

“RECRUITING” THE SELF: THE MILITARY AND THE MAKING OF MASCULINITIES

By

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To Melanie, my patient partner and best friend

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Using a grounded theory approach, I use narrative accounts from interviews with 43 pre-active duty service members (25 Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets and 18 Delayed Entry Program (DEP) enlisted men) to understand how men use the military as a backdrop for constructing a hegemonically masculine identity. I outline the concept of the warrior discourse, a set of collective ideals depicting physically strong, morally upstanding humans that reluctantly use violence and aggression to conquer evil for the benefit of the greater social good. I then explore how individuals work with this discourse in their personal narratives to present selves/identities in which themes of duty and sacrifice, integrity, and dedication become personal characteristics. Responding to questions about why they have decided to join, men suggest the military is the appropriate place to acquire these characteristics. I then focus explicitly on the process of hegemonic masculine identity construction in which men’s narratives situate them as physically fit, tough, emotionally controlled, and heterosexual. Men also construct hegemonic masculinity through comparative practice, a process whereby individuals compare themselves to others in an effort to construct hierarchies of dominance. Using civilians and men and women in the military, men create hierarchal orderings of masculinities in which they situate themselves as

more physically able, emotionally controlled, virtuous, and dedicated than those their comparison group. I conclude by exploring areas for future research.

CHAPTER 1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

As of this writing, American armed forces are stretched thin, with combat conditions existing in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a number of ongoing military operations in the Philippines, Germany, South Korea, Cuba (Guantanamo Bay), and South America. American troops are being killed at an average rate of two a day and the overall death toll has gone over three thousand (3495 U.S. deaths as of June 5, 2007). The total number of killed and wounded is over 25,000 (Iraq Coalition Casualty Count 2007). The Army (reserve and guard) and the Marines have, on occasion, fallen short of recruitment goals (Schmitt 2005) and military experts suggest that growing rates of attrition due to death, wounds, discharge, and retirements is increasingly placing a strain on the military's ability to maintain sufficient troop levels. Evidence of this is seen in the current use of American Forces, where some Regular Armed Forces units have now been deployed twice to Iraq and military and political leaders have relied heavily on Armed Force Reserve and Army National Guard units for extended periods of active duty service in levels not seen since Vietnam (Department of Defense 2005). Military and political leaders have instituted a "stop-loss" program, barring soldiers whose contract has been fulfilled from leaving active duty until released by commanders, and are utilizing members of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) in what has been called a "back-door" draft, calling prior service members who have fulfilled their military service contracts back to active duty (and for some, active combat duty) (CBS 2004). The situation in Iraq is increasingly unstable and record numbers of troops and civilians are being killed and wounded in elevated levels of sectarian violence, prompting one group of experts to call for the gradual withdrawal of American combat brigades by early 2008 (Baker et al. 2006).

Despite the current military situation and falling public support for the war in Iraq, there are still thousands of young American men signing up for duty. It would be incorrect to suggest that these young men are disregarding the dangers in Iraq and Afghanistan in pursuit of economic opportunity because this misses important questions about social and psychological processes that lead individuals to sign up for duty voluntarily. On the other hand, cultural lore tends to envision those who enlist as “gung-ho” individuals attempting to construct an aggressive, stylized masculinity. Not surprisingly, gender plays a role in men’s motivations to join the armed services, however stating that masculine identity construction is the *main* motivating factor is overly simplistic because it ignores other factors, such as family tradition (Karner 1998) or altruistic motivations (Eighmey 2006; Watson 1999). Economic and psychological/social explanations provide insufficient explanations for the complex reasons that individuals join the military. Considering that the current military climate increases service members’ risk of harm or death, understanding why people join is more compelling.

The decision to join the military is the result of a series of life course events culminating in the determination to sign up. Influences, such as family (Karner 1998) and the media (Doherty 1993; Suid 2002), are also potent sources of information about military service and comprise the cultural and institutional forces shaping motivations and desires. Cultural prescriptions for masculine conduct also plays a role. While such prescriptions represent an ideal and do not necessarily translate into individual identity construction, they certainly provide a backdrop sensitizing young men to possible future roles as warriors/soldiers (Hynes 1997; Jordan and Cowan 2004; Woodward 2000).

Since 1973, the American military has been an All Volunteer Force (AVF) (Ensign 2004; Neiberg 2001), meaning that individuals joining today are exhibiting some degree of individual

agency. This is not to suggest that economic or social factors do not place boundaries on the exercise of that agency, but given the myriad means available for men to construct gendered identities (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985; Connell 2000; 1995), the military, as an AVF, tends to attract those who see some personal benefit in associating with it. Social identities, as well as notions of self, are intimately intertwined with the culture and institutions in which people are embedded (Blumer 1956; Gubrium and Holstein 2001; Sartre 1963[1968]). It is in and through institutions that many individuals find purpose and meaning, as well as the symbolic and material resources for constructing personally meaningful identities (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). From this standpoint, soldiering can be viewed as an active strategy of gender self-presentation (Goffman, 1959; Mosse, 1996, 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1987), partially rooted in cultural norms of masculinity (Connell, 2000), because the military and dominant masculinities have a long history of association in the Western mind (Dudink and Hagemann 2004; Mosse 1996; Suid 2002; Watson 1999).

Military recruiters are certainly aware of this if for no other reason than they too are part of the culture. While western militaries have been particularly adept at depicting military men as masculine (Tosh 2004), after the advent of the AVF, military recruitment materials in some branches of the service took a decidedly more masculine turn to entice young men to join the military (Nieberg 2001),¹ a trend evident in military recruiting materials used today (Padilla and Riege Laner, 2002). In effect, the military offers to supply young men with the symbolic and material resources necessary for constructing masculinities in a way that is both personally satisfying and socially lauded (Connell 2000).

¹ Nieberg's 2001 discussion pertains specifically to the use of masculinity in Army ROTC advertising pamphlets.

Military masculinity can be personally satisfying because there are a number of different masculinities that exist within the military (Higate 2003; Kovitz 2003; Woodward 2000). This means that individuals have some latitude in constructing a masculine identity that is consistent with their identity desires. Military service also holds the promise for constructing an identity that is socially desirable largely because constructions of military masculinities mirror hegemonic masculine constructions (Connell 2000; Kennelly 2002; Tosh 2004). For those who turn to physical aggression and the development of musculature to display masculinity (Hasbrook and Harris 1999; Klein 1995; Whitson 1990), the military is a means to lay claim to masculinity when other routes might be blocked. For men who are not interested in a physically dominant masculine construction, the promise of social status, economic reward, or access to post-secondary education offer different incentives for constructing socially acceptable masculine identities (Connell 2000). Of course, there are those who join because of their sense of duty to the country, or because they believe service is honorable (Eighmey 2006). Likely, many people join because of the combination of these factors.

Tying these factors to masculinity is a group of ideas that I call the *warrior discourse*, a set of collective ideals that depict physically strong, morally upstanding humans that reluctantly use violence and aggression to conquer evil, generally done in the service of the greater public good. People who join the military are able to tap into this unique 21st century American discourse to construct an identity that has some power and status in American society. Understanding military service in this manner highlights aspects of human agency while underscoring how cultural discourses can influence, constrain, and guide individual identity construction. Investigating the process of identity construction by looking at the discursive resources available to those who join the armed services, especially in the current cultural milieu, can generate

insights about the complex interplay between the cultural, institutional, and intrapsychic processes by which men construct a masculine identity.

Specific Aims

I propose to study how men “use” the warrior discourse as one of many cultural resources for the construction of a stylized masculine gender identity. Specifically, I explore how the discourse is used in the identity constructions of men who are currently thinking about enlisting in military service. By focusing on a sample of men that has not experienced active military service, I examine how individuals orient themselves toward the construction of military masculinity through the use of the warrior discourse before they have much practical experience with the military institution.

I draw on several literatures broadly addressing how individuals, institutions, and culture influence individuals’ desires to enlist in military service. A number of general questions guiding this research are useful in understanding how individuals narratively construct selves and identities. I ask the following broad questions:

- What is the role of American culture in men’s construction of self and identity, and how does the military fit into this process?
- How do norms of gender structure men’s constructions of self/identity?
- How does popular media (movies, pictures, video games, etc.) affect men’s proclivity to join the armed service?
- How do other institutions influence the decision to join the military?
- How do men use the military to narratively construct a masculine self?

Some of these questions are addressed directly in this document, others are used to inform broader questions of identity construction.

My own brief military service and my sociological training provide me a level of theoretical sensitivity necessary for understanding the complex process of masculine identity

construction oriented toward military service. I will use the grounded theory method (GTM) advocated first by Strauss and Corbin (1998), and later adapted by Charmaz (2006). GTM is particularly useful for investigating the processual nature of self construction (Charmaz 1990), especially when the data are derived from interviews (LaRossa 2005). The vast and complex differences in how/why men construct certain “styles” of identities make a grounded theory approach an attractive methodology to study self construction processes. I discuss the methodology more fully in Chapter 2.

To access the identity construction process, I interview a total of 43 men. A key approach to is to ask men to take different standpoints in their narrative accounts; that is, asking them to reconstruct memories of their lived experiences as boys, teenagers, and young adults, and the salient features of lived experience they feel have shaped their decisions to join the military. By asking pre-active duty men to take various standpoints relevant to different phases of the life course, I investigate the subtle ways in which the process of self and identity construction emerges over time and culminates in the decision to serve in the United States Armed Forces.

Theoretical Sensitivity

In the proceeding pages, I provide a brief overview of some of the perspectives that guide this research; symbolic interaction, cultural scripts, self-presentation, social exchange theory, identity theory, and a theoretical approach to narratives. I discuss the social backdrop in which militarism and masculinities—pervasive features of the American cultural milieu—may help orient men’s thinking about military service. Although I draw heavily on the insights of constructivist and postmodern approaches to gender and identity construction, my thinking about the complex processes of identity construction is also shaped by the families and lifecourse literatures. Each of the perspectives informs my thinking about the processual nature of men’s gendered experiences and I have freely drawn on them throughout my research.

I begin with an abbreviated discussion of symbolic interaction (SI), particularly as it touches on how people attach meaning and value to a wide range of human behavior to make sense of their daily lived experiences. One of the central ideas of SI, and the one most pertinent to this research, is the self-as-object (Mead 1934). The self-as-object is a conceptual tool allowing researchers to understand how individuals actively manipulate the object (self), narratively, socially, and physically, to achieve the desired construction. Self-as-object provides a starting point for understanding the process of individual self and identity construction, or the ways in which individuals actively manipulate resources, both symbolic and material, around the self to construct a desired identity. In the case of masculinities, the manipulation of gender appropriate symbolic materials, such as the body (i.e. musculature and haircut) or affect (i.e. emotional reservation) is needed to portray a masculine identity effectively. And even when the culturally appropriate symbols are present, there must be some conditional acceptance by others for the identity claim to be considered valid.

When individuals construct identity, they are likely to be influenced, to varying degree, by the available cultural scripts. Cultural scripts provide rough guidelines for how gender is constructed, thus delimiting the symbols that can/can not be used to construct identity. The benefit of using this perspective is that it links men's behavior to cultural norms of masculinity while suggesting that men are autonomous beings who interpret social scripts by using the symbolic materials personally available to them. This helps explain why behavior does not always strictly follow expected and normative gender scripts, as individuals routinely modify cultural scripts to adapt them to specific interactive scenarios (Simon and Gagnon 2003; 1998). As I show, men's behavior in combat provides an example of the adaptation of masculine scripts.

SI and the scripting perspective provide the foundation for discussing self presentation. Self presentation focuses attention on how individuals may attempt to lay claim to a particular image of masculinity by constructing behavior in a way others recognize as being masculine (Goffman 1959). Image construction depends largely on how well one understands and is able to work with the available cultural symbols. Presenting a particular construction of self requires access to the necessary material and symbolic resources for a convincing self-presentation; otherwise, the presentation will not be accepted as credible.

Obviously, there is more to the construction of self than manipulating symbols. The social exchange perspective provides some sense of how and why some images are constructed and others rejected. More generally, it provides us with an ideal of why some constructions of masculinity might be valued over others. By attaching value to certain gender constructions, men may actively seek to construct those that bring the greatest social reward. Using social exchange in this manner moves away from its usage elsewhere (e.g. Tedeschi and Norman 1985; Walster, Berscheid, and Walster 1973), but doing so is fruitful for understanding why some men want to join the military in a time of war.

The final section addresses issues of identity and the way that identity connects individuals to the social structure. I selectively draw from this substantial literature to discuss multiple identities, identity salience and rank-ordering, and why men may commit more energy to presenting some identities compared to others.

Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic interaction (SI) is the process of cognitively attaching symbolic meaning to an object, then interacting with that object in accordance to the interpretation of the symbols associated with it. Language is a prime example of how objects, such as markings on a visible surface (e.g., words), are infused with meaning. The interpretation of symbols attached to an

object is useful for navigating the social world because symbols provide information on how the object should/should not be interacted. Attaching symbols to objects spans the range of human interaction and provides meaning and value to everything from fashion to food, physical bodies to psychological dispositions.

The self is an object that is given meaning, and can act and be acted upon (Mead 1934). The self-as-object is a product of individual action constructed during the course of ongoing social activity, but is also a social creation, constructed in relation to social others in a given social situation within a given social milieu. The self-as-object suggests that individuals can actively manipulate the object to achieve the desired construction of self that is understood largely in the context of the culture in which it exists. Society is comprised of individuals who have and who make selves (Blumer 1969).

SI involves interaction between two or more human beings where social actors interpret and define symbols. Each person, upon interpreting the other's actions (or more appropriately, reading the symbolic meaning of those actions) will come to define their own actions within the context of the on-going interaction, adjusting their behavior to construct a context-appropriate response (Schlenker 1980). The complexity of SI rests in how individuals, rooted in a particular cultural context, at a particular point in time, occupying a particular social and physical space, use cultural, temporal, social, and physical information (read as symbols) to construct behavior in a way that is meaningful to the self and to others with whom they are interacting.

An interesting observation about human behavior is that humans tend to interact with each other in consistently similar ways. The relatively stable interpretation of symbols enables loose patterns of interaction to emerge (Blumer 1969). These loose patterns are commonly referred to as social norms and become the foundation for the emergence of social structure. Simply stated,

norms provide the interactive boundaries within which agents work (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934). For example, when two people engage each other in interaction, they read the contextually available symbols to know how to orient their actions. This is possible only if there are definitions available for those symbols. By their nature, definitions delimit what something is and what it is not, providing rough boundaries for what can occur during the interaction. Those boundaries (or structures) in turn, constrain individual actions. This is known as the structure-agency feedback loop (Giddens 1984). Symbols, and symbolic interpretation, provide the basis for structure in society (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934).

The relevance of SI to this research is that when we speak of gender, we are speaking about historically located, culturally and contextually specific configurations of practice (Connell 1987, 1995, 2000), or the roughly consistent patterns of normative behavior appropriate for males and female. People are viewed as masculine or feminine depending on whether their use of symbolism is consistent with commonly accepted norms of masculinity or femininity. When individuals construct identities, they are doing so within a normative framework of gender, making such constructions neither individual nor completely reiterations of the structure (Connell 1987). An early critique leveled at sociological theory was that it treats humans as if they are merely responding to social structure, norms, or culture. In this view, humans are seen as the media through which social structure works. Agency was viewed in terms of motivations to act in accordance with structure, and usually noted after the fact. Work since the 1950's has sought to make human interaction more dynamic in theoretical paradigms (Blumer 1969; Stryker 1980; Giddens 1984).

From a SI perspective, gender, as a social structure, does not work through individuals; individuals create the gender structure through daily interactions with each other (West and

Zimmerman 1987; c.f. Yancey Martin 2003 for a critique of West and Zimmerman). As noted, interactions are guided by interpretations of the symbols associated with objects within a particular social context. Interpretation of interactions in which men's bodies are involved is guided by whether that interaction takes place at the local fertility clinic, in the local pub, or during a sports match; the same body-as-object may be assessed as defective (Dudgeon and Inhorn 2003), robust (Gough and Edwards 1998), or physically superior (Connell 1990). The body-as-object is interpreted to have different meanings because individuals are informed by the symbolic materials available within a given context, in light of socially accepted norms that are part of the existing social structure. Men and women go to great lengths to manipulate the body-as-object to adhere to gender norms; in doing so, they recreate and reinforce the existing gender structure (Connell 1987; West and Zimmerman 1987; Yancey Martin 2003). It is the willful manipulation of the body that speaks to an individual's desire to claim some symbols and not others; this speaks to a structure-bound agency that is recreated in the process of its doing.

In sum, understanding human action means understanding how symbolism is both agentically motivated and structurally bound. Constructing gendered identities means actively manipulating symbols, and as they do so, they are actively shaping the self.

Cultural Scripts

Young males reared in American society are exposed to various cultural messages about appropriate social behavior. These messages, or cultural scripts (born out of stable interpretations of symbols), provide the basis for forming expectations about individual social behaviors (Simon and Gagnon 2003). Scripts are loose guidelines for behavior that aid individual's thinking about appropriate behavioral constructions (Simon and Gagnon 1998; Klinkenberg and Rose 1994). Cultural scripts are not necessarily internalized by everyone in a culture (Estep et al. 1977), but they provide the basis for thinking about one's own behavior in

relation to others. Not all interpretations of a given cultural script are the same; studies demonstrate that scripts of masculinity differ depending on culture (Gilmore 1990); historical epoch (Kimmel 1996; Hennen 2002); social class (Cooper 2000); racial category (Majors and Billson 1992); ethnicity (Klein 2000); age (Sonenstein 1999; Spector-Mersel 2006); religious affiliation (Messner 2000); sexual orientation (Loe 2001; Mutchler 2000); sexual experience (Gagnon and Simon 1973; Simon and Gagnon 2003); dating practice (Alksnis et al. 1996); or physical location, i.e. prison (Sabo et al. 2001) or a college fraternity (Boswell and Spade 1996). These studies underscore how cultural scripts serve as general guides for thinking about masculine behavior, yet are dependent upon specific contextualized settings (Gagnon and Simon 1973). As noted above, an example is found in men's reactions to combat.

Until recently, media depictions of men in combat have men fearlessly facing harm and potential death with an affect bordering on catatonic (such as in the Rambo movie series), or on glee (as seen in the recent Hollywood film recreation of Pearl Harbor).² These media depictions draw on cultural scripts regarding how men should deal with emotions during and after combat: stoically. In reality, a common experience for men in combat is to openly express fear and grief as they struggle with the emotional stress related to physical injury or death and the loss of friends. It goes without saying that these emotional responses are at odds with current cultural scripts regarding "appropriate" (or normative) masculine behavior (Linderman 1987). As men struggle to make sense of their own (potentially) unanticipated emotional responses, their lived experiences often result in reconstruction of masculinity in which admission of fear and the open expression of grief (over the death of a friend) is reconfigured as something masculine men do

² Films such as *Saving Private Ryan* or the HBO series *Band of Brothers* have focused more on men's emotional journey through combat. Unlike previous Hollywood depictions, men in these productions cry at the loss of friends, suffer from the psychological stresses of constant risk, and engage in combat fearfully and reluctantly.

(Holmes 1985), effectively adapting cultural scripts to the specific context in which masculinity is constructed.

Because there are varied ways in which individuals construct gender and numerous means by which to construct a masculine self (Messner 2000), it makes sense to discuss masculine scripts not as a unitary construct, but as multiple constructs. Masculinities, the multiple scripts related to configurations of gendered practice for men, are part of the normative gender structures that guide social interaction and influence the way in which males incorporate gender into their individual social identities (Connell 1995; Kimmel 2004). Again, even when men are exposed to the same scripts of masculinity, they can, and do construct masculine identities differently (Kimmel 1994).³

There is evidence that children have a working knowledge of cultural scripts of gender and gender symbolism as early as four months (c.f. Pollack 2001 and Bem 1993). By the time they reach grade school, most children are actively working with these scripts (Adler et al. 1992; Bem 1989; Jordan and Cowan 2004; Keddie 2005). They learn them in their families (Adams and Coltrane 2005) and from peers (McGuffey and Rich 1999), but as a number studies suggest, television and other media sources have been particularly influential in men and women's understanding of gender (Coontz 1992; Edwards 1997; McKay, Mikosza, and Hutchins 2005; Tobin, 2000; Trujillo 1991; Vigorito and Curry 1998). "Research on gender socialization through children's books, mass media influences, and school experiences shows that gender messages are cumulative and consistent" (Cohen 2001; p. 57), and relentlessly stereotypical (Gagnon et al. 1996). Knowing the extent to which gender images in the media affect how individuals construct gendered identities is difficult to untangle because of the myriad sources

³ The fact that individuals deviate from cultural scripts demonstrates agency.

for gendered scripts, such as family, peers, and economic structures (Kaufman 1994), But there is little doubt in many researchers' minds that the various gender scripts presented in the media inform emotional expression (Kilmartin 200), classroom behavior (Eder et al. 1995; Hasbrook and Harris 1999), teacher perception of students (Ferguson 2000), body image (Grogan and Richards 2002; Goffman 1979), gendered fashion (Edwards 1997; Vigorito and Curry 1998), dating (Riege Laner and Ventrone 2000), perceptions of crime (Cavender and Jurik 1999), perceptions of sexual morality (Dworkin and Wachs 2000), and expectations for military service (Doherty 1993; Suid 2002). Cultural scripts are general enough to orient individuals' thoughts and behaviors toward appropriate norms of gender without being overly restrictive in how individual configurations of gender practice are constructed, while at the same time, they are specific enough to inform individual gender identity constructions (Bem 1981; Bem and Lenney 1976).

I tend to think of cultural scripts as part of what Gubrium (1993) refers to as "horizons of meaning," or specific contextualized points-of-view that are set against different conceptual backdrops, such as gender construction within the military. Cultural scripts tell us what it means to be gendered in American society, but these scripts are integrated into various institutional settings that have their own scripts (or narratives) that tell us what identity should look like in the specific institution in which it is constructed (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). Cultural scripts provide shape and form to identity construction, but leave room for that all-important agency.

Self-Presentation

The link between the intrapsychic aspects of identity (i.e. private thoughts about identity), socially constructed behaviors, and cultural scripts might rest with presentations of the self. Individuals, being aware that others are watching (Cooley 1909), often attempt to present the self in a way that is congruent with how they believe others want to see them (Goffman 1959) This

awareness allows individuals to control their self-presentations by controlling the way they construct social behaviors (Schlenker 1980), or in the terminology of SI, actively manipulate symbols. The relevance of self-presentation to this study is that masculinities are constructed largely for other men (Kimmel 1996). In other words, the presentation of a masculine self is partly in response to how others (men) want to see that (masculine) self presented.

One of the most basic ways in which males can present the self as masculine is through the suppression of those behaviors regarded as feminine (Connell 2000; Hennen 2002). By constructing behavior that espouses an open disdain for effeminacy in other men, a trait associated with male homosexuality (McCreary 1994; McGuffey and Rich 1999), men demonstrate to other men their own heterosexual orientation, a key component of western masculinities (Connell 1987, 1995). Obviously, young males in American society can construct masculinity using a wide range of acceptable (normative) behaviors within numerous social contexts, and can present the masculine self in varied ways (Messner 2000; Pascoe 2003). They can also engage in other “masculine” behaviors, such as fighting, smoking, earning a high income, or becoming a father through biological progeny (Larossa 1997).

Males may or may not embrace stereotypical masculine attitudes, behaviors, and roles, and present the self in a way that adheres to cultural scripts of hegemonic masculinity (De Garis 2000). Some men are also limited in their self-presentations in that they may not have access to some of the material or social resources that allow for the presentation of a particular 'type' of self. Presenting one's self as wealthy is a presentation readily accepted by others if one has access to abundant economic resources. The practical aspects of self presentation dictate that if men are to present a type of self to others successfully, they must have access to the cultural resources that enable them to do so. As we will see, the military provides men with a variety of

symbolic and material resources for masculine self presentation (Dudink and Hagemann 2004; Eighmey 2006; Higate 2003; Karner 1998; Regan de Bere 2003).

Even when individuals do have access to the necessary resources for a successful self-presentation, understanding the degree to which individuals incorporate cultural scripts into their self presentations does not tell us the extent to which individuals view those presentations as essential to the “core” identity of the self. To understand how identities are formed, and how individuals might come to value some presentations over others, it is necessary to explore briefly the ways in which certain constructions of identity are more socially and individually valued than others.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory, generally stated, deals with the rewards and costs of social interaction. This perspective highlights some of the social motivators for constructing identity in a particular way. Social exchange theorists contend that interaction takes place when it is mutually rewarding to the parties involved, and that the actors weigh the costs and benefits of social interaction (Howard and Hollander 1997; Tedeschi and Norman 1985). If true, then there is some motivation to control the presentation of self because these presentations are tied to the social rewards and costs of society (Schlenker 1980). Men who openly express sadness (generally through crying, but also through depressed affect) run the risk of being viewed by others as non-masculine, or feminine, and as noted above, as homosexual (Adler et al. 1992; Hasbrook and Harris 1999). When this happens, these men are often ostracized, and restricted to limited group interaction, which can be an emotionally painful event (McGuffey and Rich 1999). Research on children suggests that those males who are most aggressive, whether on the sports field or during interpersonal interaction, are the most popular (Adler et al. 1992). Young males who are the least aggressive and least violent within their peer groups tend to be ostracized, and

in some instances, feminized, as their non-aggressive behavior subjects them to the label of “sissy” (Hasbrook and Harris 1999). This is true in the educational system as it is in the military (Higate 2003).

To gain access to social rewards like the esteem of other men, men can engage in risk taking behaviors (Mitchell et al. 2001) such as fighting (Sabo, Kupers, and London 2001; Whitehead 2005) or taking drugs (Collison 1996). Doing so demonstrates an individual lack of concern for danger, and perhaps a lack of fear, which by proxy can be taken as a lack of femininity (Kane et al. 2000; Swann 1987). One type of reward for risk-taking behavior is earning the respect of male counterparts (Anderson 1999; Bourgios 1995; Collison 1996; Sabo et al. 2001; Whyte 1993), which may breed friendship, camaraderie, or at the very least, help in warding off social isolation and physical abuse from the male peer group.

The link between social scripts, self-presentation, and identity appears to be self-esteem (Tedeschi and Norman 1985). Self presentations are based partly on one’s understandings of social scripts, and partly on one’s self-images. In other words, one must first have some image of the self before one can present that image to others. When that presentation is acknowledged, insofar as the presentation is based on a valued self-image, the effect is an increase in self-esteem. If the image is rejected, self-esteem decreases (Tedeschi and Norman 1985).

In general, self-presentations are meant to establish a particular image of some personal characteristic or relationship in the eyes of another person. Such behaviors may also affect the reputation, ideal, self-concept, and self-esteem of the actor. (Tedeschi and Norman 1985:295)

In itself, self-esteem can become one of the rewards of socially congruent gender constructions of self.

Individuals may use social expectations to calculate a benefit-cost ratio as they seek to gain some social reward, like social acceptance, peer and self-esteem, and avoid some social cost,

such as the disapproval of others, and/or physical harm (Tedeschi and Norman 1985). This is not to suggest that all individuals actively or consciously calculate this, or even that calculations are rational. However, individuals actively or passively make decisions about the type of person they are or want to be, and to varying degree, style the self after those images (whether social or psychological) that are most attractive to them. Like the other theoretical perspectives, social exchange theory provides clues for why men might join the military and is a useful piece of this complex puzzle. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, one of the symbolic benefits of military service is the ability to construct hegemonic masculinity, and from this comes both tangible and intangible rewards that in the minds of many of the men in this study, outweighs the potential risks.

Possible Selves

In their seminal article dealing with the conceptualization of self, Markus and Nurius (1986) theorized that individuals have various self concepts, some of which they are actively pursuing as constructs, others that are projected, desired, or potentially possible at some future point. Their tripartite system of self conceptualization is broken into the expected self, or the self that one is actively striving to construct and which acts as a focal point for self-construction energies; the hoped-for-self, a distant self construction goal for which one has no direct plan; and the feared self, or the self that one hopes to avoid. The active generation of possible selves serves as a means to explore a number of potential identities that one could lay claim to (Segal et al. 2001) because the information gained from identity exploration (i.e. constructing different identities as one explores the various identity options available to them) can be used at a later point in time for the active construction of particular identities (Dunkel 2000). Of course, the generation of possible selves is limited by an individual's access to and type of resources available to construct certain identities at a given point in time (Dunkel 2000; Whitty 2002).

If true that possible selves motivate behavior, then ideas people have about future possible selves can shape self-esteem if they are able to lay claim effectively to a valued possible self. Segal et al. (2001) asked 223 18- and 19-year-olds to provide a written narrative of their future possible selves starting from their twenty-first birthday and continuing until death. Their findings are generally consistent with normative constructs of women and men's roles within American society. Women were significantly more likely to devote more space in their written narratives to relationships than men. Women were also more likely to provide accounts of future possible selves in which they were married, had a family, got divorced, and were widowed than were men. Interestingly, Segal et al. (2000) found no significant difference between men and women in their narrative accounts of future possible self in relation to occupation. Their research supports the idea that men and women expect to construct identities differently; other research suggests that in writing these narratives, they are actively beginning to construct those future possible selves (Dunkel 2002; Whitty 2002).

Using the possible selves perspective to frame the current research, men who volunteer for a study on military masculinities can be seen as exploring possible selves. As they construct a narrative of their motives for joining the service, they are constructing situated identities (during the interview) that look forward to a future possible self-as-soldier. The interview may represent 'a' reality of self; as men narrate their future possible self, the interview itself becomes a technology of self-making (Foucault 1988). Whatever the eventual outcomes of these men's lives, they are actively generating fodder for future identity constructions irrespective of whether they enter military service or not.

Identity Theory

The theoretical perspectives discussed above provide a solid foundation for talking about elements of identity theory, particularly the idea that individuals actively and reflexively work

with symbolic resources to construct an image of self that is both personally meaningful and connected to the social structure via role identity (Burke 1980; 2004a; Burke and Tully 1977; Freese and Burke 1994; Stryker and Burke 2000). One's identity is the outcome of reflexively assessing social symbols, scripts, self-presentations, social exchange values of particular behavioral constructs (personal and others), and possible selves, although the degree any one of these factors into the construction of an identity in a given context is unknown.

Identity theory holds that role identities, or identities, are the internalized expectations and norms associated with a particular social status. The heart of an identity is the identity standard, or the set of definitions individuals hold for themselves that define 'who' they 'are' as a role occupant (Burke 2004a). Identity standards are the basis for judging one's identity constructions in interactive sessions because they contain information about the normative interpretation of signs and symbols available in a given situation (Burke 2004b), and arise from socialization into a role and exposure to the meanings and expectations associated with that role (Stryker 1980). Identity standards are useful for identity control, in which the self-in-identity is actively monitoring the material and symbolic resources associated with an identity to ensure that responses in the interaction are appropriate (Burke 2004b). This speaks generally to intrapsychic processes in which an individual interprets a social identity and attendant meanings as having value to the construction of a particular self image (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker and Serpe 1994).

Individuals are assumed to maintain multiple identities that are salient in different settings. For instance, men's identities as fathers may be more salient during interaction within the family than when interacting with coworkers. Men have many identities, such as masculine man, husband, father, soldier, and son, and these identities often overlap, such as a soldier who is

considered a masculine father. Given that most individuals have multiple identities, some are the most socially enduring and personally valued, evidenced by the frequency in which those status behaviors are enacted (Stryker and Burke 2000). Individuals who value one status over others may present that identity construction to others frequently and in varied social contexts. For instance, if being viewed as physically imposing (“muscular” masculinity) is important to an individual, his self presentation may be aimed at leading others to define him as muscular. To do this, he may orient his behaviors toward the overt physical development of musculature, i.e., weight training. If however, being intellectually imposing (“intellectual” masculinity) is more important, the same man may construct an identity using other styles of self presentation, orienting his behaviors toward overt intellectual development, thus drawing attention to different characteristics of the self.

The fact that some identities are noticeably salient suggests a certain degree of effort in constructing behavior in a way that highlights those identities. Commitment is the idea that individuals invest time and energy into identities that are the most personally valued, and to such a degree that the identities are consistently salient over time during interactions with others (Burke and Reitzes 1991). A man who is committed to his status as a soldier may fulfill the duties associated with the soldier role before fulfilling the duties of other roles. Even though he also has identities as a father, husband, friend, employee, or congregation member, the centrality of the soldier identity to his presentation (and construction) of self lead him to enact soldier role behaviors first. If the soldier identity is consistently salient, others will develop interaction patterns based upon that identity and come to expect him to present himself in a soldierly manner (Burke and Reitzes 1991; Stryker 1980). This is potentially problematic for individuals when identity constructions change because the social interactions and the social relationships that

were built around that identity also change. When this occurs, some suggest the result is a disruption in one's sense of self (Bury 1994; 1982).

Identity theory provides researchers with a conceptual tool for understanding why identities differ from person to person, how constructions of individual identities can vary from context to context, and why individual identities vary over time (Burke 2004a; 2004b). Identity theory is particularly fruitful for understanding some men's motivation for joining the military; the cultural discourses of the military is rife with images of hegemonic, bodily oriented masculinity (Dudink and Hagemann 2004; Tosh 2004). From an identity perspective, men join the military to lay claim to some of the material and symbolic resources necessary for the construction of culturally dominant masculinities. They do so because these particular symbols of masculinity are personally meaningful for the self-image they hold. The men in this study, whether exploring possible selves or experimenting with self-presentation, are constructing military identities during the interview by discussing the experiences that have led them to join. Even though they are not yet soldiers, they are becoming committed to the identity because they are, in effect, expanding the social network of individuals who interact with them as soldiers (e.g. an interviewer during an interview). And because the identities people construct are generally those most personally valued, it is easy to see how the SI, cultural scripts, self presentation, social exchange, and possible selves perspectives complement one another.

The ordering of the preceding sections is meant to highlight elements of identity construction, not suggest that identity construction occurs along a linear path, moving from a general understanding of symbols to incorporating those symbols into identity. Identity construction, as presented here, is viewed as fluid process linked to cultural and institutional discourses which shape social and psychological experiences (Foucault 1977). The value in

using multiple perspectives is that they highlight the complexity of identity construction while allowing for individual agency in the construction of men's military and gendered identities.

Summary

Viewing the military as a gender resource shows how gender is an active strategy of self-presentation (Goffman 1959), negotiated during interactions with others in specific contexts (Blumer 1969; West and Zimmerman 1987), and anchored by cultural norms that shape the construction of gender in society (Connell 2000). This approach highlights some aspects of human agency while simultaneously underscoring how culturally and institutionally based notions of appropriate (and inappropriate) gender construction can influence, constrain, and guide individual gender constructions (Holstein and Gubrium 2000).

Again, the ordering of the theoretical sections discussed above is meant only to frame some elements of the identity construction process, not to suggest that identity construction occurs along a linear path, moving from the interpretation of symbols to the construction of identities. Other researchers working in the field of gender and identity construction have noted the usefulness of synthesizing diverse theoretical perspectives in much the same way as I have done here (c.f. Armato and Marsiglio 2002). The reality is that all the theoretical perspectives hold some insight but none alone are adequate to explain military identity construction.

Using men's narrative accounts to understand how and why identities are constructed entails understanding the cultural milieu in which the identity construction takes place. When individuals talk during the interview, they are essentially constructing personal narratives that draw from military and gender discourses existing in the wider culture. They also use narratives specific to the social institutions within which they are embedded or plan to be embedded, i.e., the military. Taking the view that self and identity are "as much narratively constituted as actually lived" (Holstein and Gubrium 2000; p. 71), and guided by the theoretical insights

mentioned above, I approach men's narrative accounts within the interview session (Holstein and Gubrium 1995) as accounts that relate to and are reflective of the cultural, structural, interactional, and symbolic features of men's lived experience in the United States. I elaborate on these issues in Chapter 3.

I discuss the methodological approach to this research in Chapter 2, including issues related to access, recruitment, and qualitative interviewing. Here I describe the sample and potential differences in the men in this study. My discussion also highlights some of the theoretical underpinnings of the grounded theory method.

In Chapter 3, I highlight the properties of a unique 21st century western/American configuration of gender I call the *warrior discourse*, *a set of collective ideals that depict physically strong, morally upstanding humans that reluctantly use violence and aggression to conquer evil, generally done in the service of the greater public good*. Self-discipline, courage, endurance, marital skill, emotional control, the ability to overcome physical and psychological adversity through sheer will, and personal honor are characteristics of the (American) warrior discourse (Goldstein 2001; Hockey 2002; Jordan and Cowan 2004; Karner 1998; Siebold 2001; Woodward 2000). There are strong parallels between these characteristics and those of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Men who use the warrior discourse to construct masculine identities can be said to simultaneously be constructing hegemonic masculinities. To this end, Chapter 3 highlights how this discourse influences Americans' understanding of men as men, not just as service members. I show how the warrior discourse shapes, and is shaped by, those in positions of power in American society. I then move on to highlighting the American cultural tradition of casting military men as virtuous, and how pre-service members actively apply the discourse.

Chapter 4 grounds the warrior discourse in men's personal narratives. I show how men frame past and present selves as virtuous. Their narratives suggest that duty, integrity, and dedication are qualities they possess. I highlight how these are characteristics they construct. Doing so enables them to situate themselves within the warrior discourse and simultaneously lay claim to hegemonically masculine identities.

Chapter 5 more explicitly demonstrates the process of masculine identity construction and its relationship to the warrior discourse. As men discuss their past lives and current activities, they construct the self as hegemonically masculine. By focusing on sport activities, they highlight their physical abilities, and in doing so, draw on culturally appropriate symbolism for constructing hegemonic masculinities. In a similar fashion, their focus on the male body, through military physical training, physical toughness, violence, heterosexuality, and homophobia depict them as dominantly masculine. Like the men's accounts described in Chapter 4, the men plug their stories into the warrior discourse to construct hegemonically masculine selves.

In Chapter 6, I explore how men construct masculinity by comparing themselves to others. After a brief discussion of the theoretical literature on masculinities, I show how men construct masculinities by comparing themselves to non-military civilians, women in the military, men in other services, men in other branches, and men who are officers or enlisted. This is all done against the backdrop of the warrior discourse. Comparative practice enables the men to create a hierarchal ordering of masculinities in which they are situated as more physically able, emotionally controlled, virtuous, and dedicated than those belonging to their comparison group.

Chapter 7 explores some interesting theoretical issues related to the warrior discourse and comparative practice while considering class distinctions between ROTC and DEP men.

Limitations of this research highlight several key methodological issues, which I further explore in the future research section. I propose avenues for two expanding two theoretical concepts, the warrior discourse and comparative practice, and conclude by discussing some of the policy and ethical implications of my research.

CHAPTER 2 METHODS

Introduction

The military has long been viewed as a place where masculinities are made, but what exactly does that mean? How do men use the military to construct masculinity? I began my inquiry by talking with men who were joining the military. Because interview responses are essentially personal narrative accounts of actions, motivations, reasons, etc. (Gubrium and Holstein 1997), I felt the grounded theory method would be an effective means of analyzing my qualitative data (LaRossa 2005).

To get at the masculine identity construction process, I asked several broad questions:

- How do men's life experiences (as children, adolescents, and young adults) shape their orientation toward the military?
- What aspects of the American experience of boyhood/adolescence/young adulthood inform constructions of masculinity?
- What is the role of family, educational, and economic institutions in how men construct a self/identity centered on the military?
- What is the role of American cultural narratives in men's construction of self and identity, and how does the military fit into this process?
- How is the military used as a resource to construct narratively the masculine self?

In this chapter, I outline my approach to answering the question how masculinities are constructed using the military. I start by describing the sample. This is followed by a discussion of the recruitment process, including the issues related to gaining access to pre-active duty service men. I highlight the grounded theory method and data analysis procedures. Finally, I discuss the theoretical implications of interviewing and talk about why the grounded theory method provides an excellent fit for this research.

Recruitment Procedures

This research is designed to investigate how the military is used as a tool in the construction of a particular style of gender. Potential participants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling. The use of purposive sampling allows for sharper focus (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) because only pre-service men who have initiated the enlistment process were asked to participate. Potential participants were recruited through local military recruitment stations, ROTC programs, flyers, internet forums designed for pre-service members, and word of mouth. Snowball sampling was intended to capitalize on rapport built with study participants. This strategy worked better for ROTC cadets than for DEPS, who were relatively isolated in their contact with other DEP soldiers, and even when they did have routine contact with potential study participants (generally through weekly PT sessions), they did not have their contact information.

Recruiting pre-active duty service men enabled me to investigate how a specific subset of men view the military before the reality of active duty service has altered their impressions of the military. I purposely excluded those currently serving on active military duty because of the difficulty in recruiting them as study participants. The Department of Defense is notoriously stingy in allowing external investigators access to active-duty service members (Personal communication, Shelley MacDermid, November 18, 2004).

I also did not interview prior service members. Excluding them meant sacrificing breadth for depth; however, I believe the study benefits from theoretical tightness and conceptual clarity. Current and prior-service active duty members share the common distinction of having been in the armed forces, however, their service could have been in the active Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard. Prior-service active duty members differ as well by length of service, type of duty (combat or peace time), time period in which they served (1940's, 1950's, 1960's,

etc.) and military rank at time of separation from the service. These men also differ by race/ethnicity, class, and education. To achieve any sort of theoretical clarity would require a sample of hundreds of prior service active-duty members to ensure that an adequate number of men from each branch of service, type of service (combat/peace, active/reserve, state-side/overseas, ground/air/ocean, etc.), time of service, length of duty, and of each racial, ethnic, class, and educational categorization were interviewed. Needless to say, such a study would be a massive undertaking.

