Securing the Gender Order:

Homosexuality and the British Armed Forces

Submitted by Sarah Elizabeth Bulmer to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Politics
In September 2011

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: .................................................................
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people:

The men and women in the Royal Navy who generously gave their time to talk to me about their experiences. I’d particularly like to acknowledge Commander Ivor Milne and Lieutenant Commander Mandy McBain. Without their enthusiasm and support for the project I would not have been able to meet the interviewees whose voices animate this research.

The Department of Politics at the University of Exeter for providing financial assistance and a stimulating environment in which to work.

My excellent supervisor Nick Vaughan-Williams. It is no exaggeration to say that without his encouragement at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, I would not have considered pursuing doctoral research. His limitless enthusiasm, intellectual generosity and patience sustained me throughout the research.

Anna Green, for agreeing to supervise a project that was outside her immediate research interests and expertise. Her down to earth approach to research and her ability to ask tough questions were invaluable.

Friends at Exeter’s Cornwall campus, for their collegiality and for many enjoyable evenings spent at the Boathouse. Particularly Victoria Basham, for reading drafts of the thesis and providing much needed guidance about interviewing military personnel, and for our many engaging conversations about the challenges and pleasures of teaching and researching gender. Also Timothy Cooper, for his empathy and kindness, and for introducing me to the cutting edge of refuse research.

Chris Carter and Tony Ward for valuable formative experiences in world politics and political theory, for their belief in me and their continuing friendship.

David Newton, James Lambden, Natalie Fulcher, Jennifer Morgan Jones, and Sarah Goode for their friendship and support.

Sally Aylward for her encouragement, and for generously allowing me to use her house as my office.

My parents, without whose support undertaking a PhD would simply not have been possible. Also my wonderful sister, Laura, who can always be relied upon to provide much needed perspective and good humour.

Finally, thanks to Pete for doing everything possible to make it easy for me to focus on this research, and for his warmth, humour and companionship.
Abstract

This thesis explores why gender hierarchy remains resilient and entrenched in contemporary political life, despite efforts to challenge and transform it. I approach this question by focussing on the reproduction of gendered subjects, which I argue is integral to the reproduction of what I term ‘gender orders’. This reproduction is interrogated through an analysis of the reproduction of homosexuality in the contemporary British armed forces.

A review of the literature in feminist International Relations (IR) shows feminists have engaged with poststructural thought to develop sophisticated analyses of the subject as an effect of power. I argue that there might be further resources in poststructural thought which could be mobilised to expose the incompleteness and failure of all attempts to reproduce subjectivity which might open up new ways to intervene and subvert gender.

Drawing on the thought of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler I develop a critical methodology for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects in the contemporary British armed forces. I argue that the military gender order is traditionally sustained through the segregation of women and the exclusion of homosexuals. As such it is pervasively heteronormative. For this reason I argue that the potential ‘integration’ of homosexuals did pose a significant threat to the gender order. However I will argue the threat posed by the integration of LGBT personnel has been neutralised by a series of responses which ‘re-inscribe’ them into the gender order, although these responses are always unstable.

I demonstrate that gender often fails to guarantee the intelligibility it promises, and attempts to order gender necessarily break down. However I will argue that this cannot be exploited instrumentally in order to subvert gender because the gender order is better characterised as being in perpetual crisis, and any attempt to reproduce gender differently will also be unstable and prone to crisis. Consequently critique then becomes a relentless call to question, undermine and deconstruct all attempts to secure political orders, with no guarantees. Ultimately the thesis demonstrates that gender orders are complex, mobile and resilient and argues that modes of feminist critique need to be similarly mobile and responsive to a constantly shifting discursive terrain.
Contents

Preliminaries

Title Page and Declaration.................................................................1
Acknowledgments..............................................................................2
Abstract...........................................................................................3
Contents.........................................................................................4

Introduction

The Motivation for the Research.........................................................11
The Reproduction of Subjects in Feminist International Relations......16
Rethinking Failure in the Reproduction of Subjectivity.....................19
The Case Study.................................................................................22
The Reproduction of Military Subjects...............................................26
The Implications for Feminist Praxis..................................................33
Structure and Methodology..............................................................35

Chapter One

The Gendered Subject of Feminist International Relations

Introduction.......................................................................................41

Feminist International Relations.......................................................44
Chapter Two

Critical Methodologies for Investigating the Reproduction of Subjectivity

Introduction..................................................................................................................113

The Subject as an Effect of Power..............................................................................117

Power/Knowledge: Michel Foucault........................................................................118

The Production of Knowledge..................................................................................120
Genealogy
Subjectifying Technologies
Deconstructing the Metaphysics of Presence: Jacques Derrida
Generalized Text and Différance
Deconstruction
The Subject and (Con)Text
Making Gender Trouble: Judith Butler
Sex: Always Already Gender
Matrices of Intelligibility
Performativity
Genealogy and Deconstruction as Revelatory Method?
Revealing Paradox, Failure and Crisis in the Reproduction of Subjectivity
Exploiting Failure: Genealogy and Deconstruction as Critical Praxis

Interrogating the Gender Order of the British Military: Research Methodologies
Research Methodologies for Feminist IR
Policy Texts
Interviews
The Royal Navy

Chapter Conclusions
Chapter Three
The Military Gender Order

Introduction..................................................................................................................................185

Segregating Women..................................................................................................................191

Assessing the Potential Impact of Women in Ground Close Combat Units...............194
  Biological difference..............................................................................................................197
  Female Combatants in Iraq and Afghanistan: The Quantitative Research..............200
  “I forgot I was a woman” ....................................................................................................202
  A Step Too Far....................................................................................................................204
  Challenging the Exclusion, Challenging Gender Norms.............................................211
  A Question of Research Methodology..............................................................................216
  The Permanent Exclusion of Women?..............................................................................223

Negotiating Gender in the Royal Navy..................................................................................225
  When Women went to Sea.................................................................................................227
  “I’m as good as any bloke” ...............................................................................................230
  Embodying the Norm.........................................................................................................235

Chapter Conclusions...............................................................................................................240
Chapter Four

Constructing the Homosexual Threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context: Homosexuality and the British armed forces</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing Gendered Subjects: Homosexuals</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicious Sexualities</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Taxonomy of Homosexuals</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing Gendered Subjects: Servicemen</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repealing the Ban: A threat to the gender order?</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Conclusions</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Five

Re-securing the Gender Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging the Ban</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Championing the Right to Equal Treatment</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Right to Private Life</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Integrating LGBT Personnel.................................................................298
Mapping Gendered Subjects in Equality and Diversity Policy...........302
Reproducing Gendered Subjects: Transsexuals.................................305
LGBT Activists ..................................................................................310
Sexuality: A Private Matter.................................................................312

The Military at Pride........................................................................318
Gay Pride in the Service.................................................................321
Subversive potential: Pride as Parody................................................329

Chapter Conclusions......................................................................335

Conclusions

Introduction......................................................................................339
Interrogating the Reproduction of Gendered Subjects.....................341
Rethinking the Reproduction of Gendered Subjects.......................345
The Reproduction of Gendered Subjects in the British Armed Forces..348

Implications for Feminist Praxis.......................................................354

Reflections on Limitations, Contributions and Further Work Needed...361

Bibliography....................................................................................371
Internet Sources..............................................................................405
Introduction

The Motivation for the Research

Globally, women perform 66 percent of the world’s work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn just 10 percent of the world’s income and own 1 percent of the property.1 Up to 6 out of every 10 women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.2 In ‘developed’ countries such as Britain, 40 years since the Equal Pay Act women continue to earn 16.4 percent less than men.3 Each year in England and Wales over 300,000 women are sexually assaulted and 60,000 women are raped. More than 1 in 4 women in the UK will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.4 It is clear that gender oppression remains entrenched in contemporary political life, despite ongoing efforts to challenge it. Yet it is also clear that gender relations have changed, particularly in Europe, North America and Australasia. In those areas women now have greater access to education, parliamentary representation, the workplace and reproductive rights. Evidently, as R.W. Connell puts it, ‘if gender hierarchy is resilient, then, it has also been forced to transform itself’.5 This prompts several important questions: How can we account for the apparent lack of fundamental change, despite obvious political gains being made for women? What social processes enable the

---

reproduction of gendered hierarchy? How might they be challenged more effectively? The central motivation for the research undertaken in this thesis comes from my concern with these questions.

Although I consider myself a feminist, I had a sense of unease about particular modes of feminist praxis in International Relations (IR) that I wanted to explore and understand. I felt that many feminist analyses in IR tended to focus on the power of gender, with their emphasis on its impacts and effects. Whilst I found feminist narratives convincing I also found much of this work discouraging because gender seemed so powerful and impossible to overcome. I wondered whether there was another way to approach researching gender. Was it possible to undermine gender? Did gender always ‘work’ so effectively? Were there occasions where it failed, and would a focus on these open up new avenues for feminist critique? I also wondered why there seemed to be so few voices animating feminist research, although this tendency is not limited to feminist work but to the discipline of IR more generally. Would a greater engagement with ethnographic and interview methodologies generate different feminist analyses of world politics? Were there advantages in exploring the opinions and everyday lives of different people? These questions also influence the design of the investigation, and consequently this thesis can be understood to be both an attempt to contribute to a better understanding of the resilience of gender, and a personal struggle to express and understand my own ambivalence towards many analyses characterised as ‘feminist IR’, and to find a productive way to engage with that ambivalence.

---

6 Here I am referring to the general lack of ethnographic and interview methodologies employed in IR research which means that the subjects of such research tend to be spoken ‘about’. There are of course notable exceptions to this, for example: Stern, M. *Naming Security- Constructing Identity: ’Mayan Women’ in Guatemala on the Eve of Peace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)
The overarching, or primary, research question this thesis responds to is: Why is gender so resilient in contemporary political life? There are many ways one could approach the seemingly intractable problem of gender hierarchy, as is evident in the rich and complex body of feminist theory and activism. Feminists have developed sophisticated analyses of economic structures, women's unique childbearing potential and socio-cultural factors which contribute to an understanding of why and how gender inequality remains endemic across the world. However, in this thesis I focus specifically on the reproduction of gendered subjects in order to generate insights about the resilience of gender hierarchy. The decision to interrogate 'the subject' is influenced by 'postmodern' feminist theory, which has shown that the production of 'women' might be considered a discursive 'effect' of gendered power. This means that the very distinctions which construct gendered difference can be understood as part of the constitution of gender, rather than natural biological difference upon which gender ‘acts’. Judith Butler outlines just how fundamental the question of the subject is for feminist politics when she asks whether the 'construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject [is] an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations?' This is a radically different conceptualisation of gender which has profound implications for feminist praxis, particularly in terms of research agendas and methodologies used to generate feminist knowledge. Arguably, if gendered subjects are themselves the embodied effects of gender, careful attention to their reproduction is not only a necessary, but an imperative, feminist task.

In the thesis I will argue that the reproduction of gendered subjectivity is integral to the resilience of gender hierarchy, and is itself a form of violence. Acknowledging this

---

9 Ibid., 7
generates further questions: How are gendered subjects reproduced? What is at stake in this reproduction? Is it possible to ‘show’ how this reproduction occurs? What are the implications of this for feminist praxis more generally? To explore these questions I look for resources in the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. Through my engagement with their work I ask: What insights can be mobilised for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects? How might this inform a critical methodology for investigating the reproduction of subjectivity in world politics? To illustrate and further interrogate the reproduction of gendered subjectivity I use the contemporary British armed forces as a case study in the thesis. Feminist research has demonstrated that military cultures are patriarchal, and that they are particularly resistant to change. The British armed forces have undergone significant changes with

---

the ‘integration’ of women and LGBT personnel. How has this integration been achieved? Have the gender relations of that institution changed as a result? What would an analysis of the reproduction of subjectivity reveal about gender relations in the military? Would it enable a better understanding of the resilience of gender? Throughout the analysis of the case study the interrogation of the reproduction of gendered subjectivity is used to generate arguments about the resilience of gender more generally, as I attempt to answer the primary research question identified above.

It is important to emphasise at the outset that the thesis is not intended to be a critique of feminist IR, but rather a conversation with it and, importantly, a conversation held on its own terms. It has been observed that there is ‘considerable conformity and predictability’ in some areas of feminist IR scholarship and there have been calls for greater critical engagement between feminists. It is in the spirit of these calls that this thesis is written, and my overall aim is to contribute to feminist understandings of the resilience of gender, by analysing how gendered subjects are reproduced and critically reflecting on the implications of that for feminist praxis. As such the thesis is aimed primarily, although not exclusively, at a feminist audience within IR and my hope is that it will be recognised as a contribution to that literature.

12 Feminist IR has a troubled relationship with mainstream IR, and it is not my intention to engage with, and legitimise, these critiques. For a discussion of this debate see: Tickner, J. A. ‘You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR theorists’ International Studies Quarterly, 41(4), (1997) pp. 611-632
14 Of course there is a politics in the construction of disciplinary categories, and I recognise the difficulties inherent to any attempt to demarcate, and refer to ‘feminist IR’ as a body of work.
Having sketched an outline of the motivations and the primary and secondary research questions this thesis seeks to address, the next section offers a more detailed summary of the key moves made in the thesis.

**The Reproduction of Gendered Subjects in Feminist International Relations**

In the light of the overarching aims and motivations discussed above, the starting point for my investigation is an examination of the literature in feminist IR. The purpose of this survey is to establish how feminists have conceptualised the subject and to look for ideas, concepts and analytical strategies which could be further developed. This preliminary evaluation of the literature will show that feminists have engaged in sophisticated and ongoing conversations about 'who' should be the subject of their research. I will trace these debates, exploring attempts to render women as a group visible, the shift in focus to men and masculinities, the impact of sexuality studies and the concept of heteronormativity and finally, I will consider how contemporary poststructural feminist scholars have responded to the deconstruction of the gendered subject. Questions which guide this initial review include: How are gendered subjects being reproduced in the research? What has this enabled? What are the limitations of particular conceptualisations? Are there areas of feminist scholarship which could be developed or further explored?

Despite the wealth of exemplary feminist work within IR, Jane Parpart and Marysia Zalewski have suggested that because we know so little about how gender is sustained there is a constant need to ‘rethink how we conceptualise and re-create gender, sex and
the violent international.’ They advocate a greater focus on the productive nature of sex and gender, in order to respond to the increasing complexity of gendered power in contemporary political life. Contemporary feminist work has engaged with poststructural thought to develop sophisticated analytical strategies for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects as the effects of discourse, particularly in policy and media texts. However, I will argue that this work has tended to emphasise the efficacy of this productive power, performatively reproducing gender in ways which do not sufficiently disrupt or undermine it. I will suggest that there might be aspects of poststructural thought that could be further exploited, aspects which emphasise paradox, aporia and the impossibility of gender. Terrell Carver makes a similar argument and ultimately calls for a ‘more effective and genuinely deconstructive critique [which] would promote destabilization through immanent contradictions and instabilities.’ How might this be done? Is there an alternative set of analytical strategies I could adopt which would avoid reifying gender? For Maria Stern and Zalewski it is not so simple. They identify the ‘sex/gender paradox’ or ‘predicament’ which refers to the way that feminist interventions necessarily reinvoke the ‘very grammars that initially incited them as narratives of resistance’ and become complicit in the violences they seek to

17 Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 122
ameliorate. This paradox suggests that it is ultimately impossible to analyse sex/gender without recourse to the language and norms which sustain its power, thereby implicating feminist research in the reproduction of gender. This might be appear to be a reason for disillusionment with feminist politics, but for Stern and Zalewski there is potential to reconceptualise the failure to escape sex/gender. They invite a feminist engagement with aporia and the politics of failure in order to bring possibility and open up new ways to engage with sex/gender. However, despite these tantalising suggestions, the force of their argument has yet to be fully explored and it remains to be seen what a politics of feminist failure might entail.

The engagement with the sex/gender predicament is an important moment for this thesis as whole, and provides a point of departure for the subsequent investigation. Can the reproduction of sex/gender explain the resilience of gender? If this is the case, further questions then arise: Is there a way out of the sex/gender predicament? What is at stake in trying to move beyond it? Would a ‘more genuinely deconstructive’ critique, such as Carver calls for, engage with sex/gender in a different way? What would a politics of feminist failure involve? What are the implications of such a politics for feminist research aims, methodologies and conclusions? In order to begin thinking about these questions I look for resources and insights in the works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler.

18 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 616
19 Ibid., 611
Rethinking Failure in the Reproduction of Subjectivity

My decision to return to the original texts of Foucault, Derrida and Butler is informed by the review of feminist literature in IR which showed that many feminists have adopted poststructural theoretical ideas, particularly those associated with these specific thinkers. The aim of my engagement with these thinkers is to search for further insights and vocabularies for interrogating the reproduction of subjectivity. I begin by offering brief exegeses of the three thinkers which outline their theoretical approach and how they conceptualise the subject. As a result of this investigation I am able to identify several key insights about the reproduction of subjectivity. Firstly, subjects are reproduced continuously through different social processes, but this reproduction is concealed through the discursive mechanisms that create the illusion of ontological stability and essential difference. Secondly, the reproduction of the subject is never complete and is always provisional, paradoxical and unstable; indeed this failure is an inherent part of the process of reproduction. Finally, the reproduction of gendered subjects cannot be separated from the context within which that reproduction takes place. This necessitates the analytical collapse of the distinction between the subject and the culture she finds herself in, for ‘to become subject to a regulation is also to become sub-jectivated by it, that is, to be brought into being as a subject precisely through being regulated.’

How might these insights be mobilised or deployed as analytical strategies or methodologies to explore the reproduction of gendered subjects in contemporary

---

20 I acknowledge that the term ‘poststructural theory’ is ambiguous, problematic and often rejected by those thinkers who are labelled poststructuralists. To clarify, I am referring to feminist work within IR which claims to be drawing on poststructural ideas or theorists. For example: Hansen, L. ‘Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security’, International Feminist Journal of Politics, 3 (1), (2001) pp. 55-75; Stern, Naming Security; Kantola, ‘The Gendered Reproduction’; Sjoberg and Gentry, Mothers, Monsters; Shepherd, Gender, Violence and Security

political life? To explore this I will provide three interpretations of genealogy and deconstruction. The first interpretation views genealogy and deconstruction as a ‘revelatory method’ which can be employed to expose the subject as an effect of power. I will argue that the limitation of this interpretation is that it reproduces the efficacy and power of gender. The second interpretation mobilises genealogy and deconstruction as methods for revealing the inherent failure, paradox and aporia which haunts attempts to reproduce subjects in particular contexts. Whilst there are political advantages in such an approach because it refuses to grant power to the terms, logics and regimes of truth underlying that production, I will argue that it remains a partial understanding of deconstruction and genealogy because it is predicated on there being a position of critique from outside sex/gender, something which my reading of Foucault, Derrida and Butler finds is not possible. Consequently the third interpretation considers how Foucault, Derrida and Butler critically challenge what a discourse, text, or performance of gender is such that the notion of 'exposing' something within a text is called into question. This interpretation conceptualises deconstruction and genealogy as a mode of critical praxis, which is critically transformative of the text. I will argue that this third interpretation is the most radical and has the potential to work with sex/gender paradox in order to transform it from within.

