity as well as normalize the masculine identity of her male counterparts and of military culture in general.⁶

Ambiguously Gendered: A Portrait of Lynndie England

The representation of England as a gendered body is a dominant theme in national print news coverage of the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib. Although national newspapers and journals often report competing explanations regarding the *cause* of England's behavior (and the prisoner abuse crisis in general), few reports fail to mention England's involvement, and most reports explicitly comment on the seemingly paradoxical image of a petite, young mother-to-be actively committing violence against male Iraqi detainees. Although England is identified as being female, media representations of her tomboyish or pixie-like behavior suggest that England's gender identity is conflicted. Indeed, England is constructed as a gendered enigma, a biological female who embodies masculinity in counterproductive and even dangerous ways and defies the "natural" expectations associated with femaleness and femininity.

Most national news coverage identifies England as distinctively female (although not necessarily feminine), thereby calling attention to her otherness within a military context and, perhaps more importantly, suggesting that her misconduct constitutes a *unique* (and, arguably more egregious) form of deviance. In contrast to her male comrades (including the male soldiers who were also court-martialled following the investigation at Abu Ghraib), England is constructed as uniquely Other through the use of feminine labels that emphasize her femaleness (and to a certain degree, her femininity). For example, an article in *Newsweek* describes England as “the infamous *female* [italics added] guard at Abu Ghraib Prison” (Power, 2004, p. 62), and Ellen Goodman (2005) of *The Boston Globe* refers to England as the “photogenic fall girl for prisoner abuse” (p. B-7). Some articles and editorials refer to England as a “young woman” or “female soldier” while others more creatively describe her as the “poster girl” of Abu Ghraib (“Unneeded,” 2005, p. A8; Chonin, 2004, p. 20), “the young lady with the leash” (Sherman, 2005, p. 23A), “the T-shirted dog leash woman” (Sisk, 2005, p. 20), or the “girl next door smiling” in the sadistic photographs (MacDonald, 2004, p. 15). Although these feminizing labels may appear to be benign descriptors of England, the consistent mentioning of England’s gender in national news coverage is significant. First, England is constructed as a *female* soldier, and her sex/gender become the defining elements through which her identity of “soldier” is interpreted. Put simply, these references to England’s gender depict her not as a soldier who happens to be female but rather, as a female who happens to be a soldier. Second, the articulation of England’s sex/gender identity becomes even more normative when contrasted to the representations of England’s male counterparts, soldiers who, despite their maleness, appear to be seemingly ungendered bodies. That is, most news coverage describes the male soldiers at Abu Ghraib as simply “soldiers” or “troops.” Significantly, the selective mentioning of gender

in relation to *female* soldiers not only marks England (as well as all military women) as the Other but also reifies the masculine normalcy associated with “U.S. soldier,” a term that connotes *exclusive* maleness while simultaneously appearing to be seemingly unmarked and uninfluenced by sex and gender.

England’s distinct femaleness (and conversely, her otherness) is also made visible through representations of her female body. England is often depicted in terms of her small stature and is described as the “petite” five-foot-two woman at the center of the prisoner abuse scandal (Levins, 2004, p. 29; “Mom,” 2004, p. A25). In an article in *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Bob Dart (2004) describes England as “the petite private first class shown the world over holding a naked Iraqi prisoner by a leash” (Dart, 2004, p. A1), and Doug Davis (2004) of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* refers to England as “a petite young woman who dragged nude prisoners around on the end of a leash” (p. A13). Similarly, in an article featured in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* headlined “Wrong Woman or Wronged Woman,” Ellen Goodman (2005) describes England as a “small, jaunty” soldier (p. B-7), and in the *Charleston Gazette*, Jonathan Eig (2004) portrays England as “a short, moon-faced woman from West Virginia” (p. 5A). Finally, in an editorial in the *Washington Post*, Richard Cohen (2005) refers to England as “the wee woman” who has come to personify American arrogance (p. A23).

These representations of England’s petite, “feminine” stature again mark England’s body as distinctively *female*, thus reifying her otherness within the masculine, all-male sphere of the military. In contrast, none of the articles featured in national print media elaborate on the physical stature of the male soldiers involved in the abuse scandal, suggesting that although a reading of the gendered markings on England’s petite female body may offer explanatory insight regarding *her* role in the abuse crisis, the maleness of the other soldiers involved is irrelevant to

the discussions regarding *their* participation. England is constructed as a physical aberration to the soldiers in her unit as well as to the normative definition of “U.S. soldier.” Thus, even the term “female soldier” implies a certain degree of deviance and provokes public curiosity (and scrutiny) regarding performances of female masculinity.

Paradoxically, although England is frequently described as being female, England is also depicted as being ambiguously gendered. In contrast to the representations of Jessica Lynch as “a pretty girl from the hills” or the “princess” of West Virginia, England is most often depicted as a pixie or a tomboy. For example, in an article in the *Daily News*, England is described as “the pixie-faced poster child of America’s prison abuse scandal in Iraq” (Becker, 2004, p. 4), and an editorial in the *St. Petersburg Times* refers to her as the “pixie-faced soldier” (“Iraq,” 2005, p. 8A). Indeed, over twenty articles refer to her as a pixie, constructing her as a mischievous, even malign, childlike sprite trapped within a female body. Additionally, in other accounts, her pixie-like identity is complicated by descriptions of her tomboy-ish features. Lynne Duke’s (2004) article “A Woman Apart” featured in *The Washington Post* best epitomizes the ambiguity surrounding many mainstream news representations of Lynndie England’s sex and gender identity:

She seems too small, even pixie-like, to be as sadistically abusive as she's portrayed. It's hard to imagine her holding a leash around a naked prisoner's neck. Even her name—Lynndie R. England—sounds too innocently chirpy to belong to the woman posed in the porn shots taken during her Iraqi deployment. There’s something so girlish about her, though she’s 21, and something boyish, too, with that black beret atop her close-cropped hair and that slight swagger. (p. D01)

England's "tomboyish" features, including her facial and bodily characteristics as well as her gravitation to "masculine" activities, are also described in news articles featured in *Newsweek* and in *The New York Times* (Dao, 2004, p. A1; Thomas, 2004, p.0). Significantly, Evan Thomas (2004) of *Newsweek* opens his article "Explaining Lynndie England" by posing the following question: What made Lynndie England, patriotic, pixie-ish tomboy who joined the army reserve to pay for college, become the poster girl for sexual humiliation and degradation at Abu Ghraib? (p. 0).

The depictions of England as both a tomboy and a pixie construct an unintelligible representation of England's gender identity and encourage the disciplining of England's female masculinity. As Halberstam (1998) notes, "The image of the tomboy can only be tolerated within a narrative of blossoming womanhood; within such a narrative, tomboyism represents a resistance to adulthood rather than to adult femininity" (p.6). However, the paradoxical depictions of England as both "boy" and "girl," "pixie" and "woman" suggest that England is (and will forever be) trapped in a state of flux between the boundaries of masculinity and femininity as well as the boundaries between womanliness and impish childhood. Although these representations could be read in a way that problematizes the seemingly natural relationship between femaleness, femininity, and womanhood, mainstream media representations of England's ambiguously gendered body do little to challenge gender binaries; instead, these representations suggest that England's body is just "not quite right." Hence, England's body becomes a signifier (and predictor) of other aberrant behaviors associated with her confused sex, gender, and sexual identity. That is, the ambiguous and contradictory markings *on* her body become signifiers of the gender and sexual confusion *in* her body.