On the other hand, pre-active duty service members offer an accessible and realistic sample for this project because they are a theoretically intriguing group of men who were relatively easy to locate, recruit, and interview in a timely manner. My sample was drawn primarily from ROTC cadets stationed at a large public university in Florida, and DEP soldiers recruited from recruitment stations in North-Central Florida. Because Army Reserve, Army National Guard, and Navy Reserve are not officially viewed as holding active duty status, I did not exclude them from participating; neither did I actively recruit them for this study. Only one participant was directly involved in the Army Reserve. Although they can be called up for active duty in a time of national need, the time investment of Reservists and Guard members is no different from ROTC or DEP members who routinely attend PT or drill.

Gaining access: I began recruiting participants from the ROTC in the fall of 2004. The first interview came on referral from a colleague whose student was an NROTC cadet. The second interview was a former student of mine, and he encouraged four of his friends (all NROTC) to participate in my study. After a good start, the potential pool of participants all but dried up, and I found little enthusiasm among potential participants for my project. At the start, I

was not offering remuneration, but quickly amended the IRB protocol to pay participants ten (10) dollars to compensate individuals for their time.

In order to gain access to more cadet participants, I made several visits and phone calls to unit secretaries and commanding officers within each of the branches of the program. Indicative of gaining access to this population is my experience with Naval ROTC (NROTC). I first met the unit secretary, who referred me to the unit commander, Capitan (Cpt.) Barco, although Cpt. Barco was rarely available. I offered to put together a brief prospectus detailing the study which would include my proposed question schedule and assurances of guarding cadet confidentiality. The unit secretary assured me she would pass this information along. I made it a point to call every two days to check on the status of command acquiescence to my proposal. The unit secretary and I engaged in a ritual where she stated she forgot to pass it along, to which I would ask when I could expect to have an answer. It took two-weeks to receive word that the Cpt. had approved my proposal, and would allow me to hang a flyer in the unit common area. It is my impression that had I left it to the discretion of the secretary to call me back when something was known, I may not have been granted access to the cadet area. Persistence appears to have overcome bureaucratic delay with the NROTC, a tactic which, purposefully or not, may have unofficially blocked my access to the population of interest.

Even so, getting people to volunteer is different from being granted access. After four weeks passed with no contacts, I visited the recreation area of the unit to try and personally invite men to sign up. Only one NROTC cadet provided me with his contact information, but when I called him later to schedule an interview, he declined to participate. I contacted Major Barco directly and asked permission to recruit participants from a class he was teaching; he agreed to meet with me to discuss this. During our meeting, I presented myself as someone with military

experience, telling him about my status as a medical specialist in the Army Reserves. I presented him with a five-page prospectus that included a two-page description of the study background and aims; an interview schedule; an informed consent document; and the IRB approval letter. Evidently satisfied that my research was legitimate, he consented to a classroom visit.

In class a week later he introduced me by telling the cadets I was prior service and that “He could use your help for his project.” I told Major Barco’s class that I was recruiting participants for a study on why people join the military and that in exchange for their participation, I would pay them ten dollars for their time. Eighteen cadets provided me with contact information; eleven completed interviews.¹

I was also in touch with Army ROTC (AROTC) senior officer, Major Chin, whom I found more affable. I approached him as a researcher and someone with military experience, which seemed to play a role in gaining entrée to this important gatekeeper.² He invited me to an AROTC field-training exercise and gave me permission to speak in front of the company formation and invite volunteers for study participation. Of the roughly forty-five cadets present, twelve signed-up. When contacted to schedule an appointment for the interview, nine consented to be interviewed, and seven eventually completed the interviews (two cadets did not show up). Major Chin also allowed me to hang flyers in the cadet areas of the AROTC unit. Only one person contacted me via flyer, and he completed an interview.

Air Force ROTC (AFROTC) is not represented in my sample because the commander of the unit, Lieutenant Colonel Dour would not consent to using classroom instruction time to

¹ Of the eighteen, two declined to be interviewed when contacted, four did not answer the phone or respond to emails, and one did not show up and would not return my calls or emails when I tried to reschedule.

² Among those in the know, prior active-duty members, especially those in the Special Forces, do not generally view former Army Reservists as actually being in the military.

recruit participants. He did allow flyers to be hung in cadet areas of the unit, but no AFROTC cadets have contacted me.

During this time I was working as a research assistant at the Rehabilitation Outcomes Research Center (RORC), a part of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), which is part of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). My work here gave me access to retired Major General Doctor, who at the time of my research, was the director of the Office of Seamless Transition, a VA unit that assists Reservists and National Guard members in their transition from active duty in OEF/OIF to civilian life. In exchange for her support, she requested that I consider providing the commanders of recruit stations a briefing on my findings; I consented, and she drafted a letter of introduction for a six-page prospectus to be given to commanders of recruit stations.³ The commander in my areas was Major Camo, the officer in charge of five recruiting stations in the southeast. I contacted Major Camo via telephone, introduced myself, gave her a brief overview of my research, and asked to meet with her to discuss further my research. I emailed a copy of the prospectus for her review.

I met with Major Camo a week later and she expressed her concern that I not unduly influence the recruits such that they refuse to ship out. I presented my rationale for the research as exploring identity and gender constructions. I also used the Army as a means to find common ground, and in explaining my project, I made specific reference to my military experience and how it informed my current research. As with Major Chin, I believe this helped overcome whatever doubts she may have had, and she consented. She provided me with a list containing DEP names and contact information, as well as when they shipped (left for basic training). In

³ This is the same prospectus given to Capt. Barco with the addition of the letter of interest from MG Doctor.

exchange, she requested that I present my findings to her and her superiors. I agreed (see below for a discussion on the ethical issues involved).

Things did not go smoothly, however; Major Camo did not inform all her recruiters that I was conducting research, and within days I received a voicemail on my phone from a concerned recruiter.

This is Staff Sergeant Sterns. I am calling because one [of] my recruits just contacted me about this survey you are doing. He WILL NOT be able to attend your survey today. He has physical training at that time. I repeat, he WILL NOT be able to attend. Please contact me if you have any questions.

I was careful to schedule the interview so that it did not overlap with the weekly PT sessions that DEPs are required to attend, and so I was confused by this message. I contacted Sgt Sterns, and she said Joel had told her he was taking part in a study conducted by a Major and would not be able to attend PT that evening. When questioned about who contacted him or what the Major's name was, he did not remember. Understandably, from her standpoint, "It sent up a red flag." It occurred to me that the recruiters were not aware of my research even though I had the approval and assistance of their commanding officer. As Sgt. Sterns told me "I didn't know who or what was going on." I explained my project and assured her that I had the approval of Major Camo. "Okay. This makes sense now" was her reply. With her consent, I re-contacted the potential participant (Joel), and rescheduled the interview.

Since I was going to continue contacting people who might continue calling their recruiters to find out more, I wanted to make sure that the recruitment staff was aware of my actions so that they would not continue to un-schedule appointments. At worst, my actions could spark open hostility, resulting in recruiters actively working against me and blocking my access to potential participants, official sanction or not. The same day I spoke with Sgt. Sterns, I went to the

recruiting station to introduce myself to the recruit staff and personally explain my research. I met with the station commander, First Sergeant Jeffe.

When I arrived, he knew who I was and held out his arm to invite me to step outside to talk. Once outside he told me he was concerned that I might inadvertently induce some recruits to break their contract. This is a serious issue because recruiters can only work as recruiters if they fulfill their month recruitment goals.⁴ I explained my research project and assured him that I had the backing of Major Camo. I also assured him he could contact me at anytime. I told him “The last thing I want to do is to interfere with the work you guys are doing here. If you have concerns, call me and I’ll stop what I am doing until I have talked with you.” To this he responded “HUA (pronounced Hoo-Ah)” which is military for Heard, Understood, and Agreed. In this context, the meaning I took (from the smile on his face and nod of his head) was that he liked my deference and felt satisfied that I was not out to stop recruits from shipping out. HUA meant *continue with what you are doing* and *Okay, I understand and I’m glad you came and spoke with me*. I take this from HUA because my military background leaves me with the understanding of HUA being a feeling more than a word, an expression of shared duty, risks, boredom, excitement, and understanding. It is shorthand colloquial with context specific meaning found in one’s shared connection to mutual service in the Army. My understanding of HUA made clear to First Sergeant Jeffe my Army in-group status. No further objections were raised from this station.

⁴ Unofficial discussions with recruiters place this goal between two and four recruits, and consistent under achievement can lead to eventual reassignment. Working as an Army recruiter is a valued assignment because it is a relatively safe and stable one that offers more autonomy than soldiers typically have.

I also contacted Major Camo again and asked her to write an email to her staff letting them know what I was doing. The following is the message Major Camo sent to her recruitment personnel.

[Recruiters], be advised that Mr. Hinojosa of the University of Florida Sociology Dept will be contacting your male DEPs to invite them to participate in an optional research survey on their motivations for joining the military. I encourage you to facilitate this research, which will be shared with us when it is finished, and if you have any questions you can contact Mr. Hinojosa directly, at Ramon.Hinojosa@va.gov.

FYI, this is the invitation that the researcher is employing. If your Soldiers have questions, let them know that yes, it is okay to participate, if they wish.

MAJ Camo

Hello_____. This is Ramon Hinojosa from the University of Florida, and I've been given your contact information and permission to get in touch with you from Maj. Camo of the United States Army Recruitment Command. I am calling to ask you to participate in a research study I am now conducting on the reasons men join the military. The interview takes between one and one half hours and will cover questions about the influence of family, friends, and the media on your decision to enlist in military service. If you participate, you will be paid 10 dollars for your time. Is this something you would be interested in?

The issue of recruiter mistrust arose again some time later, although from a different station. As I found out, this mistrust is not unfounded. Major Camo received a call from a recruiter who expressed his concerns about my study. She assured him that I had her support, and without my prompting, sent out another email to her recruitment staff (I found out about this because I received a CC of the email). Because I was in regular contact with Major Camo during this time, she later told me that recruiters face constant challenges from groups organized to entice men and women to break their enlistment contracts. When DEPs can be identified, these folks will pose as researchers and schedule sham interviews. During these interviews, they try to talk the recruits out of joining, and have achieved some success. Recruiters and command staff are aware of this and guard DEP information closely. I suspect my status as prior service was instrumental in being granted access to DEP men.

Interview Guide

Interviews are divided into two overlapping sections; general life experiences and anticipated military experience (Appendix B). For general life experiences, I ask the following questions:

- What was your childhood like?
- Who did you look up to and why?
- What types of things were you involved in while growing up?

For military experiences, I ask the following questions:

- What led you to think about joining the military?
- What do your friends, family, or acquaintances think about your decision to enter military service?
- How do you see the military shaping who you are?
- How do you anticipate military experience shaping how you think about family?
- How do you think about the fact that you may be or have been called on to kill another human being?

The interview guide is intentionally designed to be general to allow room for participants to direct attention to the issues that are most salient in their experiences. Having a rigid guide may constrain participants' stories and accounts, in effect, limiting the amount, type, or richness of the data. A general interview guide is more consistent with a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

To test the usefulness of the interview guide, I did a pilot study, recruiting men currently involved in the NROTC program at the University of Florida (n = 8, median age 19 years, all white); data from their interviews are included in my analysis. I made it a practice at the end of each interview to ask participants what they felt was lacking in the interview guide. Some of the responses pointed out potential areas to expand my questioning. The majority of responses are similar to Dan's, who when asked, states, "Not that I think of. Not...you pretty much covered a

lot of it.” Of course, there were instances where participants pointed out topics they felt should be of central focus.

I think a little more of a regional background might be in order. Maybe not too much into, but just a little bit of regional background. I think that that’s something sociologically I don’t see brought up enough in any of the books or anything. (Gus, NROTC)

Similarly, others suggested topics I should not cover.

Glad you didn’t ask anything about religion cause I don’t think that has a basis as far as any of the military because the one thing I learned about, I’m not a deeply religious individual but um I have had a little background in it, and it’s, no matter what religion it’s the Navy, especially anything it’s definitely supportive of anything their not prejudice no religion excels more that any other. I don’t think that really has anything to do with it. (Delante, NROTC)

Other topics, such as television viewing and other forms of media consumption were added to the interview guide after the first few interviews. The structure of the guide enabled flexibility during each interview, allowing participants to dictate the flow of the discussion. After each interview, topics central to their narrative constructions were included in the guide. Data were collected through in-depth interviews lasting on average 1 ½ to 2 hours. Some interviews lasted just under an hour while others exceeded the 2 hour mark. Most were 90 minutes.

Sample

I interviewed 43 men aged 18-29, with an average age of 20.4. Twenty-five men are Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets and eighteen men are Delayed Entry Program (DEP) enlistees. All men are pre-active duty service members, meaning that they have not been on active duty (i.e. worked for the military full-time) at any time prior to the interview. All men currently reside in Florida. All participation was voluntary.

Twenty-five men were actively involved in either the Army or Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps (AROTC and NROTC, respectively), with 16 in NROTC and 9 in AROTC. The average age for ROTC cadets is 20.4, with AROTC being slightly older (21.2 versus 20 for

NROTC). All are college students, although some are freshmen and some are seniors. None have served time on active duty, however three are prior enlisted, having attended basic training (2 AROTC, 1 NROTC). Two of the men (1 AROTC, 1 NROTC) have been to Advanced Individual Training (AIT, Army) or C-School (Navy), schools designed to teach enlisted personnel job skills specific to their Military Operational Specialty (MOS). The AROTC cadet served three years in the Army Reserves until he went back to school for his master's degree, at which time he was designated an officer cadet; he is considered an officer-in-training while he continues his reserve obligations. The NROTC cadet applied for an ROTC scholarship before shipping out for basic training and the scholarship award was made while he was there. He separated from active service to attend school as an ROTC cadet without having served any time on active duty. The third prior enlisted (Army) was a latecomer to ROTC, joining the program in his junior year of college. Before committing to AROTC, he enlisted in the Army in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) so that he could attend basic training, in his words "to come up to speed" on the military, in the summer, then return to college. Upon his return, he contracted with the Army in his senior year and was officially separated from active duty and now attends college as an AROTC cadet.

Eighteen of the men are Army enlisted personnel (mean age=20.3), 17 are DEP recruits and one has recently returned from basic and advanced training and is currently in the Army Reserves. He attends college, but is now officially separated from the service. None of these men have been on active duty.

There are differences in the enlistment processes for ROTC and general enlisted members. ROTC members generally (although not always) receive scholarships that pay for their schooling, as well as a monthly stipend. In exchange, they are required to attend college courses

on military tactics and military ethics specific to the branch of service they are planning to enter. They are not obligated to enter into military service until they contract, so at any time during their participation in the ROTC, they may back out without having to pay back the scholarship or stipend monies. After the third year (usually their junior year), they are required to “contract” with the service. This is a legally binding contract that requires them to serve on active duty for six years, or in the reserves for eight years upon graduation. The benefit for contracting with the military is they receive officers’ commissions and enter the military as either Second Lieutenants (Army) or as Ensigns (Navy).

General enlistees do not receive stipends, although they may receive scholarship monies as part of their enlistment bonus, which becomes available after they have fulfilled minimal requirements (attending boot camp and Advanced Individual Training (AIT). General enlistees contract with the military in two stages; a contractual signing and swearing-in ceremony at the Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS) and again when they arrive for basic training. General enlistees are not legally obligated to military service until the second swearing-in ceremony, a fact that remains unknown to most. Most will enter the military as privates (pay grades E-1 through E-3), although some with college educations can enter as specialists (E-4), one pay grade below Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs, commonly referred to as Sergeants). All NCOs and privates are subordinate to officers.

ROTC and DEP men are not obligated to military service by virtue of their participation in ROTC programs or having been through MEPS processing. Involvement with ROTC or the DEP does not mean that these men are required to serve in the military; they are not bound by contractual agreement. For the four that have contracts with the military (3 ROTC cadets, 1 enlisted), none have been on active duty. The ROTC cadets, by contract, can not be called up for

active service while they are actively involved in the ROTC program (attending drill and class). Of the sample, only the Army Reservist risks being called for active duty. Until that occurs, he is obligated to attend drill two days a month (and has attended 3 drills for a total of six days) and for two weeks during the summer (which he has not). These four men stand out because they are legally bound to serve in the military. This fact makes them different and one might assume their orientation toward the military and their military identity development is further along than the other men. I recognize the potential difficulties in making comparisons between participants in what appears to be such a diverse sample.

I argue that as a practical matter, they have not routinely engaged in military activities (such as drill) more often than other ROTC or DEPs men. At the time of the interview some ROTC cadets had been actively involved in the program for four years while some had only been involved for a few months. The same is true for DEP men, some who have been contracted for close to a year, others for less than a month. For example, Joel, a DEP soldier, enlisted six-months prior to the research interview. Since DEPs are encouraged to attend weekly PT sessions, Joel, who routinely misses one a month, has been to approximately 18 sessions (3 days Xs 6 months). Compared to Chip, the enlisted Army Reservist who has attended three drills (for a total of six days), Joel has participated in more military activities. And when considering college senior ROTC cadets who have participated in weekly drills, class room instruction, and summer events, the three ROTC cadets who have been to basic training (Andrew, Tom, and Maffett) have less experience with military life. Even considering the length of time spent by ROTC cadets in year four of the program, they have less actual time spent engaged in military activities than active duty military personnel who have been in the military for six months.

If the amount of time men were involved with the military as an institution were the defining criteria of study involvement, finding research participants in a timely manner might have been nearly impossible. To simplify selection criteria, I required only that the men be pre-active duty personnel, a characteristic shared by all men in this study. Doing so risks diluting the potential theoretical richness that might be otherwise gained, but in light of the fact that this research investigates self and identity constructions with the military serving as a background, pre-active duty ROTC and general enlisted men provide a rich source of data. All of the men have some level of contact with institution officials and are, at the very least, actively exploring the military as one potential identity “option.” The military becomes an active, if not central, component in the identity/self construction process. To be sure, some men have more experience working with the symbolic and material resources in their military identity production, but none have experienced continuous or extended military service and have had the relative autonomy to construct other identities (such as college student or wage-worker).⁵

I had difficulty recruiting African American and Hispanic participants for this study for two reasons. First, the areas in which the recruiting stations are located do not typically do well in attracting minority recruits (personal communication with Major Camo, December 2, 2006), and among ROTC cadets, no African American and only one Hispanic cadet volunteered for the study. Also, of the potential participants available on the list provided by Major Camo, nine were African American, but only one agreed to participate in the study when contacted.

Methodological Approach

I used semi-structured interviewing (as suggested by Holstein and Gubrium 1997) and the grounded theory method. Interviewing was used because individuals construct gendered selves

⁵ I say ‘relative autonomy’ because identity construction is bound by a host of structural factors, such as race, class, and gender that one, generally speaking, has little control over.

discursively (Cahill 1986; Pascoe 2003). I use the grounded theory method (GTM) as my key analytic strategy (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998) because little is known about my substantive interests. Grounded theory encourages researchers to immerse themselves in the data. This is important if researchers are to provide an accurate account of the social situation they are investigating (Denzin 1989), in an attempt to build theory that is grounded in empirical evidence (Charmaz 2006). Traditionalist approaches to this method recommend beginning the research without any preconceived notion of what the data suggest (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in the belief that “To preconceive relevance is to force data, not to discover from data what really works as a relevant explanation” (Glaser and Strauss 1967:143). This approach advocates starting the process of research by "jumping in" and "listening" to the data. The argument is that when researchers start projects with ideas about what they are investigating, they have already colored their perceptions of the data, thus making it difficult to truly "see" the data (Glaser and Strauss 1968).

In practice, however, beginning research with no preconceived ideas is impossible (Charmaz 1990, 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1998). One’s experiences and memories already provide a sense of what one expects to find when interacting within the social world, and this also applies when one is investigating social phenomenon. From my particular vantage point, my lived experiences, coupled with my professional sociological training, have shaped my understanding of the social world, and it is dishonest to suggest that I set aside all of my preconceived notions about gender, the military, and the processes associated with masculine identity construction before embarking on this sociological line of inquiry. Preconceived ideas founded in experience are not necessarily problematic because they provide a degree of

theoretical sensitivity to subtleties in the data, useful when thinking about the various ways categories, properties, and dimensions of the data are related (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Thus, my gendered experiences, brief military service, and professional sociological training all become an asset in my investigation of men's gender identity construction. They provide me with 'insider knowledge' of how (and why) some configurations of gender are constructed, how the military is a resource for constructing masculinities, and how sociological theories of self, identity, and gender might offer insight into the process of military masculinities construction. I used this sensitivity to guide how I conceptualized and designed my study as I explored the process of men's gender identity construction as it is rooted in the institution of the military.

Consistent with a grounded theory method is the simultaneous collection and analysis of the data. As I worked back and forth between open and higher order codes, I used the constant comparative method to compare case to case, case to code, code to category, and categories to categories (Charmaz 2006). Grounded theorists advocate adapting the method to the data (LaRossa 2005), and while I generally held fast to the advocated approaches to the method, I felt free to experiment with the approach. As I discuss below, early in the project, I eased away from axial coding because I found I had difficulty in fitting data within a structured format, largely because the more I analyzed the data, the more that structure changed (Charmaz 2006:61). For the most part, I remained true to GTM by identifying a core category (warrior discourse/hegemonic masculinity) that ties together other categories, properties, and dimensions in ways to account for similarities and differences. I also made extensive use of memoing throughout the research process. A more detailed explanation of the analysis process is offered below.

Coding

I began the coding process before I collected my first interview. That is to say, my personal experiences with gender and identity construction and my brief service in the military sensitized my approach to data analysis, as did my professional sociological training. Sensitization on this order is consistent with Straus and Corbin's grounded theory approach (1998) and was useful in developing the initial, or open codes. This aided in the microanalysis approach, a line-by-line, somewhat labor intensive textual analysis of the transcripts. This early work became instrumental in generating many of the conceptual categories and subcategories in which my grounded theory is based. Open coding is the process of labeling phenomenological patterns in the data and is the first step in moving from raw data to more abstract, theoretical conceptualization (Straus and Corbin 1998). One of the first open codes I developed was *emotions*, or discussions in which men's feelings (emotive expressions) are evident.

Men can look out for one another more in these terms. And that's why I think women have great capabilities except for combat part in the military. You always to look out for the other guys, *there is no sympathy* you expect him to do his part. (Dusty)

It sounds like, exciting, I just don't want my career working and not having any fun ... to be stuck in a warehouse, *I think they have their fun times too, I just think it is more guaranteed* for getting what I was looking for being on the assault vehicles. (Mark)

As a range of emotional expressions became evident (through the constant comparative method), these open codes provided the basis for the emergence of one of my early categories, *emotional control*. I came to see how men used discussions of emotion to construct a masculine self that is hegemonically masculine (Connell 2005). My sociological training led me to view emotional control as an identity construction strategy, thus leading me eventually to downgrade emotional control to a subcategory of the core category *constructing hegemonic masculine identity*. But of course, to get there, I first had to start close to the data (Straus and Corbin 1997).

With a few open codes and some emerging categories, I moved to focused coding, or analyzing larger chunks of data by fitting them to the categories developed in open coding. In the third phase of coding, axial coding, the goal is to relate categories and subcategories at the level of their properties and dimensions. Axial coding is the process of densely packing data around the axis of a category, comparing the properties and dimensions of that category (Strauss and Corbin 1998). *Constructing hegemony*, and its properties, *physicality*, *emotional control*, *intellectual prowess*, and *moral domination* were at the heart of much of my early work with axial coding. I struggled with axial coding procedures because it was not always clear that some actions had consequences (or perceived consequences) or that participants were engaged in strategies of action.

Some cases defied categorization within the structure I had devised, so I had to revise it, leading me to ask other questions about the data. In the end, I found that axial coding was too cumbersome of a procedure for me to follow and resulting in many hours spent classifying and reclassifying data that just did not fit. Charmaz (2006) feels that researchers, like myself, who can tolerate some (or a great deal!) of ambiguity and who find the structured approach of axial coding too confining can drop this phase (p. 61) in lieu of more flexible approaches. This is not to say that the essence of axial coding is lost; data are still analyzed with the core category in mind, but researchers are somewhat freer to rummage around in the data to explore themes that do not fit the structure. By remaining flexible, I was free to create new categories as they emerged without feeling as if I were ‘forcing’ the data.

While I refer to open, focused, and axial coding as steps in the analysis process as if they were distinct analytic phases, in reality, open, focused, and axial coding occur at the same time, as researchers often work at several theoretical and analytical levels simultaneously (Charmaz

1990). This occurs through the constant comparative method, where each incident is compared to other incidents in an effort to highlight similarities and differences between and among properties and dimensions of the categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In this manner, I was able to analyze for emergent patterns when groups of properties aligned themselves along various dimensions and delimit the core category, or the central organizing theme around which I built categories and subcategories (and their related dimensions and properties). Identifying a core category better enables researchers to conceptualize the links between open, focused, and axial coding and to account for variations in the properties and dimensions of categories and subcategories (McCann and Clark 2003; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

An important consideration for any research is whether the data are being accurately coded in a way that is useful for providing insight into the social phenomenon under investigation. This can be addressed in two ways: using in vivo codes and/or utilizing inter-coder reliability techniques (Strauss and Corbin 1990). In vivo codes are codes taken directly from the raw data. Doing this ensures that codes remain conceptually close to the data while allowing for the abstractness necessary for working with codes at the theoretical level. The second approach, inter-coder reliability, means that others are coding the same data independent of my coding. To the degree that the codes match (or are similar), the data are said to have some degree of inter-coder reliability. This enables researchers to ensure that what they "see" as patterns in the data are in fact there.

Memos

Memos are a central feature of the grounded theory approach, and are important for theoretical clarity and density of the final product (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As part of the analysis strategy, I wrote extensive theoretical and methodological (or procedural) memos and often found new ideas emerging during the memoing process. I memored freely, writing ideas as

they came to me, making connections between cases or dimensions, properties, or categories as they occurred. Memos are useful because they stimulate the analytic process, and later in the process, help to organize the categories. Memos also provide a written account of where one has been and can help take ideas in directions not anticipated (Charmaz 2006).

Theoretical memos are notes taken throughout the research process dealing with the conceptualization of the raw data on an abstract level. Theoretical memos can vary in length and are taken at any and all stages of the research process, including the literature review, after interviews, during transcription and analysis, and when reading other theoretical memos. Memos can be cross-referenced or organized in multiple, overlapping ways and I found that new ideas emerged after I sorted memos. Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommend making memos whenever interesting theoretical insights occur. I recommend taking memos whenever something interesting occurs with the hopes of stimulating that creative process. The idea behind memoing is to force researchers to remove themselves from the raw data and work with more complex, theoretical ideas. Memos provide researchers a means to capture interesting, complex, or fresh ideas before they are lost. The following is part of a theoretical memo recorded days after transcribing an interview with Dan. This memo is the basis for my discussion above regarding the multi-layered nature of individual narratives.

Cultural narratives and institutional narratives (the military and the family) are used to actively create individual narratives. Cultural narratives consists of notions of gender and sexuality, notions of self and identity, and the role of individuals in “self-construction” Institutional narratives consist of the stories and discursive practices of the military and the family, as well as the unique history of the individual’s immediate family. Individual narratives of self-construction draw upon cultural and institutional narratives as material for the construction of identity and self (past, present, and future). (4-30-05)

While the ideas contained in the memo are somewhat confused and unrefined, the purpose of the memo is to assist the researcher in organizing thoughts with the intent of developing the

theoretical density necessary for a finished project. The thoughts captured in this memo are evident in my theoretical ruminations about the meaning of interview data presented below.

Methodological or procedural memos record researcher's thinking about the actual process of doing the research. These memos enable researchers to track changes in how the research was conducted, especially important in the latter stages of the research when investigators are writing about why and how they made decisions that affected the initial design of the research (Charmaz 1990).

Transcription

I conducted all the interviews, transcribed roughly half of them (eighteen), and verified all of them. Doing transcription was born of expediency and the need to complete the transcriptions efficiently and correctly. I had difficulty at the onset with hiring people to assist; in one case, the transcriptionist summarized several pages of text in one paragraph. In another instance, the transcriptionist incorrectly recorded the discussion. Apparently, I summarized a participant response by saying “Trying to balance baby stool.” Upon verification, I actually said “Trying to balance that and school.”

I also felt compelled to transcribe interviews to get a feel for what the men were telling me. Grounded theory does not have much to say about the transcription of data, but I found it to be an extremely useful exercise in getting involved in the data. Many new ideas emerged during the transcription process and I often found myself writing new memos or rehashing old ones. For example, in Chapter 6 I talk about comparative practice and its many dimensions, such as civilian-military, women-men, inter-service, intra-branch, and officer-enlisted comparisons. This idea was derived while transcribing interviews back-to-back. While it is possible that this idea would have emerged during other tasks such as coding, transcription allowed me to mentally process large chunks of data, giving me a jump start on the constant comparative

process. I do not advocate transcription as an integral part of grounded theory unless one has the time (and energy) for this labor intensive task. However, since grounded theory is a method well-suited for individual customization (Charmaz 2003; LaRossa 2005), I will likely make transcription a central piece of my methodological approach in future research.

Institutional Review Board Considerations

By recruiting individuals in the manner outlined in this proposal, it is likely that those volunteering to participate are self-selecting in part, on the basis they are comfortable discussing their lived experiences. However, certain lines of questioning might still be uncomfortable for participants. For this reason, and out of genuine concern for participants, I reminded participants that they were under no obligation to discuss issues that would result in their psychological discomfort. I made a conscious effort to be aware of participants' body language and verbal cues that indicated psychological discomfort or stress, such as lack of eye contact, crossing one's arms over the torso, or leaning away from me. While no situations occurred that led to the termination of the interview, there were several times with different men that I asked "Are you alright discussing this?" because of their body language or uncharacteristically short or terse responses. These situations generally involved discussions about men's intimate relationships with parents or friends (usually significant others). None of the men refused to continue discussing the topics that appeared to cause them discomfort, but this is not to say they were completely forthcoming in their responses either.

Ethical Considerations

Research exploring how men use the military to construct identities seems innocuous enough; however, by exploring the process of military identity construction, I delimit some of the social psychological factors that go into the decision making process. In itself, this is not problematic, but conducting research that may help recruiters become more effective in their

efforts to enlist young men presents some difficult ethical questions. Given the current state of world affairs in which military personnel are deployed at rates not seen since Vietnam (Ensign 2004) and the increasing need for military personnel, there is a good chance that my research will find its way into the hands of recruiters. I address this issue further in Chapter 7.

I feel some obligation to the young men I interviewed because they are allowing me access to their private worlds of decision making. This information, which gets labeled 'data,' is used to write this dissertation and academic articles that will assist my academic career. My thoughts are consistent with feminist approaches to research in that researchers should strive to give something back to those she or he is studying (Campbell 2002). The ethical dilemma, for me, was in determining who that 'who' is. I am beholden to the military personnel that have assisted this research, ROTC cadets, enlisted, and commanders alike. Without the permission of key gatekeepers like General Doctor, Captain Barco, and Majors Chin and Camo, this project would not have been possible given the difficulty in finding participants. In exchange for access, I agreed to brief the commanders on my findings. On the other hand, I assisted participants where I could, primarily by responding openly to their inquiries about my own military service experiences (see above for this discussion).

One very real consequence is that my research may assist in recruiting efforts to entice young men (and women) to join the military. These young people risk being sent to serve in combat zones where they can be psychologically or physically traumatized, or in the worst scenario, suffer life-long crippling injuries or death. I recognize that the military is an institution supporting the power and policies of the social elite, charged with maintaining inequalities around the world (Enloe 1990, 2000). As a former member of the Armed Forces, I view the military as a necessary institution charged with protecting American wealth, culture, lifestyle,

and life, and it is from this standpoint that I embarked on this research. The military is an all volunteer army; even in the face of what are viewed as overly coercive incentives in the form of various economic and educational benefits (Ensign 2004). Service members are self-selecting and have a fair amount of autonomy in determining their military occupational specialties (MOS), and thus, their exposure to some of the risks of combat. The fact remains that my research may induce some men, through improved recruiting techniques, to join the military; so too, remains the fact that men can refuse to join. The most difficult part of this research, ethically speaking, was the awareness that my theoretical interests in self and identity could have potentially dire consequences for young men living in this culture. I can only offer that researchers need to assess their own ethical and moral boundaries to determine how far they are willing to go to achieve their research goals and be aware of and prepared for the latent and manifest consequences of their actions (Bernard 2000; Emerson 2001; Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Theoretical Considerations

Interviewing as a methodological approach has several potential difficulties, one of which is the collaborative nature of the interview process (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Although interviewers help frame the information likely to be elicited, the participant also has ideas about what information the interviewer is looking for, and this understanding of the research is likely to guide responses. In other words, both the interviewer and participant bring to the interview preconceived notions that define, constrain, and collectively shape the nature and outcome of the interview. The interview process is a meaning-making experience likely to be shaped by various contextual factors, one of which is researcher-participant collaboration (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Narratives are much more than simply a mirror of life events; they are embedded in temporal, geographical, political, cultural, and social fields—all which lend shape and form to

the narration (Karner 1998:198). Social behaviors, such as discursive constructions of narratives, occur at the interactional, institutional, and cultural levels (Messner 2001). The interview becomes the site of self/identity production that includes the use of gendered knowledge, and the narratives produced within the context of the interview are constructed simultaneously at three distinct but intertwined levels; individual, institutional, and cultural.

The individual level is perhaps the most immediately recognizable level because it is interactional. This is where the individual constructs a narrative that is personally meaningful and individually valued. Narratives are constructed from the unique standpoint of an individual, autonomous agent who draws from his unique stock of knowledge to tell the story of the self; where the self has been, where it is now, and where the self is likely to be in the future (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Identity is actively constructed during the interview session because individuals use their stock of knowledge to construct an identity that is personally meaningful. The men in this study discuss their desire to enter into military service by framing discussions of self and identity using their perceptions of the institution of the military (among other institutions, such as the school and the family), that have been important in shaping their selves. Cultural ideas of gender, i.e., stereotypical or idealized understandings of masculinity as it is presented in western, heterosexual societies, are used to construct a gendered self/identity that is meaningful, and part of which is presented as narrative during the interview process.

Identity, as it is constructed during the interview, is context specific. Individuals have many identities, some which are salient in different situations (Stryker 1980). The following excerpt from an interview with Preston (19 y/o male. NROTC cadet) highlights how identity is shaped by context. Preston's identity construction during the interview centers on a military in which he is intimately familiar; his father and his brother are active service members and Preston

literally grew up in the military. At the start of the interview, Preston appeared nervous, sweating and fidgeting. As the interview progressed, he became noticeably more relaxed and his answers were less strained.

Ray: Okay. [Pause] All right. Let's switch gears one more time here. I know I've asked a whole bunch of questions so far ...

Preston: That's all right.

Ray: Um, you feeling a little more comfortable?

Preston: I am. Basically, you just picked one of the most comfortable topics I could talk about.

His comment makes me wonder what topics he is not comfortable talking about. What areas of discussion would make him far less comfortable during the interview? How would his level of comfort influence the depth or breadth of his responses? Ostensibly, if the interview session focused on another topic, such as familial roles or his experience with college, it is likely his identity construction and self presentation would be different, resulting in a qualitatively different narrative construction. Even though this is a narrative of the military self, it highlights the multifaceted nature of identity, and the ways in which context shapes identity construction. As "one of the most comfortable topics" he could talk about, Preston highlights the salience of his military identity and its fit with the context i.e., an interview dealing with his decision to join the military.

At the institutional level, narratives are framed in institutional terms (i.e., the military, school, family), but are also shaped by the institutional context in which the narrative construction occurs. These men have volunteered to take part in a research study on men and the military. Before they arrive to the interview, they must first understand what research is, where

research takes place, and how research is done. Upon arrival to the interview session, they bring with them these meanings, as well as definitions of “researcher” and “research subject.” They are likely to have some idea, however superficial, that research consists of a question-answer session in which the researcher asks the questions and the subject provides answers. Talking about individual decisions to join the military and how friends, family, and culture have influenced this decision in the context of a research study about men and the military taking place at the local university, which itself is part of a wider educational structure within a particular economic, political, and cultural milieu, provides the institutional context for constructing narratives of the self.

Tom, a white male age eighteen, stopped me during our interview and asked “Is that what you want?” I replied that I wanted to hear whatever he wanted to say. He continued discussing his family, then, as if unsure if he was answering my question adequately, stopped and asked me again if I was getting what I wanted. I asked him “What do you think?” “You’re the sociologist. Shouldn’t you tell me?” was his response. He is clearly aware of the role of sociologists in studying people, and brought his ideas regarding research and the roles of the researcher and research subject with him. His awareness of the institutional context may have led him to doubt his own lived experiences in the face of “expert” knowledge. I doubt whether he would have interrupted his story to ask my advice if we had been in another context, say, talking over a beer.

Individual narratives also draw from the culture in which they are rooted (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). At the most basic level, the language used to convey the narrative is shaped and constrained by the language used to tell it. Language use is one of the structural elements of culture, and following Whorf (1956), it is likely to constrain and shape thoughts in a culturally relevant way. But language is not the entire story: Conceptions of masculinity and femininity,

social class, educational and career opportunities, and the very meaning of self are all culturally based, thus, culturally shaped. In addition, cultural meanings are associated with certain institutions, such as the military. When individuals talk about duty and honor, what they are doing is drawing on cultural narratives of the military, which are based in institutional narratives of what the institution "is." In the United States, the military is generally understood as a protective body, serving its citizens by ensuring their freedoms and rights. When the need arises, i.e. when culturally held values are threatened, the military is the institution that steps in and neutralizes the threat.

Beyond the institution is the symbolic meaning attached to the soldiers who serve the institution of the military. Drive down any street in any town in the United States and you are likely to see bumper stickers that proclaim support for (or suggest others should support) "Our troops." Much of the current political debate has centered on supporting American soldiers irrespective of what the military is doing. While it is not necessary to agree with the rationale behind the war in Iraq, most Americans are expected to support the people (soldiers) who are conducting it. Dan, a 19-year-old in Naval ROTC put it this way:

I think they appreciate the fact that these Americans are giving up their civilian lives and their nice comfortable jobs, and they're giving up their right to see their family for the possibility of fighting to preserve peace, and keep the freedom of America and possibly give freedom to others that don't have it.

Soldiers are viewed favorably in this society, and individuals proposing to enter the military are actively attempting to lay claim to that valued social role. Dan later expressed where his desire to enter into military service stems from.

To join the military, which is supposed to be there to preserve the peace, to fight terrorism, all these good things ... I think what's worthwhile about it is that people back home, regular civilians, will be able to do what they want. They'll keep their freedom, they'll be able to drive their kids to school without having to worry about terrorists or anything, and just being able to lead regular lives, and knowing that there are people out there that are

willing to fight to keep that. I think that's what worthwhile. Doing it for the people back home, really, so that they don't have to worry about it.

He draws on cultural narratives of soldiering and cultural narratives of the military to construct a personal narrative that is meaningful and valued by the self. Here he narratively constructs the self as a protector of personal freedoms, someone who is willing to sacrifice his own comfort for the safety of others. Dan's narrative demonstrates how interviews are meaning-making experiences (Holstein and Gubrium 1995) that are shaped by context and grounded in individual, institutional, and cultural narratives that shape individually meaningful constructions of personal narrative.

The interview also provides a structured environment in which men can begin to question aspects of the self. It was not uncommon for men to be surprised by a question and admit they had not thought about the issue or had not viewed the issue from that perspective. "You know, I don't know. Good question" was not an uncommon reaction. The questions served as a catalyst for greater self reflexivity as men thought about various issues. In a discussion about his thoughts on killing other humans, Jackson told me that, before he was spiritually saved, if the president had asked, he would do his duty. Now he tells me "I don't know, man. It's kind of funny now that I think about it because I was just saved not too long ago. So it's something I really even haven't contemplated which means I obviously should." He appeared to struggle for a personally satisfying response, and eventually resigned himself to the need to further contemplate this issue. "I don't know! I'll have to think about that, I'll talk to some of the elders in my church and find out what the deal is with that because we're not supposed to kill."

Sometimes self reflexive opportunities presented themselves while men were answering a question. As they shared their thoughts, new perspectives appeared to open up for them. This led them into lines of inquiry they apparently had not considered, causing them to question their

previous assumptions. For example, the media is an important source of information on the military and G.I. Joe is mentioned consistently. As Jackson shares his thoughts, he begins to question if there might be other, more potent forces at play that have had a hand in shaping his views on the military.

Do I think that because I see the commercials or do ... [pause] That's interesting. I guess I haven't thought about that before. That would be awfully conspiratorial, right? To see them sitting around planning. If I see that obviously then there's a lot of other people out there who see that...the difference between those two different sectors and trying to market [the military] ... [pause]

As meaning-making experiences (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), interviews are structured spaces in which to create narratives responsive to particular lines of inquiry (Miller 2001; Loseke 2001), that result in the construction of identity. As men construct their narrative, they are not only constructing a contextualized identity; they are literally shaping the self (Blumstein 2001). Selves are based partly in the residue of the identity construction processes (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). The interview session, irrespective of the truth of the identity claim being made, provides men with a potential future resource in the production of self (Blumstein 2001).