How can this interpretation of genealogy and deconstruction inform a critical theoretical methodology for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjectivity in the British armed forces? I will argue that in order to render the production of subjects visible it is necessary to carry out a careful examination, or genealogy, of the epistemic regimes through which sex/gender have meaning in a particular context. This requires careful analysis of the various articulations, performances, and policing of gender, the institution of boundaries and categories, and the imposition and privileging of particular
gender truths. Crucially I will argue that methodologically it is also imperative to actively pursue occasions where the gender order fails and produces paradoxical outcomes. This is an attempt to expose and performatively undermine gender in the writing of the research and to generate knowledge about the resilience of gender, by interrogating how these failures and paradoxes are mitigated. In the analysis of the contemporary British armed forces I will adopt the term ‘gender order’ as a heuristic device, in order to convey a particular understanding of the regulation of gendered life that depends on the reproduction and ordering of gendered subjects. I will argue that gender orders simultaneously rely upon, and reproduce, particular configurations of gendered hierarchy, and that it is possible to expose this by analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects.

At this stage I have generated a critical methodology for investigating and interpreting the reproduction of subjects but I have not considered what ‘texts’ or data to interpret or how to go about doing this. What are the implications of my theoretical approach for ‘data gathering’ strategies for the case study? Rather than a way to directly access ‘how subjects are reproduced,’ I will argue that all policy, practices and gendered performances are re-conceptualised as attempts to reproduce subjectivity, attempts which are never entirely successful. By doing this it is hoped that the reproduction of sex/gender in the thesis serves to undermine rather than reify its power. I will also argue that carrying out research interviews is a particularly appropriate and advantageous data gathering strategy in the light of my critical methodology. This is because interviews will generate ‘messier’ data which will provide greater opportunity to explore paradox and failure.
What are the implications of the theoretical approach for interview strategies? If the epistemological challenge that Foucault, Derrida and Butler are making is taken seriously, the very concept of a ‘research methodology’ is thrown into question because it becomes impossible to isolate the research from the wider reproduction of meaning. I will argue that in an interview the researcher and the interviewee necessarily reproduce sex/gender through the act of asking and answering questions about gender. In this light the interview becomes a site for the inter-subjective reproduction of gender. Consequently decisions must be made about how to engage with this and I will suggest that modes of questioning ‘at the limits’ of intelligibility have the potential to expose and unsettle gender, rendering the interview an occasion for political intervention. This reconceptualises 'the research interview' as a political encounter and form of critical praxis itself.

Will this alternative methodology yield different findings about the resilience of gender? Will it be possible to ‘show’ how subjects are reproduced, and sufficiently undermine that reproduction? Having developed a critical methodology for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects, I then ‘deploy’ that methodology to analyse the case study.

**The Case Study**

The thesis explores the reproduction of gendered subjects in the contemporary British armed forces as a case study, focussing particularly on the management of (homo)sexuality. Militaries continue to play an important role in world politics and feminist IR has paid close attention to the role, composition and funding of state
militaries across the globe and wider processes of militarisation.22 Perhaps the fundamental insight of this feminist scholarship is that despite significant changes in gender relations and conflict through history, war-making continues to rely on gendered constructions of the state, state militaries and international relations. These gendered constructions inevitably privilege men and notions of masculinity and militaries have been perceived as bastions of patriarchy.23 In the light of the research questions outlined above, two obvious questions emerge: How is this sustained? Would an analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects generate any insights about the apparent resilience of military cultures?

Feminists have paid much attention to the roles and experiences of servicewomen in contemporary militaries.24 There has also been interest in the construction of military masculinities, which has demonstrated how military training and culture tends to denigrate the feminine.25 Feminist work has also demonstrated that a critical interrogation of sexuality is particularly important for understanding the construction of masculinity and femininity, and that the exclusion of homosexuals from militaries was an important mechanism for maintaining the gendered nature of those institutions.26

22 Enloe, Does Khaki; Reardon, Sexism; Elshtain, Women and War; Enloe, Bananas; Peterson, ‘Security and Sovereign States’; Enloe, The Morning After; Zalewski, ‘Well, what is the feminist’; Moon, Sex Among Allies; Peterson and Runyan, Global Gender Issues; Enloe, Manoeuvres; Tickner, Gendering; Hansen, ‘Gender, Nation, Rape’; Lee Koo, K. ‘Confronting a Disciplinary’; Tickner, ‘Feminist Perspectives’; Enloe, The Curious Feminist; Whitworth, Men, Militarism; Shepherd, ‘Veiled References’; Hunt and Rygiel (En)gendering the War; Sjoberg and Gentry Mothers, Monsters, Whores; Enloe, Globalization and Militarism; Cockburn, C. ‘Gender Relations’; Sjoberg and Via Gender, War, and Militarism; Sylvester, Experiencing War
25 See: Higate, Military Masculinities
26 For example: Cohn, C. ‘Gays in the Military: Texts and Subtexts’ in M. Zalewski and J. Parpart (eds.), The ‘Man’ Question in International Relations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) pp.129-149; Herbert, Camouflage; Bower, (Im)Possible Women; Heggie, Uniform Identity?
However, these exclusionary policies have become increasingly difficult to defend, and both Britain and the United States have now been forced to repeal them. If the exclusion of homosexuals was so integral to sustaining the masculine identity of servicemen and the military institution, the repeal of these bans prompts important feminist questions: What does this mean for the gender relations in state militaries? Has the masculine cultures of militaries changed as a result?

In the United Kingdom (UK) the debate surrounding the ban on homosexuality in the 1990s was particularly intense, and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) fought to maintain the ban. The MoD position was that homosexuality was ‘incompatible’ with military service, because ‘homosexual behaviour’ could ‘cause offence, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and, as a consequence, damage morale and unit effectiveness. A study of the attitudes of serving personnel found widespread resistance to lifting the ban and evidence of institutionalised homophobia. Ultimately the UK Government lost the legal battle and the ban was officially lifted on 12 January 2000.

Curiously, the subsequent ‘integration’ of ‘LGBT personnel’ appeared to go very smoothly. In 2002 an MoD review of the policy stated that ‘the overwhelming majority’ of personnel attending the Tri-Service Equal Opportunities Training Centre saw

---

28 ‘Don’t ask, Don’t Tell’, which prevented US servicemen and women from disclosing if they were gay was repealed on 20 September 2011. Malik, S. and agencies in Washington ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ formally ends’ The Guardian, 20 September 2011. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/20/dont-ask-dont-tell-ends (site accessed 21 September 2011)
29 Ibid.,
30 Hoon, ‘Ministerial Statement’
sexuality a ‘non-issue’ just two years after the ban was lifted.\textsuperscript{31} In 2008 all three branches of the British armed forces marched in uniform at London Pride.\textsuperscript{32} Reflecting on the MoD’s previous position it seemed extraordinary that a military institution which routinely conducted ‘witch hunts’ of undisclosed lesbian and gay personnel within its ranks could have changed so dramatically, literally overnight.\textsuperscript{33} How had the ‘integration’ of LGBT personnel been achieved? How could we make sense of highly visible homosexual military subjects? Would an analysis of this policy change generate feminist knowledge about how military cultures are reproduced and potentially transformed? These questions about the case study then prompt questions about feminist knowledge and praxis: What did the integration of LGBT personnel mean for feminist analyses of the military? How could feminists respond to the increasingly complex and subtle regulation of sexuality and gender in contemporary political life?

There are many possible ways one could approach these questions. One could examine the impact of diversity policies put in place since the ban was lifted in order to assess how gender norms have changed, or regularly survey serving personnel in order to assess their attitudes and opinions about sexual minorities in the forces. It would be possible to record data about sexual orientation in order to ‘track’ changes in gender norms by monitoring the recruitment and retention of sexual minorities into the Armed


\textsuperscript{32} See, for example: Gourley, C ‘Armed Forces march united for gay rights at Pride London’ Times Online, July 5 2008 http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article4276099.ece (site accessed 29 May 2009)

\textsuperscript{33} Hall, E. We Can’t Even March Straight: Homosexuality in the British Armed Forces (London: Vintage, 1995); House of Commons ‘Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill Session 1995-96’ (London 1996); Bower, (Im)Possible Women; Heggie, Uniform Identity?
Indeed these are all methods which the MoD is either considering introducing or already has in place to evaluate its own progress in meeting equality and diversity goals. For example, Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys are carried out annually to ‘collect information on the attitudes, opinions and circumstances of serving personnel... [to] enable policy staff to be informed of the current attitudes of personnel, allowing them to take action in a timely manner.’ However these approaches all assume that personnel are easily categorised into gendered groupings and that these groups are immutable and natural. This means they cannot attempt to understand how categories of difference such as homosexuality are produced, nor how the military constructs itself through discourses around sexuality and gender. I will argue that a different mode of analysis is required to understand the productive role of the ban on homosexuality, and its subsequent repeal. Using the critical methodology generated through the engagement with Foucault, Derrida and Butler, I will explore how LGBT personnel have been integrated in the British armed forces through an analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects.

The Reproduction of Military Subjects

The aim of the case study is to explore how the British armed forces reproduce different gendered subjects in order to generate insights about the resilience of gender hierarchy more generally. To do this I will conduct an investigation of the general order of ‘problematisation’ through which gender and sexuality are managed, and provide a

---

systematic analysis of the logics of the gender order. Although the focus on the thesis is military policy towards homosexuality, in light of the critical methodology it becomes necessary to analyse homosexuality within the wider regulation of gender in the armed forces. Consequently I begin the investigation by looking at how the military conceptualises ‘gender’ and how ‘women’ are reproduced in policy and practice. Questions which guide the analysis include: How have women been ‘integrated’ into the British armed forces? How do serving personnel think about servicewomen? Do servicewomen have the potential to subvert the masculinity of the military institution, as several feminists have argued? What does the reproduction of women reveal about the gender order more generally?

To try and answer these questions I conduct a detailed analysis of research, commissioned by the MoD, which informed the decision to maintain the policy which excludes servicewomen from posts that require them to ‘close with and kill the enemy.’ This research provides valuable information about how the ‘problem’ of women is framed in the military and rich interview data from serving personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq. Through the analysis of this research I am able to identify several fundamental logics and dynamics of the military gender order, which govern the reproduction of men and women. I demonstrate that the military gender order is fundamentally organised around the construction of men and women as oppositional, biologically determined genders, and that the naturalisation of heterosexuality is integral to this production. Policies regarding the general segregation of men and women and the exclusion of

women ‘combat roles’ simultaneously rely upon and reproduce heterosexuality as the norm in the armed forces. As well as being pervasively heteronormative I also show that the gender order is hierarchical and privileges servicemen. An important dynamic that is necessary to sustain the military gender order is the ‘hyper visibility’ of women and the concurrent invisibility of men. The effect of this is that women are continually reproduced as ‘problems’ to be solved, requiring management policies that mitigate the effects of their inclusion in the military whilst leaving the behaviour of men and the effects of institutional culture beyond scrutiny. I will argue that these dynamics are also in evidence in the ways that the gender order is negotiated by several Royal Navy personnel in their ‘everyday’ lives.

Contrary to several feminist accounts, I will argue that women in the military are not inherently subversive simply by virtue of being ‘not men.’ Rather, what it means to be a woman, in a military context, is governed by a gender order which protects masculine privilege and continually reproduces women in ways which do not undermine the masculine status of the institution. Far from being disruptive, or subversive, reproducing women’s hyper visibility is inseparable from securing men’s corresponding invisibility, and seen in this way the reproduction of ‘men’ and ‘women’ is a mutually constitutive process that is essential for shoring up the gender order. In this reading strategies of segregation and marginalisation which limit women’s participation do not simply respond to gendered difference, and attempt to contain it, they actually produce that difference. A general ‘diagnosis’ of the military gender order can be made as a result of this analysis. I will argue that gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive in this context, and that the gender order relies upon the fundamental segregation between men.

and women, to be coherent. Having established how the gender order reproduces women I then interrogate how it reproduced ‘the homosexual’ prior to 2000.

The analysis of homosexuality under the ban draws primarily on the report written by the MoD’s Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team.\(^\text{39}\) This report assessed the expected impact of allowing homosexuals to serve and it formed the basis of the evidence used by the MoD to justify the ban. In the analysis of this report I explore how the ban was productive of different gendered subjects. I will argue that the exclusion of homosexuals reflected and reified the logics of the gender order identified in the discussion about women. I show how homosexuality was produced as an ever present, but ultimately unknowable threat, which legitimised strategies of suspicious watchfulness and the surveillance of all personnel. I will show that it was the potential for discovery (something the ban itself produced) that rendered all homosexuals (even ‘non-practicing’ homosexuals) a threat, hence the need for a ban. Seen in this light the ban is inherently paradoxical, and fails in the sense that it continually creates and sustains the problem it promises to resolve. However, I will also argue that it was this paradoxical ‘failure’ that actually enabled the ban to act as a self perpetuating mechanism that safeguarded the heteronormative gender order, and in this way, it ‘worked’.

An important function of the ban was being seen to deal with the homosexual threat, which enabled the reproduction of servicemen and the military institution as inherently heterosexual and masculine. From this perspective it becomes clear that the ban was an important regulatory mechanism, and that ‘the homosexual’ functioned as what Derrida

\(^{39}\) Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’
calls the ‘constitutive outside’ of the military gender order. I will argue that this explains why servicemen in particular were so vehemently opposed to lifting the ban, and that the level of their anxiety exposes how fragile and unstable gendered subjectivity is, because it requires constant reinforcement through discursive distinctions and borders which are ultimately always contingent.

Ultimately I will argue that whilst the analysis of the reproduction of subjectivity exposes how gender is ordered and regulated in ways that protect masculine and heterosexual privilege, it also reveals as much about the limits of these attempts to capture gendered life. Through an analysis of issues raised about ‘privacy and decency’ I show that the potential ‘integration’ of homosexuals exposes this gender order because the problem of accommodating homosexuals cannot be resolved within the military’s understanding of (hetero)sexuality and sexually segregated forces. Moreover, allowing ‘known’ homosexuals to serve alongside comrades of the same gender does threaten the ability of the military to be seen to control sexuality, which threatens its ability to secure the masculine status of the institution. I will argue that unlike integrating women, integrating ‘homosexuals’ as conceived by the military, did pose a significant ‘problem’ for, and threat to, the gender order of the military.

The final part of the case study explores how the ban on homosexuality was challenged, and how LGBT personnel have been integrated since 2000. The important question I seek to address is: Has the ‘integration’ of LGBT personnel challenged the logics of the military gender order? I begin by analysing how Stonewall and Rank Outsiders challenged the ban. I will argue that the arguments they made, based on rights to

---

41 Rank Outsiders was co-founded in 1991. The aim of Rank Outsiders was to provide support, advice and information to anyone similarly affected by the military’s policy of homosexual exclusion, and to campaign to overturn the ban on homosexuality. Stonewall is a prominent organisation in the UK which
‘equal treatment’ and ‘privacy’, were fraught with difficulty for the challengers, because they failed to engage with the heteronormative assumptions underpinning the military’s reproduction of gendered bodies. The limited engagement with the regulatory nature of the ban, and the gendered subjects produced as an effect of it, severely impeded the ability of those challenging the ban to effectively confront discrimination and unsettle gendered hierarchy within the armed forces.

Drawing on MoD and Royal Navy policy documents and publications, as well as interviews with serving and former Royal Navy personnel, I will then explore how the MoD and the military have integrated LGBT personnel. I will argue that the threat to the gender order, posed by their inclusion, has been neutralised by a series of responses that attempt to ‘contain’ and accommodate LGBT personnel without undermining the heteronormative status quo. One aspect of this is the ‘mapping’ of LGBT personnel in equal opportunities and diversity policies in ways which reproduce essentialised conceptualisation of subjectivity. To illustrate what is at stake in this I will offer an analysis of how transsexual subjects are reproduced and ultimately re-inscribed back into the gender order. Given that the gender order relies upon the strict correlation of sex, gender and sexuality in order to be coherent, transsexuals can be thought to pose a challenge to this order. However, I will argue that this challenge is mitigated by policies which redefine transsexuality as a medical problem which transforms it from an aberration or deviancy into something which can be diagnosed, treated, and ultimately dealt with in a way that does not challenge or disrupt the heteronormative status quo. The gender order thus re-secures itself through the reproduction of the transsexual person as a ‘medical’ problem, rather than a ‘problem’ for the gender order and in this

carries out research, educational campaigns and professional lobbying on different issues which affect gay men, lesbians and bisexuals. Stonewall supported Rank Outsiders in their campaign to overturn the ban. See chapter five of this thesis for further details.
light transsexuals, far from being subversive of the gender order, have instead been re-inscribed back into it.

Another strategy which has neutralised the threat posed by including LGBT personnel is the deployment of sexuality as a ‘private matter’ by the MoD. I will argue that privatising (homo)sexuality was an essential move for shoring up, and re-securing the gender order because it enabled the military to informally police overt displays of homosexuality. However I will also demonstrate that the attempt to designate sexuality as private is particularly unstable and paradoxical because implicit in the notion of ‘coming out’ as gay is a disclosure of the hidden, private self to the public realm. This tension becomes particularly acute when military personnel march at London Pride, in a public display of an ostensibly private sexuality. In undermining the military’s attempt to contain homosexuality, is there subversive potential in the Pride marches?

To explore the subversive potential of Pride I examine some of the opinions and responses to this event held by serving Royal Navy personnel. I show that for some they were perceived a sign of progress whilst for others they were seen as inappropriate, deviant, serving to reify their existing understanding that (homo)sexuality should remain private and consequently invisible. Crucially what is happening in the responses which do not approve of the marches is the re-drawing of lines which have been crossed, and a re-imposition of the gender order through the reading of the event. What this means is that the event itself, cannot have inherent subversive potential.
**The Implications for Feminist Praxis**

In order to fully reflect on what is at stake in the reproduction of gendered subjects it is necessary to return to the initial research questions that prompted the research, and to consider the implications of the case study for those questions. I set out to understand how gendered subjects are reproduced with the hope of contributing to feminist understandings about why gendered hierarchy is so resilient in contemporary political life. I also wanted to consider the role played by feminist research in perpetuating gender, engaging with what Stern and Zalewski have called the ‘sex/gender predicament’.\(^{42}\)

As a result of the interrogation of the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces I will make several claims. Gendered subjects are reproduced, and reproduce themselves, through matrices of intelligibility which are determined by particular configurations of power and hierarchy. The analysis shows how LGBT personnel have been re-inscribed into the military gender order in ways which do not undermine its logics. This demonstrates that gender orders are complex, mobile and resilient.

However I will also argue that what the analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects in the military gender order shows is that attempts to capture and order gender necessarily fail and break down on their own terms. In pursuing moments of rupture, paradox and failure in the analysis I reproduce sex/gender in a different way. By showing how gender often fails to guarantee the intelligibility it promises I have emphasised the vulnerability and phantasmal nature of gender. As a mode of feminist

\(^{42}\) Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s),
praxis this is advantageous because it unsettles and undermines gender, rather than reifying its power and emphasising its efficacy.