Lynndie as a Sexual Deviant

Gender transgression often prompts significant public inquiry regarding the ways in which non-normative sexual acts (which are often connoted as being dangerously deviant) are performed. Indeed, the question “What do they do in bed?” is frequently a central facet of public discussions regarding gender behaviors deemed transgressive or aberrant (Sloop, 2004; Garber 1992). Although this question is typically associated with the sexual practices involving same-sex, intersexed, or transgendered individuals, public discourse surrounding England’s involvement in the abuse at Abu Ghraib illustrates that even “normal” heterosexual relations fall under public scrutiny when the individuals involved are labeled as gendered abnormalities. Although news account regarding England’s sexual relationship with Graner never discuss the physical act of male-female intercourse, a significant amount of news coverage details the deviance that surrounded their physical sexual act (e.g., posing for pictures, violating military orders, engaging in acts of adultery, premarital sex, etc.). Thus, in many news accounts, the depictions of England’s sexually deviant history function as signifiers of her severely troubled gender identity and her inability to conform to the “proper” norms associated with womanhood.

Public discourse regarding England’s aberrant gender identity often focuses on her history of sexual deviance, specifically, her dysfunctional sexual relationship with Graner (who is also depicted as a violent, sexual deviant), and later, her pregnancy with his child. For example, an article in *The New York Times* notes that although England was not officially assigned to guard the prisoners, “military officials say Private England, 21, may have frequently visited the prison because she was romantically involved with Specialist Graner” (Dao and Zielbauer, 2004, p. A1). Illustrating a pattern of deviant sexual behavior, several articles explain that England, whose divorce from a previous marriage had not been finalized, violated military

regulations on numerous occasions by pursuing a sexual relationship with Graner. An article in *The Washington Post* explains that England was “reprimanded four times in six months after being caught in Graner’s bed,” further noting that “it got so bad that she was under orders for a time not to leave her quarters unescorted unless she was going to work, church, the bathroom or for meals” (Duke, 2004, p. D01). The same article recounts the haunting images in less publicized photographs of Abu Ghraib, including photographs depicting lewd sexual acts between Graner and England as well as photographs of England “doing things to herself” (Duke, 2004, p. D01). Similarly, an editorial in *The Washington Post* notes that she frequently “posed for pornographic pictures with Graner” (Cohen, 2005, p. A23). Additionally John Gonzalez (2005) of the *Houston Chronicle* notes that although England had “few if any duties among detainees. . . England was Graner’s frequent visitor at the maximum-security wing where he worked the overnight shift, and officers said both were admonished about adultery because England was married at the time” (p. B1). Twenty additional articles describe the “adulterous” relationship between Graner and England, and more significantly, the charge of adultery is included in a list of other violent acts committed by England and Graner, including the maltreatment of detainees.

The depictions of England’s tumultuous sexual history function as further evidence of England’s misguided performances of femininity and heterosexuality. Interestingly, although the depictions of England as a “girlish” child and a sexual perpetrator may seem contradictory, mainstream media representations often collapse both images into a coherent narrative regarding gender confusion and deception. Unlike the representations of Brandon Teena, which suggest that he was a “real” woman posing as man, England’s deception is characterized as the deception of a confused and aberrant individual who disguised her deviant gender/sex identity by posing *as*

a “real” woman. Similar to Andrea Yates, England is guilty not only of the crimes she committed at Abu Ghraib but also of deceiving the U.S. military by posing as a “proper” woman, wife, and eventually, mother.

Additionally, mainstream media discussions of England’s pregnant body, which is featured in several photographs, and the birth of her son in October 2005 further complicate the coherence of England’s identity. As both a mother and a sexual perpetrator, England’s performances of gender-linked behavior violate traditional assumptions about the nurturing instincts associated with motherhood and, more generally, with womanhood. Following England’s retrial in September 2005, Jill Radskin of *The Boston Herald* comments on “England’s bulging belly” during the trial (p. 011), and Michael Fuoco (2004) of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* describes the absurdity associated with the image of a *female* soldier, “clad in an oversized battle-dress uniform,” who is “often rubbing her stomach” during her court martial “involving the conspiracy to maltreat prisoners” (p. A-1). Similarly, in an article in the *Washington Post*, Lynn Duke states, “She is in camouflage green like any other soldier. But her standard BDU, her battle dress uniform, is cut maternity-style to accommodate a bulging stomach, eight months pregnant” (p. A-1). These representations illustrate the paradoxical image of a pregnant female soldier (which, in many ways, is paradoxical in itself), a mother-to-be standing trial for collaborating in heinous acts of violence.

Furthermore, the depictions of England holding her newborn son in the weeks following her conviction further exacerbate the tension between England’s performance of motherhood and her identity as a sexual deviant. As described in an article in the *Daily News*,

You can say this much for new mom Lynndie England: She knows how to pose for the camera. You’d never guess from these heartwarming photos . . . that the loving new

mom cuddling and kissing her baby is also Lynndie the Leasher, the poisonous pixie of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Lynndie, who gave birth to this cherubic little boy a little over a week ago, faces up to 38 years in prison for abusing and humiliating Iraqi detainees. She became the poster child for America's Iraqi prison abuse scandal when infamous photos of her surfaced last spring, including shots of her mocking undressed detainees and dragging a naked, cringing man on a leash (far right). But England wasn't so busy with her brutal chores that she couldn't find time to conceive the little tyke in an affair with another soldier, Spec. Charles Graner. ("Lynndie," 2004, p. 18)

Referred to by Daniel Ruth (2004) in the *Tampa Tribune* as the "Mommie Dearest of debasement," England embodies a gender identity that runs contrary to traditional notions of motherhood, and her pregnancy garners little celebration in mainstream discourse (p. 2). Rather, her diabolic "posing" as a loving mother only invites more public angst regarding the potential pregnancy of women who embody abnormal gender and sexual identities.

Interestingly, although normative gender binaries are often reiterated through the celebration of motherhood, in the case of England, motherhood is often framed as yet another deviant behavior, the result of an adulterous act committed by a violent sexual (and gender) deviant. Articulated in relation with the depictions of England's turbulent sexual history, including her dysfunctional relationship with Graner, mainstream representations of England as a mother frame England's child as the reproduction (both literally and figuratively) of extreme gender confusion and potentially violent sexual behavior. Indeed, these representations prompt the public to ask "What will become of the child?" and to eventually conclude that the child has little chance of escaping the inherent consequences of his own confusing and sadistic conception. Indeed, these representations of England's maladjusted gender and sexual identity offer a

cautionary tale: Although women, by nature, are suited for motherhood, the failure to regulate the sexual practices of female gender transgressors results in the reproduction of excessive deviance and the future endangerment (both physically and emotionally) of the most innocent populations.

In sum, mainstream news accounts of England's ambiguous and deviant gender and sexual identity exacerbate public anxiety regarding the issue of prisoner abuse and of the gender dynamics within military culture as well as threaten the intelligibility and sanctity of normative expectations associated with both femaleness and with military masculinity. Indeed, the representations of England as innately aberrant induce public demands for an explanation regarding the *cause* of her seemingly incomprehensible behavior. In response to the intense public inquiry regarding England's conduct, explanatory narratives were circulated throughout national print media, stories that attempt to identify the source of England's gendered abnormalities and seek to provide preventative solutions. The following section explores the construction and circulation of these narratives within mainstream news media and examines how the gender trouble regarding England's conduct at Abu Ghraib is situated and contained, at least to a certain degree, within binary notions of gender, sex, and sexual identity.

The Cause of England's Gender "Malfunction"

As Sloop (2000) explains, highly visible symbols of gender transgression are often situated within narratives that reify heteronormative practices and the expectations regarding "proper" performances of femininity and masculinity. The prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib threatened both the assumed naturalness of gender binaries as well as U.S. military masculinity by disrupting the iconic status of the benign male soldier and perhaps more importantly, by visually and rhetorically depicting violent (masculine) acts committed by a female soldier.