The potential difficulties in men interviewing men have been highlighted elsewhere (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001) and are mentioned here because of the potential influence of the researcher on participants during the interview process. I conducted all of the interviews for this research. I mention this because I am an athletically framed male, wear a wedding band around my left finger, and usually keep facial hair (in the form of a goatee). I have been in the military and use this information as my entrée to recruiting men for this study and willingly discuss my service before or after the interview when asked. Thus, participants who take part in this study about men, the military, and masculinity, may be influenced to some degree by my self-presentation, which mirrors some physical aspects of hegemonic masculinity. The narratives constructed during the interview may be shaped by their perceptions of me, a fact that has the

potential to shape the outcome of narrative construction. Although my presence during the interview probably affected interview responses, for a number of reasons which I discuss below, I do not see this as problematic.

Interaction, in any form, is the process of individuals acting and reacting to each other (Goffman 1959). The distinctive flavor of the interaction during any interactive session is likely to be influenced by any number of factors, including context, knowledge, perceived expectations, past and/or anticipated interaction(s), self-presentations, and perceptions of the self within the context of the interaction (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Added to this are other variables such as mood, weather, time of day, lighting, noise, and any number of other conditions that exist when two people interact. Individuals selectively present aspects of the self in many different types of interactions (in public, in the privacy of the home, with friends, with significant others), and this presentation varies within and between contexts (at church, at work, at home, with co-workers, with supervisors, alone). Suggesting that the interviewer “skews” the interview results with his/her presence ignores the practical reality of daily lives, given the immense variability and selectivity of interaction in everyday life (Emerson and Pollner 2001), a fact that may have prompted Neisser and Fivush (1994) to note that narratives are not fixed accounts of one’s lived experiences, but change with each retelling. While my presence likely had an impact, I did not assume that my presence alone was responsible for the narratives constructed during the interview.

Being mindful of my potential influence meant taking care not to unduly lead respondents to answer in particular ways. Participants probably arrived at the interview site having expectations about the research, perhaps even anticipating certain questions. “The stories people construct about their lives are influenced by how they see themselves at a particular point in

time” (Whitty 2002:212). The fact that they may have selectively presented aspects of the masculine self during an interview taking place within the context of research on men and constructions of masculinity is not overly problematic, and may lead to some interesting theoretical insights about how men construct gendered social selves. In any event, I took care to minimize my influence by being conscious of the potential affects my self-presentation can have.

CHAPTER 3 THE WARRIOR DISCOURSE

Introduction

Using the all-volunteer military to contextualize constructions of masculinity highlights several important points about the construction of identity. Researchers agree that the construction of identity is a social action structured by socio-historical and cultural contexts in which individuals exist (Burke 2004a; Plummer 1995; Stryker and Burke 2000). Part of the socio-historical and cultural contexts include general discourses (Foucault 1977) and semi-specific institutional narratives (Gubrium and Holstein 2000), both which affect the shape that identity construction takes. For example, an American combat soldier has access to a very different set of discourses and institutional narratives than does his Iraqi counterpart. Both construct masculinity, but they are informed by different discourses of history, religion, gender and race relations, and political structures (Boot 2006, 2002; Leckie 2005). For American soldiers, the institutional narrative tells of spreading Democracy and fighting for freedom whereas Iraqi warriors are fighting against imperialism and an invading foreign military.¹

In this chapter, I provide an overview of discourses and discuss the unique western/American configuration of the institutional narrative of the military I call the *warrior discourse*. I demonstrate how discourses and institutional narratives shape personal narratives by serving as unique sources of material for the construction of personal narratives that set the stage for the construction of militarized masculinities.

¹ This is not strictly true; the American-backed Iraqi Armed Forces are said to be fighting for peace and democracy and against tyranny. Various non-American backed forces are labeled “insurgents” or “terrorist.” One could argue that, strictly speaking, ‘institutional narratives’ do not apply for most of Iraq’s warriors because of the Bush Administrations’ 2003 decision to disband Iraqi Armed Forces. Technically, at least in the view of official American policy, they are not soldiers, but irregulars (insurgents), and thus not subject to an official institutional narrative. There is some evidence that Iraqi insurgents are armed forces personnel who are waging a guerilla war as part of a contingency plan drawn up before the American invasion (c.f. Boot 2006 for more on this).

What is a Discourse?

As sociologist Mark Cohan puts it, discourses “might best be described as linguistic and semantic stocks of knowledge, invisible narrative storehouses of what we might say and how we might say it” (Cohan 2002:95-96). Discourses have been likened to *coherence structures*, or preexisting ways of knowing, framing, and making sense of individual experiences because they shape how it is possible to think about the surrounding social world (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). Because of their power in shaping thought and interaction styles, discourses are viewed as regulative forces that provide the limits of what is thinkable, and therefore, what is possible (Foucault 1977) because they have a “vocabulary, real objects of reference, and system of representation [that] work to constitute their own subjectivities” (Holstein and Gubrium 2000:79). Simply put, they shape perceptions of reality by defining its parameters.

For example, men growing up in western societies are exposed to different historical, religious, and gendered discourses than men in Middle Eastern societies (de Groot 2004; Gerami 2003, 2005; Lorber 2002; Ouzgane 2003).² Exposure to these discourses shapes the way identities are constructed. The difference in interpretation of the September 11th 2001 hijackers who committed suicide by piloting passenger jets into buildings is an example, albeit extreme, of how gender discourse shapes the meaning and construction of social action. From the western perspective, this was a cowardly act (Lorber 2002). This view is shaped partly by the Judeo-Christian belief that suicide is a sin and partly by traditional narratives of western masculinity, in which ‘real’ men fight fair; surprise attacks (i.e., so-called ‘sucker’ punches) are dishonorable. Interpreted from Middle Eastern religious and cultural discourses, the hijackers fit the *shahadat*

² Ouzgane (2003) and Gerami (2005) caution against truncated views of Islamic and Muslim societies; I use the generic term Middle Eastern societies to highlight general discourses that exist in countries demographically situated in that region of the world without attempting to reduce these diverse societies and peoples to “Islamic,” “Arabic,” or “Muslim.” Just as western societies differ in their particular configurations, histories, and discourses, there is a general sense of history and discourse that binds Middle Eastern countries together, albeit loosely.

(martyr) model, men who stand witness to their faith by fighting their enemy and dying in defense of their country (Gerami 2005). They represent the height of masculine sacrifice in Middle-Eastern societies (Gerami 2003). Social actions are subject to different interpretations which are shaped by the different discourses of western and Middle Eastern societies. The interpretation of the hijacker/honorable warrior as cowardly/masculine depends on the discourses that frame the events of September 11th, 2001.

Americans have a unique blend of military masculinity rooted in western culture that extends from the ancient Greeks to the current war in Iraq. The Spartans, George Washington, Rambo, and President Bush help create the flavor of American militarized masculinities. In the next section I provide an overview of what I call the *warrior discourse*. It is partly an institutional narrative of the military, but also a general set of ideas regarding the meaning of American masculinity. Men who join the American military are exposed to unique set of ideas regarding military masculinities, which are a form of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005). I demonstrate how this discourse is evident in men's constructions of personal narratives.

The Warrior Discourse

Of all the sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct. Despite far-reaching political, social, and technological changes, the warrior still seems to be a key symbol of masculinity. (Morgan 1994:165)

Individuals living in the United States are exposed to various discourses on a broad range of topics, including, but by no means limited to, gender, race, class, age, consumerism and consumption, work and recreation, nationalism, patriotism, politics, and armed conflict. One of the most prominent cultural discourses of gender is masculinity as defined by warfare (Mosse 1990). As mentioned at the end of Chapter 1, at the core of this gender discourse is what I call the *warrior discourse, a set of collective ideals that depict physically strong, morally upstanding*

humans that reluctantly use violence and aggression to conquer evil, generally done in the service of the greater public good. The warrior discourse has alternatively been called the warrior narrative (Jordan and Cowan 2004) or the warrior ethos (Siebold 2001), in which individual men are referred to as the warrior hero (Woodward 2000). Self-discipline, courage, endurance, marital skill, and personal honor are characteristics of the warrior who is “outward-looking, [and] professional” (Siebold 2001:148). These individuals overcome physical and psychological adversity through sheer will (Hockey 2002). They are able to remain on task no matter the distraction, danger, or cost (Woodward 2000), and suppress fear, anxiety, grief, and control anger, all of which connote a loss of control, and thus, a personal weakness (Karner 1998).³ These characteristics form the nucleus of the warrior discourse (Goldstein 2001), and are notable for their similarity to hegemonic forms of masculinity (Jordan and Cowan 2004).

I suggest this might be properly called a discourse because it is a collective set of ideas transcending its traditional institutional home—the military. The warrior discourse is more than an institutional narrative. As a discourse, it filters into how Americans think about the family, work, and many of the other institutions central to our lives. For example, we “fight” to protect our families and “sacrifice” for our children’s futures. Business personnel are encouraged to think about problems/solutions “strategically” so that they can “coordinate a plan of attack” and go on “the offensive” to ward off competition. Beyond the institution, the warrior discourse finds its way into the everyday language we use to describe human interaction. Phrases such as “sticking to your guns” describe individuals who stand firmly beside their moral convictions or rhetorical positions; being “under the gun” connotes social pressure or psychological stress. Other issues/problems/obstacles that arise during the course of daily life can be “attacked” and

³ In a world where men are both more likely to be victimized and to use violence and aggression during interactions with others (Uniform Crime Report, 2004; Kane et al., 2000; Swann, 1987), the warrior discourse can perhaps be viewed as adaptive.

“destroyed.” Indeed, American culture is fond of “declaring” a “war” on social problems; the wars on terror, poverty, drugs and crime convey the notion that Americans marshal societal resources to defeat the enemies of calm, economic stability, health, and social order. The warrior discourse provides individuals with a useable language of warfare, but more importantly, it shapes how Americans think about themselves in relation to their social world.

The Warrior Narrative American Style

The warrior discourse can be understood as a highly stylized, albeit, loosely formulated construction of masculinity; a militarized masculinity. As was briefly discussed above, it is usually, though not always, embodied by men (Kovitz 2003), and aggression, violence, and emotional control are useful tools for the acquisition of desired outcomes (Eder, Evans, and Parker 1995; Hasbrook and Harris 1999), usually in the form of a physically and psychologically defeated (evil) foe (Jordan and Cowan 2004). These are traditional characteristics of hegemonic masculinities in general (Connell 2005; 2000; 1995), but they are exalted in militarized masculinities (Dudnik and Hagemann 2004; Hockey 2002; Mosse 1990; Padilla and Riege Laner 2002; Regan de Bere 2003; Siebold 2001). And like hegemonic masculinities, militarized masculinities take several forms (Higate 2003). For this reason, it makes sense to explore the American version of the warrior discourse rather than focus on an idyllic military masculinity.

The American (Western) strain of the warrior discourse is derived from the ancient Greek and Roman political theory of Republicanism (Landes 2004; Smith-Rosenberg 2004), in which civic virtues, rule of the people, and the protection of personal liberty is paramount to a just society (Bailyn 1992). In a Republic, citizens concerned with justice are deeply involved in politics. When threatened, Republics mobilize citizens who feel it is their duty and responsibility to protect the state from oppression and tyranny. The model citizen of a republic is embodied in the Roman politician and farmer Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, popularly depicted as a modest

man who willingly served his country without thought of personal benefit. His reward was the satisfaction of duty to his country.⁴

Military officers, historically men of wealth, have long been the ideal of manly virtue, popularly viewed as the avatars of hegemonic masculinities, a theme present in the works of Plato, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Kant (Watson 1999). Many of the Western world's warrior heroes were wealthy; Cincinnatus was a powerful Roman consul (the highest elected official) and a wealthy landowner. The real change is in how western societies saw the common warrior (i.e., non-wealthy), and it was not until the rise of the modern nation-state did this identity become the ideal of manliness and masculine virtue (Dudnik and Hagemann 2004). As late as the 19th century, enlisted military men were viewed with contempt, with many believing, as the Duke of Wellington did, that they were 'the scum of the earth' (Boot 2006; Neillands 1994). The American and French Revolutions mark the point at which all military men (and now women), not just officers, were viewed as protectors of liberty and freedom as they perform their civic duty (Landes 2004).

The American Revolution popularly located the common soldier as performing his duty out of a love for his country (Smith-Rosenberg 2004), a "virtuous citizen-soldier who was willing to sacrifice all for his liberty and that of his republic" (Dudnik and Hagemann 2004:6). American Revolution era organizations such as the *Sons of Liberty* and the ideological casting of America as the *land of the free and the home of the brave* tie national identity to a masculinity based in republican values (Smith-Rosenberg 2004), as evidenced by the use of the word *manly*, in the Declaration of Independence to refer to resisting (perceived) English oppression. "[The King] has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his

⁴ Popular culture suggests Cincinnatus willingly gave up his position as the general of the Roman legions after defeating Rome's enemies during a time of crisis. George Washington has been called a latter-day Cincinnatus for relinquishing power after leading the American Revolutionary forces to victory (McCullough 2005).

invasions on the rights of the people” (Quoted in Rotundo 1993:16). By elevating manhood to a virtue-based activity in the form of resistance to oppression and tyranny, then, as now, the rhetoric of masculinity was used to motivate and justify political and military action (Landes 2004; Tosh 2004).

Revolutionary heroes such as George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Nathan Hale appear in stories of America’s founding as the embodiment of American Republican masculinity. The parables surrounding their lives are an informative part of the distinctive American warrior discourse because they tell us what it means to be American. They instruct us in gender by providing examples of how virtuous masculinities protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Cultural lore holds George Washington as a man of integrity. His admission to cutting down a cherry tree highlights the cultural value of honesty and accepting responsibility no matter the personal costs. As the leader of American revolutionary forces, he is also the personification of American dedication and tenacity; faced with long odds, he is famed for leading an ill-trained, poorly equipped American Army to victory over what was then the mightiest military force on the planet.⁵ The battle of Trenton, fought on the day after Christmas in 1776, is an example of Washington’s indomitable spirit, in which his ill-equipped and demoralized army wins a stunning victory against the British. Emanuel Leutze’s famous painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, depicts American troop movements before the battle. More importantly, it captures the essence of Mr. Washington’s character; he stands erect on the prow of the boat leaning slightly forward as it nears the shore. While others are huddled against the cold, anxiety on their faces, Washington appears serene as he intensely stares ahead, standing resolute against the strong, cold wind that tugs at his cape. One is left with the sense

⁵ The saying “The sun never sets on the British Empire” refers to the vastness of imperial British holdings, most of them kept under control through military might.

that he is unafraid of being spotted as he leads his troops into battle, a man who is eager to engage his enemy and does not fear the consequences. And the battle, we are told, was a turning point in the war. Americans, with their rag-tag army surprise and defeat a superior British force in a daring tactical maneuver (much of it takes place at night and during the winter). Without Mr. Washington's integrity, determination, bravery, and willingness to sacrifice, fledgling America may have been lost.

In truth, Washington did not stand in the prow of the boat; the choppy wintry waters of the Delaware would have made this impractical (and dangerous) (McCullough 2005). Planning, maneuver, and surprise were key ingredients in this small American victory; a hung-over enemy commander who awakened only at the first shots also helped. American forces outnumbered two-to-one mercenary Hessian (German), not British, soldiers at the battle of Trenton, and the town itself was a remote British outpost considered insignificant by some military strategists (McCullough 2005). And while the battle of Trenton did help boost American morale, there were other, more significant factors in winning a war that continued for another seven years, ending with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. We ignore the historical fact that it was a sideshow in a global conflict; winning the American Revolution without the assistance of France, who allied with the United States, and Spain, who allied with the French, may not have been possible (Raphael 2004).⁶ Irrespective of the reality of the battle, this story and many like it, inform Americans that Republican virtues are enough to defeat powerful enemies, even when faced with long odds.

Washington's role in the American warrior narrative continues after the war. Like the Roman Cincinnatus, he gives up his position as the preeminent American military commander to

⁶ To be fair, the Continental Army under Washington was, by all accounts, poorly trained and equipped and many European observers did not anticipate an American victory.

return home to his farm. Within a few years he is called on again to serve as the nation's first president. True to citizen-soldier form, he again relinquishes power after two terms in office, setting the precedent for what eventually become presidential term limits. More importantly, as the so-called 'father' of America, Washington sets the tone for his cultural descendants by championing a virtuous American masculinity with roots in Republicanism.

Another prominent revolutionary figure is Patrick Henry, best remembered for a speech delivered to the House of Burgesses in Richmond, Virginia on March 23, 1775.⁷ With the American colony of Massachusetts in open rebellion and others leaning toward independence, the British Parliament sent 'peace-keeping' troops to quell further revolt. War had not yet been officially declared, and several prominent and politically powerful colonists advocated reconciliation. Henry was dismayed at moderates who feared that fielding Virginian troops, in response to British advances, would be seen as too provocative, thereby sparking a conflict that they believed could still be avoided (Mayer 1991). It was in this context he was reported to have stood and delivered his 'liberty or death' speech which ends with him saying:

Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?
Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me
liberty or give me death! (Patrick Henry as quoted in Mayer 1991:245)

Sacrifice is a clearly obvious theme in this speech, as is the 'America-as-passive-until-aroused' theme discussed below. Henry is rallying against British troops on American soil and calling to arms other patriots who view liberty and freedom from foreign oppression as goals worthy of defending. Since time has done much to obscure the political reality of the time, it is worth mentioning that as lofty as this call to arms was, the speech marked Henry as a traitor to the crown, for at the time it was given, he was considered (by the King and English parliament,

⁷ Patrick Henry was a prominent politician during the years before and after the revolution, serving as the first and sixth Governor of Virginia.

anyway) an English citizen living in an English colony. Agitating rebellion was treasonous, and Henry would surely have been hung if the British captured him. Fortunately for Henry, Washington and other rebels, the British lost the war. What is passed down to generations of school children is that the determination to serve one's country and protect liberty, even at the expense of sacrificing personal safety (and perhaps one's life), are key features of Henry's speech and the American warrior narrative.

Nathan Hale, while not a central figure in the Revolution on the order of a Washington or a Henry, has nevertheless captured the public imagination for his virtuous sacrifice. Captured on a spying mission against the British during the Revolution, he was sentenced to death by hanging.⁸ Asked if he had any final words, he is reported to have said "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country." Similar to Washington and Henry, we see here the theme of sacrifice, that to be a true American, one must sublimate the desire for self-preservation to the greater moral good of giving life in the service of the country. His defiance in the face of certain death also highlights the intermeshing of the warrior narrative and masculinities; 'real' men face death proudly, stoically, and if the cause is true, with the satisfaction that one has done the job to the best of their ability. Dedicated to the end, Nathan Hale is the embodiment of the virtuous American warrior.

We do not know if all the words and actions attributed to these Revolutionary heroes are accurate. One might wonder about the veracity of a tale in which a young aristocrat would willingly admit to the destruction of a cherry tree, which was a valuable source of food, energy, and shelter (wood) in colonial America. There remain doubts as to whether Patrick Henry or

⁸ Death by hanging was considered an insult as this was how common criminals were hung. The aristocracy and well-to-do were either shot by firing squad or beheaded because it was generally considered more humane because, unlike hanging, death came swiftly.

Nathan Hale actually uttered their famous words, and there is evidence that for all of these men, their famed speeches were concocted long after their deaths (c.f. Ortner 2001 on Hale and Raphael 2004 on Washington and Henry). True or not, these stories suggest something of American's reverence for virtuous men in the Republican mold; men of integrity who are determined and willing to sacrifice their lives to uphold the American ideal of democracy. American men have, throughout the years, been exposed to the Republican virtues of modesty, honesty, dedication, and emotional reservation (Landes 2004; Smith-Rosenberg 2004; Rotundo 1993). This strain of the warrior narrative appears with almost predictable frequency in the telling of American military adventures, from the founding of America to the current war in Iraq.

It is worth noting that in other contexts and epochs, the warrior discourse takes on different meanings. In some eras, it encompasses a more sinister expression, such as it did for the American military in the creation of modern national boundaries.⁹ The Mexican-American War, the Black Hawk War, and the first and second Seminole Wars, among others, were wars of territorial expansion and population removal. Recall that the heart of this discourse is the warrior ethos, or a military culture that espouses values such as being "fit, self-disciplined, controlled, outward-looking, [and] professional" (Siebold 2001:148). American soldiers behaved professionally and were self-disciplined enough to submit themselves to military rule, but were ruthless and brutal when it came to dealing with enemy combatants and civilians. The result of the various Indian wars was the genocide of native American Indians.¹⁰

⁹ The Nazi *Shutzstaffel*, better known as the Nazi SS, in World War II, is a cross-cultural example of how the warrior discourse can take on a sinister connotation. The SS were at the center of the Holocaust, but soldiers of the SS viewed themselves as standard-bearers for the Aryan race at the forefront of the creation of a thousand-year Reich. History has judged them differently.

¹⁰ American and European explorers and merchants are also responsible. They regularly killed American Indians, both intentionally in combat and inadvertently through their part in transmitting diseases that decimated the native populations.

The warrior discourse is also subjective; many Indians did not view American soldiers as disciplined or professional. The modern version of the warrior discourse that constructs American military personnel as virtuous, morally-bound protectors is, I suspect, not shared by many of the Iraqi and Afghani families that have lost loved ones in the current wars. These wars can be understood alternatively as a fight against terrorism and radical fundamentalism, or an illegal war of colonial aggression. At a cultural level, the warrior discourse would take on a different sheen if America were not currently the world's preeminent superpower. This unique place in the global community shapes the particular blend of democracy, peace, and freedom that American warriors are culturally viewed as upholding. Thus, the warrior discourse is a uniquely modern, subjective, American construct.

That said, the American warrior discourse offers a general set of guidelines for how modern militarized masculinities are constructed. As I discuss below, individual men modify these guidelines to fit their own unique personal experiences, making the construction of personal narratives a culturally informed activity that is locally situated (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). With this in mind, there is no monolithic approach to the construction of military masculinities (Higate 2003). But it is clear that a virtuous masculinity is part of the general theme of the American warrior discourse, and that it has deep roots in American national identity (Landes 2004).

State Agents and the Warrior Discourse

America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. (President Bush, September 12, 2001)

The warrior discourse shows up in American national level politics; indeed, it is shaped by politics. As we will see, those in power draw on it to frame America, as a state entity, as a passive “giant” that once angered, will use its might to thwart its enemies. The discourse casts

America as a neutral, even benevolent nation state unless attacked, and American military personnel are situated as virtuous warriors fighting for liberty, bringing peace and freedom to the rest of the world, and ensuring the safety of citizens at home. The discourse likely plays a role in shaping American's favorable view of the American soldier (Wiegand and Paletz 2001), seeing them as the national embodiment of morality and honor (Watson, 1999) and as symbols of national pride held in relatively high regard by the civilian population (Goldstein 2001; Langston 2000).¹¹ But of course, such a view may be popular also because agents of the state (presidents, lawmakers, and bureaucrats) actively shape the discourse.

In the following section I demonstrate how state agents actively work with and coincidentally manipulate the warrior discourse by drawing from publicly available transcripts of President Bush's speeches starting in 2001. I also draw on the Senate Armed Forces Committee hearing transcript on May 7, 2004 as Senators debated responsibility for allegations of torture at Abu Gharib prison in Iraq. In both cases, state agents are using and shaping the unique American warrior discourse that defines the meaning of military service for many Americans.

In a presidential speech immediately following the incidents of September 11, 2001, Mr. Bush said:

Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. (PBS 2001)

We meet today in a time of war for our country, a war we did not start yet one that we will win. (Detroit Free Press 2004)

And as I told the Congress last night, and the country, we're winning this war. We're chasing them down one by one and bringing them to justice. [Applause] Make no mistake about it, we are slowly but surely dismantling their organization.

¹¹ Vietnam is worth mentioning as a contrast to such public sentiment; however, time has done much to soften public anger (Karner, 1998).

Yesterday, some of them bunched up in parts of Afghanistan. They, unfortunately, met the United States military head on. [Applause] Unfortunately for them. [Laughter] (White house 2003)

There are some who feel like that, you know, the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is bring them on. We got the force necessary to deal with the security situation. (USA Today 2003)

The terrorists believe that free societies are essentially corrupt and decadent, and with a few hard blows they can force us to retreat. They are mistaken. After September the 11th, I made a commitment to the American people: This nation will not wait to be attacked again. We will defend our freedom. We will take the fight to the enemy. (White House 2005)

This style of narrative draws heavily upon notions of masculinity, in which the unwilling, passive victim becomes the physically dominant aggressor, just in the use of force, certain in victory. The warrior discourse effectively frames the use of state violence in moralistic terms. Irrespective of moral underpinnings, the use of force has but one end: to defeat the enemy. The President assured Americans “Our mission in Iraq is clear. We're hunting down the terrorists” (Whitehouse 2005). As the head of state, Mr. Bush’s remarks are representative of how state agents work to shape the warrior discourse, for in his words, we clearly see Americans (and the American state) judiciously using force only when necessary to protect others. Once provoked, however, force will be used until the enemies are completely defeated.

Important as it is for state agents to cast America as moral and just, it is also important for them to construct narratively the institutions of the state in the same way. In no institution is this more important than the military, perhaps because it is charged with legitimate use of violence. Given that military violence protects state interests, agents of the state are perhaps all the more keen that the institution be seen generally as comprised of moral individuals. The events at the military-run prison at Abu Gharib offer one example of how state agents play a role in shaping the warrior discourse.

Early in January of 2004, stories of torture and abuse of prisoners captured in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began circulating in the American media. Pictures showing hooded individuals connected to what looked to be electric wiring, individuals made to pose like dogs, complete with collars and leashes (held by American soldiers), naked bodies piled on top of each other, and young service members pointing gleefully at prisoner's bare genitals shocked and angered many Americans. U.S. politicians and citizens demanded answers to what looked to be violations of the Geneva Convention.¹² Perhaps more importantly to Americans, such acts by military personnel violated their view of service members as just, decent human beings bringing freedom to those with limited human rights. In a transcript from the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing that occurred on May 7, 2004 regarding the treatment of prisoners at Abu Gharib prison Senator John W. Warner (R-Va), the chairman said:

The mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners by some—I repeat some—elements and certain personnel of the armed forces of the United States, [is] in violation of U.S. and international laws. ... This mistreatment of prisoners represents an appalling and totally unacceptable breach of military regulations and conduct. ... Let me be as clear as one senator can be: This is not the way for anyone who wears the uniform of the United States of America to conduct themselves. ... This degree of breakdown in military leadership and discipline represents an extremely rare—and I repeat, rare—chapter in the otherwise proud history of the armed forces of the United States. It defies common sense. It contradicts all the values we Americans learned beginning in our homes.¹³

Note how Senator Warner emphasizes the "rare" behavior of service members when referring to the conduct of "some elements and certain personnel" of the military at Abu Gharib. Evident is the process of narrative separation in which the actions of some, not all, service members are described as a "totally unacceptable breach of military regulations and conduct" that is "rare." The implication is that most soldiers do not behave this way, in part, because it runs counter to

¹² The Geneva Conventions are the international legal statutes designed to protect the rights and lives of individuals during times of armed conflict.

¹³For full-length transcripts, visit [Http://www.4law.co.il/rum1.htm](http://www.4law.co.il/rum1.htm).

the fundamental guiding moral principles of the military and perhaps more importantly, of all Americans. That it seemingly ‘defies common sense’ suggests that what is common is that Americans are moral, fair, and decent human beings who expect the same of their warriors.

Irrespective of the seemingly dogmatic views that split the two major political parties in the United States, the same themes are evident in both Republican and Democratic narratives. Here are Senators Lieberman, Sessions, and Frist echoing Senator Warner.

Mr. Secretary, the behavior by Americans at the prison in Iraq is, as we all acknowledge, immoral, intolerable and un-American. That's why we're outraged by this.
Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.)

These are indeed actions that go against the very core values of America.
Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.)

We are all troubled by the fact that actions of a few have tainted the efforts of all Americans who are serving so nobly abroad.

Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), Senate Majority Leader.

Such narrative constructions distance the majority of service members from acts of misconduct and torture. It is equally important that the American population as a whole is also distanced. Here again we see how Americanism is discursively constructed as moral, tolerant, patient, and the military and the personnel who belong to it are protectors concerned with American "security." When Senator Warner states that the behavior of American soldiers at Abu Gharib “contradicts all the values we Americans learned beginning in our homes,” his narrative construction of a virtuous Americanism draws on the discourses of a culture ostensibly concerned with morality, where such behavior is un-American. Senator Lieberman tells us that American moral character is such that, even when a few renegade individuals have behaved in inappropriate ways, Americans feel compelled to apologize, a fact that sets Americans apart from others who murder and kill, apparently without remorse. Senator’s Sessions and Frist inform us that American service members are, on the whole, noble, and their sacrifice need not

be dishonored by a few tainted individuals. The resulting message is that Americans are a just, decent, people whose soldiers attempt to make other's lives better because they are the product of a morally-based nation-state.

The effect of turning the negative imagery of abuse and mistreatment away from the military allows America/Americans/American service personnel to remain situated in cultural discourse as moral, protective forces. No mention is made in this transcript or those from President Bush of the reality of warfare, and the tens of thousands of civilians and service members who have been killed or horrifically mutilated by an institution legally charged to use violence in the interest of the American state. No mention is made of the actual work of American service members whose job it is to quell the activities of armed resistors even if it means ending their lives. And no mention is made of the potential culpability of the senators, who as state agents, authorized the use of military force, an action that placed service members in a position to make Abu Gharib a possibility.

The warrior discourse is an institutional resource available to those who serve in the military. Without the “corresponding canopy of legitimations” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:62) offered by the state/state agents to delimit the actions of service members, a person with a rifle and camouflage could just as well be a murderous insurgent or terrorist. Involvement in the American military situates service members as virtuous warriors even while state agents actively manipulate the warrior discourse to construct them as such. State agents do not construct this message in a cultural vacuum; they, like everyone else, shape their narratives using the available cultural resources. They are men who operate at the center of institutional state power. Their use of the American warrior discourse is a legitimization of this set of ideas, both through their status as government officials and as an affirmation of their individual beliefs that this particular

discourse applies to the group in question (i.e., service members). And while the remarks at the hearing on Abu Gharib represent their official/public statements regarding the issue of service members' conduct, such statements are also a reflection of the Senators' private thoughts on the matter. State agents (presidents and senators) are perhaps best viewed as the power conduit through which masculinities discourses flow; they are in a unique position to shape those discourses through their official statuses.

Linking the Warrior Discourse with Identity Construction

How are discourses connected to the construction of personal identities? The simple answer is that they shape individual identities by providing a frame of reality within which to construct identity. On a practical level, identities are linked to discourses through the construction of the narrative self (Gubrium and Holstein 2001; Miller 2001), or the telling of stories about the self in an effort to make sense of the diverse experiences of life (Gubrium 1993). As Anthony Giddens (1991) suggests, "a person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor--important though this is -- in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*" (p. 54, italics original). Narratives are symbolic resources for self (and identity) construction (Byrne 2003; Frank 1993) because they allow individuals to present themselves to others (Kelly and Dickinson 1997) through 'verbalization' (Foucault 1988:48), literally talking one's self and one's identity into existence. Obviously body-reflexive practices such as dress, hairstyle, and gesticulations ground identity in a physical reality,¹⁴ but narratives are a key strategy for constructing identities as well.

There are different definitions for the meaning of narratives; some theorists concern themselves with narrative structure and view the structure of the story, the plot, time sequencing,

¹⁴ Foucault (1977) argues that the body itself is discursively constructed.

and characters as the essential means to interpret what individuals are saying (Riessman 1993). Others approach narratives by attending to how people actively use various discourses and institutional narratives to construct a meaningful self; this approach is *narrative practice*, focusing on both the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of self/identity construction (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). This is the spirit in which I use the term narrative.

Personal narratives are understood as a technology of the self (Foucault 1988) because they are useful in self construction, deconstruction, change, and stability (Martin, Gutman, and Hutton 1988). The particular story one tells about the self changes over time (Ricoeur 1983) and may shift depending on who one is talking to (Thorne and Latzke 1996), making narratives something of a subjective creation (McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich 2001) . Nonetheless, they are creations that provide others with ideas about who someone is or hopes to become (Gutman 1988; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997). They represent a reality of self that is based in many potential self realities, all situated within available discourses, sometimes as future possible selves and other times as selves one does not want to be (Markus and Nurius 1986). Some believe that the desire to narrate one’s life is a cultural universal (Maines 1993; Richardson 1990), so common that it is often taken as part of human nature (Plummer 1995; Sandelowski 1991). Self narratives have even been seen as an important social survival skill (Gergen and Gergen 1997). Whatever they may be, narratives are means of creating order out of everyday life, a way to structure experiences in personally meaningful ways that help us to make sense of our individual experiences over time (Richardson 1990; Ricoeur 1983; Riessman 1993). As we narrate the self, we are constructing identity because narratives are a form of self presentation (Schlenker 1980).

One particularly potent source of material for personal narratives is the ubiquitous social institution (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). Institutions, like the military, provide a “corresponding canopy of legitimations” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:62), that give shape and form to the personal narratives constructed within. Working effectively within an institution means accepting the institutional narrative and its definitions of reality as a conceptual reality (Loseke 2001).¹⁵ For example, people with cancer come to construct themselves as ‘fighters’ or ‘survivors’ rather than ‘ill’ (Kacen and Bakshy 2005). When institutional narratives change, the style and type of personal narrative constructed within the institution also changes (Miller 2001). There are limits to how much influence any one institution has on identity construction, but institutions provide individuals with materials and symbols that are used in the everyday constructions of self insofar as selves (and identities) are constructed through personal narratives. In reality, what emerge from the various institutions in which individuals are embedded are narrative selves that are cobbled together using personally accessible discourses and institutional narratives. These are fashioned into a coherent, personally meaningful identity that is presented to others, in part, as a narrative construction of self.

The Warrior Discourse and the Individual

The distinctive form that the American warrior discourse takes helps define the meaning of military service for many Americans, as does accepting the institutional narrative and its definitions of reality as a conceptual reality (Loseke 2001). These are important first steps in the self/identity construction process (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). In the American warrior discourse, the “broad popular acceptance of the military as being necessary and even laudable” (Tosh 2004:49) is part of that conceptual reality. It is a legitimate institutional entity charged

¹⁵ Dorothy Smith has called this process “conceptual imperialism” (1990:15) to refer to the ways ideas become embedded in individual thinking so as to seem natural.

with the protection of others. Service personnel are the agents of that institution. To be sure, not all of the pre-active duty service members in this study agreed with the official rationale for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I mean, we shouldn't be over [in Iraq] in my opinion. It's their problem. I'm still not sure exactly why the hell we went over there. If they tell me to go over there I will, but I don't understand the reasoning behind us going over there other than Son Bush finishing up Daddy Bush's work, is my best guess as to why we are over there. (Chip, DEP)

Similarly, not all accepted aggressive, violent, or physically oriented constructions of masculinities as personally acceptable constructions of identity. David, a 21-year-old Army ROTC (AROTC) cadet, says "I'm not going to be infantry. That's one of the last things I want to be just because its, I've done all this stuff in my life. I don't want to put that high of a risk to throwing it all away." Jackson is the oldest respondent at age 29, and he is the only cadet that holds a Masters degree. He is contracted with the Army to become a commissioned officer in hospital administration upon finishing his second Master's. He views himself as "a little different" from other AROTC cadets because he, like David, is not interested in the infantry. "For me, it's not worth going through that pain, mental-physical pain to say that I'm a Ranger." Irrespective of their reasons for joining, all of the men viewed the military, as an institution, as legitimate.

As one of the younger AROTC cadets, Tom has had very little exposure to the military. Neither of his parents served, although his uncle (father's brother) was in the Army for four years. Tom is keenly aware of the risks associated with military service.

When it boils down to it, yeah, you might be getting shot at. The fact you're going to have [to] shoot at someone to save your own life, I think any human being can do that. The fact that you're putting yourself in that position, I don't think many human beings can do that. And it is a pretty crazy concept. (Ray: Why do you think people do it then?) *Because they need people to do it.*

He is clear that putting one's life at risk is 'crazy,' but he is motivated to join anyway because he sees a need to protect America and Americans from what he views as other aggressive state entities.

The fact that there are other countries that have people that are willing to do this [go to war] and they have this undying cause, whether it be God or it be, they have an undying cause to do this and if they're going to be doing it and we don't do it back, then we're going to lose. We have no way around that. So while its not very good motivation to be doing it, you have no other choice. You have to fight back or else you're going to get taken over. And we can't let that happen so we have to fight back. And there has to be people who fight back.

Tom does not question the legitimacy of the institution, or ponder ethical questions of whether state-supported violence is legitimate. Because the military needs people and 'there is no way around that,' he has volunteered to take on the responsibility of military service even while admitting that a need for people is not 'very good motivation to be doing it.' This theme was a pervasive feature of many of the men's narratives.

Tobey, an 18-year-old DEP, joined the military to make "sure that everybody in America can live their lives safe and not have to worry from day to day 'Will this happen, will that happen, will this person try to attack us?'" His motivation to enlist stems from "trying to keep it where Americans feel safe and not having to worry about their life." I asked him if he felt he would be able to do that in the military, he said "Yes."

It helps. The military is a big factor in America. If we didn't have the military, we wouldn't have a lot of things that America would have. I mean, we wouldn't have the protection really, but we wouldn't have (long pause) We wouldn't have the freedom most other countries have. We'd have other groups over here ruling us because we would just sit back and do nothing.

Twenty-three-year-old Meyer is making a considerably greater personal sacrifice than the others. His enlistment means he will leave behind a young wife and two young children. He is motivated by what he sees as the need for service personnel.

If everybody was afraid to join the Army just because having to go to Iraq or whatever, we wouldn't have an Army. If everybody thought, 'Oh I don't want to go the Army' then we wouldn't have an Army. The Army needs people and it's a volunteer Army so if people are willing to be in it that is better than people that don't want to be in it. And I'm willing so I think I'll be a good soldier.

The men did not question the need for a standing army, simply the standing army's need for people. They accept the unique warrior discourse—in part shaped by state agents—that the military is a legitimate institution vested with the power to protect civilians and the "American" way of life. In the case of Meyer, military service and the desire to protect his family takes precedence over keeping his family together.

Summary

Discourses are preexisting ways of knowing, framing, and making sense of individual experiences because they shape how it is possible to think about the surrounding social world (Foucault 1988; Holstein and Gubrium 2000). The warrior discourse provides men with a collective set of ideas for thinking about the meaning of military service. These ideas may well be tied to the fact that modern militaries do not function well without an adequate number of personnel, and the warrior discourse has the power to structure thought and action in ways that motivate men to join. In this way, the existence of the modern nation state is supported by militarized masculinities (Dudnik and Hagemann 2004).

At first glance, the men are not explicitly constructing militarized masculinities. However, considering the importance of protectionism in hegemonic masculinities, I suggest that accepting the military as legitimate is the first step in the process of constructing a militarized masculinity. Using the warrior discourse to describe their reasons for joining is tapping into a form of hegemonic masculinity. The warrior discourse depicts men who willingly, if reluctantly, use violence to ensure the protection of American citizens from terrorists. Themes of good and evil,

weak and strong, and morality and virtue pervade men's stories of why they have joined the military.

The warrior discourse shapes how the men's personal narratives are constructed. Whether pre-service members have truly internalized this narrative and use it routinely in the intrapsychic processes of self-making is difficult to say. It is possible that they are simply using elements of the warrior discourse to construct what they believe to be an appropriate narrative for an interview on military masculinities. There is also no way to truly gauge the impact of state agents' (Presidents, Senators) manipulation of the warrior discourse on the men's interpretation of it. Irrespective of these shortcomings, it is obvious that the men are actively working with the warrior discourse to frame their reasons for joining the military. Viewing the military as a legitimate entity sets them up to become the protectors of the moral state of America, upholding the American way of life, protecting the good citizens of America from evil aggressors that would do them harm. Although these men did not explicitly state it, one gets the sense that military service is seen as a personal responsibility. And one wonders about the power of the warrior discourse to situate the military as an entity of such importance that men are willing to leave behind their loved one's to serve, as Meyer is willing to do.

Researchers agree that the construction of identity is a social action structured by cultural discourse (Foucault 1977) and semi-specific institutional narratives (Gubrium and Holstein 2000), both of which affect the identity construction process. Actively working with the warrior discourse positions the men as agents of the military; if the military is the place where masculinities are made (Capdevila 2001; Mosse 1900), then men are actively constructing a militarized masculinity through the warrior discourse. This is a topic I take up in discussions of virtue, masculinities, and the warrior discourse in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 THE WARRIOR DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Part of the process of constructing a militarily oriented masculinity is using the warrior discourse as a resource for personal narrative constructions. The construction of identity using the warrior discourse demonstrates that recruits for the armed forces have the ‘appropriate values and capacities’ to enter military service (Tosh 2004:49). While theorists have long known that institutions regulate people’s actions by guiding them to “elicit, screen, fashion, and variously highlight personal identity” (Holstein and Gubrium 2000:104), there is the assumption that people are already actively involved with the institution. I think this process can begin before institutional involvement is a daily feature of life, and even early interactions with the military can educe institutionally appropriate identity and self constructions. Men do not need to be on active duty to begin working effectively and efficiently with the warrior discourse. The military serves as an institutional backdrop for men’s stylized masculinities construction.

In this chapter, I explore how men use the military in their constructions of identity/self to construct the Americanized version of the warrior discourse, the virtuous warrior. Themes of duty and sacrifice, integrity, and dedication are properties of a virtuous self. As men respond to questions about why they’ve decided to join the military, they set the military up as the appropriate place to acquire these characteristics. And in telling their stories, they situate their narrative constructions of identity within the warrior discourse, presenting themselves as virtuous individuals.