Can this inherent failure and paradox be exploited by feminists? Is there subversive potential in these moments of rupture? I will argue that there is nothing inherently subversive in these moments. This is because the paradoxes, aporias and excesses characterise all attempts to reproduce subjects, they are not exceptional occurrences. A central insight of a performative theory of gender is that it is this incompleteness, failure and aporia which occasions and demands a constant re-drawing and re-inscribing of boundaries needed to sustain the appearance of coherence. In this sense the gender order is in perpetual crisis. I will argue that if all attempts to secure meaning are unstable and in crisis, it becomes impossible to even define what transgression or subversion is. Consequently the momentary disruption and transgression of order is not in itself subversive, rather it is the responses to such crises that contain the potentiality to subvert the order, by challenging attempts to re-secure and re-inscribe norms upon the events. However, this potential is never fully realised as any alternative framing or reading will also enact closures, and in its attempt to secure boundaries it will also be unstable and prone to crisis.

Ultimately I will argue that the approach I adopt in the thesis does not provide any guarantees for feminist praxis. It does not, and cannot, provide either a clear agenda or method for subverting gender. What it does do is enable a form of critique that can respond to an increasingly complex regulation and reproduction of gender. I will argue that gender is so resilient in contemporary political life because of its mobility and capacity to transform and re-territorialise the social. I will argue that feminist critique must respond with similarly mobile modes of critique that engage, intervene and
actively reproduce sex/gender differently rather than attempt to critique it from a position ‘outside’, or simply describe how ‘it’ works. There is no ‘outside’ or escape from the sex/gender paradox; feminists must inhabit the discursive terrain.

**Structure and Methodology**

The thesis is organised into six chapters. In chapter one I introduce some of the key debates about the gendered subject in feminist IR, culminating in a discussion of contemporary poststructural feminist work. As a result of this I advance several arguments about the way poststructural thought has been mobilised in particular feminist analyses and I suggest that there are aspects of that thought which are underexploited, aspects which explore the aporetic and paradoxical character of all attempts to secure meaning, boundaries and subjects. Chapter one also offers a survey of the literature about gender and contemporary militaries and provides a rationale for looking at policies towards homosexuality in the British armed forces as the case study in the thesis.

Chapter two examines the thought of Foucault, Derrida and Butler. In the light of the findings in chapter one I look specifically for concepts, vocabularies and insights about the failure, paradox and aporia inherent in the reproduction of gendered subjects. I offer three interpretations of ‘genealogy’ and ‘deconstruction,’ which then inform and generate a ‘critical methodology’ for interrogating ‘the gender order’ of the contemporary British armed forces. I then consider the implications of the theoretical approach for ‘data gathering’ methodologies.
Chapter three begins the substantive analysis of the gender order in the contemporary British armed forces. The chapter provides an overview of how the military regulates, manages and disciplines personnel along the lines of ‘gender.’ In this chapter I show how the military attempts to produce 'men' and 'women' as essentially different, autonomous subjects. I demonstrate that integral to this process is the assumption that they are heterosexual, and that women are hypervisible, whilst men are beyond scrutiny. For this reason I will argue that this ordering of men and women is the foundation of the gender order of the military, an order which is hierarchical, masculinist and heteronormative.

Chapter four examines the exclusionary policy towards homosexuality and the construction of the ‘homosexual threat’. I demonstrate that the rationale for the ban can only be understood in the context of sexually segregated forces, and that the ban was a central mechanism for securing the gender order of the military. For this reason I will argue that lifting the ban on homosexuality was a threat to that order, because without the assumption of heterosexuality the fundamental logic governing the reproduction of gendered subjects fails to produce the intelligibility it promises.

Chapter five considers how the ban was challenged and how LGBT personnel have been integrated into the British armed forces since 2000 in order to assess whether the gender order has changed since then. I will demonstrate how LGBT personnel have been re-inscribed into the gender order in ways which do not undermine the logics of the order. I will argue that the attempt by the MoD to privatise sexuality has to some extent neutralised the threat posed to the gender order by re-securing heteronormative boundaries. However, these attempts are not always successful and events such as Pride have the potential to disrupt the gender order.
The conclusion returns to the broader research questions and aims identified in this introduction, and responds to them in the light of the investigation of gendered subjectivity in the British armed forces. I will argue that mobilising poststructural thought to exploit paradox, failure and aporias is an alternative approach to the sex/gender paradox. However, there are limits to this approach as this mode of critique does not, and cannot, provide any guarantees for feminist politics.

It is important to make clear at the outset how the theoretical ideas behind this thesis have impacted on my analytical strategies, my use of the work of particular thinkers and the methodologies employed to carry out the research. Chapter two discusses the work of Foucault, Derrida and Butler. Although I offer brief exegeses of each thinker, I do not attempt to provide an ‘authentic’ account of their theoretical oeuvres, or to treat them as discrete bodies of knowledge. Rather my reading of the thinkers is influenced by my research aims and personal interests, and my interpretation of them must itself be contextualised. Moreover as I read different works by each thinker I subsequently read them into one another, and this is particularly the case with my reading of Butler, who herself explicitly draws on Foucault and Derrida, among others, in her texts. This means that while I acknowledge issues around commensurability, I am not particularly interested in highlighting the differences between the thinkers as this is not the focus of my investigation. Rather I approach Foucault, Derrida and Butler as potential resources for rethinking the reproduction of subjectivity, and I emphasise similarities and connections between their approaches as I explore their concepts, vocabularies and different modes of critique. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams offer a useful discussion of what this ‘rhizomatic’ approach to knowledge entails:

43 Of course the interventions made by Foucault, Derrida and Butler challenge claims of ‘authenticity’, ‘truth’ and any attempt to provide a ‘definitive’ account of anything.
44 This is not to posit Butler’s work as ‘derivative’ in a pejorative sense, but simply to note that she engages with these thinkers, among others.
A rhizome has no beginning or end. Rather it is always in the middle of things and establishes connections... As such, a rhizomatic reading involves the invention of different connections, and these spread beyond the ‘covers’ of a text.45

In this research the connections spread beyond the texts of the thinkers and into the texts of the British armed forces. Although I depict the military as a ‘case study’ in which to explore explicitly ‘theoretical’ questions about the reproduction of subjectivity, in practice the theoretical questions and the case study are inseparable, and it is impossible to draw lines between the two. Indeed, one of the central aims of the thesis is to rethink the question of feminist theory/practice in light of my alternative reading of Foucault, Derrida and Butler.46 Related to this it is important to be clear about the purpose of the case study as it is used in the thesis, and to emphasise that it makes no claims to be ‘representative', 'generalisable' or 'reliable' in the social scientific sense.47 My use of the case study is to explore the research questions outlined in this introduction, and to do this I analyse a particular set of policy documents, media sources and interview data with Royal Navy personnel. I analyse these ‘texts' in the thesis, not with the aim of extrapolating from them, or using them as 'evidence' for other claims, but as sites of reproduction of subjectivity themselves. Similarly I examine works within feminist IR as texts, and I adopt a genealogical approach to reading them.48

Finally, it is important to emphasise the ‘exploratory’ approach taken in the thesis.

Whilst the strategy I adopt is influenced by poststructural modes of critique, I am not

46 Feminists within IR are very aware of the blurred lines between theory/practice, particularly those who adopt poststructural concepts and approaches. However I will argue that the implications of poststructuralism for thinking about theory/practice can be pushed further.
47 These terms are associated with 'positivist' modes of social enquiry which aims to provide ‘reliable’ and ‘objective’ knowledge about the social world. See, for example: Frankfort- Nachimas, C. and Nachimas, D. Research Methods in the Social Sciences (London: Arnold, 1996); Denscombe, M. Ground Rules for Good Research (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002)
48 Chapter two contains a fuller discussion of this approach, and provides a rationale and justification for the adoption of these methodologies.
seeking to posit particular theoretical approaches as inherently better than others. Indeed, although I ultimately privilege poststructural methodologies in my investigation of the British armed forces in the thesis, I draw on a range of feminist work to formulate the research sub-questions that guide my engagement with that institution. The aim in the thesis is to explore alternative strategies for engaging with the reproduction of gendered subjectivity, and to be consciously reflexive about the limitations of the critical methodology employed to do this. This approach reflects what David Campbell has described as an ‘ethos of political criticism’ which involves:

An intervention or series of interventions in established modes of thought and action. Such interventions are thus positioned in a particular relationship to those practices they wish to critique. They involve an effort to disturb those practices that are settled, untie what appears to be sewn up, and render as produced that which claims to be naturally emergent. ⁴⁹

An ethos of political criticism informs the approach I take in the thesis, and I aim to make interventions in knowledge practices in feminist IR, as well as in the gendering practices performed by the British armed forces.

Chapter One
The Gendered Subject of Feminist International Relations

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine the reproduction of ‘gendered subjects’ in order to better understand how gendered hierarchy persists, despite attempts to challenge it. The analytical focus on ‘the subject’ responds to calls from feminists to better understand the productive character of sex, sexuality and gender in world politics, and to more fully interrogate the implications of poststructural theory for feminist praxis.\(^50\) It is through an engagement with processes of reproduction that the thesis explores the resilience of gender, and the potential for subverting and resisting the logics which structure and circumscribe the limits of gendered political imaginaries. As a site for this investigation, this thesis examines the politics of sexuality in the British armed forces. As such I locate the research within, and as a contribution to, feminist International Relations (IR) more generally, as well as the literature about militaries and militarism.

The organisation of this chapter reflects the audiences I intend to address, and begins with an examination of ‘the gendered subject’ in, and of, feminist IR. I trace the debates and interventions made by feminist scholars, exploring the rationale for rendering women visible and for deconstructing men, before examining the impact of queer theoretical and post structural feminist work. The second section of this chapter evaluates how feminists within IR have analysed militaries and militarism, before

considering the interdisciplinary literature, particularly in sociology, which examines
gender relations within state militaries. My engagement with this literature provides a
rationale for the investigation of homosexuality in the British armed forces, and refines
the sub-questions for that investigation.

In this review of the literature I have not attempted to cover everything in the vast canon
of work that can be classified as ‘feminist IR’ or the wide range of work which
considers the relationship between gender and the military; indeed this would not be
possible in a chapter of this length. Instead I have chosen to focus on particular studies
that illustrate best how different understandings of gendered subjectivity have
implications for research design, methodology, and overall conclusions reached. In
asking what is at stake in particular conceptualisations of gendered subjectivity, I seek
to politicise this choice and to explore the limits and ethico-political implications of
different conceptualisations.

The chapter advances two arguments as a result of the engagement with feminist IR, the
first concerning the underexploited potential there might be in poststructuralism for
feminist IR, and the second concerning the research methodology necessary to exploit
this potential. I argue that feminist poststructural work has made an important
contribution to understandings of the gendered subject as an effect of power, and has
effectively demonstrated how gendered hierarchy is sustained through that reproduction.
However I argue that there is a tendency to offer accounts which are perhaps too
coherent, and as a result emphasise how effective that reproduction is. I suggest that this
often results in ‘feminist fables’ which make a lot of sense, but risk reifying gender by
emphasising its power, rather than its vulnerability. I suggest that a shift in focus is

51 Moreover the performative categorisation of academic work is itself contingent and problematic.
52 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s),
necessary to fully exploit the inherent failures, contradictions and *immanent* deconstruction of gendered meanings.\(^53\) Related to this, I explore research methodologies commonly employed by feminists working in IR. I identify a predominance of textual analyses in poststructural accounts, particularly in terms of policy and media texts, and I propose that greater use of interview and ethnographic methods could be particularly useful for several reasons. Firstly, the pre-dominance of textual analyses which are limited to policy and media texts does leave feminist poststructuralism open to criticisms that it is abstract, academic and out of touch with people’s everyday lives.\(^54\) Secondly, if feminism is to fulfil its commitment to transgressing boundaries and locating ‘the everyday’ within the global greater attention must be paid to the ways gendered subjects reproduce *themselves*. In this way feminists could more effectively analyse how gendered subjects negotiate, reproduce and resist localised gendered hierarchies within the context of world politics.\(^55\) Finally, interviews and ethnographic data might generate ‘messier’ accounts of the gendered realities, which might present more critical opportunities for feminists to explore the immanent deconstructions and inherent failures of all attempts to order gender.\(^56\) It is important to emphasise that these comments are not a critique of the excellent feminist scholarship concerning policy and media representations of gender, but rather a call for greater use of different methodologies in order to complement these analyses and further develop feminist scholarship in IR.

\(^53\) Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’


\(^56\) Zalewski notes the tendency to construct coherence in academic practice. See Zalewski *et al.* ‘Roundtable Discussion’ 157
The second section of this chapter addresses the literature concerning contemporary state militaries and sketches the problematic which guides the investigation of homosexuality in the British armed forces. The literature has consistently found that state militaries are patriarchal institutions and the ‘integration’ of women has not changed military cultures. Research into military masculinities has consistently found that heterosexuality is a central component of this identity and that the official exclusion of homosexuality has been essential for preserving masculine identity and privilege. I will argue that the repeal of the ban on homosexuality in the British armed forces in 2000 has potentially significant implications for the gender relations of that institution, and that further research into the integration of LGBT personnel is needed.

**Feminist International Relations**

Feminist IR is often presented as offering a challenge to IR, rather than being a ‘sub-section’ of the discipline. Feminist IR has sought to transgress boundaries between domestic and international, and public and private with the intention of constructing feminist knowledge about IR which takes seriously that ‘the personal is international.’ As a result, feminist interventions have profoundly unsettled the core concepts of IR

---


58 Many feminists have argued that their work is marginalised in wider IR whilst others have argued that the tendency to situate feminist IR as marginal contributes to the marginality it laments. Rather than reproduce (and engage in) these debates, I start from the assumption that ‘feminist IR’ and ‘mainstream IR’ are discursively produced categories and that the debate itself performatively re-secures the centre of the discipline and its feminist ‘outsider.’ See: Pettman, Worlding; Smith, S. “Unacceptable Conclusions” and the “Man” Question: Masculinity, Gender, and International Relations’, in M. Zalewski and J. Parpart (eds.), The “Man” Question in International Relations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) pp. 54-72; Steans, ‘Engaging’; Tickner, ‘You Just Don’t’; Youngs, ‘Feminist International’; Zalewski, ‘Do We Understand’ Squires, J. And Weldes, J. ‘Beyond Being Marginal: Gender and International Relations in Britain’ British Journal of Politics & International Relations, 9, (2007) pp. 185-203’ Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’; Shepherd, L. J. (ed.) Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations (London and New York: Routledge, 2010)

59 Enloe, Bananas,
such as the state, war and positivist methodologies used to construct ‘malestream’
theories of IR such as realism.\textsuperscript{60} The feminist project in IR is a theoretically
sophisticated and complex endeavour, and crucially, a heterogeneous body of work.
Consequently it is impossible, and undesirable, to attempt to present or analyse the
reproduction of ‘gendered subjects’ in feminist IR in any general sense. Feminist theory
has long debated the concept of the subject in complex and theoretically sophisticated
ways, as any casual examination of different ‘types’ of feminism will demonstrate.\textsuperscript{61}
There are profound differences in the ways that gendered subjectivity is conceptualised
which results in very different political agendas.\textsuperscript{62} Yet, as Vivienne Jabri has reflected,
feminists have been ‘rather incapable of acknowledging ... [the] very real ideological
differences within feminist IR.’\textsuperscript{63} With this in mind, it is not my intention to evaluate it
against a pre-defined set of assumptions. Rather the discussion of feminist scholarship
in IR which follows instead sketches outlines of what I perceive to be the most
influential theoretical innovations about who feminist IR should study, evaluating them
on their own terms. In this way I hope to bring various approaches to the gendered
subject into conversation, asking what, and who, is the gendered subject of feminist IR,

\textsuperscript{60} Peterson, Gendered States; Peterson, and Runyan, Global Gender Issues; Pettman, J. J. Worlding
Women: A Feminist International Politics (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Steans, J.
‘Engaging from the margins: feminist encounters with the ‘mainstream’ of International Relations’
Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1994); Ticker, J. A. Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global
‘Feminist International Relations: A Contradiction in Terms? Or: Why Women and Gender are Essential
to Understanding the World ‘We’ Live in’ International Affairs, 80 (1), (2004) pp. 75-87; Zalewski,
M. ‘Do We Understand Each Other Yet? Troubling Feminist Encounters With(in) International Relations’
\textsuperscript{61} For an introductory survey see: Tong, Feminist Thought. See also Hansen, L. ‘Ontologies,
Epistemologies, Methodologies’ in Shepherd, L. J. (ed.) Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist
\textsuperscript{62} However, as Cynthia Weber demonstrated, it is particularly hazardous to attempt to organise feminist
IR into various categories. See her critique of Robert Keohane’s assessment of the relative merits of
empiricist, stand point and postmodern feminisms for IR: Weber, C. ‘Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad
Girls: Male Paranoia in Robert Keohane's Critique of Feminist International Relations’ Millennium, 23:2
(1994), 347. See also: Keohane, R. ‘International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist
\textsuperscript{63} Zalewski et al. ‘Roundtable Discussion’ 173
how these subjects are reproduced in research agendas, methodologies and conclusions, and with what effects.⁶⁴

I begin by considering moves to locate women and render them visible in IR, considering the theoretical ramifications for IR theory as a result of this. I follow this with an outline of feminist engagement with masculinity in IR, analysing the theoretical rationale for this move and evaluating the outcomes for research agendas and methodologies. I then explore feminist engagement with sexuality in IR, looking particularly at how queer theoretical insights challenge the male/female binary. Finally I examine how explicitly poststructural, deconstructive and queer theoretical work has been mobilised in feminist IR scholarship, assessing the efficacy of these approaches in feminist research.⁶⁵ I organise the chapter in this way not to suggest any linear progression of feminist thinking in IR, nor to present any approaches as inherently better than others.⁶⁶ Indeed although I ultimately privilege poststructural methodologies in my investigation of the British armed forces in the thesis, I draw on a range of feminist work to formulate research questions that guide my engagement with that institution.

⁶⁴ Of course I accept the irony that despite my careful efforts not to circumscribe feminist scholarship in IR, I am ultimately forced to re-invoke the term ‘feminist IR’ in a performative paradox similar to the ‘sex/gender’ paradox outlined by Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski in ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’

⁶⁵ I say ‘explicitly’ because as it will become clear, many feminist approaches in IR could be considered ‘postmodern’ (indeed Sylvester has argued that all feminist positions can be considered postmodern, see Feminist Theory and International Relations) and they do not fit as neatly into analytical boxes as Keohane suggests. However, many contemporary feminist scholars directly engage with gender by analysing ‘discourse’ and employing ‘deconstruction’ and ‘genealogy,’ using terms and methodologies which I argue are explicitly ‘poststructural’ in the general sense, and as such reflect very particular theoretical commitments.

Feminists have often begun by asking questions about women, in order to render them visible in international politics and to destabilise and critique existing frameworks which perpetuate their invisibility. Methodologically this has meant expanding the realm of the ‘international’ to include marginalised sites and spaces. Enloe’s pioneering *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989) brought domestic servants, military wives, factory workers, flight attendants and sex workers into the realm of the international, revealing that ‘the real landscape of international politics’ is populated by women as well as men, and that women’s everyday experiences should be taken seriously. Locating women has been essential to the epistemological challenge that feminism poses because the category of ‘women’ has been profoundly disruptive to hegemonic discourses of IR. As V. Spike Peterson explains, “‘adding women’ to existing frameworks exposes taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in those frameworks.”