Although the Bush Administration insisted that the perpetrators at Abu Ghraib were merely a “few bad apples” who acted independently in sadistic and shameful ways, the “bad apple” defense did not seem to quell public angst regarding the following question: What would motivate a *woman* to commit such heinous acts?⁷ The following section identifies two explanatory narratives commonly circulated within mass media discussions of the Abu Ghraib scandal in general and England’s involvement in particular. In both narratives, England’s unstable, aberrant gender identity is causally linked to her perpetration of violence against Iraqi detainees. However, the narratives identify different “root causes” of the crisis. In one narrative, England is depicted as uniquely troubled by her abnormal gender identity, a result of her battle with mental illness and her mild case of mental retardation. In contrast, the second narrative indicts inclusive gender practices within military culture such as coed training, suggesting that the increase in coed practices creates sexual tension that disrupt both male and female soldiers’ development and maintenance of their “appropriate” gender and sexual identity.

A Unique Case of Gender Transgression

One explanatory narrative that attempts to “make sense” of the potential gender trouble at Abu Ghraib suggests that England is a uniquely troubled individual who never developed “properly” as a woman. Articles published in national newspapers such as *The Washington Post*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and *The New York Times* describe England as a “blue baby” who suffered from learning disabilities throughout her childhood (Blumenthal, 2005; Cohen, 2005; Gonzalez, 2005). According to Ralph Blumenthal (2005), Private England was always a troubled child, “born a ‘blue baby’ deprived of oxygen and suffering from a malformation of her tongue that required it to be clipped” (p. A14). Indeed, England’s defense during her court-martial was that she is “an overly complaint, Graner-pleaser,” who is prone to depression and

bouts of anxiety due to her mental condition (Blumenthal, 2005, p. A14). Additionally, an article in *Newsweek* notes that “Lynndie England had issues” (“Compiled,” 2005, p. A22), and a similar article in *USA Today* explains that England’s attorney claimed that England “had learning disabilities and [is] prone to clinical depression that made it difficult for her to function in the stress of the prison” (Bacon, Welch, Levin, Locy, 2005, p. 3A). These representations suggest that not only did England lack the mental capacity to evaluate her actions within a moral framework, but these depictions also work to articulate England’s confused gender and sexual identity to her mental deficiencies and her fragile state of mind.

Another explanation regarding England’s seemingly inexplicable behavior suggests that England’s gender confusion and deviant sexual violence are products of her upbringing in a poor socioeconomic environment. Similarly to the representations of Jessica Lynch, most news coverage argues that England enlisted in the military in order to earn money for college. However, in contrast to the representations of Lynch, who is often depicted as unclassed or representative of the norms of middle-class femininity, England becomes an iconic representation of “trailer-trash” femaleness. Over one-third of the articles featured in national print media make reference to England’s upbringing in a trailer park in West Virginia, often suggesting that, like many females brought up in “trailer park” conditions, she has been inhibited from maturing properly into womanhood. For example, in an editorial in *The Washington Post*, Richard Cohen (2005) explains

There is no end to the sadness of Lynndie England. There is no excusing what she did, but explaining is a different matter. She is that rare genuine article, the cliché, the stereotype that turns out upon investigation to be true. She lived with her family in a trailer in West Virginia. She’s only a high school graduate. She married when she was 19—on a lark,

she told her friends, and then for only two years. She joined the Army Reserve not, as the flag-wavers would like it, for patriotic reasons but for college money (she wanted to be a meteorologist and chase storms). She had an affair or something with Graner in Iraq and has a baby by him. He apparently encouraged her to abuse prisoners. (p. A23)

Cohen concludes that England is “the sort of woman who gets used by others, most often men” and describes her as “powerless everywhere in life except on her end of the leash” (p. A23).

Thus, unlike Jessica Lynch, who is often depicted as a middle-class woman who happens to be living in an economically disadvantaged environment, England emerges as the icon of “trailer-trash” femininity, a female who is (and presumably, will forever be) inextricably associated with moral degradation, sexual deviance, and other “unwomanly” conduct.

Although some discussions of England’s socioeconomic status suggest that class, not gender, is the contributing factor to England’s transgressions, many news reports incorporate discussions of England’s class into narratives that attempt to make sense of her acts of sexual violence, her promiscuity, and, in general, her confused gender/sex identity. That is, these accounts posit that England behaved in violent and “inappropriately” masculine ways not because she is a victim of (classed) powerlessness but rather, because she is abnormally gendered due to her improper socialization in a trailer-parker community. For example, one article in *The Washington Post* depicts how England “marched into her trailer park” at the age of seventeen, demanding that her parents formally consent to her marrying her high school sweetheart (Davenport and Amon, 2004, p. A18). Additionally, other accounts reference a relationship between England’s “trailer-trash” upbringing and her “unmarried and pregnant” or “single mom” status (Cauchron, Howlett, and Hampson, 2004; Dart, 2004; Jacobs, 2004). An editorial featured in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* argues that England, “this pregnant, unmarried

21-year-old” has been exploited by the U.S. military and comments that “there is something absurd about pinning a scarlet letter on a pathetic—though perverse—21-year-old private from West Virginia” (p. B02).

These explanations of England’s history of “pathetic” and “perverse” behavior, including the sexual abusing of detainees at Abu Ghraib as well as her adulterated fulfilling of her sexual desires, associates England’s gender “malfunctions” with her marginalized class status. Additionally, this narrative not only stereotypes England as “trailer trash,” suggesting that poor socioeconomic groups lack the moral capability to distinguish right from wrong, but also, and perhaps more importantly, this narrative provides an explanatory rationale for England’s unique gender transgressions. In this narrative, England’s unique failures as both a soldier and a woman are attributed to the moral corruption and “abnormal” socialization associated with “trailer-park” condition. Put simply, England’s class status provides a cogent explanation for her becoming the violent Hester Prynne of both her community and more importantly, of the U.S. military.

The explanatory narratives constructed in dominant discourse frequently isolate England’s aberrance, suggesting that she is a unique case of gender deviance. By describing her as an abnormal gender transgressor, a product of deleterious psychological and social conditions, England becomes yet another “bad apple,” and normative gender binaries remain firmly intact. Thus, although England’s conduct may be read in ways that problematize gender binaries or that provoke public criticism of military culture, dominant discourses regarding England’s predisposition to mental illness and her unfortunate inculcation into “trailer-trash” culture construct England as a unique example of “gender gone bad,” an exception to the rule.

(Re)Masculinizing Military Culture: Indicting Practices of Military Integration

A second thread of explanatory discourse circulated throughout national print media argues that coed training practices in the military produce sexual (and gender) confusion among enlistees. This thread of discourse not only provides a rationale for both male and female soldiers' sexual deviance at Abu Ghraib but also challenges the practicality (and desirability) of further gender integration into military culture. Additionally, within this narrative, feminist politics become a prime target of criticism for members of the U.S. public in general and for advocates of gender segregation in the military in particular. Although some feminist organizations such as NOW insist that the prisoner abuse crisis has little to do with gender but instead, was (and continues to be) a product of poor leadership, improper training, and the very nature of military culture, advocates of the combat exclusion argue that the maltreatment of POWs by U.S. troops corresponds to the increase of women enlistees and to the influence of feminist politics. Furthermore, several news reports suggest that the abuse committed by England at Abu Ghraib constitutes a unique type of violence, violence committed by a woman (and presumably, by more women in the future) who are being "improperly" inculcated into the masculine sphere of the U.S. military.