Viewing the Institution as Legitimate

As we saw in Chapter 3, the young men viewed the military as the institution legitimately charged with protecting America(ns), which is to say, they accepted the institutional narrative of the military; more importantly, they are working with the American warrior discourse.

Accepting this discourse also suggests that men view the military as the appropriate, and perhaps legitimate, institutional space to construct a virtuous masculinity. The following text from the Army website (www.army.com) captures the essence of the distinctive virtuous American warrior discourse.

Many people know what the words Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage mean. But how often do you see someone actually live up to them? Soldiers learn these values in detail during Basic Combat Training (BCT), from then on they live them every day in everything they do—whether they're on the job or off.

The text explains how the Army trains leaders who will serve their fellow countrymen when called upon. A quick survey of internet home pages for the Navy, Marines, and Airforce demonstrates a marked concern with these 'core' military values. And the men in this study have not missed this message. Mark (AROTC) felt that being in the military meant "having higher moral standards than everybody, just being held to higher standards." To varied degree, the men in this study viewed the military as a place where a virtuous self/identity is made.

In ROTC we are taught the 7 army values, which are, loyalty, duty, self service, honor, integrity, personal courage, one more I can't think of right now.¹ But those are definitely the main ingredients of a military person. It's the way we live by and conduct ourselves, its huge way the military works. (Shawn, AROTC)

In discussing the benefits of military service, Dan, a 19-year-old college freshman in NROTC, told me that honesty and integrity are "definitely a big part of anybody's life, any aspect." The men understand that their military educations will, in Dan's words, focus on helping them make "moral and ethical decisions, being, doing the right thing. People will know that you've had exposure. I mean, you're not going to be lying or cheating the company out of money. Theoretically."

¹ The 7 Army values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Shawn has forgotten 'respect'.

Joining the military enables men to enter an environment conducive to their sense of who they are as individuals. “The integrity, the commitment, the courage” are character traits Delante (NROTC) “hold[s] so close. I hold those characteristics more important than anything else because those core values are what define me as an individual.” Like the other men who view the military as the correct institutional site, Delante sees it as a space that “compliments the strengths of my personality” and he hopes that joining will enable him to “surround myself with those individuals who have the same core values.”

As one of three men who have been to military basic training, Maffett (NROTC) is representative of others in stating that he “was already a good person. I had good values that I learned from my parents. But the military pushed me to become even better.” This is echoed by Andrew (AROTC), another basic training attendee, who views the military as the appropriate institutional site, but does not believe the military ‘gives’ anyone these characteristics; they must first possess them. The military is simply the place to hone them.

I've been refined in the Army's process. (Ray: How do you mean refined exactly?) I went from a civilian without a clear idea of what I want to do in life, physically unfit, different things, into the army. I've heard it said before that the army doesn't give you anything more than you put into it. You have to have those underlying traits if you want to shine in the Army. If you want the army to refine you and turn you into a soldier you have to have that in yourself somewhere. They won't give you self respect. They won't give you integrity. They won't give you loyalty, you know, all the seven Army values. They won't give them to you. They just refine them then take away all the dirt all the grime to polish a precious stone, you polish it, like metal, you forge out all the impurities until it's a working tool. That's the way I look at it.

Forging “out all the impurities” until the self is refined into a “precious stone” free of dirt and grime brings to mind an industrial manufacturing process in which the shapeless material of self (“a civilian without a clear idea of what I want to do in life”) is hardened into a useful “working tool.”

The men accept the institutional site as the appropriate place for self and identity transformation, a place where the raw materials of the self are turned into nationally useful selves that espouse Republican virtues. In doing so, they are beginning to work with institutional narratives even before they are on active duty. Like the other men interviewed, Mark, Shawn, Dan, Delante, Maffett, and Andrew believe military service will assist them achieving a virtuous self, “whether they’re on the job or off.” But as the men say, they already possess those character traits—the military will simply sharpen them. In short, they legitimize the institutional narrative by accepting it as the place where they can construct a virtuous masculinity. And in accepting the institution as legitimate, they are beginning to work actively with the warrior discourse by using it to construct their personal narratives. In the following sections, I highlight how the warrior discourse becomes a symbolic resource for the construction of virtuous and dominant masculinity.

Constructing Character

Once the institutional narrative of the military is accepted, i.e. that it is the appropriate institution for protecting citizens, and those who join believe they can achieve virtuous selves, the next step in constructing virtuous military masculinities is to align one’s personal narrative so that it fits within the framework provided by the warrior discourse. Actively constructing the self as virtuous means fitting tales of the self within the warrior discourse such that one’s actions provide evidence of virtue. Some of the men situate their current self as virtuous, but the unique quality of a discourse, as a set of ideas, allows men to also construct past and future selves as virtuous by framing these selves with the warrior discourse. In the next section, I explore the themes of duty and sacrifice, integrity, and fidelity, all of which are properties of virtue. As men respond to questions about their life experiences and reasons for joining the military, they situate the self within the warrior discourse. They tell stories in which they are motivated by a personal

sense of duty and willing to sacrifice their lives in protective service to others; they are honest, dedicated and work hard because that's how labor should be done. In a word, they are individuals who clearly possess the characteristics espoused by American Republicanism as it is found in the warrior discourse. This holds true even when they are not explicitly connecting constructions of self to military service (i.e., past and future selves).

Duty

Several of the men in this study told me they are joining the military because they feel as if they are internally driven by the intrinsic rewards of pride and personal responsibility. This stands in contrast with some explanations suggesting individuals join because of external forces, like money or benefits for school (Knowles et al. 2002). This is not to say that the men in this study did not discuss these benefits as attractive, and a number of the men certainly viewed military service as a means to access them. With this mind, however, all of the men's narratives focused at some point on their belief that service to America, through the military, is their duty, evidenced in the men's sense of personal responsibility to do something for the greater common good, to protect the American people, and help maintain the American way of life. This is different from viewing the military as the appropriate institutional site; in the section below, I show how the men are actively engaged in constructing virtue, not simply viewing the military as the place to do it.

Duty is often, but not always, tied to the men's perceived sense of the benefits of American citizenship. As Tim says "The U.S. is an amazing place to live. I think everyone should give back in some way or another." Military service provides men with the feeling that they are "doing something to help my country" (Herb, DEP). They appear to have taken to heart John F. Kennedy's call to "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Like the good Republican citizen-soldiers they are, their reward is not honor or glory,

but the satisfaction they derive from their willingness to endure the dangers of military service for the good of America. “Protecting this country and serving it. I mean everybody is not capable of doing that and that brings pride and joy in my heart that I get to help out just doing what I can,” says Tobey, a DEP enlistee.

I don't think there is any more honorable thing you can do than to serve your country. I don't think I could, I wouldn't think the same way about busting my ass for a corporation as the same way I would be fighting for my country. I just feel like there's not a higher sense of purpose than joining the military. (Norman, NROTC)

And while there is the recognition that “everyone has their different reasons,” Leonard (NROTC) casts military service as an activity of altruism based in reciprocity. “For the most part, it's to serve your country. It's kind of like giving back.”

For some men, their sense of obligation stems from a feeling of debt owed by them for the service of others, the nameless mass of American service personnel who have served, past and present. Tobey tells me that he wants “to fly, yes, but I also want to serve this country. I know how this country started. I know how many men have lost their lives protecting this country.” For Jaimie (NROTC) those connections are more personal. He comes from a family that can trace its military roots back to the American Revolution (British General Wolff) on his mother's side and the American Civil War (Stonewall Jackson) on his father's side. Both of his parents are retired Naval Officers and various extended family members have also been in the military, ranging from grandfathers to uncles, to cousins who are currently serving overseas in places like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Part of me feels like by doing that I can honor my parents and honor my family and fall in their footsteps for a little while and if I decide if I don't like it then get out. But part of me feels like because of what my parents have already done for this country, if you will, that I feel like that I can contribute too. So that's part of the reason why I'm doing that.

The men's sense of obligation to serve the greater moral good is balanced by factors like educational benefits and job opportunities. Felix (DEP) told me the military gives him that

chance at “a potential career” through “experiences and training that will last you a lifetime.” He joined because “I really wanted to get into intelligence or federal law enforcement and that [the military] is just a good stepping stone.” But even with potential job benefits awaiting him, he is “not really looking to be a hero. I’d just rather do my job and go home, really. I just want to be a good soldier and do my job and do my part.” Irrespective of educational and monetary benefits that men can obtain through military service, their personal narratives depict them as individuals who feel a deep sense of loyalty to the American ideal. It is their personal feelings of responsibility for the well-being of the country that have led them to make the decision to join.

I love my country. I love the freedoms that it gives. I know that things aren’t like that in other places of world. I’m so blessed to be living here I guess. I think that if they [ROTC] pay for my school and I can repay them with so many years of service, then so be it. I’m glad to do it. (Billy, NROTC).

Duty is not detached from the reality of what the men face through their service in the military. They are aware that personal sacrifices are necessary, yet they are willing to endure them for the sake of America(ns). “You have to make some sacrifices and give up something so somebody else can have,” says Dale (DEP), because “the needs of the many out weigh the needs of the few.” He represents himself in an altruistic manner, as someone who tries “to put other people before myself and make them happy,” and while he tries “to make sure I get what I need” he is motivated to make sacrifices because of the satisfaction he gets when he makes “other people happy around me.”

Dan told me that service members sacrifice a lot so that “people back home, regular civilians, will be able to do what they want.”

They’ll keep their freedom, they’ll be able to drive their kids to school without having to worry about terrorists or anything, and just being able to lead regular lives. And knowing that there are people out there that are willing to fight to keep that. I think that’s what worthwhile. Doing it for the people back home, really, so that they don’t have to worry about it.

Sometimes sacrifice means doing things that run counter to men's sense of morality, as it did for Leonard and Jaimie.

Ray: So what are you fighting for?

Freedom. Freedom to uh, freedom of someone standing up and pledging their life to something I would pledge my life against. They can do that, that's their freedom that's their right, to be able to get up and say, I don't know, I guess I would say, like, someone getting up and saying that abortion is wrong, its immoral, you're going to hell or whatever, protesting it. That's their right, although, I'm completely against what they're saying, but I would support them doing it, because it is their right (Leonard, NROTC).

What I believe in as a Christian is that there is a God and he's asked us to do certain things. One of those things is to not kill others but to respect, love, and care for others and as much as possible I'd like to do that. But sometimes there are people that like, Hitler, that do come along and have a skewed perception of reality, of humanity and unfortunately the only way to deal with those people and the people that follow them is to go to war with them and possibly end up killing them. Sadly it's just the way that the world is and I wished that we didn't have to (Jaimie, NROTC).

The cultural proscription against murder is an obvious example of how military service can clash with deeply held values, but Leonard also highlights another; protecting the rights of others to enjoy freedom of speech even when one does not agree with the content of that speech.

Sacrificing one's sense of morality is an often overlooked aspect of military service. Depending on how tightly held one's views are, subordinating them for the military may be psychologically distressing. None of the men suggested this was the case, but I imagine that several young men and women throughout the years have been confronted with moral dilemmas of this sort. Note that these men are not yet on active duty, but they anticipate the sacrifice of their moral bearing as a likely consequence of routine involvement in the military.

Another aspect of sacrifice is the long periods of isolation from family and friends. These men will be asked to "put your family and your life on hold for this bigger ideal that you said that you vow that you would," said Preston (NROTC). "You have your service that supersedes all that." Maffett told me "I've had conversations with my dad about this."

You know, “Why do you want to do it? Are you sure you want to do it? Do you know what that means to your family when you have kids?” And “Why? Because you are going to be away? Do you know that you always are gonna be in a situation that at any given moment they could call you and wake you up and tell you ‘Hey, you need be on the frontlines?’” Yeah, I know. I know the sacrifices that are required. And I’m willing to make them. I told him I knew.

And yet another reality lay in the current situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. As newly trained service members, several of the men will be sent to these combat zones. Preston is aware that military service also means that he may be asked to “give your life to it.” Not all of the men will be directly engaged in combat, but there is a heightened risk for injury and death for service members.² I asked the men if they had thought about this. Dale said, “Yeah. I actually thought about that pretty good. It’s not something I really take lightly.” Even with the risks associated with military service in today’s world, he felt that serving “the greater good is better” than his concern “just for me.” “For me,” says George (DEP), “Protecting our freedom and everything” is “worth standing up for. That’s worth putting my life in danger for it.”

What it really comes down to is someone willing to die to protect the rights of someone they’ve never met. I’ve sworn to protect the constitution of the United States of America and that’s what I’ll do. If my life is what it takes to protect the constitution, then that’s what I want to use it for (Chip, DEP).

There were several men, like Herb (DEP), who took a somewhat cavalier approach to the risks they face.

You got to go sometime, you know. Fighting for your country is not a bad way to go. There’s pretty other not good ways to go, you know. Like fighting somebody over in America. Like “hey, give me you shoes.” Gangs and all that stuff.

But even as nonchalant as Herb appears to be, he is stating that dying for one’s country is “not a bad way to go,” comparatively speaking. Or as Gibson (AROTC) bluntly states, joining the

² Even for those men not slated for combat duty, the fact they will be training with live ammunition and living in places where they are visible symbols of American military power means their risk of injury and death are heightened when compared with the majority of those who are not in the military.

military means “risking my life so that those who don’t want to don’t have to.” Sacrifice for one’s country is viewed as noble, even laudable. And most importantly, morally right.

Duty is a core aspect of the American warrior discourse. The use of the narrative in personal stories situates the men as responsible young men who willingly accept the risks of service for the greater moral good of the country. The men are aware that they will be called on to make sacrifices. They will be asked to give up time with their family and friends, put themselves in harms way, sublimate their sense of morality for the greater public good, and potentially lose their lives in the service of their country. But they believe that their duty and sacrifice are necessary. In doing so, they become the protectors of liberty and freedom, America, and the American way of life. And it is through their narrative constructions that they lay claim to a virtuous and dominant masculinity.

Integrity

Another property of virtue present in the men’s narratives is integrity. Integrity holds a unique position because it is simultaneously a central part of the military’s institutional narrative, a key feature of the warrior discourse, and even finds its way into the gender discourse of dominant masculinities where honesty has been tied to honor, an integral part of gentlemanly conduct and fairness in dealing with others (Kimmel 1996; Rotundo 1993). Swearing an oath is based in the masculine ideal that a man’s word is his bond. Men represent themselves as individuals for whom honesty is a point of personal honor, and truthfulness is a valued commodity.

When asked what he hoped to achieve by joining the military, the official institutional narrative came through clearly in Tony’s (DEP) response.

The Army experience? (I: yeah) Um, just that experience of being in the Army. The Discipline. Just the values. (Ray: Such as?) The values in a person like honesty and integrity. And the leadership experience. (Ray: So you think you’ll find those in the

service?) Yeah. (Ray: Don't you think you can find those elsewhere?) I don't know. I haven't even looked. (DEP)

But he knows that the military offers a route to achieve this virtuous quality.

Garrison (NROTC) worked as a congressional page where he was present on the House floor during their debates regarding the decision to go to war with Iraq. He was struck by the difference between politicians who have military service in their backgrounds and those who do not, whom he referred to as 'career politicians.' He felt that career politicians were only concerned with how to get the next stage of their careers, always looking for political opportunities to exploit, whereas former military personnel in the congress were "strong" and "honest." He spoke admiringly of Senators John McCain and John Kerry as men who were "resolute," people whom he felt had a sense of integrity that came through in the interactions with others. "You knew they meant what they said." Their honesty, as men at the center of political power was "kind of a bastion-like, unwavering."

I was attracted by it because you see that and then you say "you don't have to be fake all the time." You don't have to be smooching and kissing up and dealing with lobbyists. You can be someone that has their set moral boundaries, your values that you abide by and you do your job.

Being attracted to the military and former military personal because of their integrity is a way to demonstrate that one values honesty of character. Men like Oscar take pride in keeping their word; in this instance—that he would join the military some day. He recalls that after completing the swearing-in ceremony at the Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS), he felt a swell of pride.

And after I did the pledge I realized, now I am in the Army. I finally did what I was going to say. And I was happy actually. (Ray: Why?) Because I actually did something that I said I was gong to do. And being a kid, I want to be a firefighter. I want to be a policeman. I want to be a power ranger. This time I was older and more knowledgeable and thinking, I can't be a power ranger now. But I can still be a soldier. I thought I could be an honorable person. I am part of the Army now. I actually did it. I am actually happy.

Men not only situate their current selves as having integrity, but also tell stories in which past selves are honest. They tailor their stories to convey that integrity was a characteristic they possessed before making the decision to join. Chip, a DEP and one of three participants in this study who has been to Army basic training, situates his past self as honest. His grade school participated in a joint scholastic-commercial program called Book It! in which Pizza Hut offers free personal pan pizza's for students who read a designated number of books per month. Students confirm this by having teachers and parents monitor their reading activity. Chip found that his teacher "did not believe me" when he reported reading a complex novel written for an adult audience.

I read Michael Critton's Jurassic Park in third grade. Not the made from the movie one, the actual one. And I brought it in and there was some reading thing on the board and the teacher put little marks for it, and the teacher was like "No." Like, she didn't believe me. Fortunately, my mother taught at the same school and the teacher walked across the parking lot and asked my mom and my mom was like 'Yeah. He read it.'

Nineteen-year-old Army ROTC cadet Tim is a second year college student who also frames his younger self as honest. Like Chip, he enlists the help of his mother to confirm his veracity, and also like Chip, his story centers on grade school.

My parents were always traveling after they had me and my sister, to as many different places as possible. When I was 5 we loaded up the van and we took a 6 or 7 week trip and we drove literally across the country. We hit, drove from here to Seattle for the Fourth of July; that was the midpoint of our trip. We hit the big national parks, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon. Redwood forest. I hate that fact that I can't remember a lot of the places that we went to. But they took us out there and we went camping most of the way, doing stuff like that. That was cool. And in kindergarten and in first grade they would call my parents and say 'Your son's got a, we don't want to call him a liar, but he says these things and it is trouble'. But we would be talking about a national monument or a park and we would reference a park and I would be like 'Oh. I have been there.' They would let one or two pass and then I would say a couple of different things and they would be like 'Okay. This kid is full of it' and both teachers, kindergarten and first grade, called my mom and said 'He has got kind of a problem' and she would say 'No. He has been there. He has been there, he has done it all. He has gone to all of these places.'

Apparently, this sense of integrity has followed him into adulthood and he has joined the military out of his belief that “It’s the right thing to do.” He clearly recognizes that joining the military today means that “you have a really good chance of being sent over to Iraq or Afghanistan or anywhere there is risk of dying.” Even with the risk of death, it is his belief that “someone who has taken this into account and still says “You know what? I’m going to do this because it needs to get done” is, in Tim’s mind, “very honorable.”

And finally, Harry (DEP) recounts a more recent event in which he resigned from work after spending eight months as a state prison guard. He now works as a furniture installer until he ships out for Army basic training. Unlike Chip or Tim, who use others to verify their claims of honesty, he constructs the self as honest by comparing himself to his former co-workers. The main reason for leaving his job as a guard is because of the dishonesty of others. There were “a lot of officers that were not as honest as they say they were. A lot of them. You know, you had these little cliques. You had the people that was bringing in [contraband] for the inmates and everything.” Harry’s sense of propriety made staying at the prison personally untenable, so he resigned and now works as a furniture installer.

The men cast themselves as individuals who already possess a strong sense of integrity. They verify it when questioned, or leave jobs when their sense of integrity does not mesh well with the practices of coworkers. Of course, one could suggest that there is a huge gulf between honesty in grade school or on the job and being motivated to join the military because of personal integrity. That is unless one considers that these men’s actions are bound by their sense of justice in doing the ‘right thing.’ It would be misleading to portray their motivation to join as solely tied to integrity—Chip admires the uniform, Tim views service as a stepping stone into politics, and Harry is excited by future career opportunities; more immediately, the men

understand the military as an institutional site where ‘tough’ masculinities are constructed—but integrity is clearly a central factor in their construction of self/identity, and appears in their narratives as one of their many reasons for joining. These men are the modern inheritors of George Washington’s legacy and I imagine they might take pride in admitting to their fathers that it was they who cut down the cherry tree. Their stories situate them as honest individuals who can not tell a lie. Or, as Dan understands it, this is “theoretically” how service members are supposed to conduct themselves. Whether the men act with integrity in the future remains to be seen. But it is clear that some of them are already actively working with the ideas found in the warrior discourse and actively constructing an honest, virtuous self.

Dedication

Men also construct virtuous selves through dedication narratives, stories of personal dependability in which the self is cast as being responsible and values hard work on its own merit, and men are determined to see their goals through. These stories depict them as individuals who have a strong work ethic, finding pleasure in a job well done. Similar to integrity narratives, men construct stories of dedication by drawing on past selves. Former jobs are particularly fertile soil for demonstrating that they are dedicated, loyal, and determined individuals. Even though these stories of past selves have little to do with their current choice to join the military, by aligning past selves with the virtuous part of the warrior discourse, men can effectively demonstrate that not only do they currently possess the necessary requisites to enter the military, but in fact, have always possessed them.

NROTC cadet Delante, who we heard from above, was asked to share with me his experiences growing up. He talked about family life with parents and his twin brother Bill, playing sports, hanging out with friends, and high school, in which he held a summer job in a packaging plant as, in his words, a “cardboard box engineer.”

I worked in a box factory, and I made boxes for some type of computer stuff for [company] and [company] and stuff like that. Components. I actually enjoyed it. My parents basically had Bill and I work because, uh, just to get the experience more than anything. They didn't need me to do work for anything else. But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed getting up at 6:00 in the morning everyday in the summer.

He told me that he grew up in an upper middle class family and that his family has strong political connections that made it possible for him to find part time work in the defense industry where securing even low-skill jobs can be difficult. Given his economic background it is not surprising that Delante feels his parents wanted him to work for the experience rather than the pay. He makes clear that this is not the type of work he wants to do, but values the experience it provides him. "Working, it was, definitely opens your eyes, working in a factory its like, it was fun, but basically really showed me that I want a degree and I won't be doing that."

As summer employment, Delante's time off from school is filled with low-skill labor. One might imagine that getting up at 6:00 a.m. everyday to work in a packaging plant might be tedious and quickly lose its romance, as it did for him. While he alludes to the experience as 'eye opening,' he marks it as one that has taught him some valuable lessons. One of those lessons might be found in his ability to construct himself as someone who enjoys work for the sake of the labor. Thus, even low-skill, relatively low-wage labor becomes an enjoyable, valuable, experience that teaches him lessons in working hard for the sake of work.

This style of narrative self-construction is not exclusive to ROTC cadets, who, in general, tended to report higher family incomes and stronger political connections than did DEPs, like Richard. Unlike Delante, however, Richard has had to work in low-skill wage-labor service positions to support himself. Almost five years after graduating from high school, he still lives with his grandmother and describes his financial situation as dire. Even with their combined incomes, they have few luxuries; in fact, he told me they can barely afford their rental apartment.

He is keenly aware of his economic situation, and expressed his displeasure at being stuck ‘in a rut.’

For the past few years I’ve been floating between, you know, one minimum wage job to another. And it’s like, that supplies you with money but not enough to live on my own or go to college or anything like that.

The prospect of an unending series of low-skill jobs in Richard’s foreseeable future is a motivating factor in his decision to join the military. He tells me that “in general, it’s [to secure] money for college.” While such class-dynamics separate the experiences of Delante and Richard, both share the common narrative of dedication, in which doing a good job, no matter what that job is, is a point of personal satisfaction. In his years of working low-skill restaurant jobs, Richard views his work ethic as something that sets him apart from others who do similar labor.

I’ve had plenty of jobs where, you know, I do, I’m trying, you know the job is maybe not exactly what I want to do, you know it’s something that I do *like*. And yet other people are doing it because they need the money and not because they want to. And they’re not doing the quality of job that they need to. I try my best not to do a half-ass job on anything and yet with them not doing their job, that forces me to work harder to get the job done.

By comparing himself with others who do the work because they ‘need the money,’ he sets himself up as someone who finds intrinsic pleasure in working hard. He is clearly not pleased with his current economic situation and recognizes that restaurant work does not offer opportunities to achieve personal economic goals. Richard’s displeasure at the perceived shortcomings of other workers makes him feel as if he needs to work harder. Despite the obvious pitfalls in this line of work, he appears to take satisfaction from being a dependable and hard worker.

I did not get the sense that the men who worked in low-skill wage-labor positions explicitly viewed these jobs as preparing them for military service. There were, however, those like Gus who did see a direct link.

I actually came to a realization this summer working at Wendy's compared to a Navy ship. You know, you always have a uniform. Wendy's, you wear a shirt, even on casual days, you have some uniform requirements. Everybody has a uniform, everybody has to report in to somebody else. I mean, you're constantly preparing, you know. If you're not fighting, selling hamburgers, you're setting up, you know? You're cleaning the ship, you know? You're keeping the place clean, you're preparing for inspections, and really it is a matter of, I mean, I just see it as being very similar in that you receive a command, you respond in a certain way. You know, if you're on the grill, you know, and somebody calls for [an order] you've got to be listening, you've got to respond. Really, it is very similar.

Gus views his experiences working in low-skill wage-labor as an opportunity to develop the skills necessary to fit into military culture. As a dependable worker, he knows his place in the hierarchy, can take orders and get the job done, and is diligent in setting up his work station so that when the time comes to do his job, he has the tools at hand to get it done.

Using past employment experiences to highlight their hard work and dedication positions the men as solid candidates for the undertaking of military service. Irrespective of the many other reasons they have for joining, their narratives are uniquely aligned to fit present and past selves within the warrior discourse. Stories of past selves set them up as men for whom dedication is a central feature of who they are as individuals. They work hard because they believe that that's how work should be done. Enjoyment is found in the experience of laboring even when such labor is not normatively viewed as rewarding.

Summary

Men's work is regarded as a key site in the construction of masculine identities (Collinson and Hearn 2005; Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel 2005; Connell 2005; Cooper 2000). But what of men who are not yet actively engaged in the labor of the military? Men construct military masculinities by tapping into a potent symbolic resource for constructing masculinity, the warrior discourse. The men have located an appropriate institutional site for constructing virtuous masculinities, and even before they have gone on active duty, they are working to fit themselves within the narrative. The men viewed duty and sacrifice as laudable; honesty and

integrity were central personality characteristics, both in the present and in the telling of past selves; and dedication cast the men as reliable, loyal, and hard working. The alignment of personal narratives to fit within the warrior discourse is part of the unique process of identity construction. And while the men have not yet truly begun their work as service personnel, the military remains a key institutional site for the making of masculinities.

It may be that the men are simply picking up on the official institutional narrative and incorporating it into their interview narratives, a process more like regurgitation than active reflexivity. Recruitment advertising depicts the military as place where honest, dependable, hardworking youth who like challenges can find adventure and serve their country at the same time (Padilla and Riege Laner 2002; Siebold 2001). This message is strengthened by a lifetime of exposure to the American warrior discourse found in cultural parables regarding the activities of virtuous warriors such as Washington and Henry. Participating in an interview about the military may simply prompt men to draw on these symbolic materials to create the contextually needed militarily-styled self that I am interviewing (and paying) them for. But this is exactly the point—the official institutional and general cultural discourses are co-opted and worked into their personal narratives. Regurgitation seems unlikely because the men are reaching into their past to realign stories of the self with the institutional narrative of the military as well as the American warrior discourse. It takes creativity to use a story from the third grade about the Book-It! Pizza Hut program to demonstrate that one possesses the virtuous requisites for military service.

Constructing identities is a process that occurs over many years and is aided by many diverse personal experiences (Stryker and Burke 2000). No doubt some of these men will decide not to ship out when the time comes, or separate from the service early because of lack of fit.

And while the military offers men the symbolic resources to claim virtuous character traits as their own, it does not so much give them these traits as it gives them the narrative structures to fit their own stories of self within. To the extent that they already have access to the tools for constructing military masculinities, ending their journey in the military makes little difference in their current self construction. They already have the experience of making a virtuous self from cultural and institutional resources. I suspect there will be some residual effects left on their self/identity construction which will carry over into other contexts. But this is something left for another study.

Taken together, the men's stories depict them as personally obligated, responsible, dedicated, and honest. These stories situate men as virtuous by casting them in the mold of George Washington, honest and determined, or perhaps loyal and as willing to make sacrifices as was Patrick Henry, or maybe Nathaniel Hale, happily dedicated and loyal until the end. However they have built their tales of self, they are making identities very much in line with the military and its focus on duty, sacrifice, integrity, and determination. Doing so enables them to construct a hegemonically masculine self, a topic I explore in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 THE WARRIOR DISCOURSE AND CONSTRUCTING HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES

Of all the sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct. Despite far-reaching political, social, and technological changes, the warrior still seems to be a key symbol of masculinity (Morgan 1994:165).

In 1973, congress effectively ended the military draft (except in times of national emergency), starting the era of the all volunteer force (AVF) (Ensign 2004). The advent of the AVF, as noted earlier, means that individuals who join do so out of a desire to obtain the benefits offered by military service. One of the benefits is access to the symbolic resources for constructing hegemonic masculinities (Higate and Hopton 2005).¹ Stereotypical and dominant forms of masculinities include the able-bodied, heterosexual, physically fit, emotionally controlled man who takes risks, is assertive, decisive, and disciplined; in short, the much touted and very cliché “sturdy oak.” This also happens to be the core imagery associated with the ideal warrior (Jordan and Cowan 2004). Because “the military ultimately draws from, and is a reflection of, the society of which it is part” (Watson 1999:70), it is not surprising that military masculinity parallels certain constructions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005, 2000, 1995; Woodward 2000). There are, of course, many ways to construct masculinities (Connell 1987) just as there are many different constructions of military masculinities (Higate 2003). But because the military is popularly viewed as a bastion of masculinity, joining the Armed Forces tends to confer the right to claim a hegemonically masculine identity that is revered and feared, dominant and powerful (Connell 2000; Siebold 2001). Recall from Chapter 3 that the warrior discourse is a collective set of ideals that depict physically strong, morally upstanding humans

¹ Although women are becoming an increasing proportion of the military, as a group, they currently comprise less than fifteen percent of all military forces (WREI 2007).

that reluctantly use violence and aggression to conquer evil for the benefit of the greater social good. Because the warrior discourse is partly about the use of men's body, in this chapter, I highlight how men construct narratives in which their bodies are framed by this discourse as physically active, fit, tough, heterosexual, and thus, hegemonically masculine.

The Warrior Discourse, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Men's Bodies

Physically fit bodies are generally synonymous with able-bodied healthy bodies, which is a cultural symbol for masculinities (Gerschick 2005; Gerschick and Miller 2004; Hearn et al. 2002; Sabo 2005; Shilling 2003). Generally speaking, the more muscular one is, the more physically fit they are perceived to be (McCreary, Saucier, and Courtenay 2005). The more physically fit they are, the more hegemonically masculine they are credited with being (Connell 1987, 1995, 2000; Sabo 2005). Thus, men concerned with constructing masculinities may be overtly interested in physical fitness and the development of musculature (McCreary et al. 2005; Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia 2000).

Changing the body through the development of musculature, weight gain or loss, and/or growing, sculpting, or removing hair are transformative body practices that are part of a process referred to as *transcendence*, or the willful manipulation of the body to highlight one's gender (Connell 1995, 2000). Bodies, like selves and identities, can be constructed to convey masculinity (Epstein 2001; Connell 1990; Shilling 2003), both through active manipulation and by using it for 'masculine' activities. 'Doing gender' means actively constructing gender by engaging in activities that highlight one's gender identity claim (West and Zimmerman 1987). And so men can construct masculinity by employing the body in traditionally masculine activities found in work (Collinson and Hearn 2005; Cooper 2000; Pyke 1996), which of course includes military service (Higate 2003; Higate and Hopton 2005); sport (Messner 1992; 2005)

and leisure activities, such as beer drinking (Strate 1992); or violence (Bowker 1998; DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2005; Hearn 2003; Messerschmidt 1998).

Outside of these realms of masculinity, the use of the body in overt heterosexual activity is one of the clearest means of demonstrating masculinity (Bem 1993; Connell 1995, 2000). This is done through intense sexual relations with women or through the use of sexually harassing language (Ekins and King 2005; Mandel and Shakeshaft 2000; McGuffey and Rich 1999; Theodore and Basow 2000). Homophobic attitudes are another symbolic resource for constructing heterosexual and dominant forms of masculinities because they highlight one's distaste for sexual activities that are not heterosexual (Kimmel 1994; Plummer 1995). The threat of being labeled effeminate, which is sometimes, but not always, suggestive of male homosexuality, is often enough to create and maintain masculine hierarchies (Hennen 2002; McGuffey and Rich 1999).

Men construct masculinities by constructing stories that center on their bodies. Stories of sporting activity and military training become the means to situate the self as able-bodied, physically active, fit, tough, and thus, masculine. As the men talk about strenuous exercise and physical training (PT), they narrate a self that can handle the physical and psychological discomfort associated with using the body in these ways. Similar to this are stories in which men are injured but disregard the pain, suggesting something of their physical and mental toughness. Some of the men also relay tales in which they find the use of violence entertaining, humorous, and acceptable. Finally, to construct heterosexuality, they situate women as sexual distractions and use homophobia to discuss the intergration of gays into the military. Such narrative constructions not only place the men solidly within the warrior discourse (i.e., physically and mentally tough, and aggressive), but also highlight their heterosexuality. In short, the men use

the military to construct hegemonically masculine identities by constructing narratives in which their bodies are physically fit and strong, characteristics that align them with the warrior discourse.

Sports

Sporting activity and the warrior discourse go hand-in-hand (Bairner 2000). The most obvious parallel is the physically able and fit body. But the similarities extend into the symbolism that surrounds sports as an activity of paramilitary significance (Bairner 2000). For example, American football sports broadcasters capture this by referring to offensive and defensive strategies, quarterbacks who throw 'bombs,' or long passes, and in the most warlike of terms, the 'blitz,' a word reminiscent of Nazi Germany's Blitzkrieg (meaning lightning war) is used to describe linebackers 'rushing' the quarterback. The overlap between football and military action is not surprising given that both activities are sites of masculinized violence and aggression. Men who are employed in professional sports are viewed as cultural champions of masculinity, especially if the sports are violent (Messner 1992). Athletes are viewed as proxy warriors "who represent towns, cities, nations, and ethnic groups; in return, the public salutes them" (Bairner 2000:192). And sometimes there is a blurring of lines between professional sports and military service, as in the case of Pat Tillman and Bob Kalsu. Pat Tillman was a professional football player for the Arizona Cardinals who quit the National Football League (NFL) to join the Army. He was killed while on duty in Afghanistan in 2004 and in the media coverage that followed, he was described as "tough" and "an inspiration on and off the football field" by Whitehouse spokesperson Taylor Gross (Miklaszewski and Johnson 2004). Bob Kalsu played for the Buffalo Bills for a year in 1968 and was voted Bill's rookie of the year before leaving the NFL to fulfill ROTC obligations in Vietnam. Like Tillman, he was also killed in combat. Both men are described as making the 'ultimate sacrifice,' because they both gave up

lucrative professional sports careers to serve in the military. Although few today remember Kalsu, he and Tillman have secured a place in the annals of American masculine cultural lore.

Even though most men do not (and need not) go to such extremes, sport is an important route for socialization into and demonstration of masculinity (Messner 2005). Team sports celebrate and glorify physical and mental toughness, evidenced in the ability to withstand pain; the use of aggression; and men's physical fitness and strength (Bairner 2000; Keddie 2005; McKay, Messner, and Sabo 2000; Messner 1992; Messner and Sabo 1990; Sabo and Panepinto 1990). Most boys face the expectation that they will play sports (Cohen 2001; Messner 2005), and sports, like military service, is typically viewed as a context in which men can prove their masculinity (Curry 1991; Hasbrook and Harris 1999; Klein 1995, 2000; Malszecki and Cavar 2001).

The men in this study discussed their past and present athletic involvement in organized and non-organized sports like football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, boxing, running or weight lifting. Many of them, like Shawn, "played sports all through high school growing up and what not." Participation in organized and pick-up sports was common. Like Preston, who told me that he played "football, soccer, baseball, basketball; pretty much all of them you could've gotten into" most of the men played sports throughout their youth. Sports, more than any other aspect of men's narratives, appears to stand out as a common experience that these men share, irrespective of whether they were ROTC cadets or DEP enlistees. "I guess most of my memories come from sports participation," said Billy. "I participated in three sports a year basically, since my second or third grade year of elementary. Most of my memories are from that."

Dell and his friends "were always playing sports. That was pretty much the main thing. Most of the time we spent together was on the baseball field. But, when we weren't we usually

played baseball, football, or basketball.” Tim told me that “active might be a good word” to describe his youth. “I participated in probably every sport that a young kid can. I’ve done everything from gymnastics from when I was like 6 and 7 years old to soccer to baseball to football. I used to race bikes. Got into some more conventional sports in high school.” Dusty “was one of the kids that did four sports a year,” and Norman joked that he “played soccer all my life, since before I could walk, probably.” And when the men were not playing for their school or in other organized venues, like Felix, they “played soccer and touch football in the streets or a field in the sub-division.” “I was a very big basketball fan,” said Harry, and while “I never played for the school, I played all the time with my friends and at church. And like in, at the public outdoor courts. I played every day just about.”

Most of the men said they were talented, like Norman, the soccer player, who says he is “pretty coordinated as far as sports that include balls,” but some admitted that they were not very good at the sports they played. “I pretty much played every sport,” said Art, “except for like football. I was always a little guy so I wasn’t very good.” “I did sports. I did baseball, I did basketball but I didn’t do good,” Joel said.

I did good at first in track and then, you know, I just got tired of wearing myself out so, you know, so I was just to the point where you know what I am just going to have fun. I don’t care about when or what place I was going in. I ran the mile once. I came in last place but I still did the mile. [chuckles]

Even so, tales of hyper involvement in sports, whether one is athletically gifted or not, creates the image of extremely active, able-bodied, and physically fit individuals.

Only two men told me that they were not involved in sports as boys, but later developed a passion for them. Leonard played video games rather than sports because he “just didn’t like to go outside because I would get too hot too fast.” He qualifies this by saying that “I tend to overheat so, [living in the South] really stinks in the summer for me. So summers, I always

stayed indoors, basically. Rarely went outside.” This eventually changed for him. “Once I got into my teens, I actually stated becoming more active and at that point I guess I’d become what people would consider athletic.” “As a kid,” Gibson told me, “I was a nerd, really uncoordinated, always studied and didn’t go out a lot. I was never really good at sports growing up.” It wasn’t until much later that he “took an interest in running shortly after I graduated high school.” While “the whole exercise thing is actually pretty new to me,” he developed a “love [for] running and I do a lot of stuff.” Even though sports were not situated as the center of Leonard and Gibson’s boyhoods as they are for other men, physical activity through sports received its masculine due once they reached adolescence and young adulthood.

One of the benefits of men’s involvement in sports is the ability to construct a masculine identity via the physical body. Sports became a way to slim down, tone up, and develop musculature. Dale used to wrestle for his school, and training consisted of “time in the weight room. Running the track. Running the stadiums.” As someone who was “always in the water” Art decided to join his high school’s swim team. “But competitive swimming and leisure swimming is [a] completely different thing. Our workouts would be two hours each day and we’d usually swim about 6,000 yards. That is like two something, I don’t know how many miles.” The tangible benefit, at least as it relates to bodily-based masculinity, is that “it got me in great shape.”

Being in good physical condition is something that will ease the transition into the Armed Forces. However, of all the sports that might prepare men for the military, hunting comes most readily to mind. It requires patience, skill, and the emotional fortitude to kill a live animal. And depending on the size of that animal, it can be quite dangerous. After years of playing sports for

his school, Meyer found that “I just lost interest in the sports really.” Eventually he found that “I got more into hunting and fishing and stuff like that.”

Ray: Okay. And what kind of hunting did you do?

Meyer: Oh anything. Whatever the season called for. Rabbits, squirrels, and then deer. Never got to go down there and bear hunt.

Ray: Did you want to?

Meyer: Oh yeah, yeah!

Ray: Why? That’s a big animal! It could hurt you.

Meyer: Oh yeah. That’s part of the fun.

Looking forward to taking such risks is an effective means of constructing masculinity. Risk due to sport adds an additional dimension to such masculine construction. For other men, like Tim and Garrison, hunting is an activity that has more to do with the space it provides to bond with other men than risks involved in hunting large animals.

My dad always took us hunting too when we were little. That was a big part of how I was raised. (Garrison)

I like bird hunting the most. Deer hunting you sit in a tree stand and wait for a deer to walk by and hope you are quiet enough to not scare it always. Where bird hunting when you are out there, you can talk to people. And that is something my dad and I really enjoy doing together. He grew up bird hunting, and we don’t get to do it as often as I like to but that’s the one thing that we enjoy doing together. (Tim)

Sport is invariably an experience that men share with other men (McKay, Messner, and Sabo 2000; Messner and Sabo 1990; Sabo and Panepinto 1990). Some of the attraction of sporting activities undoubtedly lies in their communal function, as it did for Skip, who played team sports throughout his primary and secondary education. He “played football, baseball, basketball, every year with them. I loved being a part of that, where you can trust the guys.”

Among the other benefits Art found in competitive swimming, the one he remembers most is the “the environment of the team.”

It is a lot different from many other sports teams because it is a lot closer than ... all the other sports teams that I was on Because it was so small with the guys and everybody knew everybody and we were friends. And we would do everything outside of school, outside of swimming we'd do stuff together

Billy agrees.