Earlier feminist work developed analyses of gendered dynamics of international politics which radically critiqued concepts and process such as global economics and security by looking at these concepts and processes through what Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan call ‘gender-sensitive lens.’ This ‘first wave’ of feminist IR revealed the systematic exclusion of women’s experiences in IR theory and practice, and in doing so profoundly challenged the epistemological foundations and statism of mainstream IR.

---

67 Enloe, *Bananas*, 1
theories such as realism. It also highlighted the systematic inequality between men and women with regards to paid and unpaid labour, the disproportionate number of civilian causalities during war, and the marginalisation of women holding political office within national governments. These efforts went beyond a critique of IR and towards a ‘re-visioning’ of concepts and methodologies to enable an analysis of ‘relations international’ which took gender (and other ‘identity’ markers) seriously.

Although the explicit focus in this early work was on locating women in world politics, the focus on gender (often conceptualised in terms of masculinities and femininities) ensured that ‘men’ were always already included in these analyses. As Peterson and Runyan explain:

> Through a gender-sensitive lens, we see how constructions of masculinity are not independent of, but dependent upon, opposing constructions of femininity. In a sense, the presence of men depends on the absence of women. Because of this interdependence, a gender analysis of women’s lives and experiences does not simply “add something” about women but transforms what we know about men and the activities they undertake.

Hence the work that feminist IR did in rendering women visible, simultaneously allowed men to be seen as ‘men,’ rather than as gender-neutral. Consequently it is inaccurate to label first wave feminist IR as crudely concerned with women’s issues, understood in essentialist terms, nor to delegitimize its compelling narrative of the gendered nature of international politics on this basis. In an often hostile discipline, rendering women visible as a group arguably required analyses which were more general than specific,

---

70 Peterson, Gendered States; Ticker, Gender in; Sylvester, Feminist Theory. Eleanor O’Gorman and Vivienne Jabri describe early feminist IR as ‘first wave’ in ‘Locating Differences in Feminist International Relations’ in Jabri, V. and O’Gorman, E. (eds) Women, Culture, and International Relations (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1999) 1
71 Ticker, Gender in; Peterson, and Runyan, Global Gender Issues; Pettman, Worlding; Steans, Gender
72 Sylvester, Feminist Theory, 97- 105
73 Peterson and Runyan, Global Gender Issues, 7-8, emphasis in original
74 Arguably this is what some neo-feminist work appears to be suggesting. See, for example: Jones, A. ‘Does ‘Gender’ Make the World Go Round? Feminist Critiques of International Relations’ Review of International Studies, 22 (4), (1996) pp. 405–429
and which demonstrated forcefully that practices and theories of world politics were inherently gendered.

However, whilst it remains the case that the early works in feminist IR provided an excellent ‘diagnosis’ of the gendered impacts, processes and effects of international politics, there are disadvantages and risks to analyses which generalise about the inequality of women vis-à-vis men.\(^{75}\) Research that focuses on women as a group has a tendency to understand structures (economic, political, and social) as acting on women, constructing an analytical separation between those subjects and structures.\(^{76}\) For example, Tickner discusses the impact of global economic restructuring upon women, whom she argues are invisible and ignored by conventional economic analysis.\(^{77}\) The emphasis on structural oppression and inequality can also lead to the marginalisation of women who do not inhabit typical female roles. For example, Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry have suggested that violent women have been given insufficient attention in feminist IR and that studying women’s violence would lead to a better understanding of women as subjects and femininity as a construct.\(^{78}\)

Perhaps the main danger of generalised narratives of female oppression is that they portray the power of patriarchy as rather static, monolithic and impervious to resistance, which perhaps unwittingly reproduces its power. As Jane Parpart and Marysia Zalewski recognize, ‘too often men are characterized as an undifferentiated group with neither history nor divisions, uniformly committed to the subordination and exploitation of

---

\(^{75}\) It should be emphasised that these are ‘risks’ – I am not suggesting that all first wave feminist IR is ‘guilty’ of these charges, nor to suggest that feminist scholars were naively unaware of the risks inherent in their chosen analytical strategies.


\(^{77}\) Tickner, *Gendering*

\(^{78}\) Sjoberg and Gentry *Mothers, Monsters*
Jill Steans argues that the ‘impact on’ approach can also be criticised for reproducing men as the actors in world politics, and women the passive subjects. Moreover it cannot effectively engage with the complex reproduction of different subjects, structures and processes needed to sustain gender as an organising principle of social life and, for this reason, it is limited in its ability to analyse how gendered power functions.

Related to this, it is striking that in their efforts to render women visible as a group and ‘reclaim women’s hidden voices,’ feminist IR scholars have tended to do this in ways which often continue to silence women, because the women in these analyses rarely speak for themselves. Given that feminist politics is traditionally rooted in women’s experience, this notable absence warrants further reflection and I return to this point further when I discuss contemporary poststructural feminist work in IR.

**Different Women? The Women/‘Women’ Question**

The project to locate women in world politics has not been without methodological and theoretical challenges, for as Kathy Ferguson reminds us ‘the relation between efforts to

---

80 Steans, Gender 112
81 O’Gorman and Jabri, ‘Locating Differences’ 1
82 This is not to say that women never speak (for example Enloe often includes anecdotal evidence from particular women she meets within her narratives), nor to suggest that including the voices of women unproblematically provides direct access to ‘women’s experience.’ Nevertheless there is a significant methodological tendency in feminist IR narratives to speak about gendered subjects rather than to let them speak about their experiences.
83 I borrow this subtitle from an article written by Marysia Zalewski: ‘The Women/’Women’ Question in International Relations’ *Millennium*, 23 (2), (1994) pp.407-423
put women in the centre and efforts to deconstruct the centre are complex.\textsuperscript{84} The postmodern deconstruction of the subject has had a significant impact upon feminist theory and the arguments about the possibility of feminist politics without a stable feminine subject are well rehearsed in feminist theory.\textsuperscript{85} There has also been significant criticism of Western feminism by multicultural and postcolonial feminists who raise the issue of cultural difference, question the imposition of Western sex/gender binaries onto non-Western contexts, highlight inequalities between women due to race, ethnicity and other modes of oppression, and who question the right of feminists to speak on behalf of all women.\textsuperscript{86} It has been suggested that the diversity of experience between women has ‘thrown feminist politics into crisis’ as ‘contradictions, between a feminist theory that questions oppressive categories of social organization and a politics predicated on the totalizing unity of a category labelled ‘woman,’ have been thrown into sharp relief.’\textsuperscript{87} Yet feminists have continued to investigate women’s lives, and feminist IR has been engaging with these debates to varying degrees since the formal establishment of the sub-discipline.\textsuperscript{88}

One response to ‘difference’ is to consciously render visible women from different ethnic, cultural, and class backgrounds in peripheral locations. Jan Jindy Pettman’s \textit{Worlding Women} (1996) aimed to ‘world’ women ‘beyond white western power centres and their dominant knowledges’ whilst remaining committed to grounding feminist

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{84} Ferguson, K. E. \textit{The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory} (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993)


\textsuperscript{87} Goetz, A. M. ‘Feminism and the Claim to Know: contradictions in feminist approaches to women in development’ in Grant, R. And Newland, K. (eds)\textit{Gender and International Relations} (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991) 134

\textsuperscript{88} Such as it is possible to define such a ‘beginning’. Typically the 1988 LSE conference on ‘Women in International Relations’ is reproduced as the ‘beginning’ of feminist IR, in Britain at least. See: Steans, ‘Engaging’; Hutchings, K. ’1988 and 1998: Contrast and Continuity in Feminist International Relations’ \textit{Millennium}, 37 (1), (2008) pp. 97-105; Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’. For an example of this early engagement see: Goetz, ‘Feminism and the Claim’
\end{footnotesize}
knowledge of the international through the experiences of women. This is an effective strategy in so far as it allows Pettman to demonstrate the multiple, complex and intersecting axes of oppression. Crucially Pettman’s approach also acknowledges change, contestation and ongoing reproduction explicitly:

The term ‘Worlding women’ means taking women’s experiences seriously, while not assuming that any experiences are transparent or politically innocent. It assumes that all social relations are gendered, and rely on and reproduce certain kinds of masculinity and femininity, though not without context or change.

For Pettman the international and the personal come together in the ‘bodies of actual women.’ However these bodies ‘are not stable or transparent in their meanings or affiliations. Bodies become the site of contestation, and of negotiation of multiple identities.’ Pettman’s focus on ‘stories inscribed on the bodies of real women’ disrupt IR by rendering visible the way that bodies have been evacuated from theories and practices in a dangerously masculinist world. However the notion of ‘inscription’ on ‘real’ bodies, reproduces the distinction between biological sex difference, and a socially constructed gender and it could be argued that for this reason, Pettman’s approach cannot engage with the performative reproduction of sex/gender through physical violence or other structural and social processes. However, it might also be recognised as an effect of a conundrum that characterises feminist approaches more generally: the sex/gender paradox or predicament. Zalewski and Maria Stern have argued that feminist narratives inevitably reproduce the sexed identities and the gendered harms they seek to challenge. For example, when talking about masculinity and femininity feminists inevitably end up talking about how those ideas act on sexed

---

89 Pettman, Worlding x
90 Ibid., x-xi
91 Ibid., 213
92 Ibid., 213
93 Ibid., 214
94 For a theorisation of the ‘violent reproduction of gender’ see: Shepherd, Gender, Violence
95 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’
bodies, momentarily ‘forgetting’ that sex is discursively reproduced. Similarly policy implications of this feminist knowledge would be to educate men and women to do their gender differently, which only makes sense if we know who men and women are, as opposed to the ‘men’ and ‘women’ constructed through gender. In this way gendered knowledge produced by feminists ‘necessarily unravels and simultaneously reconstitutes itself in its own gendered image.’\(^96\) Hence the reproduction of gendered subjects in Pettman’s analysis might say more about the limits of feminist language and politics, than it does about the limits of her approach more specifically.\(^97\)

Sylvester’s *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (1994) responds to postmodern critiques of the subject by explicitly acknowledging that gendered identities are ‘technically... not real.’\(^98\) Throughout the text Sylvester signifies the indeterminacy of gender by referring to ‘people called women’ and using punctuation to indicate that “women” and “men” are discursively produced.\(^99\) Sylvester links her analysis of “men” and “women” with place, referring to ideas about their assigned or ‘proper place.’ This location of gendered subjects in metaphorical (and geographical) places, allows Sylvester to contextualise gendered subjects and to highlight how notions of ‘place’ are simultaneously constitutively produced in and through the reproduction of particular subjects. This is a potentially radical move, and is in stark contrast to an approach which responds to cultural difference by looking for different women ‘out there’ in different places. Her method of ‘empathetic cooperation’, requires us to engage in ‘mutual recognition,’ not from a unipolar position but from multiple or mobile subject positions. However it is not clear whether this attempt to escape and avoid reproducing gender is effective. Butler has argued that to be

---

\(^96\) Ibid., 621  
\(^97\) The implications of the sex/gender paradox for analytical strategies are discussed later on in this chapter.  
\(^98\) Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 53  
\(^99\) Ibid., 4
recognised, one needs to be intelligible, and that intelligibility is predicated on social norms that delimit the possibilities for recognition itself, such that the ‘indifferent structures that enable my living belong to a sociality that exceeds me.’\textsuperscript{100} Thus our subjectivity is perhaps not as mobile as Sylvester suggests, and if recognition is itself an effect of power, it is unclear how mutual recognition contains the transformational potential Sylvester suggests. It could also be argued that, from a ‘postmodern’ perspective we are always already recognising each other from a multiple and mobile subject positionality, and yet gender hierarchies persist.

The publication of an edited collection entitled \textit{Women, Culture, and International Relations} (edited by Vivienne Jabri and Eleanor O’Gorman, 1999) also sought to respond to epistemological and ethical challenges posed by the ‘heterogeneity of women’s voices.’\textsuperscript{101} However, rather than attempting to ameliorate or escape the challenge of ‘cultural difference’ what characterises the contributions to this book is their commitment to working \textit{with and through} the challenge of women’s heterogeneity. Consequently in this book the focus is on the production of difference, and how ‘through a variety of locales of difference, the richness, diversity, and struggle of identity for women in forging subjectivity is revealed.’\textsuperscript{102} Examining women’s participation in revolutionary wars, O’Gorman uses a Foucauldian account of subjectivity, power and resistance to examine the daily lives of women in revolution.\textsuperscript{103} O’Gorman explains that this understanding opens up ‘discursive spaces where power and resistance are creating, defining and defying each other in a tense dynamic of renegotiation.... In such a fluid context of power/resistance relations, difference and

\textsuperscript{100} Butler, J. \textit{Giving An Account of Oneself} (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005) 36
\textsuperscript{101} Jabri, and O’Gorman, ‘Locating Differences’ 2
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 10
\textsuperscript{103} O’Gorman, E. ‘Writing Women’s Wars: Foucauldian Strategies of Engagement’ in Jabri, V. and O’Gorman, E. (eds) \textit{Women, Culture, and International Relations} (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1999) pp. 91 -116
differentiation become conditions and effects of power.’ Subjectivity becomes a ‘shifting terrain of struggle such that modes of identity are claimed, reclaimed, and refused.’ O’Gorman argues that a focus on the everyday and local resistances reveals the dynamism of the reproduction of subjectivity and offers the possibilities of resistance and subversion. Jabri’s chapter explores the implications of a problematization of subjectivity and the move beyond ‘transcendental woman’ for feminist ethics. For Jabri, ‘adding culture to gender in some formulaic gesture towards difference is to preclude any discussion of the processes through which the self is constructed.’ She thus problematises the focus on including ‘the other’ without questioning the constitution of the self. She ultimately calls for an ‘ethical and praxiological discourse of dissent’ informed by the possibility for disruption of regulatory mechanisms through which the self comes to re-constitute itself and the social order. Both of these chapters, and the others in the book, show that the ‘decolonization’ of feminism ‘demands recognition of the ways which “we” are implicated in reproducing oppressions through particular representations of “others” we claim to see as equal and seek to support through emancipatory ideas and practices.’

Jabri and O’Gorman propose that the book articulates ‘a second-generation agenda for feminist international relations’ which ultimately calls for a contextualised engagement with women in different cultural contexts, and a move away from the general, to the specific. However, the challenge for feminism is to ‘elucidate difference in a way that

104 Ibid., 97  
105 Ibid., 98  
107 Ibid., ‘Explorations of Difference’ 45  
108 Ibid., 49  
109 Jabri, and O’Gorman, ‘Locating Differences’ 9  
110 Jabri, and O’Gorman, ‘Conclusion’ 187
holds on to the importance of power and resistance.' What the book demonstrates is that an engagement with local processes of inter-subjective reproduction might be a potentially very useful avenue to pursue for understanding the resilience of gender hierarchy.

**Feminist Progress? From Women to ‘Women’ to Gender**

In the light of these ontological and epistemological challenges discussed above a focus on women as the centre of feminist analysis could be seen as a somewhat archaic methodology. The move to ‘gender’ is often portrayed as a progressive one which escapes the essentialising focus on women and moves towards deconstructed women. Mobilising Derridean deconstruction Zalewski interrogates the linear thinking which locate the study of women as ‘before the gender beyond’ and questions the common sense logics which enable this move. She argues that although the move represents an attempt to go beyond essentialism and towards deconstructed gender, the move itself can result in essentialising women as a marginalised presence of questionable worth. This is because the move from ‘essentialised woman’ to ‘deconstructed woman’ is itself a discursive construction and dualism which is inherently paradoxical: in setting up a move from women to gender, the term ‘women’ comes to be essentialised as ‘shallow, derivative, untrustworthy, immature, and unlikely to produce anything of real value to IR.’ However, Zalewski shows that the overt move to gender ‘has not halted the ubiquitous theoretical return to woman in work on women, gender, and feminism in

111 Jabri, and O’Gorman, ‘Locating Differences’ 9
113 Zalewski, ‘Where is Woman’ 850
This is because for Zalewski, attempts to immobilise and define women as inessential and marginal are essential for maintaining the established order, therefore women can be considered to be simultaneously marginal and central, and ultimately everywhere and uncontainable.

In another intervention in the debate, Zalewski notes there seems to be an inherent assumption that a focus on women, ‘women’ or gender would imply a distinct methodology, epistemology and ontology depending on which foci one chose for their investigation. Rather than engaging with this assumption or reproducing the terms of the debate Zalewski looks instead at the effects of different modes of writing about women/”women.” This is a particularly shrewd strategic intervention which enables her to question the arbitrary and problematic dichotomies between ontology and epistemology that are themselves constructed. By contrasting Enloe’s ‘ontological’ focus in *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (1993) and Sylvester’s ‘epistemological’ approach in *Feminist Theory and International Relations* she argues that Enloe’s women are also “women” in that they are socially constructed and that the two approaches are not oppositional:

> Enloe’s ontological assertiveness actually leads her to the kind of epistemological concerns that Sylvester starts with (how do ‘real’ men/women/soldiers get constructed?)

Arguing that the women/’women’ dichotomy is a ‘false opposition,’ she suggests that the implications of this debate are to be found in a radical rethinking of the distinction between ontology and epistemology. This is an important point which has significant methodological implications. Sylvester is wary of starting an analysis from the

---

114 Ibid., 849
116 Enloe, *The Morning After*
117 Zalewski, ‘The Women/’Women’ 420
118 Ibid., 422
condition’s of women’s lives because the category ‘women’ is unstable and problematic, however it could be argued that this is precisely why a feminist analysis should start with women’s lives, in order to expose the contradictions, instabilities and complexities of their lived experience and their identities. As Zalewski points out, there is nothing inherent within feminist postmodernism that precludes the analysis of women’s lives.\textsuperscript{119}

For Zalewski what is at stake in the women/‘women’/gender conundrum is not the implications of choosing between them, but the implications of the illusions upon which the conundrum is based. Similarly the move from women to gender can be disrupted and the choice set up between them, problematised. These are persuasive and original arguments which extend the debate around reproducing subjectivity in feminist IR in profoundly new directions. However, I would suggest that there is something important at stake in the women/‘women’/gender question, although perhaps it is better characterised as a methodological question.\textsuperscript{120} Zalewski does seem to allude to this when she concludes that ‘the category of woman is powerful- especially if it is used in ways which defy the contemporary currency of (intellectual) common sense.’\textsuperscript{121}

Different reproductions of ‘women’ and knowledge about gender have different implications for resistance and feminist praxis more generally. Approaches which ask where the women are, do ‘presume that we know, as the world knows, what a woman is, and where she is stereotypically found.’\textsuperscript{122} Asking \textit{how} we know what a woman is might lead to different modes of critique and analysis.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 420
\textsuperscript{120} Although of course the distinctions between ‘methodology,’ ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’ are themselves constructed and mutually constituted
\textsuperscript{121} Zalewski, ‘Where is Woman’, 867, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{122} Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 115, my emphasis
Maintaining that gender hierarchy is ‘a system that is not reducible to some other form’ and that there are pre-discursive female bodies upon which gender acts has serious implications for the ‘resistance’ of gender hierarchy. For example, Peterson and Runyan devote a chapter to ‘Ungendering World Politics’ which argues that ‘to ungender power and politics we must alter the gendered division of power that established and continues to reproduce masculinist politics.’ They suggest that this requires both adding women to existing power structures and transforming those structures, indeed ‘nothing less than the elimination of structural violence will ungender world politics.’ However it can be argued that by maintaining biological sex/gender difference as the foundation for their critique, the resulting ‘ungendering’ they propose is still working within the existing discursive structures they are seeking to problematize. This replicates a ‘problem-solving’ logic which does not challenge the foundational terms upon which the problem is constructed.