In some mass media accounts, coed training practices and gender integration become prime scapegoats for the crisis at Abu Ghraib. For example, an article in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* indicates that some advocates of gender segregation in the military such as Elaine Donnelly posit that "the distractions of gender mixing in coed basic training contributed to the immaturity of the American guards at Abu Ghraib" (Hiskey, 2004, p. 8A). Furthermore, the article quotes Donnelly as stating, "I think it's social experimentation, and I don't think it's going to help us win the war . . . They [feminists] want to masculinize (sic) the women and

feminize the men, so that we're a gender-neutral society." The article concludes that Donnelly "likened the photos to the Super Bowl halftime show with its breast-baring incident" because both incidents "are shocking for an American public that generally ignores how risqué pop musicians demean women and a military that allows women recruits to undermine battle readiness" (Hiskey, 2004, p. 8A). Not only does the article assign culpability to military women for the cultural degradation of the military, but it also reiterates the traditional assumptions regarding women's innate psychological difference from men and rearticulates the desirability of the traditional masculine characteristics associated with military culture and the iconic image of the U.S. soldier.

Echoing the sentiments of Donnelly, in a scathing editorial printed in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Cal Thomas argues, "The one dirty little secret that no one appears interested in discussing as a contributing factor to the whorehouse behavior at Abu Ghraib is coed basic training and what it has done to upset order and discipline" (p. 13A). Similarly, Mary Leonard of *The Boston Globe* notes that in 1997, a Pentagon commission reported that "coed housing and training contributed to high rates of misconduct in the military" (Leonard, 2004, p. A17). Leonard's report also includes statements from several conservative opponents of military integration, including Linda Chavez⁸ who explains that coed units are creating "debilitating sexual tension" in the military and that "in the case of Abu Ghraib the presence of women in the military police unit may have even encouraged the obscene misbehavior that the photos reveal" (p. A17). The same article details the disgust and disillusionment of Retired Army General Evelyn 'Pat' Foote, who, reportedly, is extremely disappointed that the women at Abu Ghraib "did not heed her advice, that to be successful in the military, a woman should act more like a woman than a man" (p. A17). Leonard quotes Foote as stating, "I tell them: 'Bring your

competence and humanity, and don't be one of the boys. Don't romp, stomp, spit, cuss, or swear . . . but that's hard advice when you're in a unit that is 90 percent male, you want to be accepted by the men, and you are young and inexperienced" (p. A17). Indeed, the censuring of coed training is persistent throughout many mainstream news accounts. At least thirty articles featured in national newspapers suggest, at least in passing, that a possible cause of the deterioration of military culture in general and of the increase in incidents of prisoner abuse in particular is the practice of coed training and more generally, the increase in U.S. military women's presence near and around combat-related operations.

The assignment of culpability to coed training practices is significant for several reasons. First, by assigning a particularly deviance to military women's presence in combat-related situations (and to military women's inclusion in the military in general), national news stories posit yet another explanation for the aberrant behavior of women such as England. This narrative of "inappropriate" training reasserts the naturalness of gender/sex differences by implying that women are, by nature, peaceful and nonviolent while simultaneously suggesting that the violence committed by women at Abu Ghraib can be attributed to the persistent attempt to train women in ways that are contradictory to their innate gender identity. Put simply, these explanations suggest that when naturally nonviolent individuals (women) are asked to perform in ways that are antithetical to their authentic gendered selves, it is logical, and even predictable, to assume that they will perform violence "inappropriately."

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the blaming of coed training rehabilitates, at least partially, the iconic image of the benevolent male soldier. Although the "bad apple" defense detracted some attention away from the male soldiers' involvement at Abu Ghraib, the "bad apple" defense could not account for the transgressions in a way that completely absolved U.S.

military culture from blame. The question still remained: Are these bad apples *produced* within military culture? According to the narrative described above, the answer is a definitive “yes”; however, this narrative also argues that military culture, itself, is not to blame for the violence at Abu Ghraib but rather, the altering of military masculinity (i.e., the inclusion of women) disrupts the gender dynamics within military culture, thereby creating intense sexual and gender confusion to the point that male soldiers no longer know how to be “men.” The coed training defense not only establishes a causal connection between gender integration in the military and the exercise of sadistic violence by both men and women, but this explanation also implies that the prohibition of coed training and the reinstitution of gender segregation can effectively restore the sanctity of military masculinity and ensure the benevolent exercise of masculine power.

In a seemingly unrelated explanation, many news accounts reassert that the cooptation of women by men at Abu Ghraib fueled the violent acts committed against Iraqi detainees. However, a critical analysis of this thread of argumentation reveals the interconnectedness between the censuring of coed training practices and the postulation that military women are vulnerable to cooptation. According to the latter explanation, because women are uniquely passive, nonconfrontational beings, their acts of violence reflect women’s innate psychological and physical otherness and vulnerability as well as their inability to challenge the authority of their male counterparts who might order them to commit violence. Fueled, in part, by England’s testimony that “she was only trying to please her soldier boyfriend when she took part in the detainee abuse,” the exploitation of military women’s innate passivity is often articulated in mass media accounts as evidence of women’s nonviolent, nonaggressive, and emotionally-driven tendencies (Fuoco, 2005, p. A-1). For example, the representations of England as “small,” “little,” and “petite” not only emphasize England’s unique (female) stature but also connote her

specific position within the chain of command and, perhaps more significantly, her gendered relationship to her male counterparts. Moreover, articles in several news sources explain that allegedly England was ordered by the men in her unit to commit the abuses because she was a “small,” “weak,” woman and because her participation in the abuse would intensify the detainees’ humiliation (Cohen, 2005, p. A17; “Wrong,” 2005, p. B-7; Dart, 2004, p. A9; Fuoco and Lash, 2004, p. A-1). The references to England’s small, weak status symbolize both her physical and psychological weakness, thus situating her behavior within traditional assumptions regarding female vulnerability.

Additionally, in his editorial in *The Washington Post*, Cohen argues that England should “demand” an apology for the way she was exploited and then scapegoated by her unit at Abu Ghraib as well as by the Bush Administration. Although Cohen admits that the public should be appalled by the photographs, he argues

But she is, as she says, weak and passive and the sort of woman who is an easy mark for a man with the gift of fibbery. This was Charles A. Graner Jr., her superior and boyfriend, father of her child, and stock character in every country-western song: He left her and the baby for another woman. As is very often the case in life and literature (see Bernhard Schlink's "The Reader"), the perpetrator is often also a victim. No reading of England's life story can stand any other interpretation. She is one of life's losers. (p. A-17)

Similarly, several more articles not only depict England’s unique susceptibility to cooptation but also suggest that, like other women, she was particularly at risk of abuse (ironically, to orders that forced her into the role of an abuser) because she felt powerless within the (male) chain of command. The depictions of England as “overly compliant” or as a “Graner-pleaser” suggest

that women are hesitant to engage in conflict (both verbally and physically) even when they are ordered to commit offenses that are antithetical to their nonviolent nature. Furthermore, these representations imply that women are innately emotionally-driven beings, and, when blinded by love (as they often are), they can be persuaded to engage in even extreme acts of violent acts as a means to appease their relational (male) partners.