I would also have to say camaraderie. Between teammates and the friendships that I made doing it with the same group of people and looking toward the same goal; to win. I mean, I think that I really cherish those friendships and that camaraderie.

Some men thrived on the competitive aspects of team sports. I asked Billy “So what is it about sports that you like?” He replied “First of all, the competitiveness. I love to win. It doesn't matter if its checkers or football. I just really hate to lose. So, that part of it.” “We had a very competitive little league program and we were always playing baseball,” reported Dell, and Scott confided that he “played soccer growing up and I loved being on the good team you know?” He recalls that others on the team shared his sense of competitiveness and would get together and practice on their own time because they each had in mind the goal of being the best. “I loved being on the team that actually had a bunch of guys that were willing to train hard to perform well.” Now in the NROTC, he has his sights set on Special Forces. “I think that that kind of mentality stuck with me.”

The same features of sports play that enable men to claim a masculine identity (physical fitness, competition, controlled violence) are available for men who join the military. Although playing sports and joining the military may not be directly linked, and admittedly, most of the men do not overtly link their involvement in sports to their desire to join the military, their enjoyment of the physical and communal aspects of sport provide them with some idea of what military service might be like, as it did for Art, Billy, and Scott. In addition to sport being an

important means for socializing men into masculinity (Messner 1992); I suggest it is an important socializing agent for the military. The fitness aspect of sport certainly makes the transition into the military less physically difficult. But sport also offers men an opportunity to experience periods of homosocial contact in which they engage in competitive, team-based activities. And competitive sport fosters such a strong desire to win that men willingly destroy their bodies to do so (Messner 1992). The same parallel might also be made for men in the military. The famous remark, misattributed to the Duke of Wellington Sir Arthur Wellesley, that “the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton” captures the idea nicely; sport and the military go hand-in-hand.

The Military and Bodies

As noted above, the body is an important source of masculine identity (Shilling 2003). Manipulating it to achieve masculinity often means the development of musculature (McCreary, Saucier, and Courtenay 2005; Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia 2000), and military training is specifically directed at constructing a physically fit, ‘tough’ body (Hockey 2002). The men are aware that joining the military means actively sculpting the body so that it fits within the standards of the institution. ROTC and DEPs told me they exercised regularly in preparation for military service, in effect, beginning to actively manipulate their bodies. Tobey said “I went and checked with the Air Force and they said “We can’t take you. You’ve got to lose weight. That’s the only way to get signed is if you lose weight.” At first he disregarded the recruiter’s advice. “After that I was like I ain’t joining them. I ain’t joining nothing. I’ll just figure out something else.” But his desire to fly led him back to the military and with hopes of someday becoming a Warrant Officer so that he can fly helicopters. He decided to join the Army. Again, he was told he was too heavy. Presented with the choice of losing weight or finding another line of work, Tobey took steps to lose weight.

My recruiter, he's been helping me. We've been running every day two miles. I can do two miles no problem. And then we do about sixty push ups right after that. Which I'm not having a problem doing it. I'm getting better. I think I'll be able to handle it [basic training]. I'm looking forward to going off. Yes.

At the very least, joining the military means entering an institution that demands the active shaping of the body, but men sometimes go to great lengths to meet institutional demands.

Those wanting to become Navy pilots are required to have at least 20/40 vision, and with 20/50 in one eye and 20/30 in the other, Leonard was not eligible.

I decided to do the corrective surgery so I could go pilot. Cause otherwise I wouldn't have been able to. (Ray: Corrective surgery as in like, Lasik [Laser-Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis]?) PRK, but the same thing. Uh, photo uh, I don't know what it stands for [laughs]. PRK [Photorefractive Keratectomy] is the same thing as Lasik, but in Lasik they make a flap, then put the flap back on and you get epideral, epedelium. But with PRK, they take it off and it has to grow back. I guess the difference is the Navy, they just put regulations on it that you have to get PRK. When it grows back, it's stronger, and they say if you eject at high speeds the flap might reopen. If you have PRK, that won't happen. I was like, if I do the surgery, it opens the opportunity. It leaves that door open. If I don't do the surgery, I'm closing that off and I'm not leaving that option open to me.

He likened the procedure "to someone getting liposuction to lose weight," manipulating the body to pursue the goal of "fitting within the Navy's profile." Like Tobey, his desire to fly meant taking steps to ensure he could win a spot in the military. Fitting those institutional demands came at a price. "Shelling out \$2500, that's pretty much saying "this is what I want to do" [laughs]. Aside from the monetary investment, he told me that the surgery was also a physical one because it was:

A lot more painful because it's corneal abrasion. Massive corneal abrasion. They're taking off something the size of a dilated pupil and then it's growing back. Just basically the skin of your eye.

As if to reassure me it was not too extreme he said "it's not like they go into your eye and cut it open or anything." Even so, "I couldn't really see very well for about 10 days." Leonard was willing to undergo such a painful ordeal "specifically to have the opportunity to go pilot. Before [the surgery] I was slotted NFO with my eye sight, non-flight officer." There was no

guarantee that he would be accepted to flight school after the surgery, just that the option to go to flight school would remain open.

So after I think like 3 and a half months, I went back to the navy doctor, gave him all my paperwork, they did a full work-up on my eyes, then the doctor said, 'you know, the waiver looks good,' he signed off on it, but then it had to go into the Navy and the Navy had to decide. And I'm not sure who the Navy is at that point.

Fortunately, it worked, and Leonard won a spot in flight school.

Sculpting the body for the military is usually not so extreme. Some men, like Tobey, are asked to lose weight before they can sign up; others, like DEPs and ROTC cadets discussed below, engage in routine physical training exercises to prepare themselves for the physical demands of basic training and officer's basic school (or officer's candidate school, depending of the branch ROTC cadets join). Men use these routines to express their hegemonically masculine identities.

In general, the aim of military physical training is to create a "fit, self-disciplined, controlled, outward-looking, professional *military man*" (Siebold 2001:148, *ital* original) who is able to deal with the rigors of combat. Self discipline and self control are developed through disciplining the body (Foucault 1977). The gender identity benefit is that men who engage in (and survive) military PT are considered cultural avatars of bodily oriented masculinity (Higate and Hopton 2005; Higate 2003; Hockey 2002).

The men in this study were largely aware of the physical benefits of military service. "I actually think that everybody should serve in the military, a year or two even," Shawn told me, because among other things "it keeps you in shape." Jose felt that when people thought about service personnel, they imagined "G.I. Joe, muscles, balls to the wall. A badass." Part of his motivation is due to his desire "to be, you know, cut. It cuts you up." After he finished saying

this, he smiled, flexed his already sizable and considerably tattooed bicep and exclaimed “Pah-pow.”

The development of musculature that entices Jose and other men comes at a cost; hard physical work. Since this is his senior year and “I got all kinds of senior crap to do,” Dale does not know if he will wrestle for his high school again this year. In lieu of this, he tells me “I’ve just been PT’ing [on] Tuesdays and Thursdays” with other DEP enlistees.

Ray: What kinds of things do you guys do there?

P: Uh, drill sometimes or running. We do a lot of stretching before and after. Uh push-ups and sit-ups. A bunch of stuff. I don’t really know specifics. Just physical stuff; stuff I guess we’re looking to see in boot. I guess that is what it is for, to get us ready for boot. So it’s not as much as a shock. (Ray: Do you think you’ll be ready for it when you go?)

He assured me that he was “ready to go,” in part, because he is “pretty physical.”

Training is strenuous, and through it, Art has begun to pack on muscle weight, a fact he was proud of during his interview. “ROTC training is definitely tough. It got me in shape. I started my first semester and from there to now I have gained 15 pounds.” At the time of the interview, he was tall and slender and as he animatedly told me about the rigors of the program, he flexed his bicep so that I could see the proof of his words. Perhaps one of the reasons Art gained this muscle weight is because of his daily NROTC training regimen.

We do anywhere from 100 to 140 pull-ups in probably about 10-30 minutes. So we’ll do sets from anywhere from 8-20 and then it just varies how we’ll do it. And then, you know, we’ll change grips and do all types different kind of stuff. And then after that we usually do dips and we’ll do about 200 dips or something like that in a little less time limit. And then we’ll go to a push-up workout and we’ll usually do about another 200, 250 push-ups. And all that is in about one hour. And then for the second hour we do a run and sometimes we’ll do like a leg work out. Like we’ll do buddy carries and bear crawling or lunges and stuff like that. But it’s mainly focusing on a run. Either running on the track, boots and pants. One mile or mile and a half, timed. Or going to the stadium and running up the stadium and stuff. [pause] (Ray: So this is just Monday?) Yeah this is just Monday.

Recall Andrew, who did not like sports and characterized himself as “the fat kid through, elementary, middle school, and high school,” was one of three men in the study who had already

attended basic training. To make the point that military training was rigorous, he told me that when:

I got here to college, I started eating better and did a lot more exercises and started losing weight. I was 235lbs before I came into college and I lost some before I joined the army. Then I'd say my considerable loss was after I joined the army.

While I did not ask his weight, Andrew was well under 200 pounds.

In general, American culture views military training as notoriously difficult, and after listening to Art and Andrew and others discuss their training, it is no wonder. For some men, the military becomes a means to challenge, and change, others' perceptions of them. Military PT represents a physical and mental challenge to be overcome, and the ability to handle it, Ryan believes, comes with tangible social rewards, such as self and social esteem.

I think that biggest thing for me finally deciding to sign up for it was uh, mostly to prove that I could. I was never the most physically fit or anything like that but uh. I decided you know, I can, If I can prove to myself and others that I'm capable of doing this that uh, that says something. (Ray: What's it say?) It's that I'm more that I thought was. I'm more than other people thought that I was. If I could prove that I was physically able to handle Army ROTC, and when I tell people I am keeping up physically in Army ROTC, they usually drop the ROTC and they're thinking that I am physically capable of handling the Army and it changes a lot of people's perspective and image of me. On a whole I think people are, they might not be thrilled with the idea, but they respect it.

Other men make plain that they have the physical ability to handle PT. "I'm ready to run out there and run around there with my M16 and when they tell me to drop and do my push-ups I'm going to get down and do them and I'm going to get up and ask for more," said Kyle.

Asking for more suggests that he can readily, and perhaps eagerly, deal with anything physical that drill instructors can throw at him. Thus, men use discussion of military training to construct a physically oriented masculinity, in which hard bodies, musculature, and mental fortitude are the outcome of rigorous training. This fortitude is often expressed as 'toughness'.

Toughness

Another dimension of military masculinities is toughness. By tough I refer not simply to one's muscle strength, but to the mental orientation that is often associated with mental endurance. The ability to withstand pain has both a physical and psychic dimension. American culture 'toughens' boys up by telling them that "big boys don't cry." Big boys, i.e., adult masculinities, are characterized by the ability to control expressive emotions like the desire to cry when one has been physically hurt. This phrase is meant to teach young males that pain is partly a state of mind, and as such, responses to it can, and should, be controlled. By controlling the response, we are told, we can control the pain. Controlling the response to physical pain is a mark of masculine toughness (Messner 2005); it is also part of the 'suck-it-up-and-move-on' ethic of the American warrior.

Toughness as emotional reservation is a hallmark of many of the cultural parables handed down to Americans over the years. Some of the most famous men in American history are military commanders who stand fast in the face of mortal danger. Returning to the American warrior discourse, I suggest that American history can be viewed as a series of stories that depict the American warrior as physically and mentally tough. For American military masculinities, there is no equal to Andrew Jackson. "Old Hickory" earned his nickname on a grueling forced march during the war of 1812 because the men in his command thought he was as tough as a Tennessee Hickory (Leckie 2005). As if to live up to this reputation, he was once shot at close range during a duel with a known pistol marksman who could shoot a string in half at more than twenty feet. Jackson was aware of his opponent's skill and calmly waited for the shot rather than have his own thrown off. It hit him squarely in the chest, and though it staggered him, he regained his composure, took careful aim, and mortally wounded his opponent (Leckie 2005).

As the seventh president of the United States, he was propelled to office, perhaps, from the value that Americans place on tough men.

The southern civil war General Thomas Jackson was initially notable for his deep piety, but his fame stems from actions at the battle of the first Bull Run. Having arrived with his brigade at a critical moment for Confederate forces, he placed the unit on a reverse slope and appeared to calmly wait for what promised to be an overwhelming Union assault. Confederate General Bernard Bee noted this and, to buoy his own troops flagging morale, is reported to have shouted “There is Jackson standing like stone wall! Let us determine to die here, and we will conquer” (Foote 1986:78).² And so Stonewall Jackson entered the American warrior discourse as an example of the pious, resolute, and tough American military man.

In fact, the monikers of American military commanders tell us something of how Americans might view men who embody military masculinities. ‘Tough’ names like Old Hickory, Old Rough and Ready Zachary Taylor, Stonewall Jackson, the Rock of Chickamauga George Thomas (Union general), Lewis ‘Chesty’ Puller (Marine General), and Stormin’ Norman Schwarzkopf bring to mind the sturdiness and coarseness of wood, the hardness of stone and bulging muscles, and the fury of nature. We are left with the image of men who are resolute, determined, controlled, and most importantly, tough.

Given that some of these commanders are obscure outside of military history circles, it is difficult to say whether the men in this study are aware of them or the origins of their nicknames. My intent here is not to suggest that they have been influenced by any particular stories, but rather, the stories are suggestive of the overall theme of American military masculinities. They

² Foote (1986) suggests that Stonewall Jackson’s nickname might have been an insult. He was known initially for his overly cautious movements, and the fact that he did not move his men immediately into battle to support General Bee might have caused Bee to derisively refer to Jackson as a Stonewall, i.e., immovable and slow.

capture the unique flavor of the American warrior discourse and the set of ideas that comprise this discourse, and how they filter into men's personal narratives. Military masculinities are 'tough' masculinities; military men are tough. With this caveat, I turn now to the narratives of the pre-active duty service members constructing toughness.

Recall that toughness is not simply a physical orientation, but a state of mind. In the last section I discussed how men narrated themselves as individuals who can handle the physical aspects of military training; here PT is cast as both a physical and a mental challenge. Keeping up with such training is an effective way of highlighting just how tough these men are. I asked men like Michael to give me an idea of what DEP physical training is like.

Well, every Thursday they get all the recruits that are going to ship out or are thinking about shipping out and they go out to [name] Park and they train for two hours. Just running and doing exercises. So that is pretty fun and that kind of gets you in the mind set of what it is going to be like.

Note how he characterizes two hours of strenuous physical exercise as "pretty fun." He goes on to say that the challenges in basic training make him "a little nervous," but not because of the physical hardship. "I'll be all right physically. I'll be fine. I got time to train. I got time to get prepared." What makes him nervous is "all mental," or his ability to handle the drill sergeant yelling at him and being able to control himself enough so that he will not react. The worry that he will yell back makes him "more nervous as it comes. That's pretty much it. Because once you achieve the physical then it is all mental." Irrational or not, this is a fear that several of the men expressed; their ability to keep their mouths shut. In discussing his expectations for Naval Academy training, for which he leaves in a few weeks, Delante shared similar fears about being able to "keep my mouth shut."

The toughest challenge for me is getting yelled at. Basically the academy's idea is to break you and then to make you follow and then to make you lead. Cause you can't be an effective leader without knowing how to follow. So that's their idea, so they'll break,

[inhales deeply] break us. And that's gonna be the toughest thing for me, is being broken. And then accepting it and just going with it.

Concern for the mental challenge of not fighting back, coupled with an obvious disregard for the physical aspects of training suggest the men view themselves as physically able to endure the training. Both Michael, who feels he'll "be all right physically," and Delante, who states that "the physical parts not going to be an issue" are discursively positioning their bodies as strong, athletic, and physically able to endure hardship; in a word, masculine. By focusing their concerns on the "mental" aspect of training out of a fear of "being broken," they are saying something about their fears of losing control as they resist being dominated by other men (i.e. the drill sergeant or officer in charge). As a conversational technique, fear of losing control says something about their desire to fight back, which presumably they would do were they not in the military.

As evidence of how tough military physical training can be, Scott discussed an NROTC PT club for self-motivated cadets who have their hearts set on getting into the S.E.A.L.S.

I knew it was like the hardest workouts I'd ever done in my life, and I thought that I had done some pretty hard ones because I was in cross country and track and man, our first day out there was ridiculous. I think I puked three times and was exhausted and the end. I was like "Holy crap! I have to do this again tomorrow and the next day, and the next day? Holy crap! What have I gotten myself into?"

Fortunately for him, "looking back, that first day of PT was a relatively easy PT session. You grow mentally and physically over time when they do stuff like that." I should mention that not all ROTC or DEPs endure this style of training; for that matter, neither do most service members, even those on active duty. This PT club is run by an ex-S.E.A.L and designed to give cadets a realistic taste for what their training will be like. Some exercises are designed to, in Scott's words, "test your comfortability under water," what he calls "drown-proofing." One involves binding the hands and feet together and pushing the trainee into a pool. He assured me

that it was not very dangerous because “there is a technique that you can do to stay alive and it’s pretty easy.” According to him, the trick is to completely exhale, sink to the bottom, then push back to the surface for another breath of air. This process is repeated. “So you are not really going anywhere but you aren’t dying either.” Another exercise is the “50 meter underwater swim” that involves “jumping in the pool, swimming to the other side and back under water.”

Some guys will pass out trying to make it. Either they are too anxious and they go through oxygen too quickly, or they are just not in good enough shape to do it. They might pass out if they don’t come up to the surface first. The instructor will pull them out and pull them to the side of the pool and will revive them. It actually happens pretty often but nobody really ever dies from it.

This discussion took place in the context of talking about other people’s perceptions of Navy S.E.A.L. training. He recounts an experience in which someone found out he was interested in becoming a Navy S.E.A.L. and exclaimed “I hear they drown you and bring you back to life, making you do that in order to like become a S.E.A.L.” Of course, given the exercises he currently engages in, he keeps a good humor about it, laughing that “you can kind of see how people think that they make you drown yourself or that they drown you and then revive you and that you have to do that.” Minimizing the very real danger of drowning shows just how tough Scott is. That is, of course, if his ability and desire to continue exercising after vomiting did not immediately highlight this.

Toughness, as a key component of hegemonic masculinities extends beyond military PT. Like stories of virtue (Chapter 4), men also constructed toughness by drawing on tales from their past. As a Boy Scout, Tom participated in the National Jamboree, a yearly gathering of scouts from all over the nation. In 2005, some 300 scouts suffered from heat exhaustion, four troop leaders were accidentally electrocuted, and one volunteer suffered a heart attack and died.

Did you hear anything about that? The ‘Bush death march’?³ It’s nothing against Bush; it’s the Boy Scouts. We were in the Northeastern region [of the base] and we had to get to the Amphitheatre and that’s like a 5 mile walk and they only have one place for us to get water. Some four hundred had to be treated for heat exhaustion, or a thousand. That was a lot of people.

Part of the reason so many people became ill is that it was “100 degrees and 85 percent humidity.” To emphasize the difference between him and those who could not handle the march, Tom said “Lots of people were passing out but as soon as you got them in the AC, “Oh I’m fine now.” He surmised that “it was most of the Yankees, no offense.⁴ They’re not used to it [the heat].” Unlike those northerners, Tom had no problem making the trek. “Just give me bottle of water,” he said, highlighting his ability to endure the long walk in humid conditions with minimal requirements for hydration. Like Scott, his ability to withstand the extreme conditions of the ‘death march,’ in this instance, without water, marks him as a tough, almost rugged man.

The mental ability to overcome physical hardships is also found in men’s experiences with interpersonal violence. Kyle told me he was no stranger to pain because he was always “messing around doing stupid things. I’m always getting hurt some how.”

I got a hay spike stuck in my head once being stupid. Do you know what an ice pick looks like? (Ray: Uhm-hmm) And they hook. Well, I got one of those stuck right there in my skull. (Ray: How did you do that?) My friend was screwing around being stupid and he threw something at me and I threw a stick at him and he picked up a hay pick laying around and he meant to stick it in the tree next to me and accidentally hit me. I guess it didn’t do too much damage. It just broke the skin a little bit, so I wasn’t too worried about it. So I pulled it out and brushed off and went home, wiped it up. (Ray: You didn’t go to the hospital?) It wasn’t that much blood. It was just a little bit. I wasn’t pouring blood, just a little drip every now and then coming out of my forehead.

³ Tom is referring to President Bush, who gave the keynote address that year.

⁴ During the conversation that took place before the interview, I mentioned that I grew up in Michigan. Tom was an Ohio State fan, and I drew on the sometimes intense rivalry between Ohio State and the University of Michigan to build rapport. Our masculine banter over the better team has some of the elements of joking as fraternal bonding (Lyman 2004).

Kyle is not unique; Messner (2005) suggests that a lifetime of socialization instructs men to ignore pain, to "treat their bodies as instruments to be used—and used up—to get a job done" (p. 316). Stories of toughness, like those of physical fitness, position these men as well-suited to take the place of Old Hickory, Stonewall, and Stormin' Norman. If 'big boys don't cry,' then men like Micheal, Delante, Scott, Tom, and Kyle certainly embodied tough, emotionally reserved military masculinities.

Violence

As we have already seen, military service is about the body. And to be sure, one way to win a war is to kill or wound enough enemy service members that the other side loses the will to fight. The military provides men with a resource for "doing" gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) in a hegemonically masculine way because masculinity and violence go hand in hand (Bowker 1998; Connell et al. 2005; Kane, Staiger, and Ricciardelli 2000; Keddie 2005; Kilmartin 2000; Messerschmidt 1998; Whitehead 2005). Violence and aggression, as tools of masculine dominance, have lead some theorists to suggest that the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed were, at their core, about men constructing masculinity (Kimmel 2001, 2002; Lorber 2002). And if hegemonic masculinities are used to subordinate and dominate others (Connell 2005, 2000, 1995), participants of this study, as service members, can rightfully claim a masculine identity. Through their association the American armed forces, they become agents of state domination legally vested with the power to use lethal violence (Connell 2005; Nagel 2005).

The following section is not about my participant's bodies per se, but about their orientation toward the use of violence on other people's bodies. To be an effective soldier men must be willing and ready to use violence, sometimes lethal, without apparent hesitation when the enemy appears. They must also display a calculating rationality under the most extreme of

conditions, and are expected to control emotions like grief and fear. Accordingly, one tactic for constructing hegemonic masculinities was to tell stories in which violent acts were viewed as entertaining, in which participants clearly derived some pleasure from participating in it. For Dan, it was with ‘berry bombs.’

There were about three or four families that had kids that we would all kind like play and hang around. We had a big tree in the back that we used as forts that had berry bombs. We had berry bomb fights all the time ... (Ray: Berry bombs?) They’re just, I don’t even remember. [pause] They’re little things we’d pick off the trees. They would come in bunches, so we’d just grab a bunch of them and throw them at each other

Sharing a similar experience, Sam told me that “we would have little mock wars once in a while. We didn’t hurt each other, but we’d like throw mud or sticks, and we have these two big trees that were our main bases.” Sometimes, though, violent games involved unsuspecting victims. “We were just being kids,” he told me as he described an event that involved a friend of his and two young playmates.

So we, what we did is um, this was in the in the bushes, so we totally told the kids that we didn’t like that ‘hey there’s a dead rat in there’ and they were like ‘oh ok.’ So they looked, we pushed them down, turned the water valve on, which was flooding water on top of ‘em and we ran away.

Another strategy was to situate violent acts as humorous. Laughing about violence is a way of conveying emotional control. In the process, other people’s pain is minimized and the men communicate a tough, emotionally reserved, aggressive masculinity. I asked all of the men to share with me things that they’ve heard from others about military service. Marshall’s father was a Marine who served in Operation Desert Storm, the first Gulf War, and the two have had several conversations over the years about what it’s like to be in the military. His father tells him “just basically the funny stuff.”

He tells me stories about him and his friends fighting Rangers [Army Special Forces Infantry] in the bar and he tells me stories about sand spurs biting him while he was PTing. He would give, what’s it called, a blanket party. He would just tell me stuff like that. Just the funny stuff.

To set this in context, a 'blanket party' refers to a group act in which men from a military unit hold someone down and beat him with a bar of soap wrapped in a blanket. Doing so does not leave marks and so the perpetrators generally go unpunished. This brutal act of violence is usually done to punish group non-conformity.⁵ For Marshall, his father's actions are "very stupid, but it's pretty funny though."

Tony's father also served in Iraq during the first Gulf War, but even so "He doesn't really have any bad stories." One story that did bring a smile to Tony's face centered on combat duty.

He was in a Humvee and his gunner was on top and there was this Iraqi car driving toward them I guess, and he told them to fire a warning shot because they're not stopping. And he told me that the gunner pretty much parted her hair with the bullet [laughing]. And he said make it a little higher next time.

Violence as entertaining sets the stage for how men use discussions of violence to set themselves up as individuals who are emotionally controlled. They talk of using and experiencing violence as something that does not stir their emotions. From a masculinities perspective, denying that one will feel/has felt emotion during their experience of violence highlights their ability to control their emotive expressions. It distances them from accusations of unmanliness, because emotional control, especially over fear and anxiety, is one of the hallmarks of hegemonic masculinities (Kaufman 2001, 1994; McGuffey and Rich 1999).

Meyer worked as a pizza delivery driver for about nine months when he was mugged at gun point. It was late at night and he recalls that something told him to keep on going because "it didn't look right."

I went there and the guy answered the door. There was nothing on inside the house whatsoever but a candle sitting on the floor. And he said, "I ain't got all the money, hold on a minute. Closed the door and hollered and this guy came around the bushes, jumped up with

⁵ See the movie "Full Metal Jacket" for an example.

a gun, and had it up to my forehead and told me to get down on the ground. So I lay down and he held it on the back of my head until he got everything out of my pockets.

Aside from being worried that the mugger was a “crack head” who “might be shaky with that trigger,” Meyer insisted that “I was more mad that he was going through my pockets and taking my stuff more than anything, you know?”

Coolness under duress, such as when being mugged, also comes through when some of the men talked about their expectations for combat. Secondhand stories, like the one Felix shares below, are a means to demonstrate a lack of concern for the very real dangers of violence during military combat. He told me he was not worried about being hurt or killed, partly because “I have never been in that situation. It is really hard to tell how you’ll react until you are actually there.” He has, however, gleaned information from friends who are currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I have heard from friends that have been in that [combat] situation. It is very fast and you don’t have time to think until after it is over. From what I can tell from what they say [they] haven’t really had a problem with it. And I don’t know if maybe it’s because there is a lot of violence on TV and [this] has desensitized everyone to a point. Or they don’t mind it. But I mean a lot of them said, “That fucker tried to shoot me,” or whatever “so I took him out. I tried to stop.” But obviously a lot of it is self-defense. Uh, I don’t know.

He particularly admires one friend, a combat engineer who has served three tours in Iraq, for his equanimity when discussing the combat experience.

He’ll say it with the same demeanor that he would tell you what he ate for breakfast. He really just had no problem with it. He was like, yeah we were there and a Convoy got ambushed, blah, blah, blah ... and we were ambushed and what not.” And I was like, “did you get shot at?” He said, “Yeah. All the time.” I mean to him it just wasn’t a big deal.

Another tactic for displaying emotional control is to situate violence as a necessary, even acceptable, part of the job. Berry-bomber Dan anticipates flying fighter jets, and says that “I’ll just be dropping bombs,” and so his combat experience will not involve being “on the ground doing it hand to hand.” He realizes that this means “taking somebody else’s life,” but he insists

that “it doesn’t really bother me too much.” Aside from hoping that “there is never a situation in which it would be questionable to me,” he tells me that “I’m not looking to kill, like go and bomb random houses and kill, [but] civilians are going to die. Unfortunately, that happens.” He sincerely wishes to avoid hurting innocent people. “I mean, just the less the better, of course.”

But, I’ve never had too much concern over having to do it as far killing. I mean, there are people trying to kill us, so I don’t have too much sorrow over the fact that I might have to take a few lives.

While discussing the issue of combat with Shawn, I prefaced the question by saying that “militaries are designed for one purpose, which is to defeat external threats, and some of what you may be likely to do puts you in harms way. It might require that you hurt or kill somebody else.” He cut me off and said “I disagree. I don’t think that all militaries are designed like that.”

I know that the US military is designed to defend the US if that’s actively defending or passively, both are defending. I have no problem going into the combat arms. No problem doing that. I actually want to do that than anything else because it’s more of a direct solution, makes me feel like I have something to do with what’s going on.

Many of the men shared this feeling of being proactive. I asked Harry if he was worried about the fact that he might be injured or killed by joining the military. “A little bit.” But this was tempered for him somewhat by his fatalist attitude “because you know, you do die. Everybody dies eventually. Kill or be killed. That’s my perspective. Because you know they’re going to kill you if they get their chance.”

Herb enlisted in the Army with the intent of working in intelligence. Part of this stems from his desire to learn other languages (Arabic), which the Army will pay him to do. But part of his motivation also comes from reading Tom Clancy novels. And while his uncle spent a career working in intelligence, Herb has never spoken with him directly about the experience. Most of his knowledge of what his future holds comes from the novels. Aside from being good reading, he likes them because they offer what he feels is a good source of information about

what its like to be in the intelligence service. The novels have helped him to better understand “what you could do if you join the military” and “it’s almost like the government paid him to write them.”

I have thought about like, you know, stories that you hear about people being interrogated. Like my dad for instance mentioned my uncle saying something to him about like lead pipes used on people. I was like, you know, if that is what it takes. (Ray: Are you prepared to do that?) I am!

He goes on to say that if he could extract information without force, he “would be just as happy to have a nice conversation and you write what they say down and there you go. But if they want it the hard way, then we have to do it the hard way.”

I don’t think it makes me a bad person, but anyone who has this desire in their heart to hurt civilians or my country for any reason; gets no sympathy from me.

When asked about how he felt about the prospect that he may someday be in a position where violence and lethal force are necessary, he told me it was his opinion that he was doing something to help his country. “I’m not just hurting someone for the pleasure of it. It’s justice. It should be justified. I think it is.” He does not believe he is someone who will ever “step over the line and do something that they have told me not to do. Because you end up like those people at Abu Gahrib and out of the military and in jail.”

The prospect of me having to hurt someone? [pause] I can handle it. I am an American and I am a Christian. Like they intend harm to us and I just don’t feel sorry for them in any way. And if they take that into, like, a militaristic action, then they are going to get what is coming to them. They are going to shoot at me and they are going to shoot at my fellow men and, you know, they’ve put themselves in combat. And if my combat just happened to be across the road, or in the ditch, or the lead pipe, they signed up for that. And if the same thing happened to me I would probably assume that it would be the exact same thing. I don’t have any doubts that I couldn’t do it. [pause] I don’t know, I just [pause] I see it completely justified. In my mind, anyway, they are soldiers. You know what I mean? They want to fight, fight.

The reaction to combat is “one of those things you never know until it happens,” agrees Chip. “But somehow, I don’t see myself freezing. I may be the one to go suicide heroics and get

shot, but I'm not going to freeze or crawl away." Most of the men did not express the bravado that Chip did, but he captures the essence of their tales of their anticipated selves in combat. A lack of fear and other emotions, like remorse, over the using (or experiencing) lethal violence are obvious features of their stories. The danger for these men is that denying or ignoring the emotional aspects of military service leaves them vulnerable in the future to psychiatric disorders like PTSD because they are unprepared for the experiences that lay in their not-too-distant-future. However, this is in the future. For now, using violence as entertaining and humorous helps the men construct an emotionally reserved masculine identity.

Heterosexuality

Finally, I explore how men use heterosexuality and homophobia to construct hegemonically masculinity. While sports, physical fitness, toughness, and violence are important elements of dominant masculinities, heterosexual activity remains one of the most important means for men to construct masculine selves (Connell 2000, 1995, 1990, 1987; Connell et al. 2005; Higate forthcoming; Marsiglio 1998). The use of overtly heterosexual language in conversation that highlights men's sexual activity is a traditional means for men to do gender (Ferguson 2000; Gough and Edwards 1998; Hennen 2002; Majors and Billson 1992; McGuffey and Rich 1999; Quinn 2004). Whether the discussions focus on intense sexual relations with women or are simply laden with sexually harassing language (Boswell and Spade 1996; Ekins and King 2005; Mandel and Shakeshaft 2000; McGuffey and Rich 1999; Theodore and Basow 2000), the effect is the same; constructing a heterosexual masculinity.

Men sometimes discussed women as one of the benefits of military service. This is a consistent theme in research on military masculinities (Enloe 2000, 1990; Higate forthcoming). At the start of the interview I asked the participants to briefly tell me why they've decided to join the military. With other men, heterosexuality did not come up as a topic until much later. Joel, a

DEP enlistee, got right to it. “That’s a hard one. [laughter] Because I just want to get laid.”

Jaimie told me that he was aware that “a lot of people go into the military for, especially guys, because girls like the uniforms, they like that kind of attitude.” He qualifies this by assuring me that this “definitely was not one of the reasons that I’ve gone this route,” but even so, “it has been a benefit that I have noticed.” He thinks wearing the uniform is symbolic of having better “grooming standards” which “gives that professional appearance” that can make “guys seem that much more attractive to a female.” As proof, he offered “I’ve had several girls say you know, “Guys in uniform, they look so much better.”

Richard stumbled over his words in telling me that “when it comes, when it comes to women I’m, I’m not good at that at all.” He went on to clarify.

I’m not good at talking to them and things like that. Hopefully this [military service] will give me more self confidence. Uh, uh it will give more uh, social speaking skills. Because I’m not self confident in talking to them or even on what to just say and hopefully it will help me with that.

“I have had girlfriends here and girlfriends there, previously” Dale told me. “And right now I am single and I guess I’m looking for a girlfriend.” Curious as to whether this desire had something to do with his motivation to join, I asked if he thought he would meet someone in the military. He replied that he “very well may. It takes you a lot of different places.”

No matter where he was stationed, Skip anticipates having fun because “when you’re with a bunch of your friends, and [on and around] the bases, there are a lot of girls, too. Bases are so much fun.” This idea of sexual fun comes from “my friend who is a Marine, still in the military,” who, with a group of military friends, would go to bars specifically for the purpose of meeting “the fattest chicks they could find.”

And whoever found the fattest chick and hooked up [had sex] with them would win \$100 for the night or something. (Ray: So they went from bar to bar doing this?) Just one bar every night and they called it “hog hunting”. (Ray: So did he ever win?) No, but he’d talk about, he was a sergeant and he was over his whole platoon so he was the rule maker

over how it was set up, so he would just watch and crack up. A bunch of drunk Marines trying to pick up fat chicks. It's funny.

Labeling this sexually-oriented activity as "hog hunting" certainly demeans the women the marines are attempting to pick up, but the masculine identity benefit is that doing so introduces an element of sport into the men's sexual fun.

Another way to construct heterosexually oriented masculinity was to convey the feeling that women in the military were sexually distracting. "I really am against women in the infantry or the special forces," Gus told me. "I don't like the problems that could possibly arise."

It could really only hurt the mission in general, whatever that might happen to be. It loses people's focus. If people have a little affair or something and it breaks off, then you have a morale problem, then you have distrust could arise. It just weakens the team in general. Yeah, I'm not too keen on just mixing it up.

Garrison also suggests this might be the case.

I was watching Discovery Channel and it was the Swedish submarine and it was a female, very attractive. I wouldn't be able to, it would be hard to take orders from her, I guess. Not to follow them out but just to concentrate.

Having said this, he appeared to have an epiphany. "That actually probably could have been considered sexual harassment." But the overall sentiment seems to be that women in the military are a sexual distraction. Dusty, like Gus and Garrison, sees it this way too.

Like submarines. There's not a lot of women on them a lot of time. That's because they're stuck down there a long time and it's not good if there is a woman on board. (Ray: Why do you think that is?) Well, the sexual thing. She might get raped.

And while he feels that it's "better the temptations not there," he goes on to say that "I'm sure the female would love it with all those guys." Other men, like Norman, appear to struggle with how to interact with military women, like those in his unit.

We have several females in ROTC, nobody is supposed, you're not supposed to date other girls. So what are you supposed to view them as? Are they equals? But they're women, so, I mean it's difficult to act like they're the same, but they're the opposite sex. It's different. I don't know if I can explain it. I just think it creates a different atmosphere.

He concludes by saying that “I think the military should be kept for just men.”

In general, the men perceived increased sexual access to women as one of the benefits of military service. At the very least, women were viewed as objects of sexual desire that would distract them from their military duties. And if some of the men did not personally believe this, orienting their narratives in this way serves to highlight their masculinity through heterosexual constructions of self.

Homophobia

Heterosexuality is also constructed through homophobia (Curry 1991; Franklin 1988; Kimmel 1994), which is an effective symbolic tool for actively demonstrating that one is not gay (Edwards 2005; Hennen 2002; Kennelly 2002; Plummer 1995). Studies of children’s gender constructions show that young males sometimes use accusations of homosexuality to ostracize other males and create masculine hierarchies (Adler et al. 1992; Jordan and Cowan 2004; Keddie 2005; McGuffey and Rich 1999). This extends into adulthood. Openly gay males tend not to be welcome in federal, state, or local governments, nor are they welcome in the military. Most state governments do not recognize the legality of homosexual marriages, nor does the federal government. The "Don't ask, don't tell" initiative of the 1990s clearly positions heterosexual masculinities above homosexual masculinities. Part of this policy stems from the widespread believe within the military, which I will discuss below, that homosexuality undermines group cohesiveness and lowers unit morale (Bacevich 1993). Oddly enough, homophobia has also been cited as a means to create unit cohesiveness; homophobia is behind the sexualization of enemy fighters (Higate and Hopton 2005), which may make using violence against them easier (Jones 2006; Wright 2004). Thus, homophobic attitudes are another way men construct hegemonic masculinities.

I get the sense that many of the men were careful in how they answered questions regarding gays in the military. They expressed views that took an edge of homophobia, and while not overtly homophobic, their anti-gay attitudes came through, some more clearly than others. “I don’t plan to serve with anyone gay in military,” said Andrew. “Personally I believe it destroys morale and the cohesiveness of the unit.” Part of this view stems from his strong religious beliefs that homosexuality is “a lifestyle sin.” He does hold out hope that “because it is a choice, you can change. You don’t hate the sinner, you hate the sin. As a Baptist, that’s what we believe.” Even with such concessions, he concludes that “it would be very hard for me to serve with a homosexual in the military.”

Part of the reason men find it difficult to accept gays in the military has to do with their own comfort level. Billy says “you obviously look at somebody differently if they are a homosexual.” And even though Norman has never really encountered gays, he thinks there would be “a certain level of weirdness, awkwardness.” He agrees with Andrew and Billy that it’s not okay to personally “dislike them for it, for being gay,” but he feels that their presence in the military would change how he acts. “You’d probably feel different sleeping in the same room. You’re in a real cramped atmosphere. You don’t want to feel like another guy is watching you all the time, you know what I mean?” That comfort level is, of course, rooted in culturally appropriate sexual responses for hegemonically masculine men (Kilmartin 2000).

Scott, the NROTC cadet who worked on drown-proofing himself, asked rhetorically “If I meet a person and he is gay, am I going to make fun of him? No.” He did, however, qualify this by stating that “I mean I am not gay and am not interested in that lifestyle.” He felt that allowing openly gay men in the military “is going to affect the other guys in the platoon, mentally.” Unlike most of the other men, Scott shared living space with a gay man. “I didn’t know about it

until I was pretty close to signing the lease and didn't really have any other place to live. But it turned out to be okay. This guy, it turned out that he was a nice guy." While I would not necessarily call this statement evidence of tolerance, it does suggest that the experience of living in close proximity with a non-heterosexual has altered Scott's view. This does not, however, negate the fact that Scott has a clearly defined understanding of his own sexuality.

Just his, who he thought was attractive and who he thought was not attractive were just the opposite of mine you know. Um, I don't know. It's weird. I just don't see how anyone could be interested in dudes. I just don't see how guys can be interested in guys. When I was younger in elementary school I had a crush on a girl with red hair. I didn't have a crush on the other guy in my class.

The issue of exposure is also evident in Harry's response. He feels his experiences as a prison guard have somewhat normalized the idea of gays in the military. Like Scott, he made it clear that he was heterosexual. "As long as they don't touch me, I'm all right." He said that he was not "really against gay people" in the service. On the other hand, "I'm not going to march down the street for 'em either. So I, I don't know. I don't want to do it, you know? Because I love women too much."

Perhaps it is not surprising to find homophobic attitudes among the men who are joining the military given the official institutional narrative, found in a policy statement by the Military Working Group (MWG) (Otjen et al. 1993), regarding the presence of gays in the military. The group found that "the presence of open homosexuals in a unit would, in general, polarize and fragment the unit and destroy the bonding and singleness of purpose required for effective military operations," (p. 5) and that homosexuality "would severely undermine good order and moral and ethical beliefs of individuals would be brought into open conflict" (p. 6). The report concluded that "Homosexuality is incompatible with military service," and that "if identified homosexuals are allowed to serve, they will compromise the high standards of combat effectiveness which must be maintained, impacting on the ability of the armed forces to perform

its mission” (p. 12). While this policy report is over a decade old, recent comments by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace, the military’s top officer, about homosexuality as “immoral” reaffirms that such sentiment is still very much alive (Chicago Tribune 2007).