Similarly in Globalization & Militarism (2007) Enloe explicitly calls for:

A move beyond an interest in the impacts of global affairs on women – though those impacts are important and do need careful monitoring. This book is a call for action, a call to use a feminist curiosity to develop explanations – that is, to discover causes.

She goes on to explain that:

Explanation – the discovery of what causes what- is the “brass ring” of any analytical endeavour. If you can discover a cause for something, you are on your way to creating a theory about it. A theory is an explanation that is

---

123 Peterson, ‘Introduction’ 9
124 Peterson and Runyan, Global Gender Issues 149
125 Ibid., 166
126 The authors do call for the rejection of male/female dichotomies in favour of a rethinking of what it means to be human (p.165). However the concept of ‘human’ can also be understood to be already gendered, see Butler, Gender Trouble, 151
128 Enloe, Globalization and Militarism, 11-12, emphasis in original
Articulating a search for causes of gender hierarchy and for the causes of women’s oppression in this way requires a particular conceptualisation of ‘cause’ and ‘impact’ which reproduces a particular understanding of gendered subjects whom are implicated in the processes being analysed. The methodology Enloe advocated can generate important feminist knowledge, but it cannot effectively engage with the subject as an effect of power, or ‘the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories that are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin.’

Clearly the differences between women and the postmodern deconstruction of the subject have not prevented feminists from analysing women in world politics, although these epistemological concerns do pose a considerable challenge for feminist research. However, I would suggest that this is perhaps more accurately understood as a methodological challenge, rather than a challenge to the existence of feminist praxis per se. Studying women remains a valid methodology for investigating gendered power, despite, or perhaps especially given the poststructural critique of the subject. I would argue that calls to abandon ‘women’ as starting point of feminist IR should be themselves subject to feminist curiosity, and possibly scepticism. There is clearly a case to be made for sustaining efforts to continue to include women as the subject of analysis, however, the exclusive or even primary focus on women in ways which do not effectively destabilise the production of gender, risk reproducing and reifying the binary upon which gendered hierarchy is based. A more effective destabilisation of this binary

129 Ibid., 12, emphasis in original
130 Butler, Gender Trouble xxxi, emphasis in original
131 For example Steve Smith argues that ‘the most productive focus is on gender, not women or feminism’ in “Unacceptable Conclusions” 62. For a detailed discussion of the implications of a move from ‘women’ to ‘gender’ see: Zalewski, ‘Where is Woman’
might have greater subversive potential, and a focus on men and masculinities might be one way to do this.

**Men and Masculinities**

It has been argued that the most significant theoretical change in feminist IR has been the engagement with masculinity studies since the late 1990s. I begin this discussion, controversially perhaps, with a brief consideration of the critique of feminist IR put forward by Adam Jones. I do this not to attribute his work as having particular influence on the growing body of feminist scholarship which considers men and masculinities, but rather to highlight some of the issues at stake in a move from ‘women’ to ‘men’. Notwithstanding the arguably patronising tone, misunderstandings, problematic assumptions, representations and generalisations found in his critique, his work is useful for illustrating the dangers of limiting, or even privileging, women in feminist IR. The main line of argumentation in his critique of feminist IR is that the feminist account is unbalanced because it focuses on women, it equates gender issues with women’s issues, and does not acknowledge (‘has a blinkered mindset’) that a ‘great number of males continue to suffer and die.’ To remedy this he calls for ‘more balanced and fertile theories of the gender variable’s operation in international relations.’ Similarly Charli Carpenter also refers to the desirability of ‘nonfeminist insights’ based on a ‘balanced gender analysis,’ in addition to the feminist

---

132 Hutchings, ‘1988 and 1998’
135 Jones, *Gender Inclusive*, xv
136 Jones, ‘Does ‘Gender’ 423. The use of gender as a ‘variable’ is probably enough to distance Jones from feminist IR but Jones declares himself ‘feminist and proud’ in Jones, *Gender Inclusive*, xiii
perspective. This seems to affirm the dangers highlighted by feminists that a move to ‘gender’ could be mobilised to suggest that gender is something which oppresses and disadvantages everyone equally. However although Jones and Carpenter frame their work in opposition, or (a more generous reading) in addition to feminist approaches, in one crucial respect they are similar to the feminist work they criticise. They remain within and reproduce the gendered binary, by invoking men as a group. However, rather than acknowledge the systemic and asymmetrical power relationships between these two groups, they instead cite violences done to men as if this undermines the feminist critique of androcentrism in Western culture which privileges men and masculinity. It does not. The evisceration of the systemic inequality between men and women that feminist IR has so powerfully demonstrated is what makes the ‘neofeminist’ move regressive, in terms of gendering IR. Nevertheless the Jones/Carpenter intervention arguably was made possible by earlier feminist accounts which tended to reproduce men and women in oppositional terms without effectively demonstrating how masculinity commands its power.

Zalewski and Jane Parpart respond to these theoretical and methodological dilemmas in their edited volume dedicated to masculinity in IR: The “Man Question” In International Relations (1998). They judged it necessary to move away from asking the ‘woman question’ because it was ‘insufficient (not changing the gender order in significant ways) and reactionary (presenting women as a ‘problem to be solved’)’, and so they asked the ‘man question’ instead. The aim of the book is to ‘problematize masculinities, the hegemony of men, and the subject of man within the theories and

---

138 Zalewski, ‘The Women/Women’
139 Zalewski, ‘Do We Understand’
140 Parpart, and Zalewski, ‘Introduction: Rethinking’
practices of international relations\textsuperscript{141} and offer an ‘alternative, gendered expose’ of international politics.\textsuperscript{142} The rationale for a focus on masculinities and men was inspired by postmodern critiques of the subject which suggest that the modernist project of claiming subjecthood for women or ‘adding women and stirring’ cannot destabilise the subject of ‘man’ or his power and privilege in international relations.\textsuperscript{143} Moreover the focus on men and masculinity allowed feminists to demonstrate that international relations is already gendered, something that could be missed where gender becomes synonymous with women.\textsuperscript{144} Zalewski is careful to emphasise that the move to interrogate ‘men’ must be understood not in terms of a progression in feminist scholarship, but as a change in ‘tactics.’\textsuperscript{145}

The study of men and masculinities studies owes much to feminism, and feminist theory.\textsuperscript{146} The works of Raewyn Connell in particular have been influential in feminist IR. For Connell, masculinity must be understood as diverse and multiple, contextually located and understood as a ‘configuration of practice’ within the wider regulation of gender which she calls the ‘gender order.’\textsuperscript{147} Her theorisation of gender as a complex historical process has demonstrated that patriarchy is resilient because it is dynamic and constantly transforming. Connell develops the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ to interrogate how particular groups of men secure their dominance over women (and other men):

\textsuperscript{141} Zalewski, M. ‘Introduction: From the “Woman” Question to the “Man” Question in International Relations’, in Zalewski, M. and Parpart, J. (eds.), The “Man” Question in International Relations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) 1
\textsuperscript{142} Parpart and Zalewski, ‘Introduction’ 1
\textsuperscript{143} Zalewski, ‘Introduction’ 8
\textsuperscript{144} Carver, T. Gender is Not a Synonym for Women (Boulder and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1996)
\textsuperscript{145} Zalewski, ‘Introduction’ 12
\textsuperscript{146} Edwards, T. Cultures of Masculinity (London and New York: Routledge, 2006)
\textsuperscript{147} Connell, R.W. Masculinities, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2005) 84; See also Connell, R. W. Gender & Power (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); Connell, Masculinities; Connell, R. W. Gender (Cambridge: Polity, 2002);
Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.\textsuperscript{148} Importantly, hegemonic masculinity is contestable.\textsuperscript{149} For Connell, this means that ‘change is visible even in dominant forms of masculinity, where there is struggle for hegemony as the circumstances for the maintenance of social power themselves change.’\textsuperscript{150} The study of masculinity engages directly with the reproduction of gender as a process which is embodied and performed by both men and women, and promotes a more fluid, dynamic and unstable conceptualisation of patriarchy which might have greater potential for subversion, challenge and transformation. Connell argues that rather than starting from the general picture of gender relations, understanding gender as a historical process requires ‘concrete study... a range of studies that can illuminate the larger dynamic.’\textsuperscript{151} Connell’s analysis of the ‘crisis tendencies’ inherent to gender orders is particularly innovative.\textsuperscript{152} These crises do not necessarily lead to a disruption of masculinities, but can instead lead to attempts to re-instate particular masculinities.\textsuperscript{153} Nevertheless the potential for ‘mapping’ those tendencies and interrogating how masculinities are reconfigured in the light of such moments of crisis has opened up a vast new field of enquiry in feminist IR. Thus the ramifications of masculinity studies for feminist IR go far beyond simply ‘including’ men as gendered subjects worthy of feminist analysis.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{148} Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition 77 \\
\textsuperscript{149} Connell, \textit{Gender & Power}; Connell, \textit{Masculinities}; Connell, \textit{Gender}; Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition \\
\textsuperscript{150} Connell, ‘Preface’, xi \\
\textsuperscript{151} Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition 86 \\
\textsuperscript{152} These tendencies arise due to contradictions in the three structures of gender: power relations (patriarchy), production relations (divisions of labour) and relations of cathexis (emotional attachment and sexual desire). Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition 84 -86 \\
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 74
\end{flushleft}
Charlotte Hooper’s extensive analysis of the construction of masculinities in *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations and Gender Politics* (2001) engages with Connell and other scholars researching masculinities.\(^{154}\) Arguing that feminist IR has tended to posit masculinity as too coherent, static and singular she explores the contestation between multiple masculinities in the construction of hegemonic Anglo-American masculinities. Her analysis poses an intriguing question about the reproduction of masculinities: ‘Might international relations discipline men as much as men shape international relations?’\(^{155}\) Her persuasive study demonstrates that world politics and IR as the study of world politics construct *each other* through representative practices and ongoing performative reproduction. This brings the reproduction of subjects squarely into focus by blurring the distinction between ‘the world’ and study of the world, and showing the dangerous, indeed often lethal, consequences of reproducing gendered subjects in theory/practice. Of particular value is her discussion of the impact of globalisation on hegemonic masculinity and her identification of ‘masculinist strategies’ deployed in the micropolitics of competing masculinities. Through a discussion of these strategies she effectively interrogates the resilience and complexity of hegemonic masculinities, and provides a compelling intertextual account of the reproduction of subjectivity in contemporary culture, theory and practice. Although she focuses on the resilience of masculinity, in her conclusion she suggests that ‘pointing out the contradictions within so-called masculinity highlights the multiple indeterminacies of an apparently stable gender order. Keeping such contradictions visible could help in very practical struggles.’\(^{156}\) This

---

\(^{154}\) Hooper, *Manly States*

\(^{155}\) Ibid., 2

\(^{156}\) Ibid., 229
has important implications for feminist research agendas, suggesting that looking for ‘failures’ of masculinity might be a potentially very fruitful avenue to pursue.

The “Man” Question contained chapters which explored the construction of multiple and hierarchical masculinities in different cultural contexts, particular institutions such as the military, and IR theory itself. Crucially, the authors documented and analysed the struggle and contestation between competing notions of masculinity, which means that the ‘men’ who inhabit these pages are denaturalised, and masculine power is rendered less stable and less obviously attributed to male bodies. However, as Parpart reminds us in the conclusion:

It is important to note how often contending versions of masculinity rely on the dichotomy between masculinity/manliness and femininity/femaleness to assert their superiority. Coding a particular form of masculinity as feminine or womanlike is still the best way to undermine its authority and power... Although men may compete with each other and various masculinities may struggle for ascendency, all men lose if the close association between maleness/masculinity (in any form) and power is broken.

What remains within this overarching framework is the implicit assumption that bodies are unproblematically divided into two sexes, and that gender somehow ‘acts upon’ these bodies. It also reinstates masculinity and femininity as oppositional, and symmetrical categories. This is acknowledged by Zalewski and Parpart in their introduction to Rethinking the Man Question (2008) where they write that the move to masculinities ‘does not overcome the constitutive production of gender as a heteronormative binary.’ The concept of ‘heteronormativity’ has a queer theoretical heritage, and it is to sexuality studies that the discussion now turns.

158 Parpart, ‘Conclusion’, 206
159 Parpart and Zalewski, ‘Introduction’ 2
Queering IR: Engaging with Sexuality

Since the 1970s sexuality studies has become increasingly influential in feminist and gender studies as well as in social and cultural studies more widely.\textsuperscript{160} Within this body of work what can be loosely called ‘queer theory’ has become particularly influential, comprising with a variety of approaches to dissident sexuality which adopt deconstructionist and poststructural perspectives which are heavily informed by the thought of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, among others.\textsuperscript{161} Although, as Terrell Carver notes, in the first two decades of feminist scholarship in IR sexuality ‘was almost universally a marker for ‘the gay question’ (which was almost universally a ‘man question’’) and that the ‘distance between sexuality studies and IR therefore looked immense, and attempts to bridge it looked decidedly marginal, and were easily marginalized.’\textsuperscript{162} More recently feminist scholars in IR have engaged more substantially with queer theory and sexuality studies and this has had a profound impact on research agendas and methodologies for investigating different gendered subjects in world politics.

Although arising out of gay political and theoretical priorities and a concern for the plight of sexual minorities, queer theoretical work does far more than ‘just’ researching the lives of sexual minorities.\textsuperscript{163} The deconstruction of all sexual and gendered identities radically decentres and destabilises gender norms and identities, including

---


\textsuperscript{161} Queer theorists, who are often committed to the deconstruction and critique of normalising practices and identities, often reject the notion of ‘queer theory’ and adopt a politics of refusing to identify as ‘queer theorists.’ For a discussion of this see Giffney, N, ‘The ‘q’ Word’ in Giffney, N. and O’Rourke, M. (eds)\textit{The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory} (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp.1-13. This general summary is drawn from Stevi Jackson, ‘Heterosexuality, Heteronormativity and Gender Hierarchy: Some Reflections of Recent Debates’ in Weeks, J. Holland, J. And Waites, M. (eds)\textit{Sexualities and Society: A Reader} (Cambridge: Polity, 2003) pp. 67- 83

\textsuperscript{162} Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 108-9

\textsuperscript{163} This is not to suggest that research into gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people is not important in its own right.
heterosexuality and the male/female binary this presupposes. The work of Butler has also been extremely influential in queer and feminist thought, and particularly in feminist IR.\textsuperscript{164} Perhaps most influential for IR feminists has been the concept of ‘heteronormativity’ and the problematization of heterosexuality. Feminists, such as Stevi Jackson, have engaged with the critique of heterosexuality, exploring how the hierarchy between heterosexuality and homosexuality is maintained:

by naming the other [homosexuality] as outsider... But heterosexuality also, and very importantly, is sustained by maintaining a silence about itself. It dare not speak its name, for in so doing it makes evident what it keeps hidden, that it is only one form of sexuality... hence heterosexuals often do not know what they are; they do not need to know; they are simply ‘normal’.\textsuperscript{165}

Jackson argues that gender hierarchy is fundamental to heterosexuality, that ‘its ‘inside’ workings are not simply about guarding against the homosexual other, but about maintaining male domination: and these two sides of heterosexuality are inextricably intertwined.'\textsuperscript{166} Although the links between patriarchy and homophobia have been theorised by feminist activists before,\textsuperscript{167} the queer theoretical problematisation of heterosexuality goes further than the concept of ‘homophobia’ because it addresses the regulatory and productive function that heterosexuality performs. Butler develops a critique of what she calls the ‘heterosexual matrix’:

the institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary result in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{164} Butler, J. Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (London: Routledge, 1993); Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble}; Butler, \textit{Undoing}. See chapter two for a detailed discussion of the work of Butler.
\textsuperscript{165} Jackson ‘Heterosexuality’, 77, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 77
\textsuperscript{167} See, for example: Pharr, S. \textit{Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism} (Little Rock, Arkansas: Women’s Project, 1988)
\textsuperscript{168} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble}, 31
The concept of heteronormativity can be understood as ‘the political power that heterosexuality has when its functions as a norm.’ The subversive power of the concept of heteronormativity lies in its ability to reveal the contingent and phantasmal nature of heterosexual ideal genders. However, as Butler cautions ‘there is no guarantee that exposing the naturalized status of heterosexuality will lead to its subversion.’

Carver mobilises a queer theoretical approach to make the case for more ‘effective’ feminist critiques of gender. He argues that feminist critiques are often founded on a confrontation between an object and its ‘other’ for example, IR and feminism, heterosexuality and gay sexualities and man and woman. For Carver this is problematic because it reifies the binary categories which ‘results in paradox and stand-off: an ‘outside’ secures and stabilizes the ‘inside’, which the outsiders are intent on transforming through critique, and within which they expect to be heard and find ‘voice.’ He continues to argue that a ‘more effective and genuinely deconstructive critique would promote destabilization through immanent contradictions and instabilities.’ Mobilising the work of Butler Carver argues that this would require a non-referential theory of language that goes ‘all the way down.’ This would mean that a critique of gender in IR could focus on the ‘language through which the narratives of knower and known are constructed in the first place.’ A crucial aspect of this would be a recognition that sexuality ‘appears not simply as marginalized ‘other’ but rather as the ubiquity – not just of heterosexual ‘orientation’ or behaviour – but of

---

170 Butler, *Bodies that*, 231
171 Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 122
172 Ibid., 122, my emphasis
173 Ibid., 110
174 Ibid., 118, emphasis in the original
reproductive necessity in relation to humanity tout court.\textsuperscript{175} What this means is that the binary opposition between men and women is constructed and projected onto the bodies such that these bodies can be rendered intelligible and naturalised. For this reason Carver argues that ‘it is thus the production of man and woman that becomes of interest to feminists.’\textsuperscript{176} The corollary of this is that the practices of world politics do not need to be (shown to be) ‘gendered’ by feminists in IR, rather world politics can be understood as:

repetitious practices that in already-coded language tell us what gender actually is (and in particular masculinity), before it is projected onto individual bodies as heteronormative sexuality and ‘sex’ itself.\textsuperscript{177}

To illustrate the implications of this approach I return to Tickner’s analysis of economic restructuring which focuses on the ways women are invisible in economic policy and how economic processes impact on them. An analysis such as Carver is proposing would examine how ‘women’ are produced as a category of workers within neoliberal discourse and practice; consider how women’s labour comes to reproduce particular occupations such that they become ‘women’s work,’ so that particular occupations reproduce what being a women means. These processes would be understood as simultaneously constituting gender, which only materialises in its effects. This has the potential to reconceptualise feminist dilemmas over who should be subject of feminist analysis, for if the analysis of ‘woman’ is derived through a critique of the masculinist processes through which she is constructed, paying attention to these processes serves to destabilise and denaturalise masculine power rather than reaffirm it by reproducing the male/female binary. However, Carver argues that ‘man’ ‘as overtly gendered and as apparently ungendered’ should first be subject to feminist critique and destabilisation.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{175}Ibid.,117, emphasis in the original
\textsuperscript{176}Ibid.,120, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{177}Ibid.,119, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{178}Ibid.,121
This is because gender is a set of binary and hierarchical categories which are *asymmetrical* because the feminine *is* the mark of gender. Thus the ‘feminine’ is reproduced as generally inferior and ‘other’ to the generically human, *as well as* to ‘the masculine.’¹⁷⁹

To illustrate the critical impact deconstructive and queer theoretical work has had on feminist IR I return to *Rethinking the Man Question*. Although the book is ostensibly analysing masculinities, the rationale for the book and the methodological approaches evidenced in this volume differ in significant ways from *The “Man Question”* discussed above. In the introduction of *Rethinking the Man Question* Zalewski and Parpart situate the edited collection in response to several important theoretical and methodological issues, which concern the reproduction of subjectivity. They begin by acknowledging that although the move to the ‘man’ question is about dislocating ‘male-orderedness,’ ‘interrupting this stability while at the same time invoking its terms – man, woman, femininity, masculinity, gender, sex – is however tricky.’¹⁸⁰ This explicit recognition of the reproduction of gendered subjects in and through feminist analyses, education, policymaking and practices is an important theoretical innovation in feminist IR, and it re-opens debates about how to responsibly conduct feminist research.