Dominant news media postulation of the inherent dangers associated with the gender confusion that accompanies coed military training reinforces the notion that women, by nature, are ill-suited for military operations. In both explanatory narratives, women's innate femininity (defined as nonviolent and passive) inhibits their ability to understand the logics of violence and/or to oppose male commands to commit violence. In the first scenario, the attempt to "teach" military women the logic of violence induces such gender confusion that women may perform acts of excessive violence in order to meet what they perceived to be "appropriate" male standards of violence. In the second scenario, women, moved by their sense of compassion, nonaggression, and even love yet unable to resist the power of their male counterparts, comply with direct (or even indirect) orders to commit violence in order to appease the male soldiers in their unit. In both scenarios, dominant media representations construct a coherent explanation of the Abu Ghraib crisis by situating the seemingly inexplicable behavior of England within intelligible categories of gender/sex, thus constraining the reading of England's behavior with the realm of heteronormativity and binary sex difference. Furthermore, these representations of Woman as nonviolent, emotional, and passive not only reinscribe the normative expectations associated with "proper" femininity but also suggest that the characteristics associated with Woman are undesirable and even dangerous when situated within military culture.

Finally, many news accounts assign an external cause for the “uncivilized” practices within military culture: the politics of feminism. Propagated by the same feminists who willfully endangered the life of Jessica Lynch (and who will continue to endanger the lives of future Jessica Lynches), the increase in coed training as well as the masculinization and/or cooptation of young woman is attributed to feminist politics in many mainstream accounts. Several news articles note that proponents of the combat exclusion and other conservative groups describe the integration of women in the military, particularly in combat situations, as both dangerous and “uncivilized” (Fears, 2005, p. A04). In an article in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Donnelly explains that feminist politics regarding the inclusion of women in combat operations is a dangerous “social experimentation” (Hiskey, 2004, p. 8A). Similarly, in her article headlined “You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby; Was It for This?”, Mary Jo Malone (2004) of the *St. Petersburg Times* laments the declining moral character of women, as illustrated by England’s behavior at Abu Ghraib. Disillusioned by the direction in which feminist politics is headed, she concludes, “There you have it: evidence, finally, of how far women have come. We have achieved a perverse equality. We have the right to behave as badly as men” (p. 1B). Finally, in an article in *The Washington Post* Phyllis Schlafly, president of the Eagle Forum describes the photographs at Abu Ghraib as a “feminist fantasy” arguing that “that’s how feminists think about men” (Fears, 2004, p. A01).

The alleged association between feminism and the abuse at Abu Ghraib not only helps insulate military culture from further criticism but also functions as a means to dismiss and even deride all feminist politics. Additionally, this association externalizes blame for Abu Ghraib, thereby absolving military culture of blame. Although the gendered assumptions underlying the coed training explanation articulates a “commonsensical” account for the abuses at Abu Ghraib,

accounts that are consistent with traditional assumptions regarding feminine nonaggression, the blaming of coed training facilities also indicts particular practices inside military culture. That is, an explanation that identifies the source of the abuse as being within military culture could prompt even more public scrutiny regarding other military practices and potentially, even call into question the ideological structure of military culture. In contrast, by depicting feminism (in monolithic terms) as the singular offending politic that managed to infiltrate even our most sacred masculine institution, dominant mass media accounts articulate a narrative that depicts military culture as yet another casualty of feminism, thereby isolating the source of the abuse from the culture in which it actually occurred.

Additionally, the allegation that feminism is responsible for the “uncivilized” behavior of U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib rearticulates the “natural” divisions between benign and malign forms of masculinity, thereby reinscribing particular tenets associated with the cultural divide between the U.S. and “the Middle East.” As illustrated in the first case study, national identity (and the violence that is justified to secure that identity) is always couched in gendered terms, and war is frequently depicted as the struggle between benevolent and sadistic forms of masculinity. The Abu Ghraib scandal problematized the cultural divide between “East” and “West” not only by *literally* reversing the gendered relationship between victim and perpetrator but also by symbolically blurring the lines between the sadistic masculine aggressor and the benevolent masculine hero. The “civilization” discourse embedded in the indictments of feminism is significant. This discourse conjures images regarding the “proper” ways in which gender and power interact within a “civilized” nation and more importantly, suggest that the preservation of civilization requires not a restructuring of our masculine institutions but rather,

the disciplining (or “civilizing”) of feminist politics that threaten the stability of the dichotomy between “good” and “evil” forms of masculinity.

Conclusion

The depictions of Lynndie England as ambiguously gendered, although distinctly female, as well as the causal explanations for her deviant behavior at Abu Ghraib rearticulate a natural and normal relationship between femininity and femaleness and masculinity and maleness. Depicted as a maladjusted female (whose natural maturation into womanhood went awry), in some mass media accounts England comes to signify a unique case of aberration, a product of both a mental deficiency as well as “improper” socialization, thus deflecting attention away from the ways in which her behavior could complicate normative expectations associated with gender, sex, and sexual identities. Moreover, in other explanatory narratives, England also symbolizes the cooptation and sexual confusion associated with gender integration in the U.S. military and with the ominous effects of feminist politics. By externalizing the cause of England’s gender and sexual malfunction, dominant media accounts not only rearticulate the intelligibility of innate sex difference and normative gender categories, but these representations also rehabilitated the “civilized” image of the U.S. soldier and the benevolence associated with military masculinity. That is, public audiences are encouraged to read the prison abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib as an example of the catastrophic consequences that inevitably result from unnatural gender bending, particularly when those practices affect the masculine structure of U.S. military culture.

According to Julia Kristeva, England’s conduct at Abu Ghraib appears to exceed normative gender expectations and heteronormativity (Marlowe, 2004). Indeed one could interpret England’s conduct as acts of same-sex or homosexual abuses committed by a soldier (who, by definition is defined as masculine) against male detainees. That is, she performed

sexual violence “as if she was a man” (Marlowe, 2004, p. 17). Kristeva’s reading of England’s performativity is insightful and illustrates the ways in England’s behavior has the potential to trouble bigender and heteronormative categories and more importantly, the way military masculinity is performed. However, the representations of England as uniquely female make such a reading implausible, if not impossible, for public audiences. Once England’s body is marked as female, her performance of masculinity (including both her performance as a soldier and her performance as a perpetrator) emerges as a dangerous imitation of maleness. As Halberstam (1998) notes, when acts of female masculinity are read primarily through the female signifiers of the actor, the masculinity performance is often interpreted a dangerous imitation and an illustration of gendered abnormalities. Hence, England “comes to be” in public discourse, not as just another (male) soldier but rather as a *female* soldier whose innate gender confusion results in her inappropriate and violent performance of both femininity and masculinity.

Additionally, many mainstream media representations reiterate the normative characteristics associated with innate female vulnerability as a means to rearticulate the intelligibility of military masculinity. Although England appears to be an aggressive perpetrator, the explanatory narratives of her violent aggression suggest that she was yet another female victim who was exploited by the men in her unit and, even more insidiously, by feminist politics. These representations of England’s otherness and vulnerability, both unique in their own right and representative of the innate characteristics of all women, obscure political debates regarding gender equality, specifically the controversial debates over the combat exclusion. Dominant public discourses regarding the role of military women, particularly those associated with combat, suggest that although both men and women are vulnerable to the sexual and gender confusion perpetuated by policies of integration, women are often the primary victims of these

policies. Hence, the solution is simple—segregated military practices. Thus, rather than engaging in a critical investigation of how military masculinity functions, dominant media representations affirm the argument that the exclusion and segregation of military women will prevent the future exploitation of women by sexually confused male soldiers, forestall repeat occurrences of aberrant acts of female masculinity, and ensure the proper masculinization of male enlistees.

A critical analysis of the discourse surrounding Lynndie England's conduct at Abu Ghraib illustrates that although the relationships between gender, militarism, and national identity are often couched in simplistic discussions regarding innate sex/gender difference, dominant discourses surrounding these relationships are complicated and even, contradictory at times. Indeed, many mainstream media accounts go to great lengths to situate transgressive acts within the normative gender expectations surrounding military culture. Understanding how England's ambiguous gender identity as well as her performance of violent female masculinity at Abu Ghraib is recuperated back into intelligible gender categories provides some insight into the ways in which dominant discourses reassert the normalcy and naturalness of gender binaries and maintain the iconic image of the civilized (male) U.S. soldier.