And while several of the men’s responses bordered on homophobic, there were those who took a more moderate approach and were clearly accepting of serving with people who had different sexual orientations. “Gays in the military? Whatever, you know? Do what you’re gonna do, but do your job, too, you know? It don’t matter, really,” was Jose’s stance. Kyle echoed him “I don’t think it matters. They are in there fighting for their country. They are not fighting because they are gay or because they feel anything about it. It is their country and it is their freedoms.” Shawn felt that “they are obviously doing the same thing that we are doing so, no difference to me.” And Michael told me “I have a few gay friends. It’s cool! A male is a male whether he is gay or not. So, yeah, that shouldn’t play a role in whether he is allowed to go out there and fight if that is what he pleases.” But again, these men are in the minority, and even with their seemingly tolerant attitudes, they still asserted their heterosexual constructions of self.

I’m not going to be kissing them, you know? (Jose)

If they can keep it to themselves and do whatever they want to do, then fine. When they are in, like in the group they are not messing with people, you know, like that. This isn’t the time or the place for it. (Kyle)

If men and women get along then why can’t men and men, as long as they can control themselves. (Shawn)

They don’t do anything sexual towards me and I’m fine with them. (Michael)

Resistance Masculinities

Even when men do not accept violence and aggression as an appropriate part of their individual identity constructions, joining the military enables them to lay claim to a militarized

masculinity all the same. In fact, the military enables men to claim a dominant identity even when they may in fact be constructing marginalized, subordinated, or resistance masculinities. The military gives them institutional cover through stereotypes that suggest that military men are hegemonically masculine, i.e. heterosexual, physically fit, assertive, and aggressive.

Some of the men actively constructed identities that challenge dominant notions of masculinity. They are not protesting per se (Walker 2006), but resisting dominant constructions (Kimmel and Mosmiller 1992). Jackson, the oldest participant in the study, felt that maturity separated him from other men. Not only did he see himself as “a little different,” because “I’m a little older,” he said that it was “not worth going through that mental and physical pain to say that I’m a Ranger [Special Forces Infantry unit]. This goes against the way many of the men in this study have cast themselves as masculine—through their physical body, and represents resistance to the dominant masculine ideal.

Resistance to a physically based masculinity was evident in some of the men’s stories about growing up. There were men like Jake who told me he was “not a bit sports guy” never developed an interest in sports at all. “I wasn’t really the athletic kid or anything,” said Ryan. Andrew told me that “I always had been the fat kid through elementary, middle school, and high school. Never played any sports and did very little PT, if any. Just was never one of my forte’s.” One of the pitfalls of not playing sports is that one runs the risk of being singled out as Garrison found. “I was already different from kids in the sense that I didn’t do sports and everything like that.” And because he “was never into sports as much as my family,” he feels this is “something that puts me at odds with all of my buddies in the Navy [ROTC].” His disinterest in playing sports extends to spectatorship as well. “I don’t like watching ESPN, never have, since I was little.” Although these men represent exceptions to the common experience of active sports

participation in youth, they highlight that not all men construct masculinity in line with hegemonic forms.

Another masculine norm men resisted was emotional control. This was obvious as the men talked candidly about their impending military service. Garrison (NROTC) was describing an incident in which a lieutenant had a heart attack and died during PT.

Our CO, Captain Anchor said “you learn [to] just move on and not look back because you do, you’ll be wrecked with emotions and grief.” And I firmly disagreed. I think there is a period of mourning. I think the magnitude of someone dying, especially under someone’s command, you can’t take that lightly. Not at all does he [the CO] take that lightly. It’s just he deals with his pain by shelving it and I would deal with it [differently]. Did you ever hear of “Tuesday’s with Morrie” and how he confronted fear of death by crying about it, actually confronting the fear and that is what I would do with grief.

He recognizes this goes against the norms in the military by telling me that “I couldn’t do that in the military,” because the “most efficient manner would be not to deal with the pain and so the military will adopt that view.” But he sees himself as a different type of officer. His concern for his men and their emotional needs prompt him to try and be “someone to talk to and be honest with.” He adds that “I think that’s important, just being able to be honest with your emotions because then you’re not going to get so tense.” As a practical matter, dealing with grief and being honest about emotions has ramifications. “Pulling a trigger would have a whole different connotation if you were right with yourself.”

Surprisingly, several men I spoke with shared their feelings with me. Some men expressed a fear of the unknown, as Joel (DEP) did. I asked how he felt about his impending ship date, which at the time of the interview was four days away. “I’m happy, I’m excited and I’m nervous. I want to drop out, but I don’t want to drop out. I want to go, but I don’t want to go.” He was worried that “maybe I’m not good enough for the basic training. I could fail.” This sentiment was shared by others. Billy says:

I would have to say that I'm definitely nervous. You know I've heard things and know all the training we have to do and everything and, you know. I don't know how I'm going to perform in doing certain activities. You know, it frightens me sometimes. I get nervous and anxious, and I want to actually be there and be like "All right, I can do this."

Some men expressed anxiety over the dangers of combat duty.

I realize its [combat] dangerous and stupid, and when I think about getting shot it scares the heck out of me. (Gibson, AROTC)

NROTC cadet Jaimie, couched his fears in terms of his future family, saying he was "scared about how that's [the military is] going to affect me having a family and things like that. So those are my first thoughts." With these fears in mind, he chose the Navy because "of the branches, it's probably the safest." Taking this one step further, he chose submarines as his service branch.

Basically those subs, nobody is supposed to know where they are except for the captain and two or three people that sent them out there. Even the people on the sub, they don't exactly know where they are at. (...) So its the whole idea that, I don't want to be like I am hiding. We call it strategic deterrence, if you will, so I look at it more that way. We are hiding yes, but we are trying to deter people.

And some men like Oscar openly shared their emotional vulnerability. "Pretty much just seeing a smile on their faces makes me happy as well. And when I see other people cry, I get sad myself. I don't like seeing people cry. So I want to make people happy."

The fact that these men are constructing resistance masculinities suggests that not all men completely accept hegemonic forms of masculinity as appropriate identity constructions for themselves. Military men, by virtue of being men, construct masculinity in many different ways. This highlights the point that military masculinity, like hegemonic masculinity, is best discussed as multiple constructions, or military masculinities (Connell 1987; Higate 2003; Higate and Hopton 2005).

Summary

The overall story here is that the men who are joining the military are masculine; they are athletic, physically and mentally tough, emotionally controlled, aggressive (violent) and heterosexual. The military offers them the various resources they need to construct a dominantly masculine self, and they certainly appear to be taking advantage of it as they align their personal narratives with the warrior discourse. Through the men's stories, we develop the sense that they possess hard bodies and hardened emotional selves. Exercise that causes them to vomit does not stop them from coming back for more. Physical pain is disregarded or minimized in a way that highlights emotionally controlled selves. Violence is entertaining and humorous, and military service provides access to women. The men also constructed the self as heterosexual through homophobia, partly by tapping into the anti-homosexual institutional narrative present in the military. Before we judge them too harshly, we would do well to remember that these men are embarking on a journey in which they believe their military service will help protect others. Their willingness to join the military means that they will likely live and work in places where extreme violence is part of their daily experience; and they do this partly out of a concern for their fellow Americans (Chapters 3 and 4).

With regard to violence, perceiving it as entertaining, humorous, or acceptable is, at first glance, callous. Keep in mind that these men will be expected to use violence on other human beings or support those who do. They will also be expected to continue working efficiently after they have experienced violence or witnessed it used on people they care deeply about (i.e., fellow unit members). Casting violence as they do serves two purposes; first, there is the masculine identity benefit, which I have already discussed. Second, and in my view, most important, is that it serves as anticipatory socialization. The men get used to violence as something that is entertaining or funny; in a word, normal. The danger is, of course, that the

effects of violence are minimized and perhaps this will make it easier to use it on others, even in situations where it is not appropriate (such as the abuse of prisoners). Violence, like sports and physical fitness training, harden the body and the mind, and by constructing hegemonic masculinities, these men begin to develop the skills necessary to deal with the experiences that lay in their immediate futures.

But again, some men, like Ryan, Andrew, Garrison, Jackson, Joel, Billy, Gibson, and Oscar, resisted these stereotypical constructions, at least in some forms. Their narratives suggest that men can, and do, construct masculinity in non-hegemonic ways. Note, however, that men like Billy used the body (via sports) to construct masculinity, whereas Andrew rejected sports, but used a physically fit body and heterosexuality (via rejecting homosexuality) to do so. Men can resist or reject some constructions identity based in hegemonic masculinities while accepting others.

One final note; I noticed very little difference between ROTC and DEP men's narrative constructions of masculinity. This is not to suggest that ROTC and DEPs use the military to achieve the same goals; ROTC (officers) men generally view the military as a stepping stone to white-collar careers, whereas DEP (enlisted) men view service as a route toward economic stability (Segal and Segal 2004). Although the ROTC cadets are, on whole, more educated and tend to come from economically advantaged backgrounds, this did not translate into different constructions of masculinity.

Part of the answer rests with *how* the symbolism of traditional masculinities is used narratively to construct a masculine self. The literature on masculinities suggests that working class men, compared to their middle- and upper-class counterparts, tend to construct identities that are more bodily focused (fighting, sports, weight training, labor, etc.) (Connell 1995, 2000,

2002, 2005; Kimmel 1996; Messner 1992; Morgan 2005). Working class masculinities are also said to be constructed through overt heterosexuality, sexual banter, misogyny, or homophobia (Calasanti and King 2005; Gregory 2006; Rotundo 1993).⁶ These masculine themes are also considered part of 'traditional' masculinity, and so they are not necessarily class-based constructions. Studies suggest that those who join the military are more religiously, politically, and socially conservative, irrespective of officer or enlisted status (Franke 2001; Williams, Bliss, and McCallum 2006). The men in this study tapped into dominant gender discourses of masculinity, which include these traditional characteristics.

As we will see in Chapter 6, there was also little difference in how men used other categories of men (and women) to construct a hegemonically masculine self. In fact, there was a noticeable difference only when ROTC cadets constructed masculinity by comparing officers to enlisted; by contrast, DEP men constructed masculinity by comparing enlisted to officers. As I will discuss further in Chapter 7, there was some difference in the class backgrounds of ROTC and DEP men, however, there was little difference in the actual process of constructing personal narratives of masculinity.

⁶ Other studies have suggested that working-class men are much more dynamic in their gender constructions (Walker 2006).

CHAPTER 6 THE WARRIOR DISCOURSE, MASCULINITIES, AND COMPARATIVE PRACTICE

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the military offers a route for the construction of hegemonic masculinities. Men construct personal narratives in line with the warrior discourse (Chapter 4), but they also actively situate themselves as hegemonically masculine by focusing on their bodies (Chapter 5). In this chapter, I discuss how men create hierarchies of masculinities and in the process, construct a hegemonically masculine self/identity. I call this *comparative practice, a process whereby individuals compare themselves (their actions, behaviors, and perceived motivations) to others in an effort to construct hierarchies of dominance*, in this case, a more dominant masculinity. In sociological parlance, this is akin to setting up a ‘straw man’ that individuals use to highlight their own identity constructions. They situate themselves as more aggressive, more physically fit, more emotionally controlled, or more intelligent than other people, both civilians and other service members. Men use civilians, female military members, men in other military branches, jobs within a particular branch, and enlisted/officer status as comparisons to construct hegemonic masculinity. My starting point for this chapter is a brief discussion of the theory behind hegemonic masculinities. From there, I highlight how comparative practice is an important and effective strategy for the construction of dominant forms of masculinities.

The Hegemonic Hierarchy

Masculinities, very simply, refer to configurations of social practice that are constructed in opposition to configurations of social practice known as femininities (Connell 1987). Gender constructs are, at their very core, typically conceptualized as dichotomous constructs (Bem 1993, 1989, 1981; Bem and Lenney 1976) and males and females encounter social expectations that they will, respectively, construct a masculine or feminine identity (Fausto-Sterling 2000).

Because of their dictomous nature, an important way of constructing masculinity is to deny that one is feminine (Hennen 2002). Men can do this through sport (Bairner 2000; Cohen, 2001; McKay, Messner, and Sabo 2000; Messner 2005, 1992; Messner and Sabo 1990; Sabo and Panepinto 1990), physical ability and mental toughness (Connell et al. 2005; De Garis 2000; Hockey 2002), violence (Bowker 1998; Connell et al. 2005; Kane, Staiger, and Ricciardelli 2000; Kaufman 2001; Keddie 2005; Kilmartin 2000; Messerschmidt 1998; Whitehead 2005), overt heterosexual desire for women (Boswell and Spade 1996; Ekins and King 2005; Ferguson 2000; Gough and Edwards 1998; Majors and Billson 1992; Mandel and Shakeshaft 2000; McGuffey and Rich 1999; Quinn 2004; Theodore and Basow 2000), and homophobia (Curry 1991; Edwards 2005; Franklin 1988; Hennen 2002; Kennelly 2002; Kimmel 1994; Plummer 1995). These constructions are culturally indicative of masculinity and when men express their self/identity in these ways, they are, in effect, denying that they are feminine.

Masculinity exists in relation to femininity, making them relational constructs (Connell 1987; 1995). In the plural, masculinities are constructed in relation to femininities, and perhaps more importantly, other masculinities (Connell 1995), meaning that there are multiple forms of masculinity that men (and women)¹ construct (Carrigan et al. 1985). Hegemonic masculinities refer to dominant constructions of masculinity, i.e., those masculinities that receive the greatest ‘patriarchal dividends’ (Connell 1995:82), or societal resources such as income, wealth, free time, etc., that men accrue simply for being men. As I’ve already noted, those dominant forms look much like the constructions of identity in Chapter 5. All other masculine constructs are subordinated to the dominant forms. Notwithstanding the serious critiques that have been leveled at hegemonic masculinity as a concept, i.e., that it is too broad and used to explain

¹ See Judith Halberstam (1998) *Female Masculinity*.

everything from individual identity constructions to corporate power to nation states (Collinson and Hearn 2005; Campbell and Mayerfeld Bell 2000; Demetriou 2001; Donaldson 1993; Hearn 2004; Holter 2005), it remains a useful way to discuss hierarchies of gendered power (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

With this in mind, hegemonic masculinity has both an external and internal component. External hegemony refers to the “institutionalization of men’s dominance over women” (Demetriou 2001:341), or the way masculine power is embedded in the institutions used to maintain men’s positions of dominance over women (Connell 1987). The military is an obvious example; not only does it revere and reward men’s aggression and violence, it also legitimizes it. Internal hegemony refers to the hierarchal structuring of masculinities so that some forms are dominant over others (Demetriou 2001). Aside from external and internal, there are four loosely identifiable categories of masculinities worth mentioning; Hegemonic masculinities, which I’ve already discussed and spent much of my work describing, are at the top of the hierarchy. *Subordinated masculinities* are oppressed, exploited, and subjected to overt control by more dominant forms, and might consist of gay or immigrant masculinities, or any combination of subordinated social categories that tend to be barred from economic, social, and ideological power in Western society. *Marginalized masculinities* consist of constructions that are neither dominant nor subordinated, but relegated to being dominated by more powerful forms of masculinity even while they receive a greater share of the patriarchal dividends than subordinated masculinities. An example might be black or working class masculinities; while working class masculinity is marginalized when compared to the masculinities of the middle-and upper classes (Pyke 1996), as a collectivity they tend to emphasize physical toughness (Kimmel 1996; Majors and Billson 1992; McKay et al. 2005; Messner 1992) and reify men’s association

with musculature (McCreary et al. 2005; Pope et al. 2000). And finally, *complicit masculinities*, which refer to those configurations of practice that are not constructed on the basis of dominance and control, yet still receive patriarchal dividends because they are constructed by men in a society that advantages men because they are men (Connell 1987; Johnson 2005). Some have suggested further ways to conceptualize masculinities; *resistance masculinities*, or those forms of masculinities that actively resist hegemonic forms of masculinities (Kimmel and Mosmiller 1992; Messner 2000), or *protest masculinities*, constructions that attempt to de-center or challenge dominant forms (Walker 2006). It should be clear that masculinities are conceptualized as co-existing in multiple forms and are relational (being constructed in opposition/comparison to other forms of masculinities) and contextual (what is dominant in one setting is not in another).

For my purposes, I will only focus on how hegemonic masculinities are created by subordinating other constructions of masculinities. As Connell (1987) has written:

These other masculinities need not be as clearly defined—indeed achieving hegemony may consist precisely in preventing alternatives gaining cultural definition and recognition as alternatives, confining them to ghettos, to privacy, to unconsciousness (p. 186).

My concern in this chapter is not to identify the various categories of masculinities defined above, but rather, to show how men use comparative practice as a tactic to locate their constructions of masculinity in positions of dominance over other gender constructions. In other words, comparative practice highlights the process of internal hegemony construction. In the following section I highlight how men create masculine hierarchies in which their individual constructions of masculinity are more virtuous, physically able, disciplined, willing to take risks, emotionally controlled, and intelligent. Men use these dimensions in comparison to civilians, women, different branches (i.e., Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force), jobs within a particular

branch (i.e., infantry, artillery, supply), and career trajectory (officer versus enlisted) to create hierarchies of masculinity in which their individual construction is dominant.

Civilians and Comparative Practice

Comparative practice, as I mentioned above, is a tactic for constructing hierarchies of masculine dominance. Sometimes the men explicitly compare service members to non-service members, other times they are responding to questions about what differentiates them from those who do not join. In both instances, they are creating rough hierarchies in which military personnel are positioned over non-military civilians (i.e., civilians who have never served). I asked Dell to share with me what image came to mind when he thought of service personnel.

Dell: Courageous, loyal, honorable, clean cut

Ray: When you say clean cut, what do you mean by that?

Dell: The way they present themselves, the uniforms, their physical appearance. As well as their demeanor. How they carry themselves. Their presence.

He goes on to tell me that service members are “proud, but not arrogant. Compassionate at the same time,” and that unlike civilians (specifically), members of the military are “physically in shape, for the most part [laughs]. Their hair is cut. They’re clean shaven. All a part of the clean cut military.”

These are qualities that Andrew prides himself on being able to spot in service members, even when they are not in uniform. He tells me that “sometimes you can pick it up, other times you can't. Some people just emulate military service. They live it 24/7. It's just real pervasive. You can tell.” By way of example, he told me about waiting for his sister to arrive at the airport over Christmas and attempting to pick service members out of the crowd. “That's kind of become one of my favorite past times.” Sitting there with his mother, he noticed a group of young men and women who appeared to be waiting for someone because “they all had

something in the way of Army attire.” Andrew determined “that they must be waiting for somebody coming back from being deployment or basic training or something.” So he made a bet with his mother that he would spot this person before she did. “I told my mom, ‘He won't have anything Army on when he gets off the plane’.”

So I think that's one of those things I've learned in the Army is that you judge people real quick. I don't know if it's a good thing or not, but you look at somebody and you pick up information about that person, about how they walk, what they carry, etc. How they walk. What they are carrying in their left or right hand. The haircut. The clothing. Sometimes it gives it away, but other times it doesn't. And I eventually picked him out and he wasn't wearing anything Army. How he walked, the haircut, etc. I said, that's the guy. Sure enough. (Ray: What was it about him?) He had a determined glare. Not a glare. He had a determined fixed gaze. He knew where he was going. He didn't wander aimlessly. He walked from the waist down. He didn't swagger. His haircut was high and tight, almost basic training, a fiftieth of an inch, that kind of thing. He didn't wear any camouflage. He wasn't in uniform.

This service member represents the ideal for Andrew. “That's one of those things you try to aspire to. Personally, I do.” Because “I'm going to be an officer,” he feels it is important “to convey that whether or not my soldiers are watching me.” The posture, the gaze, how the man moved and his overall countenance conveyed a sense of honor and pride that Andrew does not believe civilians have. “In or out of uniform, I know that he's a soldier.” To be fair, Andrew does admit that “certain people that I look at now, they wear the uniform but they don't carry themselves as a soldier.” But what truly separates civilians and service personnel is their demeanor and this is something in which he clearly takes pride.

The idealized images that Dell and Andrew convey of the clean cut, disciplined military man, represent just that; ideals. But it is in the idolization of this image that we gain an understanding of what sets service members apart for pre-active duty service members. We know this because Andrew himself marks this difference. Recall from Chapter 4 that he viewed the military as the appropriate place to acquire virtue. He told me “I went from a civilian without a clear idea of what I want to do in life,” in which he was “physically unfit,” to someone

who joined the army. His implication is that service members are physically fit and have direction in life, like the soldier Andrew described: “He had a determined fixed gaze. He knew where he was going. He didn't wander aimlessly.”

Another quality that differentiates service members from civilians is personal discipline, which as far as Kyle, Dan, and Dusty are concerned, set them apart. They all believe that military service will help them secure jobs, partly because of what they see as the work ethic that the military instills in its members.

Getting out there and getting what they got to do, done. Making sure it is taken care of right. (Kyle)

And once I get that job, definitely everything you do to motivate your men, to get the job done basically, you can kind of carry over I think. And definitely as far as discipline goes, you're working, you're not going to be one of those guys hanging around the coffee pot and chit-chatting, you're going to be doing jobs and working hard and everything like that. (Dan)

My dad talks to me about it, but he has people under him that I would never want to have under me. And I won't ever have to worry about in the military. That's the one thing, cuz I think that is hard, traditionally, for a lot of people to come out of the military, especially on the officer side and the admin side. People get things done when you want them to get done, they don't wait. (Dusty)

As men talk about their impending military service, they also cast service members as having virtue and being of sound moral character, as did Leonard.

I guess the first thing to come to mind is like, discipline and someone who is willing to serve a higher good. I'm not saying the military is better than anything else, but there is a different mind set. I think it takes a certain type of person to commit to that.

Preston agrees with Leonard's assessment. “Not everyone, I don't think, would drop everything in a moment and start fighting if they truly had to.” He told me that he felt “that it's my personal duty to do this,” but appeared to grapple for a reason as to why others did not join.

Why doesn't everybody join the military? Why doesn't everybody have that sense of duty and responsibility? ... Why [do] they [service members] feel that they had to answer that call rather than everyone [else]? What separates them from everyone else that didn't say “this is what I'm going to do.” Its probably one of the hardest [questions to answer], in

that you're trying to put your feelings into words, and your beliefs, but I think trying to get at that [answer] is probably what decides why someone would dedicate their life, or the best years of their life, to the military.

Part of the answer for Preston lay in service members' strong sense of patriotism or the realization that civilian life is unfulfilling.

For some people, the attacks [of September 11th] kind of opened their eyes [leading them to say] "My country needs me now. I have to do this." So I mean, I think some people felt that nationalism, or that call, [and] decided that maybe what they're doing in life wasn't what they wanted to [do] or wasn't as important [as military service].

But in the final analysis, for Preston, what separates civilians and service personnel is that civilians don't "understand the things they get out of it, whether it be the morals and the duty and the sense of pride, stuff like that." I've already discussed how pre-active service members view the military as the appropriate institution to construct a virtuous masculinity, but what lies beneath this is that these men view themselves as more virtuous and more patriotic than their civilian counterparts and of the various institutions they can access, the military best suits this construction of self. Tim certainly recognizes service members' strong sense of virtue as one of the defining qualities that sets them apart from others.

Someone that says you know what um, in times past I suppose a lot of people have entered just to go do it for a couple of years and didn't really think that they would get deployed or really see any real danger. And now people are entering, knowing, I mean, probably expecting to see it, and they do it anyway. Like Pat Tillman for example, I was watching something on him the other night, an NFL player, I don't know, he had multimillion dollar signing deals and he still was like I need to do this and he walked away from it and joined the military because he felt that was the right thing to do. Because everyone is not necessarily walking away from million NFL contracts but everyone is giving up something, everyone is making some sacrifice, to go do it.

"It's not something everybody can do. It's not something everybody chooses to do,"

George told me. He also says that, "a lot of people do [take freedom for granted]. I for one don't take it for granted." As we saw in Chapter 4, he feels that this is "worth standing up for.

That's worth putting my life in danger for it." It is the men's sense of virtue, found in their belief

that they are making personal sacrifices for the greater moral good, mixed with what they see as superior physical ability, that become ways of setting themselves apart from civilians. Not only apart, but above them in the masculine hierarchy.

Oscar seems to hold service members in high regard. Part of this stems from first hand experience in which he witnessed a transformation in a cousin who joined the Marine Corps. “He became more organized and more disciplined and pretty much happy, I think. He is actually happy that he is in the Marine Corps. So I started thinking that I could be also happy.” When comparing service members to non-service members, Oscar says:

The person [service member] looks like someone who is intelligent. Who knows what he is doing. A person who has morals in his life, rules. Who is happy. Who loves defending his nation. Who enjoys his job. Who is happy and is willing to help other people. A person who can prove that he is not just a really smart person. A person who can do stuff rather than just write stuff on paper. And pretty much, that is about it.

Participants, irrespective of their ROTC or DEP status, set service members apart by comparing their perceived qualities to those who do not join. They view service members as more physically appealing, disciplined, virtuous, moral, and in Oscar’s case, happy, than non-military members. By creating these distinctions between military/civilian, it’s as if they are creating dichotomies between groups who have more/less, or are good/bad (or perhaps better/good). Doing so creates a hierarchal ordering of military and non-military people, in which military personnel are positioned above others. Purpose, self discipline, patriotism, duty, honor, and happiness are qualities they view themselves as possessing, and while they do not necessarily see service as a zero-sum game (i.e., service members have them, others do not), their responses suggest that they view service members as having more of these character traits. Active duty will mark the men’s ascendancy to the top of the hierarchies they have created, and as men at the top of the purpose/discipline/patriotism/virtue/physical ability/happiness hierarchy, they can legitimately lay claim to a dominant construction of hegemonic masculinity. As I will

highlight below, the process of comparative practice is essentially the same no matter if the straw-men are non-military civilians, military women, military men in different services, military men in different branches, or enlisted (if one is an officer) or officers (if one is enlisted).

Comparative Practice and Military Women

Past research suggests that men justify gender inequality in the military based, in part, on differences between men and women's physical abilities (Cohn 2000; Herbert 1998). This sentiment, although not explicitly stated, is certainly reflected in the men's frustration at women's perceived lack of strength and physical endurance. Thus, another tactic of constructing masculine hierarchies is to situate women as physically weaker and less emotionally able to handle the tasks associated with military service. This is not surprising when we consider that one of the most effective means of constructing masculinity is to deny femininity. While the men were not explicitly denying femininity, by suggesting that women are not capable of handling military service like men are, they are constructing masculine/male feminine/female hierarchies, if only by proxy. As males, presumably, they can handle what women can not. If women are weak, then men must be strong. If women are emotional, then men are reserved.

Note that this section on how men use military women to construct hegemonic masculinity does not appear to strictly follow Connell's (1987) conception of internal hegemony, or the ways masculinities are hierarchically structured in relation to each other. That is, of course, if we presume that women do not construct masculinity. Some women do (Halberstam 1998), and there is evidence that women who join the military are among this group (Herbert 1998). Comparative practice is about how masculinities, not males and females, are internally structured, no matter whether it is men or women who are constructing them. In this way, it makes sense to include a section on military men's use of military women to construct a masculine hierarchy.

Recall Gus, from Chapter 5, who viewed women in the military as something of a sexual distraction. As a second year NROTC cadet (sophomore), he has already formed some opinions about the direction the military was going.

One thing I don't like that I see happening is lowering of standards. I think that physical standards should be maintained. If you have to lower 'em for women, you have to lower them for everybody. I don't like the idea that a male has to do something like fifty some push-ups and a female only has to do about ten. That just doesn't seem right to me.

This was echoed by Marshall, who was asked to share his thoughts on women in the military.

I think its some bullcrap that on the PT test they only have to do three pushups, and I had to do some eighty or some. And they had to do like three or six pushups to pass. I think that's bullcrap.

"But," he assured me, "other than that, it doesn't really matter. Women can do the job just like men can. You know?"

While the men seemed to accept, as George did, that women were physically "weaker," making them less "able to do as many push ups or sit ups" or having a slower "run time," during training, they were somewhat harsher in their assessment of women's perceived emotional capabilities, especially when it came to their ability to handle combat. Dusty felt that the military's "double standards" were bad for this reason.

Women don't have to run as fast as us they don't have to do as much as us and that's why they aren't in combat. Men can look out for one another more in these terms. And that's why I think women have great capabilities except for [the] combat part in the military.

His stance extended beyond the physical and touched on one of the main culturally perceived differences between men and women. Being in combat meant that "you always look out for the other guys," but "there is no sympathy" if he gets hurt. "You expect him to do his part."

Presumably women will not do their part because they are too sympathetic. This theme arose time and again in the men's responses.

When it comes to women in the military, Jake felt that “men are a little more emotionally stable.” He did concede “that is hard to say with some girls today,” but overall, he felt that men were better suited emotionally to deal with combat. Harry agreed that “they can be in the military, but I think they’ve [the military has] got it set up like they should because women can’t have combat MOS’s [Military Operational Specialties].”² In his opinion, “I don’t think we should send a woman out there. Because they’re very emotional. They’re very emotional. They are.” In Chip’s view, a lack of emotional control is problematic.

If I got my leg blown off, I would much rather be with somebody that says “Aw man, that sucks,” and grab me and carry me to a medivac [medical evacuation] unit than someone like “Oh my God, Oh my God, he’s hit” and like, freak out.

Chip said ‘Oh my God’ in a high pitch tone and pretended to hide behind his hands as if demonstrating how a woman might not want to look at the casualty.

When asked about his thoughts regarding women in the military, Billy appeared to struggle to put together a coherent response.

I would have to say that uh [pause] I don’t know. [laughs] This is a tough question [pause]. Because if they can prove that they can do the job, then that’s fine by me. But, at the same time [pause] I just, I don’t know. Sometimes I don’t think that women have that right mentality.

He went on to say that he “really wouldn’t mind working alongside of one if they were competent, I guess,” but I sensed that he was uncomfortable responding to the question, partly because he kept looking at the tape recorder sitting a few feet from him. I assured him that his response would be anonymous and he said “Right, right, right, right.” After a moment, he explained what he meant by ‘that right mentality’.

I [pause]. I guess I would have to say that [pause] Women have monthly cycles that can mess with their brains. I don’t know if I would want some women telling me what to do or making difficult decisions under those [pause] aspects of their life. But, other than that, if

² This is sometimes also referred to as a Military Operational Skill.

they can handle being [pause] that time of the month, then you know, then the guys around them can handle that I guess. (Ray: So you wouldn't mind serving with them if they are competent?) Right. ... Women are definitely a lot different than men in the emotional aspect. There is a time to be emotional, and you can definitely get to know your comrades on a personal level, but lets say you're in Iraq and a woman is fighting in a division or whatever and she sees a guy that she's known for a couple of years get killed right in front of her. Like, how is she going to react? But you can say the same things for guys as well. You don't know how they're going to react in that situation. So I would say that women are just more emotional about things in general, so I would say they would be more emotional about that. And I think that would kind of effects the way they operate. (Ray: More so than the guys?) I think so. I would just say, like, as an example, I was going to say if a woman's pet dies, it's usually a pretty big deal. I'm not saying that if a guy's dog dies it's not a big deal either, but I think that women get more emotionally attached to things so its harder to operate, I guess, whenever those things end.

Although he does qualify statements about women's emotionality by questioning men's emotional control, Billy clearly wonders whether women can operate as effectively as men in the stressful combat context.

To be fair, some men did not share this sentiment. "There's no job that I think a female can't do as well as a male," said Leonard. He thinks "there maybe some physical differences, as far as hand to hand combat, but as far as intellectually, I don't think there's anything a female couldn't do that a man can." Gibson conceded that there were "physiological" differences between men and women. "That's just the way it is. But I don't think that there is anything in a combat zone that would prevent a woman from participating." Jaimie's mother was commissioned as a Naval officer three years before the Naval Academy began accepting women, so he has first hand knowledge of women's struggles in the military. "I don't feel like women are any less capable of doing the job than men are," he replied. "I don't feel like there is any restraints on women in the military," with regard to their ability to handle combat. Jaimie did say that the only area he could see women having difficulty was on a submarine, but he felt this was due to logistics. "It would be very difficult to have female and male berthing [sleeping quarters] on the sub without having to completely alter the submarine itself." When asked if he

thought it was problematic that women and men bathe, toilet, and sleep together, he said that personally, it did not bother him, but rather, the problem rests with our gender divided culture.

“It’s just the way our society is.”

Like I said its just a logistical issue that we have. I feel like we could have solved it if we really wanted to but its one of those things where we kind of pick at it, we nickel and dime it until eventually, we’ll get it taken care of.

As an NROTC cadet and future Naval officer, Jaimie might well be in a position to institute such changes.

While not all men felt that perceived differences between men and women justified keeping them from combat, their narratives touch on physical differences that, in other studies (Cohn 2000; Herbert 1998), have been used to justify inequality. It is worth mentioning that there was little difference between ROTC and DEP’s view on women in the military. One might expect that ROTC men, who are generally more educated, might be more open to the idea of women in the military, but there is evidence that those who join the military are more religiously, politically, and socially conservative, irrespective of their officer or enlisted status (Franke 2001; Williams, Bliss, and McCallum 2006). In sum, positioning women as less able, both physically and emotionally, serves to push men to the top of the gender hierarchy. The practical translation is that men who make the military a career may use these opinions to justify the very real gender power differences between men and women in the United States Military.

Inter-Branch Rivalry and Comparative Practice

Men constructing hegemonic masculinities by positioning themselves over civilian non-service members or over women in the military is, perhaps, not that surprising. Both groups are used to highlight differences against which the men can construct masculine selves that are more disciplined, virtuous, physically able, and emotionally controlled. But what of other men in the military? One of the more interesting findings is that men use other male service members to

construct hegemonic masculinities (Barrett 1996; Bibbings 2003; Higate 2003, 2002; Lahelma 2005). Conscientious objectors³ are the most obvious source for constructing masculine hierarchies in the military (Bibbings 2003), but others have noted this process can take place even among fighting men who voluntarily join the military (Lahelma 2005). I've already mentioned that some forms of masculinity are considered more or less dominant than others (Connell 1995). In the following section, I discuss how service members construct hierarchies among themselves by comparing one branch against another. Inter-branch rivalries are a known fact of life to service members, but far from being just a source of ribald humor, men use these perceived differences to construct hierarchies of masculine dominance.

“I decided to go Navy and I'm happy I did,” said Norman, an NROTC cadet. To explain why, he compared service in the Navy with that of the Air Force.

The Air Force is totally different from the Navy. All the services have a different culture. I don't know much about the Army, but the Navy and the Air Force are very different. The Navy is much more “Come with what you have. Do the mission with what you have.” The Air Force is very rules oriented and you have to ask permission to do everything. Whereas in the Navy you are given responsibility of being in charge of a plane and you carry out the mission the best that you see fit.

The Navy is situated as a branch in which those who join are independent, and can be trusted with the responsibility to do their jobs. They are given leeway in how they complete their missions, because presumably, they are capable of doing so without direct oversight. The Air Force, by contrast, is a “very rules oriented” branch. Norman's description makes Air Force service members seem almost infantilized for having “to ask permission to do everything.” He does not say this, but the impression I was left with of the Air Force was a branch whose ranks

³ The Vietnam war popularized conscientious objectors as men who refused to serve in the military, but in reality, this is a technical (military) designation for those individuals who refuse to use violence on other human beings. Such moral objections to using violence are not necessarily barriers to military service, and there are many conscientious objectors who are currently on active duty serving in non-combat related capacities, such as the chaplaincy or medical corps.

seem as if they are inhabited by men who are not responsible enough to be left to their own devices.

Tony, a DEP enlistee, spares no service in his assessment of why the Army is better.

The Air Force is real individual I guess. More of an individual thing. And the Army is real close knit. Is what I think. Um [pause] I like [the Army] better. I was thinking about the Air Force but then I was looking at the MP job and they're more like guards instead of like cops. I think the Marines are too proud, though [laughs]. And I just don't like the Navy uniforms; the hats mostly [laughing]. Nothing against them. Just not my taste.

The Army is a better fit for him, partly because he views it as a more congenial atmosphere ('real close knit'), but especially because he wants to become a military police officer (MP). He could be an MP in the other branches, but suggests that, in the other services, like the Air Force, the MPs aren't really police officers, "they're more like guards." I find it interesting that he casts the Marines as too proud, but when I asked him why he felt this way, he told me "I've just known a lot of people who have gone into the Marines and they'll come back and they'll just think they're out of this world."

Ray: And you disagree?

Tony: Yes.

Marine training makes men too arrogant, a quality that Tony finds disagreeable, like the hats and uniforms of the Navy.

Stiles has a different view. He is a NROTC cadet, and tells me that "Sometimes we make a joke about the Air Force and the Army. The only reason they went into the Army or Air Force is because they couldn't get into this program." And Garrison, NROTC, proudly suggests that what separates the Navy from other services is their combat readiness, making them deployable at a moment's notice.

When the president set them all down, [he] said "how quick can you be there?" The Air Force said "three weeks" to Afghanistan. The Army was like "we can have troops on the

ground in two weeks,” and Marines and Navy was like “we can be on the ground tomorrow”

Harry is going into the Army because, compared to the other branches, he feels that “they offered me the most. Everything. The most training. Because I got nineteen weeks of training before I even go anywhere.” But aside from the training and the money, which he told me was “all right,” he decided not to join the Marines because of his experiences with men who are just out of Marine basic training who have “have real bad attitudes.” Asked what he meant by this, he said:

They’re just like [dropping his voice a few octaves and shouting] “Yeah! I’m the best.” You know? “Yeah! [shouting] Hoorah, Hoorah,” everywhere, you know [flexing his muscles and turning from side to side].

He does admit that “it’s pretty cool to listen to their stories and everything,” but feels that they’re a little too hypermasculine for his liking. On the other hand, “the Air Force is more kick back and lay back,” which he feels is too low-key. “And the Navy, they’re kind of like the Army. They’re just mellow.” He does concede that “you do have your “ARGHH” [shouting] special forces wanna be dudes,” but feels that the Army is a better overall fit for him

In fact, many of the men I interviewed felt that the Marines were too aggressive.⁴ Michael is an Army DEP and one of two men who are married with children. He chose the Army because he felt it offered the best benefits for his family. He did talk to recruiters from the other branches, but found that the Marines did not appeal to him

He [the Marine recruiter] was very pushy and I was like, “I don’t want that.” Because that is how the Marines are. They are very hard-ass and very mean, basically. Nobody really likes the Marines because they are mean. So that’s not something that I really wanted.

⁴ I did not interview any DEP Marines, although I did speak with one NROTC cadet (Dusty) who was contracted to become a Marine officer. I suspect men going into the Marines might disagree that they are overly aggressive.

When I asked him “why not?” he leaned in from across the table and asked “Would you like it if I was mean to you? Would you like it if I bullied you around?” He admits to recognizing that “you are going to get that in the military, but I mean if you go to the Marines, it’s like ten times as worse.”

Army ROTC cadet Gibson is another who feels that the Marines are too hypermasculine. He briefly contemplated joining the Marines, but felt that their personal style was not in line with his. “If I had to describe them all [Marines] using one word, [it] would be intense. Intense individuals. Whereas the army seems to be a lot more laid back.” In a wonderfully descriptive example, Gibson told me about a friend who served as an infantry officer in Afghanistan with a unit from the 82nd Airborne Division that ran out of supplies. He was sent to a designated location to meet a unit of Marines detailed to resupply them. His friend arrived with his men first, and “they’re all relaxed and they’re all smokin and jokin. They’re loosely on security because its a relatively safe spot.”

So they’re sitting back relaxing, joking, got their backs to trees and whatnot, and all the sudden here comes these two civilian vehicles [that] screech to halt in front of them. Apparently the Marines had commandeered them and their commander released these vehicles to help these Army retards who had gone out without supplies. So they come piling out of these cars, and they all come out screaming, they’re like “Arrrgh!” The guy I knew had actually, him and his squad had been playing with these Iraqi kids, shooting the shit, and then here come these Marines jumping out of the vehicles screaming “Argghh!!” and they yell at the kids “Get out. Get out of the way.” And they set up this security perimeter around the two cars and they’re all running around and screaming, and this [Marine] corporal walks up [and asks] “Who’s in charge here?” And this guy I graduated with stands up and says “I am,” and he walks over and says “what’s up?” “Sir,” and this Marine is yelling and he’s standing at attention because there is officer there, and the guy I graduated with is like “whats up?” So Marine is all yelling “Sir! We have your supplies and if you don’t mind sir, we were told to return as soon as possible. And we got to go.” By this time all the kids are gone! So they drop the supplies and try to get back in the cars just as quick and they can’t all fit in the cars, so the cars take off with ten Marines running behind the cars.

“So that’s the difference between the Army and the Marines,” Gibson concludes. “On one hand, they are intense fighters, but on the other hand, it’s a little obsessive. They don’t need all that.”

At first glance, viewing some services of the military as too masculine seems inconsistent for men who are joining the armed forces particularly because they are voluntarily joining an institution that legitimates the use of violence. American culture openly admires its military members (Wiegand and Paletz 2001), and celebrates male military violence (Langston 2000), especially when it comes packaged as a Rambo or a John Wayne. In reality, overtly aggressive, physically combative masculinities are penalized by laws (Toch 1998), and men of the working classes who, because of limited access to wealth or power, use violence to construct masculine identities find that this route of gender construction can land them in prison (Hagedorn 1998; Messerschmidt 1997). This style of masculine construction is ridiculed and generally avoided by men of the middle and upper-classes (Messner 1992). Suggesting that some styles of masculinity are too masculine is a way of subordinating or marginalizing aggressive masculinities, effectively knocking them from the top of the gender hierarchy.