Perhaps the most important theoretical innovation of *Rethinking the Man Question* concerns how to account for the reproduction of gendered subjects as a process itself. Zalewski and Parpart write:

> Though gender remains significant and constant it also remains slippery and elusive. The ability to see gender, to document its effects and to know that

---

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 115
¹⁸⁰ Parpart and Zalewski, ‘Introduction: Rethinking’ 2
gender relations could be different, perhaps does not tell us enough about their reinvention or what might be done to ‘make them otherwise...’

They argue that because we know so little about how sex/gender is sustained there is a constant need to ‘rethink how we conceptualise and re-create gender, sex and the violent international.’ They emphasize that gender is ‘impressively malleable,’ and reaffirm the necessity of vigilance in relation to the ‘gendered remapping of international politics’ particularly since 9/11.

Unlike the *Man Question* which assumed male bodies and masculinity were mutually constitutive, this collection illustrates the instability of these connections and considers the ‘ways in which gender/sex disciplines, reconstitutes and organizes power.’ In particular the ability of masculinism to ‘take on different modalities, practices and performances’ is explored, which includes sites and practices outside of the sexed body. For example Cristina Masters interrogates the discursive constitution of the cyborg soldier, which although not biologically male is still coded as masculine. In a challenge to Donna Harroway’s argument that suggests there is transgressive potential in the cyborg, Masters argues that fundamental binaries between men/woman and masculine/feminine have been reinscribed and reified rather than challenged, such that the post human figure of the cyborg comes to eviscerate all the subversive potential found in embodied experience.

---

181 Ibid., 15, emphasis in original  
182 Ibid., 15  
183 Ibid., 3, 5  
184 Ibid., 9  
185 Ibid., 9  
Several of the contributors engage with Connell’s thesis which defines hegemonic masculinity as aggressively heterosexual.\textsuperscript{187} For Connell ‘gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity…. Gayness is easily assimilated to femininity.’\textsuperscript{188} Daniel Conway’s chapter offers a more complex picture of the interplay between masculinities and homosexuality through an analysis of the public rejection of military conscription by several white men in 1980s apartheid South Africa.\textsuperscript{189} His discussion of the End Conscription Campaign reveals the complex dynamics involved in challenging militarised gender norms. The objectors framed their protest in terms of masculine duty and heroic sacrifice which directly contested the narratives of state. Conway demonstrates that while this was a very effective destabilisation and subversion of those narratives, the state responded by branding the objectors are sexually deviant and cowardly, thus regaining control of the definition of militarised tropes of gender. This had the effect of constraining the objectors who strategically distanced themselves from homosexuality and ‘sought to assimilate their challenge to the state’s militarised gender norms within the heteronormative framework.’\textsuperscript{190}

Both Masters and Conway contribute to feminist knowledge about the resilience of gender. Master’s analysis of cyborg demonstrates well how subversive potential is not necessarily realised. Conway’s case study raises serious questions about transgressive potential of alternative masculinities and sexualities to disrupt hegemonic discourses. It also demonstrates the limits of political agency and subjectivity which are always refracted through societal norms and discourses, showing that the performative subject

\textsuperscript{188} Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 78
\textsuperscript{189} Conway, ‘Contesting’
\textsuperscript{190} Conway, ‘Contesting’, 139
is inseparable from the norms through which he or she is rendered intelligible.\textsuperscript{191} What both their analyses show so well is that hegemonic discourses have remarkable capabilities to respond and adapt, such that apparent challenges to them can be rapidly neutralised through the reappropriation of the discursive terrain. However, this does not mean that a focus on the subversive potential of non-normative sexuality should be abandoned. On the contrary, as Jamie Munn concludes:

research focused on investigating the insurrectionary potential of the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality, not forgetting the multiple masculinities that narrate both, may be the difference needed to deconstruct the ‘man’ in international politics.\textsuperscript{192}

\textit{Contemporary Poststructural Feminist IR}

Contemporary feminist scholarship has been heavily influenced by poststructuralism and deconstructive critiques of sex/gender binaries discussed above.\textsuperscript{193} Sylvester highlights the particular (ad)vantages of these approaches:

[they] often reveal the undersides, the cases that never really fit, the discontinuities that subverted the orderly narrative, the dissidences and dissonances that belie a story line, the homes that the ostensibly homeless build, the painterly talents lurking in the wrong bodies. Postmodern tendencies can also reveal the complicities that enable the old order to persevere.\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{191} See also Munn, ‘National Myths’ which explores the transgressive potential of homosexual masculinities in post conflict Kosovo.

\textsuperscript{192} Munn, ‘National Myths’,157

\textsuperscript{193} It is worth acknowledging that despite the growing body of feminist poststructural literature within the discipline of IR there has been a general lack of engagement and discussion between ‘critical poststructural’ IR scholars and ‘feminist poststructural IR scholars.’ This is symptomatic of the camp mentality identified by Sylvester, but also perhaps indicative of wider marginalisation specifically of feminist scholarship in IR. For example, in the 2006 c.a.s.e collective manifesto feminist contributions to security studies were reduced to a footnote: For a discussion of this see: c.a.s.e. collective, ‘Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto’ Security Dialogue, 37(4), (2006) pp 443-487; and the rejoinder: Sylvester, C. ‘Anatomy of a Footnote’ Security Dialogue, 38(4), (2007) pp.547-558. Also see the discussions in Smith, “‘Unacceptable Conclusions’”; Zalewski et al. ‘Roundtable Discussion’ 162

\textsuperscript{194} Sylvester, Feminist Theory 15
For feminist scholars who are committed to a poststructural or deconstructive approach to gender there are significant methodological challenges inherent to their theoretical perspective.¹⁹⁵ If, as poststructuralist theory has shown, subjects, discourses and meanings are characterised by their impossibility and radical incompleteness, how do they come to appear so entrenched and difficult to challenge? Or, as Kathy Ferguson puts it, the ‘vexing question’ is ‘what exactly constitutes patriarchy’s reproduction?’¹⁹⁶ To begin to deal with this question there is a need to go beyond ‘diagnosis’ and to investigate the complex, contradictory and messy social practices and interactions that reproduce gendered regimes of power.

Feminist engagement with poststructuralism is reflected in methodologies employed to carry out feminist analyses of world politics. In particular feminists have adopted discourse theoretical approaches to analyse a wide range of ‘texts’ which reproduce the gendered international, drawing on analytical strategies such as ‘deconstruction’, ‘genealogy’ and ‘subversion.’¹⁹⁷ Feminist IR has tended to draw heavily on written texts such media reports, popular culture and key policy texts produced by states and other international actors.¹⁹⁸ The deconstruction of these texts has lead to some creative and innovative feminist research which has begun to develop sophisticated analyses of the reproduction of gendered hierarchy by denaturalising ‘common sense’ political processes. The ‘gendered subject’ features in these deconstructions as an effect of

¹⁹⁵ Chapter two explores what a ‘poststructural approach’ might involve through an examination of the works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. The term ‘poststructuralism’ is problematic and many of the authors who are commonly associated with the term are keen to problematise the notion of ‘post structuralist’ as a category. For example, Derrida is ‘eager to maintain [the concept of ‘poststructuralism’] as suspect and problematic’. Derrida, J. ‘Deconstruction: The Im-possible’ in Lotringer, S. And Cohen, S. (eds.), French Theory in America (New York and London, Routledge, 2001) 16
¹⁹⁶ Ferguson, The Man, 3
¹⁹⁷ The concepts are usually associated with (respectively) Derrida, Foucault and Butler. Chapter two interrogates these approaches in greater detail through an analysis of the original texts.
¹⁹⁸ For example see: Hooper, Manly States; Masters, ‘Bodies of Technology’; Hunt and Rygiel, (En)gendering; Shepherd, ‘Veiled References’; Coleman, ‘The gendered violence’; Griffin, ‘Sexing the economy’; Kantola, ‘The gendered reproduction’; Sjoberg, ‘Agency’; Parpart, and Zalewski, Rethinking; Shepherd, Gender, Violence
particular discourses, which is not to say that s/he does not have agency, but rather than
the possibilities for his or her political subjectivity are contingent and limited, or
circumscribed, by social and political discourse and practice.\textsuperscript{199} What follows is a brief
survey of two contemporary feminist poststructural texts, Laura J. Shepherd’s \textit{Gender,
Violence and Security} (2008) and Maria Stern’s \textit{Naming Security- Constructing
Identity: ‘Mayan Women’ in Guatemala on the Eve of ‘Peace’} (2005).\textsuperscript{200} I aim to
juxtapose these two pieces of research to show that although they are both broadly
‘poststructural’, they adopt different methodologies and approaches to doing this kind
of work.

\textit{Gender, Violence and Security} (2008) has been described as ‘an excellent example of
contemporary feminist poststructural research.’\textsuperscript{201} In the book Shepherd conducts a
‘discourse-theoretical analysis’ of institutional policy relating to UN Security Council
Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in order to interrogate the discursive construction of
(international) security and (gender) violence which are simultaneously produced by,
and productive of, UNSCR 1325.\textsuperscript{202} Shepherd outlines the aims which motivated her
research: to illustrate the ways in which discourses of security and violence are mapped
in order to understand how UNSRC came to be written the way it was; to demonstrate
that the discursive construction of those concepts determined the failure of UNSRC
1325; and to show that these discourses could have been constructed differently.\textsuperscript{203}
The ‘policy relevance’ of the study is found in the ‘exploration of different possibilities’ and

\textsuperscript{199} Debates about the ‘agency’ of gendered subjects in poststructural thought are well rehearsed in
feminist theory. See for example: Butler, J. and and Scott, J. W. (eds), \textit{Feminists Theorize the Political}
(London: Routledge, 1992)
\textsuperscript{200} Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence}; Stern, \textit{Naming Security}. See also Stern, M. ‘‘We’ the Subject: The Power
\textsuperscript{201} Zalewski, M. cited on back cover of Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence}
\textsuperscript{202} Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence} 6
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 9-10
Shepherd emphasises her desire to engage with the practical concerns of policymakers.  

Shepherd outlines her approach to discourse and deconstruction which draws particularly on the thought of Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Roxanne Doty. She begins from the position that ‘discursive practices maintain, construct and constitute, legitimize, resist and suspend meaning’ and it is these practices, in relation to Resolution 1325, that Shepherd analyses in her book. She acknowledges that these discourses are only ever partially fixed, incomplete and contingent and notes that it is the ‘partial nature of fixing that allows a critical space for engagement.’ Although Shepherd does not draw directly on the work and concepts of Derrida, she suggests her methods are compatible with his theories of textual deconstruction. She writes that deconstruction ‘is not a method or strategy’ but rather it is ‘what happens... as a result of strategies of analysis employed in research.’ Her aim in deconstructing the policy texts is to disturb the coherence of the texts, demonstrate the antagonisms, explore possibilities that have been closed off and to open up and reconceptualise the concepts she is investigating. The resulting study offers a rigorous analysis of the ‘conditions of possibility’ which occasioned the writing of UNSCR 1325. Shepherd compellingly argues that the discourses of international security and gender violence (re)produce liberal, modernist configurations of political community and subjectivity. She critiques the ‘integration’ of ‘gender’ through ‘gender mainstreaming’, which she argues conceals the way that

---

204 Ibid., 10
205 For a full discussion of the methodology used in the research see chapter two ‘Analytical Strategies’ in Shepherd, *Gender, Violence*
206 Ibid., *Gender, Violence* 21
207 Ibid., *Gender, Violence* 21 emphasis in original
208 Ibid., 26 emphasis in original
peacekeeping operations and post-conflict resolution are always already gendered. Furthermore she demonstrates that the reproduction of ‘women’ as a homogenous social group who are essentially peaceful is problematic because it denies their agency, reinforces the gendered dichotomy between protector/protected and presents women as eternal victims. For these reasons she argues that the UN is ‘trapped within the discursive limitations of its own construction’ and cannot but fail to achieve the transformations of subjectivity and community that is sought in Resolution 1325.\textsuperscript{209}

The analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects is central to her argument. For Shepherd:

\begin{quote}
  gendered subjects inhabit certain spaces in the social/political order as configured by the violent reproduction of the international. These subjects are gendered not only by the violences of conflict and post-conflict peace(state)building, but also by the violences inherent in policy that seeks to differentiate subjects along gender lines, thereby constituting the differences to which it claims to attend.\textsuperscript{210}
\end{quote}

She goes on to argue that the ‘violent reproduction of the international, in both theoretical and practical context, is dependent on the violent reproduction of gender, however these violences are manifested.’\textsuperscript{211} Ultimately, Shepherd offers a substantial critique of gender mainstreaming on the basis of its inherent teleology which implies the process can be finite, problematic assumptions underpinning liberal forms of governance and notions of gender equality, and its overarching framing within narratives of modernity and neoliberal, individualist political orders.\textsuperscript{212} This is a powerful and sobering feminist critique and is an exemplary illustration of the importance of poststructural analytical methodologies for interrogating how gender is reproduced in international policy.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 164  \\
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 171  \\
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 171  \\
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 169-70
\end{flushright}
Undeniably Shepherd’s approach reveals much about productive power in international policymaking. However, it does tend to present the discourses around UNSCR 1325 as perhaps too coherent, and too effective, such that the emphasis of the analysis is towards revealing the ‘closure’ written into the resolution, rather than exploiting and disrupting those attempts at closure. For example, following an analysis of the texts which preceded the Resolution she argues that it ‘could not have been written any other way.’ The danger of this statement is in further entrenching and edifying discourses which are malleable, contradictory and prone to failure and paradox. Although Shepherd aims to explore the ‘tensions and inconsistencies that are product/productive of the contact of these discourses,’ I would argue that this aspect of the study is underdeveloped and that she does not fully exploit the critical potential of these tensions. Perhaps one reason for this is that Shepherd’s analysis remains within a concealing/revealing dynamic in relation to reading the texts, which might limit its potential to disturb and transform those texts.

To some extent Shepherd’s ability to exploit contradictions and tendencies is limited by virtue of the texts used for the analysis. Policy documents, reports and official texts can provide valuable insights but they are a particularly ‘sanitised’ and coherent manifestation of discourse. Although it is possible to looks for tensions and contradictions in the official discourse (indeed Shepherd does this) much of the contestation and negotiation over the meaning of the Resolution remains ‘behind the scenes’ and cannot be accessed. Moreover the implementation of policy is an interpretation and re-reproduction of the policy texts in a particular context, which is then reproduced through everyday interactions and practices in an endless performative

---

213 Ibid., 132
214 Ibid., 6
215 See chapter two for three interpretations of deconstruction and genealogy which consider the complex relationship between the reader, and the text being read.
process. Although Shepherd discusses UNSCR 1325 in terms of reproducing ‘subjects,’
these subjects do not animate the analysis. If we understand gender as ‘actively’
reproduced and negotiated in different contexts, policy agendas and reports can only
offer a limited insight to this process. They represent attempts to order gender, and
cannot offer any insight into how subjects themselves negotiate, challenge, transform
and reproduce gender norms. In the light of this, arguably there is a need in feminist IR
for more explicit analysis of the subversive potential in these partial fixings, and for
more research which investigates how different people negotiate, reproduce and contest
these understandings.

Maria Stern’s Naming Security- Constructing Identity: ‘Mayan Women’ in Guatemala
on the Eve of ‘Peace’ (2005) draws on poststructural critiques of security to explore the
connections between security, identity and subjectivity of Mayan women in
Guatemala.216 In examining how Mayan women understand and constitute their identity
through their security narratives this study speaks directly to the research questions of
this thesis. Stern conducts interviews with 18 Mayan women and bases her analysis
around their narratives, adopting a research methodology that is relatively uncommon in
IR generally. Stern’s understanding of the reproduction of subjectivity, recognises that
the subject ‘gains presence through the process of interpellation and articulation within
discourse,’ but that the subject can never be represented because it exceeds all attempts
to capture or name it.217 Identification then becomes the ‘naming’ of ‘what it means or
feels like to be a particular human among other humans.’218 This approach allows Stern
to explore the ways the narratives of Mayan women reflect the hybridity and
multiplicity of their identities, and the multiple and sometimes contradictory insecurities

216 Stern, Naming Security. See also Stern, M. ‘‘We’ the Subject: The Power and Failure of (In)Security’
217 Stern, Naming Security, 31
218 Ibid., 31
and threats they face. This approach also does not to reduce women ‘to mere effects’ of power, but reveals their individual agency, contributing to a growing body of work around the politics of resistance.\textsuperscript{219}

The security narratives articulated by the Mayan women are used to deconstruct and effectively expose the contingency and impossibility of all identity claims, profoundly unsettling modern logics of security and sovereignty. Stern specifically interrogates the ‘lacunae and contradictions’ of in/security and its relation to Mayan women’s identity claims in order to open up ‘terrains of meaning’ to enable a rethinking of in/security.\textsuperscript{220}

Her analysis of the complex security narratives of Mayan women reveals that they:

reject the security story written and enacted by the Guatemalan state as violent and dangerous, yet clearly cannot completely escape the conflicting grammars, or logic, of its plot. They thus simultaneously rearticulate and disrupt in/security as it has been written in modern account of politics.\textsuperscript{221}

Thus Stern finds attempts to articulate in/security ultimately risk reproducing violent security logics they are attempting to resist. However the narratives also show that these attempts to narrate security and identity \textit{necessarily fail}, and therein she finds political possibility. In this way Stern engages with ‘failure’ by arguing that exposing the impossibility of security and identity is a political intervention which disrupts totalizing and violent narratives and opens up space for alternative modes of living, modes which embrace uncertainty, failure and in/security in ways which generate less harm.