Notes

¹ Two other military women were court-martialled as a result of their participation in the abuses at Abu Ghraib. Both former specialist Megan Ambuhl, not featured in any of the photographs, and former specialist Sabrina Harmon, photographed standing over a corpse, were dishonorably discharged, and Harmon was sentenced to six months in prison. Additionally, former Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who headed Abu Ghraib, was relieved of duty and demoted to the rank of colonel.

² Although three other women were implicated in the Abu Ghraib scandal, I will focus my analysis on national print media's discourse regarding Lynndie England. Both the photographs of England and the discourse surrounding her involvement appear to be the most widely circulated discourse regarding the scandal at Abu Ghraib. Although I cannot completely account for this phenomenon, I believe that the photographs of England garnered significant public fascination because they provide visual evidence of her transgression (only one other woman was featured in the photographs) and more importantly, because they feature a female soldier *actively* engaging in the abuses (as opposed to the picture of Sabrina Harmon passively standing over a corpse).

³ My purpose here is neither to minimize the severity of the violence committed at Abu Ghraib nor to suggest that England's conduct at Abu Ghraib is a "productive" way to complicate normative gender assignments. Rather, I am

suggesting that through an analysis of the discourse *about* England's conduct, we can gain some insight into the ways in which normative gender assignments are articulated in relationship to military culture and, more importantly, better understand how dominant discourses thwart critical investigations regarding the ideological nature of militarism and the practices that sustain U.S. military culture.

⁴ The events surrounding the rape and murder of Brandon Teena received a considerable amount of media attention across the nation, and the Brandon Teena story became the subject of a series of documentaries and the critically acclaimed film *Boys Don't Cry*. In 1993, Brandon Teena (born Teena Brandon), a twenty-one year old "woman" who had been "living as a man," relocated to Fall City, Nebraska. The ambiguity regarding Brandon's "true" sex/gender identity prompted intense angst, particularly for two of Brandon's male friends, Tom Nissen and John Lotter. On Christmas Eve, the two men forced Brandon to reveal his genitals, and, upon discovering Brandon's vagina, raped him. One week later, with the rape under investigation, Nissen and Lotter fatally shot Brandon along with two other residents of the farmhouse in which he was staying.

⁵ In 2001, Texas police responded to Andrea Yates' bizarre phone call to a 9-1-1 dispatcher and upon arrival, found Yates' children, ages six months to seven years of age, dead in the bathtub and spread across the bedroom floor. Reportedly, Yates had a history of mental illness including psychiatric hospitalization and several suicide attempts. Although Yates plead not guilty by reason of insanity (allegedly due, in part, to her battle with severe postpartum depression), a jury of eight women and four men found Yates guilty after only three and half hours of deliberation. Yates was sentenced to life in prison.

⁶ Using the search terms "England," "woman," and "female," I gathered national news articles from the Lexis-Nexis database regarding England's involvement in the crisis at Abu Ghraib that were printed between April 2004 and February 2005. I examined over 200 articles, including headline articles and articles printed in editorial and opinion sections of major U.S. newspapers and news magazines.

⁷ A plethora of articles did offer counter explanations regarding the reasons that soldiers (ungendered) would engage in extreme acts of violence against unarmed detainees. One thread of argument included the conspiracy theory that the soldiers at Abu Ghraib were given orders from their superiors while other arguments suggest that the Abu Ghraib scandal implicates the Bush Administration and the very nature of military culture. Although I find these discourses to be significant, I am choosing to focus on the ways in which gender influenced particular rationales for the crisis. Moreover, the sheer magnitude of discourse devoted to Lynndie England suggests that discussions regarding gender, militarism, and nationalism have become increasingly more significant in public consciousness over the past two years.

⁸ Linda Chavez is the president of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a think tank that opposes various forms of affirmative action, including military integration.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Since 2005, when the media frenzy around Lynndie England's participation in the events at Abu Ghraib began to dissipate, other events related to Operation Iraqi Freedom have received significant media attention, and the discourse surrounding those events continue to demonstrate the fertile relationship between gender, war, and nationalism. For example, publicity surrounding Cindy Sheehan's orchestrating of anti-war protests, the failures of Iraqi reconstruction, the kidnapping of U.S. reporter Jill Carroll, and the democratization of "women's rights" in Iraq illustrates the political tensions surrounding the ongoing U.S. occupation and its relationship to gender, cultural, and national identities. Although my analysis, like all scholarship, is an incomplete reading of the relationships described above (in part, due to the extremely complex nature of both war and gender ideology as well to the inherently unstable nature of discourse), my work provides a productive starting point for discussing how normative gender categories significantly influences our sense of "self."

As illustrate in my work, the rearticulation of normative gender categories works in tandem with the construction and maintenance of national identity and military masculinity, particularly during times of war. In one case, mainstream media representations of Iraqi women's oppression function as visible signs of women's innate vulnerability as well as the ultimate signifiers of Iraq's cultural barbarism. The U.S. invasion of Iraq was articulated, at least in part, as a moral mission that was necessary for protecting the lives and freedoms of innocent feminine (and female) populations. Similarly, in another case, the capture and rescue of

Jessica Lynch, as depicted in popular culture and in national print media, reiterates the need for masculine (male) protection of vulnerable women (in this case, the protection of white, middle-class, heterosexual women) from barbaric male enemies. Additionally, the Lynch narrative continues to influence the debate over women in combat by suggesting that women's biological femaleness and femininity make them uniquely ill-suited for combat operations. In the final scenario, public discourse regarding the conduct of Lynndie England at Abu Ghraib offers a cautionary tale concerning the unnaturalness of female masculinity. This discourse suggests that the attempt to condition women to be "like men" in combat operations creates sexual confusion within military units, and, as illustrated in the case of Abu Ghraib, this sexual confusion results in abhorrent acts of violence and sexual misconduct. Similar to the Lynch narrative, the explanatory narratives of England's conduct provide a seemingly logical rationale based on biological determinism for the exclusion of women in combat operations (and arguably, in all "non-feminine" military operations).

Although these three case studies are unique in their own right, each instance should be read as part of a larger ideological narrative regarding the normative expectations that govern the "proper" roles of men and women in "civilized" countries, particularly during times of war. In general, each chapter illustrates mass media's tendency to essentialize the category "Woman" by characterizing all women as innately passive and vulnerable, thus reifying women's dependency on men. Additionally, the women featured in public discourse surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom are frequently represented in relationship to larger cultural narratives regarding the "authentic" benevolence of Western men who are responsible for rescuing innocent damsels in distress from malignant male enemies. Finally, as each chapter illustrates, the regulation and disciplining of women's gendered behavior during wartime often entails the condemning of

feminism, particularly when the behavior at issue has the potential to disrupt the “naturalness” of gender binaries. The purpose of this project has been to investigate how public discourses surrounding the unique events of Operation Iraqi Freedom have been and continue to be informed by normative gender assignments and the disciplining of gender boundaries. Moreover, a critical examination of the gender controversies regarding the ongoing conflict in Iraq can contribute to theoretical discussions concerning gender performativity and the “material” constraints of the sexed body.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I discuss the contributions that this project makes to scholarly discussions regarding the relationship between gender, war, and national identity. Additionally, I expand upon Butler’s discussion of gender performativity, arguing that the three case studies discussed in this project illustrate the ways in which the fluidity of gender performances is often rigidly constrained within particular contexts, particularly when the context is highly depended upon binary notions of gender. Finally, I discuss the future direction of this projection and outline potential case studies that could contribute to a more thorough understanding of the relationship between citizenship, gender performativity, and militarism.