Casting the Marines as too masculine, ridiculing the hats and uniforms of the Navy, saying that some men are not smart enough to join the Navy, suggesting that Air Force personnel are too laid back (non-aggressive), or that members of other branches lack purpose marginalizes the men who join them. Some of this inter-branch rivalry may be nothing more than the process of in-group/out-group identification and many current and former service members (myself included) view this as little more than friendly banter that exists as part of the tradition of military service. On the other hand, Connell (1987) notes that creating hierarchies in which groups of men are marginalized in a process akin to “ideological warfare” (p. 186) is an effort to “negate” their power (p. 187). This is what hegemonic masculinities are all about.

Finally, such rivalry extends beyond the military. When he asked, I told Dan (NROTC) during our pre-interview chat that I was in the Army. He was headed to the Naval Academy in a

few weeks. At the end of the interview I asked if there was anything he would like to add before I shut off the tape, and he smiled, clenched his fist and pumped his arm back and forth and shouted “Go Navy, beat Army!” Even though I had been out the military for years and he was yet to go in, the inter-branch rivalry was still a source of masculine bonding and amusement for us both (Lyman 2004).

Intra-branch Comparative Practice

Inter-branch rivalries aside, men also used different occupational specialties within the same branch of service, such as the difference between men in supply, artillery, or infantry, to construct hegemonic masculinities. This finding mirrors some of the sparse research on this phenomenon (Barrett 1996; Higate 2003). The men quoted below compared themselves with other men in the same branch to construct a self that is more hard working, physically able, aggressive, and/or intelligent.

Stiles, the NROTC cadet who joked about the intelligence of Army and Air Force cadets, plans to follow in the footsteps of his parents and become a surface warfare officer (SWO). Although he is proud of this, he tells me that the NROTC culture is dominated by aviators and submariners who chide him for “going SWO.”

Aviators always think they’ve got the best job in the world, so they’re always going to down talk living on ships or in submarines. Submarines [submarine officers] have a hard time down talking aviators, so they down talk the SWOs because they get paid more and then they always consider themselves the silent service. They call surface warfare ships ‘targets’ because they think they can like, kill them easily. There’s a mentality that SWOs eat their young and you get yelled at the most and it’s the hardest working one.

He may not agree with the sentiment that he will eat his young, but he definitely agrees with the idea that he is joining the hardest working service in the Navy. “Aviation,” Leonard confided, “seems to be people who are more, a people person. From what I’ve noticed.” Recall from Chapter 5 that Leonard underwent PRK surgery to correct his vision so that he could have

the opportunity to apply for flight school. Perhaps part of his desire to become an aviator was that “they seem to be fun loving people,” a statement that appears to confirm Stiles’ stereotype of aviators. Leonard is also aware that “aviation tends to have this reputation of play hard but work hard,” but feels that “what people actually see and what you notice more often is the play hard.” I suspect that he and Stiles might disagree about which branch is the hardest working. Fellow NROTC cadet Jaimie does not claim that submariners are hard working, but he does feel that his chosen branch is “a little cooler because you have that top secret aspect of it and nobody knows and things like that.”

By contrast, Scott is in the Navy with plans to become a Navy S.E.A.L. “There are plenty of people that are in the military who are necessary in order for it to work,” but feels that some of the jobs are “less appealing” to him.

In the Navy there is the supply core. These are the guys that are making sure that shipments of food get to certain destinations on time so they can be picked up by Helo [helicopters] and flown out to a ship and dropped off for extra scrambled eggs.

Of course, the supply core also brings ammunition, medical supplies, and other vital items necessary for the survival of the fleet. Demeaning the labor of these men and women by equating their work to making sure sailors have extra scrambled eggs for breakfast sets Scott up to suggest that his military service is more purposeful than others. “I definitely want my life to mean something while I am here,” he concludes.

Men in the Army also compared themselves to other soldiers⁵ and set themselves up as being more aggressive, having a stronger sense of duty, being more mature, or more intelligent. Richard explained why he signed up for the Army. He told me that “Some of the other positions they had weren’t my idea of combat.”

⁵Army personnel are referred to as soldiers, Navy personnel are sailors, Marines are marines, and the Air Force has airmen

Like they had a crew man on a Hummer with a rocket launcher on the back. But you didn't really do anything. You just drove the Hummer, worked at computers, and then shot the missile. And to me that's less combat involved than I really wanted to be. And at the same time I feel it's a little too impersonal. If you're going to war and you want to fight somebody I feel that you need to fight them face to face. You don't hide behind your rockets miles and miles away.

Note how Richard positions rocket crews as less 'combat involved,' stating that they are not truly 'fighting' or that their jobs enable them to 'hide' from the enemy, impersonally firing their rockets from a distance of several miles. Granted, as an infantryman, Richard will likely experience combat in all its brutal violence. He will have a front line view quite unlike any other in the military, enabling him to claim that he, unlike others in the Army, is actually fighting the enemy face to face. He creates the image that he is man enough to stand openly against his enemies and fight, unlike other soldiers, who cower behind mechanized weapons far to the rear of the battlefield.

Reminiscent of Richard, Skip says "I don't want to be behind a desk, I don't want to be a medic, I don't want to be a cook. I'd rather be on the front lines." He reasons that being in the infantry will enable him to "say that I fought for my country and I knew I did something to support it, give back to what they gave me." He concedes that "I'm not saying those guys [other MOS's] didn't do anything," but personally, "I just can't do it. If I go to Iraq, I want to be saying 'I fought,' not sat behind a desk." In comparison, those who have desk jobs, like supply or headquarters, do not fight, and by default, can not 'give back' to their country like Skip. Meyer agrees: "I might feel like I am serving more in the infantry." And Gibson bluntly states what these men appear to be getting at: "The infantry is the military. Everything else in the military exists to support the infantry."

"There are only two goals I've got for the Army," Tom said. "I want to go [to] the 82nd airborne, get the maroon beret and then go to the Rangers, [and get] the green beret." Both of

these are Special Forces infantry units with difficult training. To highlight the completion of training and entry into these elite groups, soldiers wear different color berets. When I noted that regular army soldiers are now being issued black berets, Tom scoffed. “You can’t see a black beret. It’s the actual color. It represents the hole in their heads.” The essence of the insult here is that because black represents a lack of color, black berets represent a lack of training, a lack of dedication, and a lack of intelligence. By striving to wear a colored beret, Tom is using the black berets of other soldiers to highlight his own physical ability, sense of duty, and intellect.

Not all the men in the Army have signed up for the infantry, and to be sure, not all of them agree that infantry soldiers are the most dedicated or intelligent. Herb is a college graduate who decided to enlist in the military to pursue his interest in military intelligence and found himself “talking to the guys at the recruiter’s office” about their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. “A lot of them were Calvary Scouts, so they were all on the front line and were interrogating people.” One recruiter told him that, “if you want to be an interrogator you should be a Calvary Scout.” His rationale was that it expedited the intelligence gathering process because as a Scout, he would not have to remove the person to an interrogation center; it could be done on the spot in the field.

And I was like “yeah, but you can’t talk to them because you don’t speak Arabic.” And they are like “I speak M16.” I was just like “all right guys.” That is like the difference between the combat guys and the educated intelligence people. ... I would like to speak to them [enemy prisoners] in their own language so that they understand why it is that they are being interrogated. So that they can know what is going on. Pointing a gun at someone, you are not going to get anything intelligible out of them even if you did speak that language.

The difference between infantry soldiers and Herb is, in a word, intelligence.

Jackson, who will receive a commission as a supply officer, suggests there is an undeniable difference between infantry soldiers and other Army personnel.

Some of the kids in ROTC when they go out there, they're looking forward to killing bad guys... They're there because they want to do that. They want to be the infantry. It seems like it's fairly split; you either got the hard cores who want to kill or the other guys who are kind of supporting or helping, who want a career.

When I asked him what differentiates him from the men who are 'hard core,' he replied "for me, I'd say maturity." He explained that "when I was younger I wanted to be that infantry hardcore," but he came to realize that being infantry did not help his civilian occupational opportunities.

'Cause you know, what do you do after the army? What kind of skills are you taking from the infantry? Yeah, you're going to be a manager, you're leading a lot of people, but as far as technical skills, you're not really getting too many ... you could dig a ditch

No matter what branch of service the men were planning to serve in, they compared themselves to others, and invariably, they came out on top.

Officer-Enlisted Comparisons

Finally, some ROTC and DEP men used comparisons of enlisted personnel and officers to highlight their positions within the masculine hierarchy. Admittedly, most of the participants in the study had positive things to say about other service members regardless of whether they were officers or enlisted. It remains, however, that the officer/enlisted distinction became a source of comparative practice for some of the men in this study. Unlike the quotes presented above, in which themes such as discipline, duty, and sacrifice are present, officer/enlisted comparisons tended to focus mainly on economic opportunity or the perceived ability of the other to adequately complete their military tasks. Both ROTC and DEPs questioned whether the other truly had the skills necessary to do an effective job in the military, and by proxy, suggested that people of their status (i.e., officer or enlisted) did.

As noted, sometimes this comparison is couched in class terms, as it was for Norman, an NROTC cadet.

I think there is definitely a social difference between the enlisted guys and the officers, so when you asked me whether I considered being an enlisted guy, I'm not trying to demean,

by any means, the typical sailor, but at the same time, a lot of times, you get the kids who don't have opportunity and don't have parents that, I mean, they just didn't have the same opportunities when they were younger. Whereas a lot of the guys that join or are officers, are probably raised expecting to go to college.

For him, officers generally come from “the middle class. White. American. Male. Whereas enlisted guys, they attract middle class, lower class people of all ethnicities. Everything.”

Echoing him is Tim, AROTC, who feels that people enlist in the military “because they don't really have a lot of other options.” There is a disconnect between him and the enlisted that stems from his perception that “I put myself in [the military] because that's where I want to be, not that I'm in because of lack of options.” Naval ROTC cadet Garrison felt that “because a lot of these enlisted guys are coming out of small towns in the Midwest,” the biggest challenge for him, as a future officer, would be “to bridge that gap between ‘I went to college, I had the ability to have it paid for.’” He goes considerably further than Norman or Tim, because he questions the motivations of enlisted personnel. “A lot these guys don't care about honor, courage, commitment. They're serving because it's the way they've had to support their families.”

Not all the ROTC cadets viewed the choice to enlist from a class perspective, but they nonetheless suggested that there was a difference in life experience that separated officers from enlisted. “The one thing that might be important is why people go into the officer program,” said Mark, an Army ROTC colleague of Tim. A friend's father had volunteered for the Army and fought in Vietnam. “He was so torn apart after because of the stuff that he saw. He said that it was just a big culture shock for him.” Mark reckons that because “young guys, if they come from life on a farm, they never do anything,” making them more susceptible to experiencing culture shock when they enter combat. By contrast, “I think that people in the officer program are more knowledgeable about that stuff.” Presumably, this makes officers better able to handle the psychological stresses of combat.

From the DEP perspective, officers were lazy and inexperienced. Enlistment was not born of economic desperation, but rather, a dedication to making sure that they have the training to complete the mission. Herb said that “if you get a college degree and join the Army and become an officer, you don’t know anything about the military. [The men] are not really going to think that you are going to be a good officer.” Herb has his bachelors’ degree, but made the decision to enlist specifically to “get experiences with the men.” He feels that enlisted personnel are the backbone of the military, and only by enlisting can he get to “know what it [the military] is like and learn my trade.” He makes it clear that there are “educated people who join the military to become officers or career military. And I see myself as more that kind of person.”

Harry is another DEP with some college education, and when asked why he did not go in as an officer, he responded:

That’s why my mom’s boyfriend, he was telling me “Go to college, get your bachelor’s degree, be an officer.” I was like “Yeah, that’s good, you get paid. You get to tell people what to do, but you don’t know what they’ve been through when you don’t know it yourself.” That’s why I want some experience under my belt before I do become a commissioned officer.

He reasons that he can earn his degree while he is in, then make the transition. The experience he gains from being enlisted will make him a stronger officer and better leader. Andrew, a NROTC cadet, agrees with Harry. As one of the men who has been through basic training, he is perhaps in the best position to discuss differences between officer and enlisted service members. He feels he will be a stronger officer because he has had an experience they have not.

That’s one of the things that I wish other cadets could experience it more often. It’s a little different from LDAC [Leadership Development and Assessment Course]. I think a lot of times they [cadets] think LDAC suffices for basic training and I’ve heard a lot of enlisted personnel say “These officers, all they do is come out of college and they don’t know what we’ve been through. They don’t know about basic training, they don’t know about a lot of stuff.” I definitely think there is a disparity between the two. So it was definitely a good experience.

And Jose, the tattooed DEP participant who said joining the military would enable him to work on increasing his already considerable muscle mass, rejects that idea out-of-hand that officers are better soldiers than enlisted. He seemed somewhat irritated by the idea that officers, who he views as “half-educated, half-cocked micro-managers,” would be in positions of authority over him. He asked rhetorically “these guys who get to be officers, what do they know? They just sit behind their desks and give orders.” After sharing a story with me about an older brother who enlisted and, coincidentally, provided Jose with information about officers, said “It’s us enlisted guys who get to do the work, do the job. They just sit around and drink coffee and get the credit. We’re the one’s sweating and working and they get the medals.”

In sum, the men compared themselves to other service members by focusing on the perceived differences between officers and enlisted military personnel. From the cadet’s perspective, enlisted personnel were inexperienced or joined out of desperation, leading at least one of them to question enlisted members commitment. Officers, on the other hand, were viewed by the ROTC cadets (men who will eventually become officers) as better educated, more experienced, and better able to lead. From the DEP’s perspective, being enlisted meant having a greater commitment to the service than officers, and to this end, they tended to view officers as lazy power-mongers who did not really understand the military.

Summary

While the warrior discourse was not explicitly discussed, it is apparent in men’s comparative practice as they narratively construct themselves as more physically able, emotionally controlled, virtuous, and dedicated than those their comparison group. In effect, what they are doing is drawing on the warrior discourse to create internal hegemony. The result is to create a gender hierarchy by actively comparing themselves to others. I suggest that comparative practice gives structure and form to masculinities through the process of

hierarchically ordering them. Recall from the beginning of the chapter that such efforts are designed to subordinate or marginalize other forms of gender construction and other masculinities (Connell 1987; 1995). As I discuss in Chapter 7, DEP's construction of hegemonic masculinities in many ways touches on symbolic rather than real power. Their military service as enlisted personnel will subordinate them to other men (i.e. officers). Their future lay in constructing masculinities that will be subordinated. For now, however, comparative practice enables them to claim some patriarchal power, even if it is only symbolic. By using civilians and other women and men in the military, ROTC and DEP men in this study effectively situate themselves at the top of the gender hierarchy, constructing hegemonically masculine identities in the process while simultaneously subordinating other forms of gender construction.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

The men in this study, and others like them around the United States, continue to sign up for military service at a time when America's warriors are being called upon to serve in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Service in these wars will put them at a greater risk for harm, increasing their chances of being wounded or killed. At the very least, they will be asked to support an organization whose activities wound and kill other human beings.

To understand why men are still signing up for military duty, I interviewed young men who were seriously considering joining the military. All of the men are pre-active duty service members in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). ROTC cadets are college students who, upon finishing school, will receive officers' commissions in the United States Armed Forces. DEPs are men who may or may not have college degrees, but have chosen to enlist in the military through military enlistment stations. They will become the privates, specialists/corporals, and sergeants of the armed forces. Not all of these men will see combat, but some will.

I began this project by suggesting that men join the military to construct hegemonic masculinity. I then explored how the process of identity construction occurred. We saw that men constructed personal narratives that aligned constructions of self with dominant discourses of gender that fit them within the institutional narratives of the military. Joining the military is an act of laying claim to an identity that has power and status in American society, not because the military confers this power on men, but rather, because men are able to draw on the symbolic resources of the military to construct a self/identity that fits within the warrior discourse, my core category.

The Warrior Discourse

Recall that a discourse is a set of ideas that define the meaning of the surrounding social world (Foucault 1988, 1982, 1977). In Chapter 3 I outlined the warrior discourse as a unique construction of American hegemonic masculinity that depicts morally upstanding individuals, usually men, who reluctantly use violence to defeat evil. These men are selfless, morally obligated to serve others, honest, hard-working, and physically fit. They are relatively passive, at least until evil doers threaten to harm the public good, at which time, they dedicate themselves to defeating the perceived threat regardless of the personal costs.

The warrior discourse is a distinctive set of ideas surrounding American military service, but it also filters into non-military related thought. American culture is saturated with militaristic thinking making the warrior discourse a subtle, yet ever present ideological structure for thinking about the social world. At its most basic level, the warrior discourse provides individuals with a useable language of militarism that transcends its traditional institutional home in the military. The Wars on poverty and drugs are examples of this. In other forms, it helps shape the way Americans think and talk about sports (Bairner 2000), business (Koller 2004), and politics (Nagel 2005). We saw in Chapter 3 how men in power use this discourse to frame the meaning of Americanism in which Americans are defenders of freedom and liberty. This discourse even shapes academic debates, in which ideas/practices are “deployed,” and opposing ideological camps are discussed as having “running battles” rather than on-going theoretical debates; and, after all, aren’t sociologists on the front lines in the fight against economic, gender, and racial oppression?

This discourse, as we have seen, is a culturally available symbolic resource that enables men to construct dominant masculinities. In some ways, it represents a cultural script for military identities, providing men and women with a guide book for constructing them. Because

scripts are general, the men in this study were able to use their own experiences to demonstrate that they have the appropriate institutional qualities necessary for military service. In effect, they used pre-military experiences to construct military masculinity by aligning past selves with the warrior discourse. A wonderful example of this is highlighted by Chip (Chapter 4) who used his third grade experiences with the Pizza Hut Book It! Program to convey his sense of integrity essentially aligning this past experiences in a story told during his interview with me in a way that drew on the scripts inherent in the warrior discourse.

The warrior discourse was present when men presented themselves as individuals who felt a deep-seated sense of responsibility to their country (duty). They narratively constructed themselves as individuals with a strong sense of right and wrong (integrity), or shared stories in which they found hard work to be intrinsically rewarding (dedication). It was also present as the men discussed sport activities, military physical training, physical toughness, violence, heterosexuality, and homophobia. The body played a dual role for the men; stories of sports, training and violence enabled them to align their narratives with the physically fit, able-bodied part of the warrior discourse, but also allowed them to construct the self as hegemonically masculine by presenting themselves as physically strong and mentally tough. And recall from Chapter 5 that men used violence as a source of humor and entertainment, a tactic that demonstrated their emotional control as they told stories about using violence on others and being able to withstand the effects of its use on themselves. Overall, their narratives provide a rough chronological accounting of the experiences they best feel represent their trajectories into the military, but in its practical application, such narratives construct a self/identity that is situated within the warrior discourse and very much in keeping with cultural scripts of hegemonic masculinities.

As I have hinted at throughout this project, not all men construct hegemonic forms of masculinity. In Chapter 5, I highlighted several men who resisted constructing identity in this way, whether it was rejecting sports play in their youth, resisting the pull to construct masculinity based in violence, or constructing an identity in which emotional expression is acceptable. That said, some of the same men who rejected sports or violence as routes to a hegemonic masculinity continued to draw on other forms, such as masculinity based in heterosexuality or physical fitness. Constructing dominant masculinities is not an all-or-nothing process, and depending on the individual, some forms of hegemonic masculinity may be embraced while others are deemed individually inappropriate (Connell 1987, 1995).

No matter how these men construct personal masculinity, they are joining the military, and because they are joining, they will, at least in the popular minds-eye, be viewed as hegemonically masculine men. Recall from Chapter 3 that institutions provide a “corresponding canopy of legitimations” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:62). For those who resist dominant constructions of masculinity, military service affords them the necessary institutional cover for deviating from hegemonic forms. The military serves as an identity screen that enables men to escape the threat of being labeled effeminate or unmasculine, a risk they encounter when deviating from hegemonic masculinity in other institutional contexts, like the school (Adler et al. 1992; Eder et al. 1995; Ferguson 2000). Military service helps to legitimize men’s hegemonic masculine identity claims no matter how those identities are constructed.¹ This is partly due to the warrior discourse, which shapes how Americans view America’s warriors.

Using the military to construct masculinity is best understood as a multilayered process because it occurs simultaneously at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels. On the

¹ Gay masculinities are generally not tolerated in the military and may be the exception.

individual level, the men's narratives presented a masculine self/identity, as we saw in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. They did this partly by drawing on the official institutional narratives suggesting that military personnel possess (or learn to possess) characteristics like loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage in basic training (recall the official Army statement in Chapter 4). Their personal narratives presented past and present selves that clearly had the necessary institutional requisites. Since these characteristics are also part of the more general warrior discourse, by constructing their stories to demonstrate that they possess the institutionally necessary characteristics, the men are actively working with the warrior discourse. It is in this reciprocal process of using cultural discourses and institutional narratives to construct personal narratives that the multilayered process of self/identity construction is most clearly noted.

Hegemonic Masculinities and the Warrior Discourse

The warrior discourse concept helps tie individual motivations for joining the military to wider cultural ideas of gender by casting the men as able-bodied, physically fit, emotionally controlled, virtuous protectors of America. By focusing on more abstract notions like good/evil, right/wrong, etc., the warrior discourse provides male service members with a virtual panacea of ways to construct masculine dominance. This leads one to wonder why the warrior discourse exists as it does and to what end it is aimed.

Consider that the rise of the nation state was aided through the use of the warrior discourse (Dudnik and Hagemann 2004; Landes 2004; Tosh 2004). The fact that hegemonic masculinities and the warrior discourse overlap (Tosh 2004) suggests this discourse is useful for those in power. Indeed, dominant masculinities (as part of the warrior discourse) are found in different cultures (Kovitz 2003), exist as key institutional narratives of the military at different times (McCullough 2005; Mosse 1990), and cut across the different branches of service (Hockey 2001;

Regan de Bere 2003), irrespective of whether military personnel hold status as an officer or enlisted (Neiberg 2001). If, as Holstein and Gubrium (2000) suggest, "social life constructs the selves it needs" (40), then the style of masculine construction offered by participation in the military can be viewed as the proverbial carrot that draws the horse (i.e., attracts the individual), and thus the cart (supports state interests).

Modern militaries are institutions that protect state interests,² a fact recognized by the classic Clausewitzian dictum that war is the continuation of policy by other means.³ Modern nation states exist because they are able to harness effectively the energies of its citizens, and it is in this process that identities are perhaps most closely aligned with state interests. In a reciprocal process of power, states employ its citizens in military activities to ward off threats to state interest. Those joining the military become state agents; more importantly for masculine identity construction, they are the embodiment of America's military power. They represent the physical projection of American power around the globe. It is they who will be commanding the troops and ships and tanks. They are the ones who will fire the guns at the enemy and as symbols of American state power, they are the ones who will bear the brunt of the violence directed toward American dominance and risk their lives in the process of defending state policies.

In exchange, they enjoy social and cultural reverence; Americans view their warriors favorably (Langston 2000; Siebold 2001) and culture celebrates them as virtuous (Watson 1999). But perhaps the real benefit, from a gendered perspective, is that these men gain access to an institutionally legitimized, powerful symbol of hegemonic masculinity, i.e. military service (Dudnik and Hagemann 2004). Military service grants them access to dominance in several

² Military coups are an obvious exception. Of course, one could argue that those initiating the coup might view their actions as protecting state interests.

³ Keegan (1993) suggests this translates closer to "war is the continuation 'of political intercourse' (des politischen Verkehrs) 'with the intermixing of other means' (mit Einmischung anderer Mittel)." p. 3

realms; militarily (over enemies), culturally (over non-service members and women), and ideologically (as virtuous protectors of Americans and the American way of life). And while military service will put these men at an increased risk of harm and death, it also provides them with access to some very powerful symbolic resources for constructing masculinity, with culturally tangible rewards based in power and dominance. Men construct hegemonic masculinity by aligning self/identity with the warrior discourse (Tosh 2004). This is how the military serves as an institutional backdrop for the construction of hegemonic masculinities.

No matter the personal reasons for joining, by associating with the American armed forces, men become agents of state domination (Connell 2005; Nagel 2005), legally vested with the right to use force in the domination of others. Violence and aggression are tools used when others refuse to submit, or do not recognize America's claim of dominance, paralleling Connell's (2005, 2000, 1995) theoretical assertion that hegemonic masculinities subordinate and dominate other forms of gender construction through violence and aggression. The military provides men with a resource for "doing" gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987) in a hegemonically masculine way.

Although the construction of masculine identities using the warrior discourse is rooted in theory, we should not forget that there are very real practical consequences for making hegemonic masculine identities in this way. I've already discussed how personal narrative constructions are symbolic resources for self-presentation (Byrne 2003; Frank 1993; Kelly and Dickinson 1997), and represent self 'verbalization,' a technology of self-making (Foucault 1988:48) that provides information about who someone is or hopes to become (Gutman 1988; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997; Markus and Nurius 1986). The narrative excerpts presented here as "data" form the nucleus of a conglomeration of ideas, motivations, desires, and thoughts

about self that motivate these men's construction of masculine identity. Recall that personal narratives (or stories) are useful in self construction, deconstruction, change, and stability (Martin, Gutman, and Hutton 1988). When constructed with regularity, these narratives become a tool for identity salience. In fact, it is in the consistent construction of a personal narrative over time, the repeated "telling" of our self/identity to other people that makes it evident that the identity is a salient one. And as other people hear our narrative self-presentations, they may develop an interactive style based on that identity construction; and here, perhaps, is the genesis of identity commitment.

The practical aspect of the narrative construction of military masculinity is that repeatedly doing so takes men one step closer to military service. Men who continue making identity claims in which their masculinity rests on future military service must join at some point or risk having their identity claims rejected. And if the identity is a valued one, men may be especially motivated to sign up for military service so that others do not reject their identity claim. Another way to state this is that it is not the pursuit of masculinity, per se, that encourages men to join the military, but rather, the pursuit of maintaining a particular construction of masculine identity. And it is the narrative construction of identity, like the one's presented during the interviews for this project, that may eventually lead men onto the battlefield where they may be mentally traumatized, physically wounded, or killed. Of course, not all the men in this study will ship out for military service, but for some, narrative constructions of self/identity may come with severe, and very real, consequences.

Class Issues

Recall that in Chapter 5 I stated that there is little difference in how ROTC and DEP men construct narratives of masculinity. This occurs because the military provides men with the symbolic resources to construct themselves as virtuous, physically able, tough, heterosexual, and

emotionally controlled. Joining the military means, at least from a stereotypical view, that the men are not afraid to take risks, that they can endure mental strain, and that their bodies are physically able to withstand tests of endurance such as they might encounter in training or combat. In this regard, there is little difference in how the men construct masculine identities. This is not to say that the men are similar in all respects. One real difference is class privilege.

Men join the military for many different reasons. Focusing on more theoretical concepts like the warrior discourse and hegemonically masculine identity construction does not negate the fact that men also join for the occupational and educational benefits. And where these reasons are part of men's motivations, the middle and upper classes have a greater variety of occupational, educational, political, and economic resources available to them. Both Delante and Garrison (NROTC) served as senate pages for a year, and both were recommended for the program by family friends with political connections. In Delante's case, personnel friends also recommended him for an appointment to the Naval Academy. Upon graduation, both Delante and Dan (who is also headed to the Naval Academy), will join the alma mater of men like Senators John McCain (R-AZ), James Webb (D-VA) (who was also secretary of the Navy under President Ronald Reagan), John Poindexter (national security advisor under Reagan), Oliver North (Timberg 1995), and others who are in the upper echelons of Naval command. Other ROTC men, like Shawn, have parents who are high-ranking, politically powerful officers in the military. Stiles, Preston, Jaimie, Norman, Scott, Tim, and Dell have parents who are currently military officers, or they come from families in which grandfathers and great-uncles were high ranking military officials. On the whole, this group was well connected, both militarily and politically.

None of the DEP men had parents who were officers. Most have fathers and brothers who were/are enlisted. These men's social networks are somewhat limited in that their personal contacts generally do not include people in positions of power, of if they do, that power is rather limited compared to the ROTC men's networks. For example, it was a friend of Tony's father that signed him up for enlisted duty as a military police officer (MP). His father is currently a sergeant in the Army and was at the recruiting station chatting with a military friend, when he called Tony and told him that if he was thinking about joining he should do it soon. Tony went down and his father, in perhaps what can be seen as generative behavior, coached him through the signing process. In exchange for referring his son to his recruiter friend, Tony's father earned a one thousand dollar bonus. But as I've said, this represents a more powerful social network than most DEP men have.

Another class difference is how the military will enable the men to access careers that are appealing to them. ROTC men will have both symbolic and real power in the military, which gives them greater access to power structures outside the military (jobs, political power, etc.). ROTC cadets, who are predominantly from the middle and upper classes, are young, able-bodied white adults who are college educated and will soon hold college degrees. Their social networks include mid- and high-ranking military officials, university administrators, other university students and college graduates. As they make the transition from student to worker and claim adult manhood, their prospects for finding work that satisfies the economic requirement of dominant masculinities are far greater than DEPs without college degrees. Being able to support oneself, the family, and having access to vehicles and housing are expectations rather than desires. They do not join the military to earn a living wage—they do so because they perceive the military as a viable stepping stone into the future. In the words of NROTC Gus, "It looks

nice on a resume.” I suspect that even without military service, many of the ROTC men could tap into their social networks to find relatively lucrative and stable employment.

Men entering the military through enlisted service are predominantly working class (Segal and Segal 2004). Their social networks tend to be somewhat limited and future prospects for work are largely engendered in low-wage, labor intensive jobs that do not readily offer opportunities for supporting oneself, let alone a family. In some ways, military service can be understood as providing them with expanded social networks by opening up access to educational, economic, and political opportunities that many do not currently enjoy. Recall Richard from Chapter 4 who narratively constructed dedication by discussing his perseverance in unsatisfying, low-wage restaurant jobs. The low-pay, limited job opportunities, and job insecurity that this type of work offers served as his impetus to join the military. By contrast, he perceived the military as a job that “provides stability.” Enlisting means that “I’ll be in one spot and not have to worry about where I’m living or what I’m going to do for money.” For several of the DEP men, joining the military is an attempt to secure a more stable and lucrative economic future. Without the military and its occupational and educational benefits, and lacking the personal networks of the ROTC men, their occupational futures are likely to remain somewhat limited.

Although joining the military can potentially expand DEPs current and future economic opportunities, it still represents a rather limited approach toward accessing the hegemonic masculine power structure. And it may be that military service actually works against their ability to construct dominant masculine identities, for unless they receive a college degree while serving in the military, they will face the same issues that led them to enter military service in the first place—a lack of decent paying, relatively stable jobs—largely due to their lack of

credentials. This is especially true for men joining the combat arms (infantry, artillery, and armor), who will develop some leadership skills (at least, per Army ads), but precious few other skills that will help them in the civilian marketplace (outside of protective services, anyway).

Another benefit of military service for both ROTC and DEP men is the ability to construct identities in line with dominant masculinities. Their impending military service gives them somewhat greater access to both the warrior discourse and the institutional narratives of the military. This allows them to claim identities/selves that are virtuous, emotionally controlled, and physically able. Such moral, intellectual, emotional, and physical dominance are symbolic of dominant masculinities. But even here, there is a difference between ROTC and DEP men. For the ROTC cadets, who as a group already have a great deal of class privilege, the military can be said to represent an *identity option, a consciously (or semi-consciously) chosen route that will enable them to further construct socially privileged masculine identities*. Their decision to join the military represents one of many potential options they have. As a group, ROTC men do not need to join the military to access the resources to construct dominant masculine identities because they already have access to other routes that would fulfill the masculine identity prerequisites. So why do they join? What could be more deserving of a greater share of the patriarchal dividends than men who are educated, able-bodied veterans of the military who will likely come to have very real political and economic power in the future? This greatly oversimplifies the cadets' motivations for joining, which are a mix of patriotism and altruism (a desire to serve) with an eye toward future economic opportunities. But it remains that these men will be in perhaps the best positions of masculine dominance as they move into the future.

For working-class men who enlist, joining the military does not require vast economic resources, long years of professional training, or well-connected social networks. Able-

bodiedness and a personal desire to join are all the human capital necessary to access the symbolic material needed for a dominant masculine identity. But because these men are joining to open up greater prospects for the future, military service becomes, in effect, an economic opportunity that comes with *identity benefits, or identity construction privileges conferred by association with an activity*. While military service provides masculine identity benefits, those benefits are something of a by-product rather than an active goal for why men join. Unlike ROTC cadets who have several options for constructing hegemonically masculine identities, as a group, DEP men are rather limited; they have their bodies, but few other symbolic or material resources for doing so. The problem for DEP men is that power and dominance through military service will remain largely symbolic. These men act as conduits of military power (i.e., they will be the ones using violence ‘on the ground,’ so to speak) while they serve, but this power belongs to the military and largely disappears when they leave the service. It’s as if the military allows them to borrow access to hegemonic masculinities for a time, but once they separate from the service, they have to give most of it back. They lose much of their ability to draw on the symbolic power of the military once they return to civilian life. This holds especially true for those men who return to low-wage, low-skill jobs, in which the loss of the hegemonic masculine symbolism of the military may be quite stark.

The difference between identity benefits and identity options represents an interesting avenue for future research. If true, it would suggest that identity construction is something of a class privilege, in which men of dominant economic classes join the military voluntarily for status, while men of the working-classes join somewhat involuntarily because of their economic situation. Constructing dominant masculinities through the military becomes just one more class

privilege in which middle- and upper-class men have a degree of autonomy not available to working-class men

In some ways, however, military service levels the class playing field (Lahelma 2005). Both ROTC and DEP men join for expanded career and educational opportunities, although ROTC men clearly have class advantages when it comes to both of these areas. If we look at the issue of class from an education standpoint, of the 25 ROTC men in this study, 20 were on full or partial ROTC scholarships to help pay for college.⁴ Most of these men came to the university specifically because the ROTC program there offered them the scholarship. Among DEP men, two hold college degrees. They enlisted in the military to help pay back college loans. Another six DEPs have at least one or more years of college education. All eighteen of the DEP men reported that joining the military was partly about gaining access to money for college. In this regard they are not at all different from the ROTC men on scholarship. That said, it is perhaps an inescapable truth that the life trajectories of these two groups of men remain divided largely along class lines, and for the reasons mentioned above.

Another area of similarity deals with the role of violence in the construction of masculinity. While working class masculinity has often been accused of relying more on violence than middle or upper class masculinities, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, I found that violence/aggression/toughness/physical ability were very much a part of both groups' constructions of self. Messner (1992) argues that the practice of violence may be more prevalent in working class men's lives:

Yet violence among men may still have important ideological psychological meaning for men from privileged backgrounds. There is a curious preoccupation among middle-class males with movie characters who are "working-class tough guys," with athletes who are fearsome "hitters" and who heroically "play hurt." These violent "tough guys" of the

⁴ All the men in ROTC have some college educations because of the nature of ROTC.

culture industry--the Rambos, the Ronnie Lotts⁵--are at once the heroes who "prove" that "we men" are superior to women and the "other" against whom privileged men define themselves as "modern" (168-169.)

To this list of men, we might add Pat Tillman. I will take Messner's statement one step further when it comes to military service. Both groups of men (ROTC and DEP) recognize and construct themselves as assertive and aggressive men who can withstand the physical and emotional strains associated with the use and experience of violence. In short, the role that violence plays in these men's constructions of masculinity was not class-specific.

Perhaps this is because ROTC and DEP men join the armed forces because they are more likely to use violence than those who do not. The military provides them with a legitimate outlet for using violence. But like education, while the motivations for joining may be similar, there are still some differences in ROTC and DEP men's experiences. Officers in the armed forces are expected to fight alongside their men, but they are first and foremost expected to lead and direct the actions of men in their units. For those in the upper echelons of the officer corps, the actual utilization of violence is somewhat rare (Keegan 1976). Some of the most revered officers in American history, such as Robert E. Lee and Dwight Eisenhower, are culturally depicted as relatively passive, non-violent figures. Even so, it is as managers of mass violence that they derive their fame. ROTC men, as officers, will become managers of other men's violence. Enlisted men, depending on their military occupational specialty (MOS), will be the purveyors of violence. The combat arms, infantry, artillery, and armor, will place enlisted men in the position of using and experiencing violence. It remains a fact that in wars throughout human history, it has been enlisted men who have felt the sharpest edge of the sword; they are wounded and killed in greater numbers than officers, no matter what their MOS happens to be. This makes sense

⁵ Ronnie Lott was a cornerback for the San Francisco 49ers renowned for his hard-hitting tackles.

given that enlisted personnel make up 85 percent of the American armed forces (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007), and so more of them are placed in harms way. Of course, this lies in the men's future. For now, violence, as a symbolic tool for the construction of masculinity, serves both groups equally well.

Comparative Practice

In Chapter 6, I used the sensitizing concept *comparative practice* to refer to how individuals compared the self to others in an effort to construct a dominant masculinity, and in doing so, shed some light on the process of internal hegemony, or the hierarchal structuring of masculinities. Men did this by comparing themselves to non-military civilians, women in the military, men in other services, men in other branches, and men who are officers or enlisted. Comparative practice enables the men to create a hierarchal ordering of masculinities in which they are situated as more physically able, emotionally controlled, virtuous, and dedicated than those in their comparison group; in short, their constructions of military masculinity are more in line with the warrior discourse. By constructing narrative hierarchies in which their identity constructions were positioned at the top, the men symbolically recreate the gender order by setting up the same structures (i.e., gender hierarchies) that are a source for men's unequal share of societal power. It's not too much of a stretch to see how comparative practice can play a role in the self-justifications people develop for why they have greater access to resources like power and income. Situating oneself as more dedicated/intelligent/physical/stoic than others means that one is a better soldier/sailor/marine/airman; or simply, one is a better fit for the institution, and thus, more deserving of institutional rewards.

I suggest that comparative practice might also be a useful way to explore the role people play as gatekeepers to institutional resources. How do officers construct hierarchies of value among subordinates (lower ranking officers and enlisted men)? What types of abilities are

valued and how are they situated in comparison to others? Specific to the men in this study, how do college-educated, middle-class, white men (soon to be officers, perhaps with combat experience) use comparative practice to rank-order other people? Some of these men will be in real positions of power, and perhaps, with enough years in the military and the right political connections, they will be involved in decisions regarding the use of military force. The ranking of countries, political entities, or groups of people as bad/good/better/best will influence their choice of whether or not to use military violence.

Before I speculate too much on the comparative practices of men who may or may not be in such positions of power, I return to what lies in the ROTC cadets' immediate future. Some of them will be placed in charge of other service members and will be responsible for assigning duties to subordinates, or determining promotions.⁶ In this capacity, they will act as gatekeepers to the power structures of the military. Promotions confer greater autonomy and increased access to resources such as income, increased retirement pensions, and access to better housing. For example, the Army gives soldiers a monthly Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) to help subsidize off-base quarters that increases by pay-grade. Those who are E-1 to E-4 (rank of private to specialist) receive less than E-5s (sergeant), who receives less than E-6s (staff sergeants) and so on. The same is true of officer pay grades/ranks. The men's perceptions of others' abilities are part of the subtle social psychological processes that help them make decisions about the relative value of other people's contributions to the institution. This, in turn, motivates their likeliness to reward some people (with promotions) and not others. Of course, promotions are given on the basis of "objective" measure like combat duty and performance

⁶ All of the ROTC men will start at the rank of O-1, 2nd Lieutenant for the Army, Marines, and Air Force, Ensign for the Navy. It will be years and several promotions before they will be determining promotions. As junior officers, they have the right to recommend promotion for the enlisted men serving under them, but this is approved by the commanding officer of the unit (or CO).

evaluations (PT, job evaluations, etc.), but it is not difficult to imagine a situation in which two equally qualified candidates are recommended for promotion and there is only one slot available.

What role might comparative practice play in who receives the promotion?

As for the DEPs, many of them will serve under men similar to the ROTC cadets in this study. Theirs will likely be a story of complicit masculinities, in which they derive some patriarchal benefit for constructing masculinities that are in line with the dominant men of the military institution. Like the ROTC men, they too may find it easier to justify receiving a greater share of the resources because they also placed themselves at the top of the gender hierarchy. And like ROTC cadets, some of the DEP men will be in real positions of power. Deciding who to recommend for promotion is one function a sergeant might perform. Deciding whether or not to use violent force might be another. If friendly enemy civilians are rank-ordered at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy, perhaps using violence against them becomes easier. And when these men separate from the service, they will be in a position to construct hierarchies of dominance over non-military men and women.

Men, Women, and the Military

Comparative practice in which women were situated below men in their masculine hierarchies because of their perceived differences in physical strength has consequences. The men used these perceived strength differences to justify why women, as a group, are still barred from direct combat roles, even when there is evidence that they are capable of being excellent soldiers.⁷ Recognizing the process involved in how men, who control the power centers in the

⁷ The African Dahomey are among some of the world's fiercest warriors, and roughly one-third of their military force was female (Kovitz 2003). Another example comes from Russia; although women were not deployed in large numbers, they are famed for their fighting skills during WWII (Goldstein 2001).

military, use women to construct masculinity, might lead to changes in policies regarding women's role in the military.