Stern’s innovative approach to analysing the reproduction of Mayan women’s identities


\textsuperscript{220} Stern, \textit{Naming Security}, 41

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 10
also generates new possibilities for engaging with the sex/gender predicament identified by Stern and Zalewski. This predicament means that ‘feminist stories repeat the very grammars that initially incited them as narratives of resistance’ and become complicit in the violences they seeks to ameliorate. However, in Stern’s analysis these grammars are revealed to be unstable and contradictory in such a way that the analysis undermines the reproduction of those grammars. This engagement with aporia, impossibility and disruption is a potentially very useful avenue to pursue, as the work of Stern arguably demonstrates. Indeed, Stern and Zalewski make this case in their article about the sex/gender paradox. They suggest that rather than viewing the performative failure to escape gender as cause for disillusionment, or as something to ‘strategically’ ignore, it is possible to reconceptualise that failure:

Refracted through the conceptual framework of aporias we might re-imagine feminist failure as bringing possibility – the hope of rupturing the hegemony and assumptions of powerful political concepts – of thinking and creating new social, ethical, economic relations outside their oppressive structures of the hegemonic political epistemological order.

They go so far as to suggest that ‘failure and disenchantment are perhaps necessary to re-imagine the possibilities of unrecognisable interventions that lie at the heart of feminist political imaginations.’ This is an enticing proposition, which arguably warrants further exploration and attention in feminist IR.

Stern’s work also raises methodological issues. For Stern, the value of the interviews analysed lies in their ‘untidiness,’ and their exposure of the disorder that characterises attempts to secure meaning and identity. The tendency to construct coherence in academic practice is noted by Zalewski when she admits that ‘the very idea of messiness

222 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 616
223 Ibid., 629
224 Ibid., 613
225 Stern, Naming Security, 12
perhaps exudes too much of a feminist gloss." Yet engaging with messiness is essential for understanding social and political processes and interviews in particular offer one of the best ways to access the complexity of social life. I have suggested that in feminist IR poststructural work tends to focus on policy and media texts, often for very sound practical reasons given the subject matter than IR often privileges. However, if feminists are going to engage more fully with localized reproductions of gender this will require research methodologies which can access how gendered subjects reproduce themselves. Moreover, there might be strategic advantages for feminists in re-connecting with the experiences of women’s (and men’s) lives in order to bridge unproductive chasms which often appear to exist between different ‘types’ of feminists. Finally, in order to fully realise the potential of Stern and Zalewski’s reconceptualisation of feminist failure I would argue that feminists might need to embrace a wider variety of ‘data gathering’ techniques, which would probably include interviews.

**Investigating Gendered Militaries**

This section mobilises the insights garnered from the literature review of feminist IR to assess the literature that considers gender and the military, drawing on work in political geography, sociology and politics, as well as IR. The following discussion traces some of the key debates and analysis relevant to my investigation of sexuality in the British armed forces. The engagement with this literature develops a rationale for my choice of this particular case study and enables a ‘fine-tuning’ of the research sub-questions

---

226 Zalewski et al. ‘Roundtable Discussion’ 157
227 For example it is not always possible or desirable to go to war zones to conduct ethnographic research.
228 For a discussion of the alleged gulf between modernist and postmodernist feminisms see: Zalewski, *Feminist After*. 

83
which shape the analysis in chapters three to five of the thesis. Central to the evaluation of this literature is an interrogation of how different studies have conceptualised gendered subjectivity and what impact this has had on their approach and conclusions drawn. In this way the review of this literature is a further illustration of what is at stake in particular conceptualisations of the gendered subject.

Feminist IR has paid close attention to the role, composition and funding of state militaries across the globe. Much of this work locates the study of militaries into broader understandings of militarisation, globalisation and security.229 The gendered processes inherent to militarism are understood as simultaneously product and productive of, masculinity and femininity in wider society.230 Enloe in particular has developed a compelling body of work which investigates the centrality of gender to these processes.231 Perhaps the central insight of feminist scholarship is that despite significant changes in gender relations and conflict through history, war-making continues to rely on gendered and sexualised constructions of the state, state militaries and international relations.232 Whilst these studies are nuanced and sophisticated, they have consistently come to similar conclusions about the relationship between gender and militarism. Zalewski and Stern name these ‘typical’ accounts as ‘familiar feminist fables of militarisation’ whose ‘basic storyline’ has made a great deal of sense.233

229 Enloe, Does Khaki; Reardon, Sexism; Elshtain, Women and War; Enloe, Bananas; Peterson, ‘Security and Sovereign States’; Enloe, The Morning After; Zalewski, ‘Well, what is the’; Moon, Sex Among Allies; Peterson, and Runyan, Global Gender Issues; Enloe, Manoeuvres; Tickner, Gendering; Hansen, ‘Gender, Nation, Rape’; Lee Koo, ‘Confronting a Disciplinary’; Tickner, ‘Feminist Perspectives’; Enloe, The Curious Feminist; Whitworth, Men, Militarism; Shepherd, ‘Veiled References’; Hunt and Rygiel, (En)gendering; Sjoberg and Gentry Mothers, Monsters; Enloe, Globalization; Cockburn, ‘Gender Relations’; Sjoberg, and Via, Gender, War; Sylvester, Experiencing War
230 Cockburn, ‘Gender Relations’; Reardon, Sexism; Tickner, Gendering; Peterson and Runyan, Global Gender Issues
231 Enloe, Bananas; Enloe, Does Khaki; Enloe, The Morning After; Enloe, Manoeuvres; Enloe, The Curious Feminist; Enloe, Globalization
233 The basic storyline is that socially constructed masculinity is associated with violence and relies upon socially constructed femininity to make sense. Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ pp.611-630
Feminist analyses of war and militarism continue to develop alongside changes in world politics. Two recent edited volumes are particularly exemplary in this respect. Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via’s *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives* (2010) contains chapters which explore many aspects of contemporary conflict and processes of militarisation including relations between the European Union and the United States, the military family as a crucial site of processes of militarisation, the rise of private military corporations, and rape as a practice of cultural destruction in the Sudanese civil war. *Feminism and War: Confronting U.S. Imperialism* (2008) edited by Robin L. Riley, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Minnie Bruce Patt explores the intersection of racism, sexuality and gender specifically in the context of US wars in the era of capitalist and cultural hegemony. Contributors explore how US militarization:

Deploys gendered roles that embody oppressive power relations. It depends on the manipulation and demonization of complex structures of sexuality, including same-sex and queer sexualities, and on the assumption that a Eurocentric heteronormative heterosexual ‘order’ is an underpinning for both nation and empire.

---

This collection includes analyses of the torture at Abu Graib,\textsuperscript{239} post colonial critiques of the feminist attempt to rescue women in Afghanistan\textsuperscript{240} and a section dedicated to feminist activism which organises against imperialism and war.\textsuperscript{241}

The sheer breadth and complexity of these impressive collections might be cause for questioning the analytical focus of this thesis, which concentrates on the regulation of sexuality within the British armed forces. This focus might appear to be limited, or even a retrograde move in terms of understanding wider economies of violence in world politics. Indeed, Zillah Eisenstein observes that in terms of militarisation the ‘actual military is only a small, even if central, aspect of this disciplining and regulating of social relations.’\textsuperscript{242} However, the military, as the primary coercive instrument of the state, is an institution which continues to command vast resources, status and privilege.\textsuperscript{243} Moreover as Jean Bethke Elshtain demonstrated, militarised tropes about ‘Just Warriors’ and ‘Beautiful Souls’ have been central to Western notions of citizenship, and the ‘proper place’ for men and women in society.\textsuperscript{244} State militaries, have played a significant role in reproducing these tropes, and some have identified the military as an important site for the maintenance of heteronormativity in society more widely.\textsuperscript{245}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{241} See the chapters under ‘section four’ of Riley, \textit{Feminism and War: Confronting U.S. Imperialism} (London and New York: Zed Books, 2008)
  \item \textsuperscript{243} Enloe, \textit{Manoeuvres}
  \item \textsuperscript{244} Elshtain, \textit{Women and War}
  \item \textsuperscript{245} Paul Higate argues that ‘the inscription of heterosexuality into all aspects of culture… is deeply bound up with the… [combat masculine warrior] ethic.’ See Higate, P. R. ‘Concluding Thoughts: Looking to the Future’ in Higate, P. R. (ed.) \textit{Military Masculinities: Identity and the State} (Praeger: Westport, 2003) 209
\end{itemize}
Perhaps the most important reason for studying militaries is to better understand how
gendered hierarchy sustains itself. Feminists in IR have often understood militaries to be
the bastion of patriarchy or as Edmund Hall puts it, as ‘the ultimate boys’ club, the
‘apogee of all that is male and macho.’

Peterson and Runyan have suggested that it is
the ‘one highly legitimated and organized institution within most societies, [in which]
men not only can but – to be successful- must prove their masculinity.’

Feminists have argued that despite the inclusion of women the ‘masculinized culture’ of the world’s
militaries has not changed.

Yet Enloe maintains that it is important to pay attention
to militaries and in particular to women serving within the ranks ‘because taking women
soldiers seriously allows one to see whether the patriarchal inclination to privilege
masculinity... is lessened when women join the ranks.’

She argues that when we pay close attention to the negotiation of gender in the military we find many ‘times of
patriarchal discomfort and confusion’ which are particularly valuable to explore.

Ultimately, for Enloe:

We will never fully understand patriarchy’s adaptive qualities and its limits
if we avoid studying those women who are trying to pursue their own goals
inside such patriarchal institutions.

This is a powerful rationale for continuing to analyse military institutions, and in
particular to study those gendered ‘others’ such as women and sexual minorities who
arguably occupy marginalised positions within modern militaries.

---

246 Hall, *We Can’t Even*, 67-8
247 Peterson, and Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*: 118, emphasis in original
248 Tickner, *Gendering*: 58. See also: Enloe, *Does Khaki*; Elshtain, *Women and War*
249 Enloe, *Globalization* 68
250 Ibid., 81
251 Ibid., 83, my emphasis
Women’s Participation in the Military

There is a large body of literature which addresses women’s participation within state militaries, much of it based on the American experience. Women’s involvement in Western militaries, debates about combat exclusion and the link between citizenship and the right to defend the nation, arguments about how women affect combat effectiveness, sociological explanations of factors affecting women’s integration and feminist debates about the desirability of female participation in militaries. Despite this breadth of literature it has been argued that the contemporary debate on women in the military tends to remain on the macro level, thus


253 For example Noakes, Women in the British Army; Bomford, Soldiers of the Queen

254 For example Yuval-Davis, Gender and Nation; Solaro, Women in the Line; Sherrow, Women


marginalising the experiences of women soldiers themselves. Helen Carreiras’s 
*Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (2008) 
addresses this deficiency and tries to bridge the ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ levels. Carreiras 
carries out a comparative study of female participation in NATO countries which 
provides a valuable resource for assessing women’s participation. Crucially she finds 
that there is no automatic link between greater numbers of women, or the length of time 
women have participated in different militaries, and the overall level of gender equality 
in those institutions:

> Women are still *tokens* in the military and are likely to remain so in the near 
future. Besides minority status, gender “inappropriateness” in a profession 
that is normatively defined as masculine still accounts for women’s lack of 
organizational power and influence. But most of the problems military 
women have to face—performance pressures, blocked mobility, social 
isolation, or sexual harassment—result from tensions that are not revocable 
“by decree” and that exist beyond the military context.

Although adopting a very different methodological approach Carreiras’s findings 
correlate with Enloe’s, who argues that modern militaries try to recruit and deploy 
women in ways which do not subvert the masculinised culture of the military. Indeed 
Sandra Whitworth highlights the astonishing finding that ‘the majority of cases of 
PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] in female soldiers result not from witnessing or 
participating in horrific events... but from sexual harassment and abuse experienced 
within a military setting.’ Clearly the literature has provided ample evidence that 
militaries continue to marginalise women, and put them at risk of sexual harassment, 
but it has not fully explained *how* this is able to continue, despite various policy 
initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and equality in contemporary militaries.

---

258 Sasson-Levy, ‘Feminism and’  
259 Carreiras, *Gender*  
260 Carreiras, *Gender*, 206, emphasis in original  
261 Enloe, *Manoeuvres*  
The literature also tends to discuss the desirability of, and problems posed by, women’s ‘integration’ into male dominated, masculinized militaries. However, as Regina Titunik points out, the assumption of the military as a hyper-masculine space obscures complex military cultures and imposes a framework from ‘outside’ through which to understand and explain the gendered military. This framing also tends to rest upon problematic assumptions about the nature of gendered subjectivity because by focusing on how women are integrated or managed within the military, the productive power of the military to discipline and reproduce gendered subjects is rendered invisible. Moreover the disproportionate attention to servicewomen in this research continually reproduces women as ‘exceptional’ and reifies the masculine status of the military.

Related to this it is widely held in feminist accounts that female soldiers inherently present a challenge to hegemonic masculine norms that characterise militaries. For example, in their article about representations of the Jessica Lynch story in the US media, Claire Turenne Sjolander and Kathryn Trevenen argue that the media reports ‘re-order the disrupted gender norms that are the result of women serving in military combat roles.’ However if women’s participation in militaries does not challenge hyper masculine military cultures, it is contradictory to posit female soldiers as intrinsically disruptive simply by virtue of being ‘not male,’ and arguably this form of argumentation leaves feminist theorising in something of an analytical deadlock. It also limits our ability to engage with the productive power of institutions and gendered

---

263 Titunik, ‘The Myth’
265 See, for example: Kronsell, ‘Method for studying silences’; Heggie, Uniform Identity?; Turenne Sjolander and Trevenen, ‘One of the Boys?’
266 Turenne Sjolander and Trevenen, ‘One of the Boys?’ Jessica Lynch, a young soldier in the US military, was rescued by US forces from an Iraqi hospital in 2003 and was heralded simultaneously as a national heroine, and a ‘damsel in distress’
agents themselves. By assuming that women ‘enter’ the military, we presuppose that what ‘woman’ means is stable and separate from ‘the military’ which is a masculine space. This closes of alternative questions one might ask, such as how are ‘women’ produced within military spaces? How do women as embodied military subjects reflect, sustain or transform gender norms? How do women articulate themselves in relation to these norms and how do they actively negotiate them? To ask these questions would radically collapse the distinction between ‘subjects’ and ‘culture,’ and requires a shift in focus from ‘feminist common sense’ about militaries towards a messier, and more ambiguous analysis of the reproduction of gender in those institutions.

Military Masculinities

Despite the growth of men and masculinities studies, relatively little has been written specifically on military masculinities. As a result many analyses of military masculinity, such as those outlined in ‘traditional’ feminist accounts, remain very general and perhaps oversimplified. For example, Connell portrays military institutions in no uncertain terms: ‘military forces are patriarchal institutions.... It is clear that this construction of [a narrowly defined hegemonic] masculinity is a widespread feature of military life.’ However as Titunik has argued ‘the military is not a monolithically or rigidly hyper-masculine environment, but a complex culture that embodies competing values, some of which have facilitated the advance of servicewomen.’ She argues that the ‘qualities’ required for organized warfare are not aggression and bloodlust, but teamwork, submission, obedience, and self-sacrifice which she says are all qualities that

---

268 Connell, Gender, 41
269 Titunik, ‘The Myth’ 163
both opponents and proponents of an imagined hyper-masculine military associate with femininity.\textsuperscript{270} Titunik’s assertion that hyper-masculinity is a ‘myth’ is provocative but is probably an overstatement given that research continually finds that militaries are undoubtedly sites where particular masculinities are privileged and reproduced.\textsuperscript{271} Nevertheless Titunik demonstrates well the dangers of problematic assumptions when analysing militaries.

Paul Higate’s edited collection, \textit{Military Masculinities: Identity and the State} (2003), deconstructs traditional stereotypes of military identity and offers more complex analyses of a plurality of masculine identities within modern militaries.\textsuperscript{272} John Hockey draws on his participant observation of Infantry soldiers in the British Army to show how heterosexuality, aggression and risk taking are valorised through continuous social practices.\textsuperscript{273} Higate's chapter explores the way in which clerks within the Royal Air Force are 'belittled as worthless and unmasculine.'\textsuperscript{274} Samantha Regan de Bere explores how naval personnel actively contest and negotiate discourses about masculinity.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{270} Titunik, ‘The Myth’\textsuperscript{147}
\textsuperscript{272} Higate, \textit{Military Masculinities}
Rachel Woodward documents how identity construction within militaries is highly contingent and always in relation to 'space, place and location.'

The implication of *Military Masculinities* is that whilst the British armed forces 'continue to be characterized by a relatively stable constellation' of masculine cultures those masculinities are more plural, contested and fluid that some conceptualisations of the military allow. Claire Duncanson has argued in a similar vein in her analysis of 'peacekeeper masculinity.' She argues that as masculinities are actively constructed in relation to the contexts men find themselves in, peacekeeping could play a role in constructing alternative military masculinities. Her analysis of autobiographical accounts written by soldiers in Bosnia demonstrates that although peacekeeper masculinity remains militarized and constructed through feminised Others, it represents an important challenge to gendered dichotomies associating men with war and women with peace which means it 'has the potential to be more significant than many feminist allow.'

She continues to argue that:

> It is through such challenges to traditional gender dichotomies that we can open up the space to challenge both militarism and oppressive masculinities ... Rather than insisting that it [peacekeeper masculinity] only serves to legitimize militarism, I argue that it can also be interpreted as a challenge to militarism ... Disruptions to established discourses linking masculinity and militarism are there to be encouraged and exploited rather than dismissed and ignored.

Duncanson’s call for greater engagement with disruptions to hegemonic masculinity is a response to commonsense feminist fables of militarisation which can limit the ability of

---

277 Higate, ‘Concluding Thoughts’ 204
279 Ibid., 76-7
feminists to engage with, and exploit the challenges to hegemonic discourses. Looking specifically for disruptions and challenges to this familiar account might be a way of reproducing hegemonic masculinities in a different way. This intervention demands a commitment to exploring the breaks and discontinuities in feminist narratives, not to invalidate them, but to performatively challenge their reproduction in theory/practice.

Studying masculinities clearly generates useful feminist knowledge about the reproduction of servicemen in militaries. However, Rachel Woodward offers an observation about the concept of 'military masculinities.' She questions its continuing relevance and calls for a critical discussion concerning its utility for understanding gender relations within contemporary militaries. This is an important question, because as with the move to masculinities within feminist IR, studying men and masculinities does not necessarily overcome the heteronormative binary underpinning gender, and can limit the ability to understand what is at stake in those masculinities. For example, Marcia Kovitz explores the construction of military masculinities to maintain the militaries unity of purpose and to ensure troop solidarity. She argues that the emphasis on male/female difference is crucial to this process because 'uniform masculinity (uniformity, strength, etc.) and an opposition to femininity (diversity, weakness, etc.)... is used to deflect, mask, and contain these tensions between multiple and unequal masculinities.' The implication of this argument is that the study of masculinities must be located within wider gendered context.