The Frontlines of Civilization: Gender Performativity within a Military Context

Although Operation Iraqi Freedom and the ongoing War on Terrorism continue to illustrate the inherent instability of the geographical lines of the combat zone in the post-9/11 era, the ideological boundaries between and within civilizations continue to be constructed as fixed territories. Indeed, the boundaries of war and of citizenship are constituted, in many ways, along gendered lines and in relationship to gendered territories. In public discussions regarding the war in Iraq, the visibility of women’s otherness and vulnerability (as depicted in mass media representations of both U.S. and Iraqi women) often serves the purpose of recuperating and

sustaining the cultural and military supremacy of U.S. national identity. When read as part of a coherent narrative, media representations of oppressed Iraqi women and of liberated U.S. women protesters, popular culture depictions of the Jessica Lynch narrative, and mainstream media explanations for Lynndie England's conduct at Abu Ghraib demonstrate how gender identity is contained during times of war. Additionally, these case studies also illustrate how the issue of context can limit the public audience's ability to read particularly gender performances in ways that disrupt normative gender (and cultural) categories. As illustrated throughout this project, the very nature of military culture situates female bodies in relationship to ideal notions of Western femininity (defined as white, middle-class, and heterosexual) and in opposition to maleness for the purpose of making sense of military masculinity, national identity, and potentially disruptive gender performances. Within the context of war (specifically, the war between the "West" and the "Middle East"), bodies are marked in terms of gender and culture *prior* to war (and to military enlistment). Those markings are often read in ways that reaffirm traditional assumptions about how "civilized" people should behave, who has the agency to define and shape civilization, and who fights for whom when the clash of civilization erupts in armed conflict. In the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, it is not surprising that both Iraqi women and Jessica Lynch have become highly visible signifiers of victimage and dependency and that the representations of both reiterate the need for U.S. military intervention. The contrasting representations between Iraqi women and Lynch appear to represent the insurmountable difference between the ways in which civilized and barbaric nations behave toward *their* women (and the ways in which women themselves behave within these nations). In a similar vein, although England's conduct appears to defy the behavioral norms associated with both femaleness and with civility, her gender deviance is rationalized as the aberrant consequence of feminists' attempts to "masculinize"

women in “uncivilized” ways. Thus, the discourse surrounding all three cases not only marks, in advance, all women as female Others (thus essentializing the definition of “Woman”), but also situates the events surrounding these women within the gendered parameters that demarcate the frontlines of the clash of civilization (both literally and figuratively).

I concur with Butler’s argument that the materialization of seemingly fixed sexed and gender bodies (which come into being through repeated performances of normative gender prescriptions) often limits the transgressive potential of performative acts. However, my project attempts to take Butler’s claims one step further, arguing that not only are bodies marked by their previous performances of gender, but also they are constrained and marked by particular cultural contexts. As Greene (1998) explains, “The ability to judge and plan reality” (p. 31-32) is often predicated on the articulation of static notions of identity and behavior, which are “governed in advance” (p. 25). My project suggests that the public’s understanding of militarism, national identity, and the frontlines of combat continues to be influenced by larger ideological narratives regarding gender and the clash of civilization; hence, those narratives often “govern in advance” the ways in which particular bodies are read in terms of gender.

Moreover, this project also suggests that, for women, performing gender in opposition to regulatory norms is extremely difficult when those performances occur within or in relationship to a highly masculinized context. One might read U.S. and Iraqi women’s resistance to the war in Iraq as a signifier of their realpolitical competence. One might also read Lynch and England’s performances of soldier as performances that challenge the seemingly natural association between maleness and masculinity, femaleness and feminine passivity, and the seemingly inherent benevolence associated with Western military masculinity. Unfortunately, such readings are unlikely for many people in the mainstream public because the historical narratives

regarding innate gender and cultural differences predetermine the lens through which gender, culture, and war are made meaningful. Additionally, during times of war, national identity is premised on the image of “our” troops; thus any challenge to military masculinity poses a threat to our own identity, to our own sense of self. Thus, reading women’s performative acts in disruptive ways is discouraged and even denounced because such readings call into question the gendered constructs that preserve a coherent national identity.

Defining Citizenship and “Women’s Rights” during Wartime

This project also contributes to scholarly discussions regarding the norms of citizenship and the issue of women’s rights during wartime. War is often rationalized through contradictions, most notably, the “killing to save” line of argumentation. In a similar vein, the military’s role of protecting the rights of civilians and citizenship, particularly women and their rights, often entails the denial of women’s rights or, at the very least, the paternalistic protection of women’s rights and citizenship. Indeed, the issue of women’s rights is significant in all three case studies and illustrates how the debates regarding what constitutes a “right,” who has the authority to determine which rights are necessary, and who has the agency to exercise those rights are often obfuscated during wartime. Additionally, all three case studies reflect the ongoing tension regarding the direction of feminist politics and of women’s rights and “liberation” as well as the shape of national identity. As illustrated throughout this project, media representations of the rights of women are reinvigorating new discussions regarding what constitutes “women’s rights” and, more importantly, *who* has the authority and agency to determine which rights are desirable. For example, although the military protection of both Iraqi women and Jessica Lynch are construed as a means to protect women’s lives and freedoms (even the freedom of women to *avoid* the frontlines of combat), this protecting of women’s rights

presupposes that women lack the intellectual and physical agency to determine, protect, and exert the rights afforded to “first-class” citizens or to participate in international politics. Moreover, the representations of Lynch and England as casualties of feminism justify the further disciplining of women’s rights and the denial of rights and opportunities to women (in these situations, the prohibition of women in combat-related territories). Put simply, this project illustrates that during wartime, the sanctioning of women’s rights remains permissible and even desirable as long as men (and masculinity) predetermine the rights of women.

In *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Butler (1997) argues that “the military is a partial zone of citizenship, a domain in which selected features of citizenship are preserved, and others are suspended” (p. 103). Although Butler situates this statement in relationship to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy that currently restricts gay and lesbian participation in the military, the partial rights of citizenship associated with militarism are also maintained through the preservations of male/female boundaries.¹ The masculine identity of the U.S. military and the ideological boundaries of the war zone assign bodies to gender and cultural categories *prior* to the onset of war or to one’s enlistment in the U.S. military. That is, the answer to the question “Who counts as a soldier or a citizen?” is often predetermined by the military context itself. In the cases described above, although some women are depicted as being citizens while others are identified as soldiers, in each scenario, women are represented not as individual agents but rather as dependents, partial citizens or soldiers who lack the ability (both mentally and physically) to act on their own behalf or, more importantly, to fully understand *how* to act in their own best interest. Additionally, the depictions of women in Iraq and of Jessica Lynch suggest that both suffer from a sense of “false consciousness” which prohibits them from recognizing both the dangers of their own cultural practices and the dangers of war respectively.

Similarly, both women protesters and England are constructed as abusers of their rights and powers, gendered bodies who are unable to fully comprehend how to exercise the rights and powers given to them. The enthymeme threaded throughout each scenario is fairly consistent: the regulation and disciplining of women and their rights, particularly during times of war, is critical to the preservation of “women’s rights.” Moreover, the maintenance of the partial zone of citizenship *within* military culture also functions as a means to limit the definition of citizenship with civilian populations. That is, because the military is responsible for protecting civilian populations (e.g. women and children), military culture, and the gendered regulations that maintain that all-male power, in many ways, becomes the governing body over civilian populations.