Moving beyond comparative practice, I imagine that the continued integration of women into the military will eventually pay dividends by changing men's minds regarding their status in the military. Only in the 1990s did we finally see women on the battlefield in combat support roles other than medical care. The Iraq war has given women further visibility, for better or for worse. While women are becoming common place in combat zones, media-frenzied coverage of cases like Jessica Lynch do nothing to help women's cause. Recall that she was an Army soldier rescued by a group of Special Forces men in a fire-fight that was captured on film and broadcast around the world. This spectacular rescue had all the earmarks of a classic "damsel in distress" story; the evil enemy, the helpless woman, the gallant male rescuers, the happy homecoming. Whatever the reality of her capture and recovery, the Lynch story simply reinforces what some of the men in this study told me; women in the military jeopardize the mission because they, more so than men, need extra protection. Recall that Dusty felt that while "you always look out for the other guys," in combat situations, if they get hurt, "there is no sympathy." In other words, there are no spectacular rescue missions in store for male service members in the event they are captured. While he did not address the Lynch case directly, I assume that, given his sentiment, he might say that using military resources to rescue a prisoner of war in a dangerous mission like this is evidence that men are distracted by the need to protect women on the battlefield.

As men are exposed to greater numbers of women, perhaps they will come to accept women as soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen, without the identifying adjective of "female" (i.e., female soldier, female sailor, etc.). As more and more women find their way onto the

battlefield, especially in wars like the one in Iraq in which there is no frontline, women will increasingly engage in combat (The irony is that they will be doing the same jobs as men, but will not receive the institutional recognition for doing so. After all, shooting and being shot at by the enemy is combat, no matter if women are officially in support roles or not). Until the official policy of the armed forces changes, people like Jessica Lynch will be forced to remind the men they serve with that they, too, are soldiers. Perhaps this is what she had in mind when she shared her experiences in a memoir entitled *I am a soldier, too: The Jessica Lynch story*. One hopes that a future exists in which it is no longer necessary for women, like Jessica Lynch, to point out the obvious. They are soldiers. As the percentage increases (women currently comprise roughly 15% of the Armed Forces) and men come into more regular contact with women, both on and off the battlefield, I suspect men's attitudes toward women's military capabilities will begin to change, both for those in the military, and men in society at large. For the present, however, women are not allowed in combat. The perceived physical differences that justify their ban from combat stems from official military policies that set physical standards lower for women than for men. And until that changes, men have easy access to a group whom they can use in their comparative practices of constructing hegemonic masculinity. One of the consequences is that even when women enter the military, they are symbolically subordinated to men, whether or not their military rank holds institutionally sanctioned power.

Study Limitations

Certainly, hearing from the men who are joining the military provides some insight into how the military is used to construct hegemonic masculinity. One of the most glaring issues here is whether these men will actually ship out for the military when the time comes. Recall that DEPs go through a two stage enlistment process (Chapter 2); an initial agreement to ship out on a specified date at the Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS), and a second, legally

binding contract when they arrive for duty at their basic training station. Enlistees are not legally obligated to military service until that second swearing-in ceremony. Major Camo (the commanding officer (CO) of the recruitment battalion) told me that the attrition rate for her command is somewhere between five and ten percent. National estimates put this figure as high as 20 percent (Knowles et al. 2002), but curiously, I was not able to access many published sources on this subject.

Similarly, ROTC cadets are not obligated to military service by virtue of their participation in the ROTC program until the second year. At that time, the ROTC offers scholarship money and stipends in exchange for signing a contract that confirms the cadet's intent to serve in the military. If the cadet breaks the agreement by deciding not to take an officer's commission, he (or she) is legally obligated to pay back the scholarship/stipend monies, but no further service is required.⁸ I have no official data on national attrition rates, partly because rates may be unknown or are unreported (at least in publicly accessible documents). Major Chin and Captain Barco, CO's of the Army and Naval ROTC units, said that attrition rates in their units varied each year, but overall, were relatively low; no percentages were given. When pressed, the COs were evasive, repeating, "it depends." During my discussions with ROTC cadets, a few of the college seniors, in discussing how difficult the physical and mental requirements were, suggested that roughly half of the people they started the program with as freshmen were not there at the end. I can only offer my best guess that between ten and 50 percent of individuals who start the ROTC program eventually withdraw.

⁸ The exception is for men like Andrew, Jackson, and Maffett, who, because of their enlistment status prior to joining the ROTC, would be compelled to return to active duty and serve out the remainder of their contracts as enlisted men. If they refused, they would be considered Away Without Leave (AWOL) and subject to fines and/or imprisonment.

Although knowing DEP and ROTC attrition rates would be ideal, the important point is that some of these men may not ship out for service when the time comes. Eleven of 25 ROTC cadets in this study were college freshman. Two of these men, Dan and Delante, had been accepted to the Naval Academy and were scheduled to leave after they completed their freshman year. One of the remaining nine, Mark, had his application in for the following year (he was unaware of its status at the time of the interview). Given the difficulty of this program, these three men might “wash out” and not earn commissions. The other eight freshman are under no obligation and may drop from the ROTC program as they progress through college or, for some, drop out of college all together. Major Camo, CO of the DEPs, shared her concern that some of the DEP men might be “on the fence” as to whether they will ship. One was Joel, whose recruiter called to cancel his appointment out of a concern that he was using the interview to get out of DEP PT. Joel admitted that he had signed up once before, but did not ship because he felt obligated to stay home and help his mother alleviate her financial difficulties.⁹ Major Camo and his recruiter were concerned that he might not ship again. Another DEP of some concern was Jose, who was in a similar situation.

My intent with this research was not to investigate whether the men eventually ended up on active duty, but how they used the military as a backdrop to construct hegemonic masculine identities. Of course, one could certainly argue that knowing whether they shipped out is important in understanding how salient military masculinity is for these men’s identity constructions. But this is a topic somewhat separate from the process of masculine identity construction using the military. Men need not be on active duty to draw on the symbolic resources of the military.

⁹ This is consistent with research by Kearl and Nelson 1992 on reasons why DEPs decide to break their contract.

Whether the men actually stay in the military or drift away into other civilian institutional settings, they now have experience using the warrior discourse to construct dominant masculinities.¹⁰ No matter the end result of using this discourse (i.e., shipping out when the time comes), men's constructions of self-as-militarily masculine also provides some experiential knowledge in working with the distinctive institutional narratives of the American military. In looking at how the military is used as a backdrop for the construction of masculinities, my sample and methodological approach are adequate.

Although issues of identity salience or commitment are necessary to understand more fully the process of identity construction, this is something that can be addressed in future studies. Identity salience is the idea that some identities are constructed more frequently during interaction than others (Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker and Serpe 1994) because these identities are more important to a person's self-concept (Burke 2004a). Identity commitment refers to the relationships individuals develop around a particular identity that leads others to expect that identity to be expressed during interaction (Burke and Reitzes 1991) The result is that identity commitment makes it difficult to construct other-than-expected identities (Stryker 1980). Because I interviewed men at one time point, I can say little about the salience of their military identity. Regarding their identity commitment, I can say nothing because I did not interview those with whom they regularly interact. It may simply be that men who are being paid to take part in a study to talk about why they are joining the military construct a contextually specific identity that suits the needs of the interview, earns them a few dollars in the process, but has little bearing on their everyday lived realities of identity construction. Exploring

¹⁰ This is true for both ROTC and DEP men. Recall from chapter two that both groups are obligated to weekly training in which PT and close order drill are routine training exercises. Such training keeps them embedded in military culture.

identity salience and commitment without interviewing men at several different time points and observing them in interactions with others in contexts outside ROTC and DEP training presents some methodological challenges.¹¹ Ideally, researchers would use an ethnographic methodology that would include several interviews with the men and the people with whom they routinely (and intermittently) interact. With this in mind, I explore some of the possibilities for future identity research below.

Another limitation of this study is the almost complete absence of racial and ethnic minorities; DEP Marshall is the only African American and NRTOC Maffett (Cuban) and DEP Oscar (Mexican and Ecuadorian) are the only Hispanics in this study. Roughly one third of active-duty enlisted personnel are minorities (Aguirre and Johnson 2005; Ensign 2004), with Blacks accounting for about 20 percent (CBS 2006), and Hispanics roughly 10 percent (Segal and Segal 2004). Blacks also comprise just nine percent and Hispanics six percent of the officer corps in the military. As a group, blacks make up about 13 percent of the American population, so they are overrepresented in the military, whereas Hispanics comprise roughly 15 percent of the population, making them underrepresented as well (Segal and Segal 2004). Given that many racial and ethnic minorities seek economic and educational opportunities through military service (Booth and Segal 2005), their lack of representation in this sample is something to be noted. Unfortunately, the areas in which the recruiting stations are located do not typically do well in attracting minority recruits (personal communication with Major Camo, December 2, 2006). Of the potential participants available on the list provided by Major Camo, only nine (of 72) were African American; I have no data on how many were Hispanic. Of the African

¹¹ It may be possible to work backwards by asking men questions about how military involvement has affected their lives, and encouraging them to think about extra-military contexts in which a military masculine identity was constructed.

Americans (I attempted to contact all of them), four did not return my phone call, one person hung up on me as I tried to introduce myself,¹² three refused to be interviewed, and only one agreed to participate in the study when contacted.

With regard to ROTC cadets, no African American cadets and only one Hispanic volunteered to participate. I have no official data from the ROTC units regarding minority enrollment, however, in my informal observations during participant recruiting, I did not see more than six African Americans present (and then only in AROTC formations). Determining Hispanic origin based on phenotype is somewhat more difficult, so I offer no estimates as to how many ROTC cadets are Latino. Future research should address this obvious limitation by recruiting a more diverse body of participants.

Finally, my sample came from three places; the Navy and Army ROTC, and the Army Delayed Entry Program. No Air Force enlisted personnel are represented, and only one NROTC cadet (Dusty) had contracted with the Marines.¹³ Recruitment from these service-branches is important to understand more fully how men construct masculinity using the military.

Directions for Future Research

There are several potential areas/issues for future research that potentially can build on the foundation provided by my dissertation research. From a methodological (and substantive) standpoint, interviewing pre-active duty service members at different time points over the course of a few months, or even years, would undoubtedly shed light on the process of identity construction and the military. The inclusion of more minorities who are pre-active duty service members would provide an interesting point of comparison for exploring how the warrior

¹² I suspect this may be the result of negative feelings toward telemarketers.

¹³ Marines are a sub-branch of the Navy

discourse in used in constructing masculinity. Given the bias in interviewing men from the Army and Navy, including men from other service branches, such as the Marines and Air Force, or even the reserves affords the opportunity to explore further how men use the warrior discourse to construct masculinity. As women become increasingly involved in the armed forces, exploring how the military is used in their identity construction represents a worthwhile area of research.

From a theoretical standpoint, the warrior discourse offers new ways to explore the use of men's bodies, from sports, to work, to violence. I extend the discussion of violence to organizational violence outside the military and how the warrior discourse might provide ideological cover for corporate practices that harm the environment. My research generates another theoretical idea, comparative practice, and I explore how this may be further used to highlight the construction of hierarchies of power. In addition to the methodological, substantive, and theoretical issues, I discuss the policy implications of this research and some of the attending ethical issues that have emerged.

Methodological and Substantive Areas for Future Research

Future research would ideally employ a longitudinal approach to explore the construction of military masculinity. Interviewing men several times as they move from pre-active duty to prior service offers the promise of capturing the changing nature of how discourses are used in identity construction, and how identity construction changes over time. Factors such as experiential knowledge and greater familiarity with institutional narratives are likely to play a role in how identities are constructed. Questions that might fruitfully examine masculine identity construction are as follows: Are there key moments when using the warrior discourse to construct identity change, such as when men engage in DEP or ROTC training? How does basic training or Officer's Basic School (OBS) alter how men use the warrior discourse? What about

men who separate from the service before training is completed? Does deployment change men's use of the warrior discourse, and in what ways? How about combat duty? And how do men who separate from the military use the warrior discourse? These questions focus on transitional events in men's lives (i.e., exiting civilian life, exiting peace, exiting the military), and provide useful markers for thinking about identity transformation over time (pre-service, active service, prior-service).

With regard to the specific features of the men's identity constructions, such as virtue (duty or sacrifice), the use of violence, the value of emotional control, or the role of women in comparative practice, their active duty military experiences are likely to radically alter the relative importance of these symbolic resources for constructing masculine identities. I envision a scenario in which military service, especially during armed conflict (i.e., combat duty), requires them to shed their hegemonically masculine-based idealistic views of violence and emotional control. Histories and personal biographies of military service suggest this may well be the case (Ambrose 1992, 1994, 1998; Foote 1986; Holmes 1985; Hynes 1997; Neill 2000; Wright 2004). Open expressions of fear are no longer viewed as a sign of effeminacy but as the mark of a man comfortable with himself. Men who openly boast about their lack of fear are ridiculed (Foote 1986; Holmes 1985). Violence loses its appeal after men have experienced combat (Ambrose 1998), and in some situations, restraint in using violence becomes a mark of masculinity (Ambrose 1992). Camaraderie is built upon the unmasculine characteristic of intimate and deep concern for others in a homosocial environment. Constructing masculinities seemingly opposed to dominant forms has been called protest masculinities (Walker 2006), and there is evidence that men with combat experience actively construct them.

It may be that such reconfigurations of masculinity during combat are based in sound practice; emotional control (a lack of fear) and aggressiveness can, simply put, result in a premature death. This is perhaps the irony of military service; recruiters actively seek men who construct masculinities in line with dominant forms, but the experience of military service, especially in combat, requires a somewhat different approach to constructing masculinity. Tracking the transformation of military masculinity such that it moves from what the men in this study have constructed (hegemonic masculinity in personal narratives) to those resembling the protest masculinities listed above requires more than a single interview.

Additionally, interviewing men at several different time points may shed further light on issues related to identity salience and identity commitment. What factors play a role in keeping military masculinity salient in men's identity presentations? Are there key events, like those listed above that are factors in identity salience? An obvious question deals with the role of the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001. Another is what influence does the ongoing war in Iraq have on the salience of a military masculine identity? Future research could also explore men's thoughts on the roles played by key people, such as grandfathers, fathers, uncles, and brothers who have been in the military. Does a family tradition of military service play a role in the salience of a military identity, and if so, to what degree? With regard to identity commitment, we might ask the same questions. With regard to the family, how do family members play a role in a pre-active duty service member's commitment to military masculinity? If male family members have been in the military, to what degree is there the expectation that men will construct a military masculinity? What events make commitment more or less likely? War, because of the potential risks of deployment to combat zones, might make a military masculinity less attractive, and less salient, leading men to move away from it in interactions

with others. Do expectations that men will serve in the military lead them into the armed forces? Said another way, what is the role of identity commitment in men's decision to join? Once they've made the decision to join, what is the role of commitment in keeping them from renegeing on their enlistment/ROTC contract?

Some of these questions might also be answered by interviewing key people in men's lives, such as their friends and family. Asking questions like "When did you become aware that the ROTC/DEP member was interested in the military?" or "How do you feel about his impending military service?" can help us to understand better the role of important others in identity commitment. In addition, expanding the research to include key people provides some means of augmenting men's narratives. I imagine a father confirming a son's story about sports participation or recalling the first time a son spoke of joining the military.¹⁴

Ethnographic methods would provide a way to observe identity construction over time. By observing pre-service members in different contexts, such as school, work, or in leisure activities, researchers can explore how and when the military identity is employed. For instance, I image that some men might draw on the warrior discourse to construct masculinity when in the presence of single women. If they successfully attract their interest, does this make it more likely that the men will construct a military masculinity in the future? When DEPs or ROTC cadets share with others their plan to join the military, how do the reactions of other people influence their likelihood to share this information with others in the future? And if the men are sharing it, are they also more likely to present an identity construction in which the military is

¹⁴ I'm not suggesting that including other people would make the men's narrative constructions more valid; whether the stories of past experiences are recollected by the men or their family/friends, it is still a narrative constructed for the interview, subject to interpretation, and clouded by months or years of other experiences. It would, however, add richness and dimension to the men's stories.

clearly present? What situations are more or less likely to elicit presentations of military masculinities? And does the regular presentation of military identity influence whether the men will eventually ship out?

With regard to women, we might ask what situations are likely to elicit presentations of military identity. How are women similar or different to men in how they construct their military identity? Are they more or less likely to construct a military identity in other contexts, such as work, school, or in leisure activities? When these women are single, how do they negotiate interactions with men whom they are trying to attract? How do they disclose their military identities to others? Unfortunately, interviews alone are inadequate for answering these important questions.

Another way to expand the findings of this research is to include racial and ethnic minorities. Given the different ancestral histories that Hispanics and Blacks have from many of their white counterparts, one interesting line of questioning could explore the different discourses that might shape their understanding of the warrior discourse. First generation Mexican-Americans who are aware of Mexican-American relations might view the warrior discourse very differently than Caucasians. Blacks have fought in every major war in the United States (Mullen 1999), even when they did not share the same personal freedoms of their white counterparts. Does this play a factor in their understanding and use of the warrior discourse? Data suggest that Hispanics are more likely to join the Marines than any other branch, and no matter what branch they join, they tend to select combat arms, whereas African Americans are more likely to choose the Army and support MOS's (Segal and Segal 2004). An obvious area of exploration is why Hispanics are more likely to serve in combat arms and Blacks in positions of support. For Hispanics, if it "machismo" that leads them to join combat arms, what are the processes involved

in constructing that *machismo*? What discourses do Hispanic men draw from? For both Blacks and Hispanics, how does their understanding of the warrior discourse influence their choice of branch and MOS? Do they construct masculinity differently from each other, and from whites? And what of internal hegemony? How do Blacks and Hispanics use comparative practice to construct hierarchies of hegemonic masculinity? Other questions regarding the role of family and friends in encouraging or discouraging military service focus critical attention on the process of identity construction as it exists at the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, and culture.

Future research could also include men from all of the different service-branches. Several men in this study perceived the Marines as hypermasculine “special forces wanna be dudes” (Harry, DEP), whereas Air Force personnel were considered too mellow.¹⁵ Men in the Marines and Air Force would likely disagree. A colleague of mine who was in the Air Force suggested that Air Force personnel viewed themselves as more intelligent than the men in other branches because they were smart enough to seek out a job in the military that was relatively low risk. A childhood friend who enlisted in the Marines chided my decision to join the Army by saying that the Marines *were* the military, and the Army existed to support them (and the Navy to transport them). These anecdotal examples smack of dominance not unlike that of the internal hegemony constructed by Army and Navy personnel. I suspect widening the sample to include men from other service-branches would yield interesting theoretical and substantive differences in how men use the military (and other military personnel) to construct hegemonic masculinity.

I also wonder if men from different branches have a different understanding of the warrior discourse? The Army is the largest branch of the military and certainly provides the most by

¹⁵ There may be some truth to this, as the Marines are typically employed as infantry and have the reputation of being the “first to fight.” By contrast, the Air Force has the fewest number of combat positions available for enlisted personnel (Segal and Segal 2004).

way of combat support. The Marines are the smallest branch and its personnel are more likely to be directly involved in combat. Does this influence how the men in these branches view the warrior discourse? Are Marines more likely to focus on the judicial use of violence while Army soldiers focus on duty and service to the country? And if the service branches view the warrior discourse in a similar way, do the men in these branches draw from it differently to construct personal identity?

While I did not explore it here, interviewing men who are joining the Army National Guard and Army Reserves, Naval and Marine Reserves, and Air Force Reserves would certainly make an interesting comparison group for men joining the active duty military. The warrior discourse is based in the Republican ideal of the citizen soldier (Bickford 2003; Landes 2004; McGregor 2003; Smith-Rosenberg 2004), so I imagine reservists and guardsmen might draw from this discourse differently than pre-active duty personnel. Because they remain rooted in the civilian community after training is completed, they will be the embodiment of the citizen soldier. Will this affect how they draw on the warrior narrative to construct identities? And because they will remain tied to their pre-service communities, future research might explore the degree to which their military identity filters into civilian identities. What are the mechanisms that make this more or less likely? Does social class play a role here? This is an interesting proposition, especially if working-class men have few prospects for constructing hegemonic masculinity outside of the use of their bodies, being a reservist might provide an additional route. Since the military uniform is the most visible sign of military participation, are working-class men more likely than their middle-class counterparts to wear the uniform openly and visibly in their communities? Finally, because they are on the border of both identities, future research might explore how reservists use active duty men and women and civilians to construct

masculine hierarchies. Do they construct masculinity in the same manner as pre-active duty service members? Exploring these questions from the intersection of race/ethnicity also provides another way to look at how military masculinity is constructed.

Another intriguing line of inquiry might be whether reservists have different goals in mind when thinking about military service? Since they have access to civilian jobs, what role do economic and educational incentives play in enticing them to join? And when they join, why have they chosen reserves and not active-duty positions? I imagine that some men join reserves because it represents a means to “try out” the military without fully committing to it, while others join because of the additional monthly income it offers. Educational benefits likely play a role for others, and for some, all of these factors are motivations to join. Exploring the nuances between pre-active duty and pre-reserve duty military personnel offers interesting ways to explore hegemonic masculinity construction among men who are in the military, but situated differently in relation to that institution.

Increased opportunities for women to serve alongside men is already in the making, and I anticipate the growing need to recruit women, largely due to personnel shortages that are the result of an unpopular war in Iraq and an expanding war on terror. To this end, researchers might also explore differences in why men and women choose military service. If men join so they can access the symbolic resources needed to construct hegemonic masculine identities, then why do women join? Is there a similar gender resource available for them? Do women draw on the same imagery when they think about themselves as service members (i.e., honest, dedicated, self-sacrificing, physically fit, and tough)? Is there a uniquely female warrior discourse that differs from the warrior discourse discussed here? Following work by Herbert (1998), does military service work against women’s gender constructions? How so? What techniques do

women use to avoid being labeled homosexual? How do pre-service women deal with telling others they have joined the military? Is the process of comparative practice the same for women as it is for men? Research can also look at how pre-active duty women use comparative practice for identity construction. Is this similar to how men construct theirs? Other questions might explore how civilians and other service personnel are used in women's narratives to construct hierarchies of dominance. Other variations of this line of inquiry might include women of color or women who openly identify as lesbian (although I suspect pre-active duty lesbian women might be a difficult group to locate).

I imagine greater integration of women into the military and men's increased exposure to their capabilities will have profound effects, not just on men's perceptions of women, but for society. Including both men and women in future research on the military will help researchers to track a process that I suspect will be similar to the smoothing of class distinctions among the British during World War I. Because of the need for bodies during the Great War, people of all classes were drafted into the military. The vastness of the human mobilization made it necessary for men of different classes to work side by side toward a common goal.¹⁶ Historians have suggested that it was the integration of men of different classes in the military that opened the way for a dismantling of traditional class structures that limited class mobility (Keegan 1993). In an example from American history, the forced integration of blacks into the Army may have had similar effects on race relations (Moskos and Butler 1996). This is not to say that racial prejudice and discrimination disappeared, but as increasing numbers of whites in the military were exposed to Blacks who demonstrated the same martial skills, integration of Blacks in civilian institutions became thinkable (Mullen 1999). Greater numbers of women in the military

¹⁶ Of course, officers were still drawn largely from the upper classes and the enlisted infantryman from the lower.

will likely play a role in the leveling of the gender inequality, and including men and women in future research offers the opportunity to explore changes in how men and women think about gender, the military, and identity construction.

Theoretical Approaches for Future Research

In addition to these important methodological contributions, I believe the theoretical concepts of the warrior discourse and comparative practice offer new ways to look at old issues. A potential topic for future research using the warrior discourse is men's willingness to destroy their bodies for the sake of sport. The idea of sacrifice, as an important part of the warrior discourse, might help explain why men feel compelled to "take one for the team," by playing hurt. Messner (1992, 2005) rightfully situates this as men constructing masculinity, and suggests that American culture teaches men to play through pain and to "treat their bodies as instruments to be used--and used up--to get a job done," (2005:316). Rather than this simply being a route for men to demonstrate their physical and mental toughness, and thus, their masculinity (Swain 2003), physical sacrifice takes on added meaning when connected to the warrior discourse. Playing hurt, and destroying the body in the process, casts men as a heroic, if tragic, figures who sacrifice their well-being for the sake of the team. The moral overtures enable men to align their construction of self with the warrior discourse, transcending their ability to construct a masculinity based in physical ability alone. The ramifications for identity is that while men regret the injury and struggle to continue constructing a masculine identity based on physical ability (Smith and Sparkes 2004, 2005; Sparkes and Smith 2002), the warrior discourse offers them another route; that of the selfless sacrificer. This moves masculinity away from the body and casts it as virtuous masculinity, a key theme of the warrior discourse.

Along the lines of sacrifice, the warrior discourse is a unique way of looking at men's labor practices. For instance, it has been suggested that men who work abnormally long hours

do so because it is a means of constructing a hypermasculinity based in work (Cooper 2000). Like sports, I envision this as more than simply a route to demonstrate masculinity. We might situate labor-based constructions of masculinity within the warrior discourse and ask questions that highlight how men draw on the discourse (sacrifice, duty, dedication) to explore their understanding of the meaning of their labor. We are still dealing with questions of masculine identity construction, but through the warrior discourse, we can better illustrate how men's identity construction is related to cultural discourses outside of gender; or rather, how those discourses are intertwined with gender.

The warrior discourse also provides another tool for understanding male violence as something beyond the individual. Although researchers recognize that violence is structural, i.e., that it is a common feature of social life and has been historically used by various social institutions to enforce rules and norms (Hearn 2003), it is generally discussed as an activity used for the sake of constructing masculinity (Hagedorn 1998; Messerschmidt 2005, 2001; Toch 1998; Whitehead 2005). To be sure, violence remains an important vehicle for constructing masculinity, as it was for the men in this study. However, I suggest that it is also tied to a wider discourse of morality, integrity, and duty. For example, violence has been used in the defense of men's sense of honor (Anderson 1976; Bourgios 1995; Majors and Billson 1992), that ideologically constructed personal "territory" surrounding individual reputation (Bowman 2006). Through the lens of the warrior discourse, men might be seen as being obligated to protect themselves against attacks to their personal honor. Violence, if used, is justified because the men enter a struggle of good versus evil, in which it becomes immoral not to use violence to defeat threats to personal liberty. Of course, this may be quite a stretch because violence is not used by all men, and certainly not in all instances in which men's sense of personal honor is insulted.

Even so, the warrior discourse can help us to think about how the issue of male violence is something more than a tool for constructing masculinity because it is tied to cultural discourses that go beyond the individual.

Future research might include explorations of how the warrior discourse plays a role in male-on-male violence in primary and/or secondary schools or how it helps shape the use of violence in prison or between rival gangs. We might ask how men understand the use of violence as being justified. In a similar way, we can explore violence that men feel is unjustified. Does the warrior discourse play a role in shaping perceptions of justice? How and why? Does the warrior discourse shape how individuals are situated as good/evil in a way that makes using violence a moral imperative? We can also see the use of comparative practice here, because if people are situated as good or evil, we might ask how men construct hierarchies that position them in this way. Beyond individual violence, how do state agents (legislators, bureaucrats) currently use the warrior narrative to motivate a population to mass violence via warfare? Transcripts of the president and vice president's speeches prior to the invasion of Iraq provide a fertile source for exploring how the warrior discourse is used to justify the war. Beyond warfare, how do legislators use the warrior discourse to shape the meaning of America? Do they make distinctions between different segments of the American population, such as white/black, natural (or naturalized citizen) versus illegal immigrant?

More subtle forms of violence might also be explored, such as how the warrior discourse is used to justify economic transactions that harm citizens' health. Oil and natural gas drilling, the industrial use of fossil fuels, and use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides provide Americans with cheap energy, manufactured goods, and food. However, these practices are harmful to humans. Future research can look at whether the warrior discourse and the idea of sacrifice for

the greater common good helps neutralize corporate culpability for polluting the environment. It is recognized that masculine discourses shape organizational practices (Collinson and Hearn 2005); we might also ask the same of the warrior discourse.

One of the important theoretical contributions of my research is the concept of comparative practice and how it is used to construct hierarchies of masculine dominance. Comparative practice, as a narrative tool, provides insight into the process of the hierarchical ranking of individuals, groups, and/or nations. Hierarchical rankings have very real, tangible consequences for individuals, groups, and/or nations. To this end, comparative practice can sharpen understanding of the social psychological influences involved in the allocation of resources (whether these resources are wealth, power, or time). We might think about the role that comparative practice plays in constructing hierarchies of race, gender, age, religious, and sexual orientation. Who is more likely to construct hierarchies of dominance and why? What conditions make the use of comparative practice more or less likely? And like the warrior discourse, we can explore how comparative practice affects the way agents of the state construct hierarchies based on bad/good/better/best. There is value in further developing this concept because it moves beyond simple in-group/out-group dichotomies. For example, an area that might be explored is how gay men construct hierarchies of dominance, in which some gay masculinities are positioned above others. With regard to race, comparative practice might be an interesting way to explore instances of black-on-black discrimination, in which African Americans discriminate against other African Americans. Because comparative practice is about constructing hierarchies of dominance/subordination, it becomes a useful means of exploring power dynamics at the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age, among others.

Policy Implications

This work is mainly a theoretical exploration of how the military is used to construct hegemonic masculinity, however, it has important policy implications which are intricately linked with ethical issues. Understanding what motivates men to join the military is certainly a useful tool for recruiters who wish to entice young men to sign up. In a study based on telephone survey data from the 2001 (N=2000, youth ages 15-21), 2003 (N=3000, youth ages 16-21), and 2004 (N=2990, youth ages 16-21) Youth Polls sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense exploring pre-service members' motivations, the author concludes that youth enlist in the military for "intrinsic" reasons, such as sense of duty, honor, and love of one's country (Eighmey 2006). My research certainly supports this finding. With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and flagging recruitment rates, one of the risks of doing this research is its institutional usefulness, especially as military agents seek new and ever-more subtle ways of convincing men to join. By exploring how the warrior discourse is used by men to construct masculine identities, I am potentially offering the military institution an additional tool in effective recruitment.

A familiar tactic for recruiters is to play on men's sense of masculinity as a means of enticing them to join. This is, of course, a strategic targeting of men's intrinsic motivations. Military recruitment materials and sales pitches depict the young male service members as hegemonically masculinity and powerful (Padilla and Riege Laner 2002). With this research, I tie hegemonic masculinity to wider cultural discourses that are often used to inspire patriotism in the American population at large (the warrior discourse), effectively demonstrating that masculinity, like duty, honor, and love of one's country is also a powerful intrinsic reason. I imagine that knowing men are motivated to join because of this intricate mix of virtuous masculinities would lead some recruiters to probe specifically for and target these attributes. To some degree, this is a practice already used when recruiters discuss duty, honor, and commitment

as ways the military turns boys into men. This research risks reinforcing and formalizing this practice.

It is perhaps no surprise that when men first arrive at the recruitment station, recruiters interview them about their reasons for joining. These interviews are designed to help recruiters personalize the sales pitch. In Chapter 5, I spoke about how the men told stories in which violence was perceived as humorous or entertaining. I suggested this was one tactic for constructing an emotionally controlled identity that was in line with hegemonic masculine constructions. I suspect that many recruiters understand, at least subconsciously, that violence and masculinity go hand-in-hand. The risks in conducting a study like mine rest with reinforcing the masculinity-violence link; in the hands of an effective recruiter, this knowledge could encourage them to formalize the use of violence in their sales pitch to prospective service members. Herb, a DEP we heard from in Chapter 6, encountered something very much like the practice I am talking about. Recall that he was talking to the recruiters about being an Army interrogator, when one recruiter told him he should be a Calvary Scout so he can conduct on the spot interrogations. Herb replied “yeah, but you can’t talk to them because you don’t speak Arabic. And they are like ‘I speak M16’.” In effect, the recruiters were using tales of violence from their own experiences in what they perceived to be a humorous way to entice Herb to join. Recruiters who skillfully probe potential recruits for stories in which violence is humorous/entertaining might fruitfully cast military service in the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as violence filled adventures in which the men can experience their own humorous/entertaining tales which they can then pass on to others. This minimizes the very real dangers involved in military service; that is, if that danger is ever critically discussed.

I also explored some of the nuances of hegemonic masculinity construction by highlighting the process of comparative practice. Although the inter-branch rivalry is something of an informal tradition in the military, recruiters might formalize it as part of their recruiting strategies to create in men a sense that joining a particular branch makes them more physically fit, intelligent, tough, and/or emotionally controlled; in a word, masculine. An easier route would be to use non-military civilians as the comparison group.

In December of 2006 I was invited to give a presentation on my research at the headquarters of the local recruiting battalion. Recruit commanders from around the area attended my presentation, in which I talked about some of the same issues I've addressed above. My consulting work stems from a feeling of obligation to the commanding officers who helped me to recruit my sample. Without them, this dissertation research may not have gone very far. As a courtesy to the men who participated in this study, I told them that I would use their interviews to write my dissertation project and academic articles, and that I would share what they told me with the military (anonymously, of course). Some men said "I thought so," others did not respond, but none refused to be interviewed after I told them.

By consulting with the military regarding my findings, like it or not, I am effectively helping recruiters think about new and innovative approaches to recruiting men. Through my consulting work, I become an agent of (American) state domination and institutional (military) power. In their roles as service members, these men will be used as projections of American military power around the globe. The obvious ethical dilemma here is that some of the men recruited into the military using these methods may be hurt or killed. Some of these men may also hurt and kill others. All of them will support an institution that in one way or another is

involved in the use of lethal violence, making them complicit in its use. I too bear this responsibility.

Such statements do not absolve me from the ethical concerns inherent in my consulting work. I accept my responsibility and the consequences of my decisions, both to undertake this study, and to consult with formal agents of the military. I recognize that my research there is a risk that highlighting some of the process of hegemonic masculine identity construction can be further used to entice young men to join. This inadvertent aspect of my scholarly exploration of hegemonic masculinity has very real potential risks for others. I realize I have a hand in the creation and maintenance of hegemonic masculinities, both at the individual and institutional level. But the upside to this research is that a better understanding of how the military entices young men to join makes it possible to raise consciousness regarding state agents' manipulation of the warrior discourse. Recruiters are particularly deft at enticing young adult men to join by subtly highlighting the different ways the military will assist them in the construction of masculinity. Because most are in the throes of transitioning to adulthood, searching for opportunities to acquire masculine capital as adults, these men may be psychologically vulnerable to such manipulation. Raising awareness among youth and their families can minimize the risks to these men, in part, by making them aware of how gender is used to tempt them to join. At the very least, young men who are conscious of how the warrior discourse is used can make better informed choices regarding the identity benefits, risks, and consequences, of military service.

Summary

My intent in this dissertation was to explore some of the nuanced and complex ways in which selves and identities are constructed. Using men's narrative accounts to understand how and why identities are constructed entails understanding the cultural milieu in which the identity

construction takes place. This research has demonstrated how men use the military as a backdrop for constructing a hegemonically masculine identity, one that has power and status in American society. In Chapter 3, I outlined the concept of the warrior discourse, the central theme of this research. I showed how state agents use it and how individuals work with it in their personal narratives. Chapter 4 grounded the warrior discourse concept in the data and showed how men aligned their personal narratives with the discourse to present selves/identities that were virtuous. In Chapter 5, I focused more explicitly on the process of hegemonic masculine identity construction by using the military, and the warrior discourse, as the institutional and cultural backdrops. Chapter 6 explored how men construct hegemonic masculinity through comparative practice. By comparing themselves to civilians and men and women in the military, men created hierarchal orderings of masculinities in which they are situated at the top. While the warrior discourse was not explicitly discussed, it was apparent because the men narratively constructed themselves as more physically able, emotionally controlled, virtuous, and dedicated than those their comparison group.

It has been suggested that “traditional masculinity can be seen as hazardous to health,” (Hearn et al. 2002:25). No place is that more clear than the military. Men pursuing an institutional site that offers powerful symbolic resources for constructing hegemonic masculine identity need look no further. With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, their military service makes it increasingly likely they will be harmed or killed. My hope is that by exploring how ideas regarding military service are shaped by cultural discourses, and how masculinities are constructed using the military as a backdrop, my efforts will highlight some of the subtle reasons that men continue to volunteer to put their lives at risk.

STUDY FLYER

Seeking Men for University of Florida Study

Men who are thinking about or plan to enter into
military service

Who is eligible?

Men 18 years of age or older who are thinking about enlisting in any branch of the armed forces. You must have initiated contact with a recruiter, be in a Delayed Entry Program (DEP), in the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC), or be attending a military college. Members of Officer Candidate School (OCS) are not eligible.

What is the Study About?

Men will be asked to talk about their potential military service. Questions will be asked about why people join the military, and how friends, family, and culture shape perceptions of the military.

How to Arrange an Interview?

If you are eligible and would like to be a part of this interesting study, please call or E-mail the Study Director to discuss the possibility of scheduling an interview. Please leave your name, phone number(s), e-mail address, and the best time to call you:

Ramon Hinojosa, M.A., Department of Sociology,
University of Florida. Phone: 352-256-3528 or E-
mail: rhinoj1@ufl.edu

A ten (10) dollar Interview Fee will be paid for study participation

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide: Military and Gender Study

(Note: This interview schedule should be treated as a general guide to specific topic-areas that allows the flow of the interview to be directed by the participant.)

General Life Before Military

Tell me about growing up (What was your childhood like? Brothers/Sisters/Mom/Dad/Relatives?)
What kinds of things did you do as a kid? (Prompt: play sports? Hunt? Other activities?)
Tell me about your friends. What kinds of things did you and your friends do?
Who did you look up to and why?

Decision to Join Military

Why *did you/do you* want to go into the service? What led you to join the military? Personal influences (Family or Friends)? Military Role Models?
What *did your/do your* friends/family/acquaintances think about your decision to enter military service?
Did their thoughts have any bearing on your decision to join/stay/exit the military?

The Military and the Self

How has the military shaped who you are?
Has the military impacted the way you see yourself? How so?
(*How do you think the military will impact the way you see yourself?*)
Has the military impacted the way you see the world? How so?
(*How do you think the military will impact the way you see the world?*)
How do you think the military experience is different for women than it is for men?
What did the military tell you about being a soldier (meaning/behavior/self-image)?

What thoughts do you have about the fact that you *may be/have been* called on to kill another human being?

The Military Experience and the Family

How do you think the military experience *has/will shape(d)* how you think about family?
(*decision to marry/decision to have children/importance of family/protecting family*)
How *does/will* the military impact family decisions?
(*pay/benefits/protection/mobility/deployment/choice of residence*)
What role *has/will* the military played in your relationships?
(*decisions to enter/leave/marriage/divorce*)
What role do you think the military *does/will* play in child rearing?
(*discipline/social activities/education*)

(Spoken to the participant)

We've covered many topics here, and I want to thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your experiences. Before any interview ends, I like to ask participants if there are issues that I should have asked about that I didn't.

I realize it is not possible to cover everything, and that each person's experience is unique. For that reason, I would like to ask you to give me a sense of what I could ask in future interviews that I should have asked today.

Again, thank you for spending time talking with me.

LETTER REQUESTING SUPPORT FROM MAJOR GENERAL DOCTOR

Request for letter of support
Major General Doctor

Greetings from (town)! Hope all is well.

A few months ago I contacted you about my dissertation “Recruiting the Self: The Military and the Making of Masculinities” in which I planned to recruit pre-active duty enlisted personnel from all branches of the Armed Forces. I have completed the interviews for ROTC personnel and am planning the general enlistee recruitment phase. I would like to ask for a letter of support for this stage of the project.

If agreeable, I have drafted a copy of the letter of support and will gladly send it upon request.

The letter covers your note of support, IRB requirements and approvals, and the importance and ethics of conducting qualitative research with voluntary adult participants. My intent is to use this letter as part of a 6 page prospectus of the dissertation research (title page, two page project summary, interview schedule, informed consent document, and LOS) which I will give the recruitment officers and staff to explain why I am hanging around outside recruitment offices and bugging potential recruits.

Thank you again for your consideration. And tell (name) I said hello!

Respectfully,

Ramon Hinojosa

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM MAJOR GENERAL DOCTOR

FROM: the Office of Major General Doctor. Major-General.

TO: Recruitment Personnel

I write this letter in support of Ramon Hinojosa's dissertation research project entitled "Recruiting the Self: The Military and the Making of Masculinities." This project deals with how and why young men make the decision to join the military and the role that family, friends, personal identity, and the media play in this decision. I believe this is a worthwhile study with important implications for identity research and the production of knowledge more generally. From the standpoint of the United States Armed Forces, there is great benefit in understanding why some men choose to voluntarily enlist while others do not.

His study has been approved by the University of Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB), the research oversight committee that ensures ethical research. The IRB approval code is 2004-U-0881. Mr. Hinojosa is a mature young scholar aware of rules of human subject research as federally mandated by the National Research Act, Public Law 93-348. Conducting ethical research includes honoring participants' rights to anonymity and rights of participation refusal at any stage of the study. He seeks your permission to actively recruit pre-service enlisted personnel from your area with the purpose of interviewing them for his dissertation research project. His recruitment tactic is to approach potential participants as they emerge from the recruiting office, to which he will collect their contact information and call them later to schedule an interview appointment. He has prepared a brief prospectus of his research methodology and aims that will explain the rest.

I state plainly that the decision to assist or not assist him is at your discretion, but I hope that you will see as much value in this research as I do. It is my sincere wish that you will support Mr. Hinojosa's efforts.

Very Truly Yours,

Major General Doctor. Major-General (ret.), Ph.D.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ramon Hinojosa received his Associate of Arts degree from Muskegon Community College in Michigan, in 1998. He attended Grand Valley State University, also in Michigan, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree with a major in sociology in 2000. Upon graduating, he attended the University of Illinois at Chicago to earn his Master of Arts degree in sociology in 2003. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his partner, his daughter, their dog, and two cats.