Moving Forward: Directions for the Future

The case studies that I have explored thus far examine a few of the central gender-related issues threaded throughout the discourses operating in and around Operation Iraqi Freedom. Although I believe that this project is a productive first step for examining the relationship between gender, militarism, and national identity in the post-9/11 era, I hope to explore additionally facets of this relationship in the future. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the future direction of this project and provide brief descriptions of additional case studies that I believe will contribute to a more thorough discussion of the gendered nature of Operation Iraqi Freedom in particular and of militarism and national identity in general.

Although my current project examines numerous artifacts from mainstream news sources, I believe that this project is limited by the scope of my artifact selection. Thus, in future studies, I intended to broaden my analysis by exploring the ways in which Operation Iraqi Freedom and the debate over women in combat are discussed by anti-war advocates.

Significantly, although many mainstream news sources reiterate the necessity for continued U.S. military intervention/occupation in Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom remains a contentious issue. According to Feldman (2006) of the *Christian Science Monitor*, “In a mid-March *Newsweek* poll, Bush’s approval rating for his handling of the situation in Iraq has sunk to an all-time low of 29 percent. And looking ahead to the fall congressional elections, 50 percent of voters say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq in the next 12 months” (p. 1). Certainly, I cannot predict the gravity of public dissent in the months and years to come nor the specific way in which the war will be discussed in the mid-term elections in 2006; however, the controversies surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom have already prompted the circulation of a rich body of discourse in need of examination. In my future analysis, I will examine the anti-war discourse surrounding events such as Cindy Shaheen’s protests at Bush’s ranch in Texas, the March 2006 demonstrations during the three year anniversary of the war, Code Pink’s anti-war campaign, and Iraqi women’s organizations’ condemning of the war. Through an examination of oppositional, anti-war discourse, I hope to not only identify recurring themes related to gender but more importantly, to examine how those themes compare and contrast to mainstream representations of gendered bodies who occupy space in and around the frontlines of the war in Iraq.

Second, my future analysis will also include a more complete discussion of the feminist debates concerning Operation Iraqi Freedom and the “liberating” of Iraqi women. The ongoing political struggle regarding the reconstruction of Iraq’s government (and to some extent culture), including determining what is best for Iraqi women, has prompted intense debate both nationally and internationally. Thus, I will explore the ways in which U.S. military success in Iraq continues to be traced on and through the bodies of Iraqi women by examining political and

media discourses concerning policies aimed at protecting Iraqi women's rights. My analysis will examine texts such as the President's remarks at the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003, Bush's State of the Union Addresses in 2004, 2005, and 2006, the remarks by First Lady Laura Bush at the Conference of Women Leaders during the International Women's Day Event on March 8, 2005. Additionally, I will analyze public discussions regarding the Administration's new proposals to democratize Iraqi women (as outlined in the fact sheets published between 2003-2005 by the Office of International Women's Issues and in the Department of State's Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative). Finally, I also hoped to contextualize these discourses within the ongoing struggle over various cultural definitions of "women's rights" by exploring Iraqi feminists' opposition to U.S. imperialism, including the war itself and the new democratizing initiatives proposed by U.S. political leaders and by Western feminists. In this case study, I will focus on how the normative expectations of gender, cultural identity, and agency are articulated within gender binaries that reinforce paternalistic notions of citizenship and reify the American public's faith in its own cultural supremacy. Moreover, I hope to assess how oppositional discourses (e.g. discursive strategies used by Iraqi feminist organizations) both exceed normative Western expectations regarding Middle Eastern women and/or are contained within dominant narratives that are circulated by U.S. mainstream media.

Third, I will explore the debate over women in combat from a somewhat different direction by examining the popular cultural representations (and media coverage surrounding those representations) of military women who have attempted to redefine themselves as "real" soldiers rather than as *female* soldiers. For example, in her 2005 autobiography *Love My Gun More than You*, Kayla Williams argues that neither Lynch nor England is representative of how

military women behave within their units. She also notes that media obsession with both women has resulted in the continued devaluation of military women who continue to overcome extreme difficulties within a culture “where the motto is ‘bros before hos’” (p. 26). In a similar vein, Janis Karpinski’s (2005) autobiography *One Woman Army* also documents the difficulty that she faced as a military woman and attempts to detail the intricacies surrounding her participation in the Abu Ghraib scandal. In her book, she argues that she became a convenient scapegoat for the Abu Ghraib crisis despite the fact that she was following orders when she permitted certain abuses to take place. I believe that these autobiographies (and the media attention surrounding them) merit attention because the mere publication of these texts suggests that counter-discourses are emerging in mainstream media and in popular culture, discourses that have been prompted by the Lynch and England narratives. Not only do these discourses demonstrate the complexities surrounding the debates over women in combat and the gendered nature of military culture in general, but they also illustrate the inevitable slippage of all discourses no matter how rigidly binding they seem. That is, despite dominant media’s fidelity to the ideological narratives regarding U.S. cultural and military supremacy over the “Middle East” and to notions of innate sex difference, these autobiographies seem to exceed dominant narratives and could potentially challenge public understanding of the relationship between gender, war, and military culture.

Finally, I will expand my discussion of media representations of women protesters in the U.S. by exploring the discourse surrounding Cindy Sheehan. Frequently referred to as the “Peace Mom,” Sheehan has been an active anti-war protester since the death of her son in April 2004. Notably, Sheehan recently received national and international publicity in August 2005 when she staged an extended protest outside of President Bush’s ranch in Texas. Founder of the Gold Star Families for Peace, Sheehan has been censured publicly by some for engaging in acts

of “treason” for verbally condemning the war in Iraq and for staging anti-war demonstrates both within U.S. borders and abroad (Costanza, 2006, p. E3). This case study is significant because not only has Sheehan received intense media and public attention, thus become another highly visible women associated with Operation Iraqi Freedom, but also, her identity as a “Peace Mom” in many ways distinguishes her from other protesters. Additionally, as illustrated in the first case study, although some civil rights, including the right to demonstrate, fall under intense public scrutiny during wartime, women protesters seem to be a primary target for proponents of militarism because as Enloe (1994) explains, women are perceived to be childlike in their understanding of world affairs and, hence, often depicted as using their rights (specifically, the right to demonstrate) in detrimental and ill-informed ways. Media coverage of U.S. women protesters in general and of Sheehan in particular will be a productive site for examining the relationship between issues of gender and citizenship during times of war and for assessing what is at stake when determining *who* has the authority to confer or to restrict particular rights for given segments of the American public.

In sum, this project has engaged in a critical investigation of the ways in which gender performativity is constrained within particular contexts, particularly when those contexts are ideologically founded upon binary notions of gender. It takes seriously the need to rhetorically examine both individual performances of gender as well as the gendered context that often governs in advance how gender *should* function according to traditional assumptions regarding “proper” and “civilized” gender behaviors and identities. By situating gender performativity within larger discussions of war, militarism, and national identity, this analysis has investigated the potentially fluid nature of gender while simultaneously recognizing the rigidly binding nature of gender binaries within and around military culture. More generally, my work here suggests

that a critical examination of gender performativity must take into account the ideological and ontological baggage surrounding the context in which gender performances occur in order to better understand the constraining discourses surrounding transgressive performances. That is, context matters because often it is the context (rather than an individual's gender performance or sexed body) that governs the audience's reading of gender behavior and identities. Thus, before assessing how we *do* gender, perhaps we should explore the ways in which, in Butler's (1990) words, we are "done *by* gender" within a particular context.

Notes

¹Arguably, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is yet another manifestation of the regulatory gender prescriptions and heteronormative expectations that demarcate the boundaries between "real" men and "real" women.

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