---

280 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 621
281 Woodward, ‘Locating’
Sexuality in the Military

There is a growing literature which explores the relationship between homosexuality and militaries, particularly with regard to the American policy of ‘Don’t Ask Don’t Tell.’ This literature includes appraisals of international patterns of integration, arguments for and against policies of exclusion and histories of ‘gay warriors.’ Whilst providing useful general data and engaging in political debates about the effects of homosexuals in the ranks, these approaches uncritically reproduce the military as a space to which lesbians and gays are either allowed or not allowed to enter. Thus the limits to these analyses is that they cannot engage with the reproduction of what it means ‘to be homosexual’ within military contexts or analyse the role of the military in reproducing particular forms of gendered and sexual identity.

Feminist analyses tend to approach sexuality in the armed forces in terms of how it relates to gender relations. Carol Cohn’s analysis of the American ban on open homosexuality explicitly links male fear of homosexuality to their fear of being

284 For example Segal, et al. ‘Gender and Sexual’; Levy, ‘The Right to Fight’
285 For example Hall, We Can’t Even; Tatchell, We Don’t Want to
286 For example Burg, Gay Warriors
feminized. Cohn asks several feminist questions which engage with the ‘subtext’ of debates around gay participation: ‘Why are people so upset about gay men rather than lesbians? Why are men (both inside and outside the military) so much more opposed to gays in the military than women?’ These questions lead her directly into an interrogation of the constitution of male subjectivity within military contexts. Documenting the homoeroticism and emotionally charged practices of ‘male bonding’ Cohn argues that the paradoxical reality is that the military institution constructs and upholds rigid stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity whilst simultaneously providing context (and cover) for men to transcend the limitations of ‘normal’ male relationships. Consequently what is protected by the ban is the appearance of the heterosexual masculinity of the institution itself, and as a corollary of this the masculinity of the men serving within it:

If gays are no longer banned... anyone in the showers might be gay – and straight soldiers suddenly imagine themselves as the objects of the male gaze- just as women are... the problem is not that the imagined homosexual gaze turns straight male soldiers into gay men but that it turns them into women. Their gender, not their sexuality, is at stake.

Consequently if gays are officially allowed into the military it will be impossible for the military to ‘exert the same kind of masculinity-granting power; it also disrupts the chain of signification: military, real man, heterosexual.’ Hence for Cohn lifting the ban on homosexuality has disruptive and potentially transformative potential for the military.

Taking a similar approach Melissa S. Herbert uses the analysis of sexuality in the military to understand servicewomen’s behaviour. Herbert employs the concept of ‘doing gender’ to frame her enquiry into the ways servicewomen in the US military use
behavioural strategies to negotiate gender norms. Based on survey research with hundreds of women she found that 49 percent of women felt pressured to act feminine or masculine, and more than 60 percent believed that penalties existed if they were perceived as too feminine or too masculine.\textsuperscript{292} She found that the penalties for both gender violations included accusations of sexual deviancy, either as ‘sluts’ or as ‘dykes’.\textsuperscript{293} In order to negotiate this gendered terrain, servicewomen adopt behavioural strategies in different contexts to manage their relations with their military colleagues. Herbert relates these behaviours to the construction of heterosexuality, in particular the ability to assess one’s sexuality through perceptions of gender, which in the context of a ban on homosexuality means that women accused of lesbianism face investigation and possible discharge. She ultimately argues that the ban on homosexuality in the American military impacts negatively on all women, regardless of their sexual orientation:

If women did not feel compelled to insure that they are seen as heterosexual, there would be less pressure to enact femininity, a marker of heterosexuality. By having to confirm heterosexuality, women enact femininity, thereby ensuring that they will be perceived as less capable than their male counterparts. The link between gender and sexuality situated in an institution that formally regulates sexuality insures the subordination of women.\textsuperscript{294}

Consequently for Herbert, the ban ensures that women ‘do gender’ in ways ensure that gender norms are maintained and reified. Consequently she argues that the ban should be lifted.\textsuperscript{295}

Joan Heggie has conducted research specifically into lesbians who served in the Women’s Royal Auxiliary Corps (WRAC) and Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army

\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 52-53  
\textsuperscript{293} See chapter three in Herbert, Camouflage;  
\textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 128  
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 124-5
Nursing Corps (QARANC) in the British armed forces. Heggie is a former WRAC Military Policewoman and was consequently involved with policing other women and investigating alleged homosexual behaviour, before being discharged for being a lesbian. Consequently Heggie’s research is infused with ethnographical and anecdotal evidence, and arguably her ‘insider status’ was significant in gaining access to the women she interviewed. Part of her motivation for conducting the research was to address the paucity of work documenting lesbians’ experiences more generally, and to address what Heggie perceives to be a marginalisation of lesbian soldiers by feminists:

These women, who, I suggest, live the most ‘feminist’ of lives (independent, financially secure, mobile and powerful), have been marginalised and silenced because of their participation in the military. Their voices are seldom heard within feminist debate and their life choices are often judged.

The resulting research narrative offers a rich and fascinating glimpse into the lives of the women who negotiated sexual and gendered norms in what was arguably an extremely hostile institutional environment.

Heggie’s account is particularly valuable because it provides an account of how lesbians lived and worked within the Army under the ban on homosexuality. She begins her discussion by noting that statistics for discharge on the grounds of homosexuality show that lesbians in the British army have been the most targeted group, and not gay men. However she also argues that precisely by banning homosexuality the military created the conditions for lesbian subculture to flourish. She juxtaposes her narrative of how the Army policed or controlled women, with an exploration of how this control was

---

296 Heggie, *Uniform Identity?*
297 Ibid., 12
298 Ibid., 21
299 Heggie focuses on exploring how lesbians articulate their experiences and she acknowledges that her approach was influenced by Herbert’s study. See: Heggie, *Uniform Identity?* 16 -17
300 Heggie, *Uniform Identity?* 157
subverted. For example she explores how the military used the uniform to mark the female body as feminine and to inhibit movement and the ability to perform, and shows the way that lesbians in the WRAC used to dress in such a way to appear straight whilst also communicating their sexual identity to other women and demonstrating their unavailability to men. This is summarised by one former soldier who says she was ‘hiding in plain sight.’

This raises interesting questions about the reproduction of subjectivity through ‘ways of seeing’ and ‘being seen’ which seriously disrupts the notion of the gendered subject as unitary by showing how the reproduction of subjectivity occurs differently according to who is looking.

Both Herbert and Heggie conceive of gender as a performance, as something one does. By approaching gender in this way they are able to demonstrate that gender is dynamic, and has a complex relationship between sexuality and gender. However, in both their studies the emphasis is on women doing gender in particular ways, leaving the ways men do gender unproblematised. The concept of ‘doing gender’ is also used to suggest that women actively hide or mitigate their real gender or sexuality. For example, Heggie describes lesbian soldiers as ‘doing gender twice’ to highlight the perceived double burden faced by lesbian women in the forces, to be seen as straight, and as feminine. This formulation is problematic because it suggests that these women already exist before ‘doing their gender’ and also it presupposes that straight men do not ‘do gender.’ Whilst this highlights the way that straight men are the privileged group it seems to conceal the overall performative character of gender and misses an important critical opportunity to destabilise and denaturalise male performances of gender. There is also the analytical separation between sexuality and gender in both of these accounts, which views sexuality as something to control, manage or hide, rather than as a

---

301 Ibid., 192
302 Ibid., 132
constitutive discourse of gender. Arguably this limits their ability to interrogate the productive role of the ban on homosexuality in constituting gendered subjects in the military.

Gary L. Lehring’s *Officially Gay* (2003) examines the central role of the US military in defining the homosexual judicially. Adopting a broadly genealogical approach he examines the epistemological tenets of the ‘modern gay and lesbian subject.’ He explores the official policy of the US military as a site in which arguments about who and what lesbians and gay men are are deployed to legitimize and legalize discrimination against them. He argues that the military created homosexuals as a ‘category of identity that would serve both as a new site of regulation and a new form of resistance to regulation.’ The analysis of the rationale for excluding gay men and lesbians from the US military demonstrates the contradictions and tautology involved in US policy and practice which produces those people as subjects to be feared whilst simultaneously using the resultant homophobia and fear as a rationale for the ban. The focus on exposing the tautological and paradoxical nature of the ban allowed Lehring to effectively undermine the rationale for the ban, which was still in force when he published the book.

Derek McGhee analyses the ban on homosexuality in the British armed forces. He analyses the MoD’s reproduction of ‘the homosexual’ as behaviourally malignant because of his immutable sexual orientation and interrogates the ways in which the MoD argues that homosexuality is ‘incompatible’ with service in the armed forces.

---

303 See chapter two of Lehring, *Officially Gay*
304 Ibid., 7
305 Ibid., 6
306 Ibid., 179
Highlighting that those homosexuals who have been discharged often served for many years without being ‘discovered’ McGhee argues that within ‘the irrepressible homosexuality which pervades the MoD’s homosexual incompatibility arguments seems to be an absence which haunts the MoD’s discursive deployment of it.’ McGhee argues that the lack of evidence that homosexual members of the armed forces are a disruptive force:

reveals a trace of homosexuality, absent from that of the MoD’s homosexual incompatibility argument... This homosexuality is compatible, not incompatible to service in the armed forces by a project of non-disclosure and non-legibility, and, therefore, disruption avoidance.

McGhee then analyses the ‘passing strategies’ adopted by undiscovered homosexuals which allow them to inhabit the ‘informal panoptic homosocial habitus’ of the armed forces without being detected. He argues that, ironically, homosexuals resist their exclusion through the tactical use of the same panoptic informal structures and sanctions which attempt to ensure their exclusion. This analysis is important because it demonstrates the incoherence and impossibility of the MoD’s reproduction of the homosexual threat, whilst complicating ideas around ‘resistance.’ I would argue that this is a particularly effective political intervention which undermines the efficacy of the attempt to exclude homosexuals by showing how it fails, both on a conceptual level (the narrative breaks down) and in ‘real terms’ (homosexuals still serve).

Lehring and McGhee both interrogate the productive role of exclusionary policies which attempt to police sexuality, and they illustrate how well these attempts fail. However, unlike the feminist analyses, they do not situate sexuality in relation to the wider gendered organisation of the armed forces. The main problem with this is that in

---

308 McGhee, ‘Looking and Acting’ 215-6
309 Ibid., 216
310 Ibid., 206
isolating sexuality they cannot engage effectively with wider logics which governed the reproduction of homosexuals in the military, and as such they can offer only a partial account of that reproduction.

Performative Accounts of Gender in the Military

Responding to the limits of accounts of the gendered military which treat sexuality and gender as separate, there have been several studies which consider their mutually constitutive relationship.\textsuperscript{311} The approach taken in these analyses avoids imposing any pre-determined understanding of gender or sexuality, and instead interrogates how those two epistemic regimes function to reproduce gendered subjects who embody, perform and negotiate these gender norms in their everyday lives. Woodward and Winter’s \textit{Sexing the Soldier} (2007) analyses ‘discourses of female difference’ within the British Army. They highlight the fact that despite a wealth of interest in gender and war, there is a distinct lack of research into gender and the contemporary British military.\textsuperscript{312} Underpinning their argument about gender politics and the military ‘is an observation about the contingency of military structure, culture and organisation.’\textsuperscript{313} Drawing on MoD and Army policies and reports they interrogate how women’s participation in the British Army is contained through the discourse of ‘female difference’ that operates to exclude women from direct combat roles and prevent full equality with their male colleagues. They problematise linear accounts of female participation found in MoD narratives which associate increased female participation with modernity, progress and gender equity arguing that these narratives obscure ‘the circularities and the similarities

\textsuperscript{311} Woodward and Winter, \textit{Sexing the Soldier}; Herbert, \textit{Camouflage}; Sasson-Levy, ‘Feminism and’; Basham, \textit{An Analysis}  
\textsuperscript{312} Woodward and Winter, \textit{Sexing the Soldier}, 2  
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.,2
They highlight the data concerning harassment of women, racial and sexual minorities as evidence that cultures of military masculinity are at the heart of problems encountered in integrating women into the forces in Britain. Alongside their deconstruction of the discourses of female difference they document the ways in which masculinity is constructed through basic training, operations, drinking and other forms of homosocial activity. This analysis presents an excellent diagnosis of how the military attempts to order and manage gendered subjects in the military, and gives insight into how social practices reproduce gendered subjectivities. Perhaps because of the reliance on policy documents for most of the analysis the account does tend to present military attempts to order gender as coherent and effective, with less emphasis on their contingency and instability. They also tend to refer to gender as ‘acting on’ sexed bodies which limits their ability to fully address the heteronormative reproduction of ‘female difference.’ For these reasons I would suggest that the critical potential of their analysis is not fully realised, and that emphasis on the perpetual negotiation and contestation of gender within military institutions would create more space for the political engagement and intervention the authors seek to make.

Orna Sasson-Levy demonstrates that Israeli women soldiers negotiate their gender roles in complex, and contradictory, ways. She argues that by analysing how subjective meanings are created at different locations she is able to develop understandings of the interactions between state institutions and identity practices. Drawing on in depth interviews with female soldiers Sasson Levy identifies several strategies adopted by female soldiers in “masculine roles” (roles which were formally only occupied by men) including mimicking combat soldiers behaviour, distancing themselves from traditional

\[314\] Ibid., 37
notions of femininity and trivialising sexual harassment. She argues that these practices and strategies:

signify both resistance and compliance with the military dichotomized gender order. While these transgender performances subvert the hegemonic norms of masculinity and femininity, they also collaborate with the military androcentric norms. Thus, although these women soldiers individually transgress gender boundaries, they internalize the military’s masculine ideology and values and learn to identify with the patriarchal order of the army and the state. This accounts for a pattern of “limited inclusion” that reaffirms their marginalization.315

Sasson-Levy’s nuanced analysis of the role of gender norms demonstrates how militaries can ‘integrate’ women and empower them whilst maintaining the gender inequality of the institution. Rather than assuming women inherently pose a challenge to militaries simply by virtue of ‘not being men’, Sasson-Levy is able to interrogate how ‘what it means to be a women’ is mediated through the institutional context of the military. In assessing the subversive potential of women’s strategies in militaries she concludes that:

Undeniably, women’s identity constructions present an alternative to accepted dichotomous identities, but they do not break the dichotomy itself. Rather, women soldiers align themselves with the masculine side of the dichotomy. Hence, while their identity construction might be subversive locally, it does not alter the military’s gender regime.316

In this light particular behaviours can be ‘read’ as both reification and subversion of gender norms, depending on the ‘framing.’

Sasson-Levy illustrates clearly what is at stake in the reproduction of gendered subjects in the military. She offers a critique of liberal feminist arguments which posit military service with full citizenship and instead comes to more radical conclusions:

315 Sasson-Levy, ‘Feminism and’ 440
316 Ibid. 459.
in order to enable an egalitarian participation of women in the military and in the institution of citizenship, we need to reconfigure the ideological gender regime of the military, the gendered nature of citizenship, and the nature of gender itself. 317

How this might be achieved is not discussed. Her analysis suggests that strategies for ‘breaking the dichotomy’ of gender are ultimately what is needed to subvert or effectively challenge the gender order of militaries. Yet one might ask whether these dichotomies are so stable as to need ‘breaking’? Are masculine norms really so powerful and hegemonic? Perhaps an alternative way to challenge the ‘nature of gender itself’ might be to look for points of failure and contestation in order to politically exploit their instability.

Victoria Basham has conducted an extensive analysis of social diversity within Britain's armed forces, through policy analysis, in depth interviews and ethnography. 318 Her work investigates the ‘lived experience’ of personnel and explores how they ‘contract meaning in their everyday lives’ in order to find out ‘how the realities of interviewees relate to normative realities envisaged by others.’ 319 In order to do this Basham draws on Foucault’s ‘intersubjectively constituted subjectivity’ which recognises that ‘social categories not only function as ‘norms’ but as ‘regulatory practices’ which produce the bodies they govern.’ 320 In this way Basham engages with official ‘attempts’ to order gender and how personnel respond to those attempts. The interviews reveal the heterogeneity of service personnel, and the different ways personnel understand their own participation within the armed forces. As well as providing a complex account of military service, the interview data clearly demonstrates how subjectivity is reproduced in the interactions between service personnel on a daily basis.

317 Ibid., 461
319 Basham, ‘Everyday Gendered’ 152
320 Basham, An Analysis, 272
Basham finds that the ‘everyday experiences of military personnel suggest that the heterosexual men who have long dominated the institution continue to do so.’ This is because women and non-heterosexual men continue to be marginalised through exclusionary policies and informal social practices which police their behaviour and exclude them from rituals of male bonding, meaning their commitment and contributions to the military are more likely to be questioned. She argues that military officials remain cautious of undermining the collective identity of white, heterosexual men, and that social diversity initiatives within the British armed forces are ineffective because they serve to reinforce cultural norms, by isolating minority social groups to be managed, rather than examining the behaviour of traditional male recruits. Ultimately, Basham argues that in allowing discrimination, sexual harassment and a masculine culture to continue the military actually jeopardises operational effectiveness because marginalised individuals are not able to perform effectively, and because the social legitimacy of the forces is undermined more generally.

Despite offering a serious critique of British military culture, she also argues that ‘experiences of military personnel, who struggle to be recognised on their own terms, can displace the notion of the hegemonic heterosexual male soldier.’ This is because by enlisting they fail to conform to normative expectations of how they should behave, and their presence reveals ‘the reliance on notions of weak women, effeminate gay men and ‘culturally inferior’ minority ethnic recruits as “constitutive other[s]” to constitute normative white, heterosexual male identity. Furthermore this normative white male identity is revealed to be incomplete and unstable because ‘the presence of

321 Basham, ‘Everyday Gendered’ 160
322 Basham, ‘Harnessing’
323 Basham, ‘Everyday Gendered’ 161
324 Basham, An Analysis, 288
strangers in the armed forces ‘haunts’ the institution’s hegemonic masculine identity by illuminating its fragility.\textsuperscript{325} This is a very significant conclusion that Basham is able to effectively demonstrate through the use of interview data. It also goes some way towards undermining the military culture she is engaging with, rather than reifying its power it in her research. However, rather pursuing the implications of this revelation Basham ultimately concludes that:

\begin{quote}
Until difference - from the hegemonic, idealised image of ‘the soldier’ as a white, heterosexual man - is no longer seen as problematic, servicewomen, sexual minority and ethnic minority personnel are faced with the impossibility of trying to be, and to live by the standards of, white, heterosexual men.\textsuperscript{326}
\end{quote}

This suggests an uneasy tension between deconstructing difference, whilst advocating that difference is viewed more positively. For some this uneasy conclusion might indicate the limits of poststructural accounts of gendered identity for making recommendations for policy change.\textsuperscript{327} It is perhaps another excellent illustration of the sex/gender predicament which ‘persistently haunts attempts to translate what we know into useful knowledge’.\textsuperscript{328} Of course the ‘difference’ that Basham is referring to is socially produced and therefore mobile and transformable:

The salience of the ‘disruptive/distractive/weak servicewoman, the ‘incompatible’ sexual minority, and the ‘insubordinate’ minority ethnic soldier, does not mean all personnel assigned to these normative social categories behave in these ways as they are expected to. These subjectivities are not ‘natural’ or inevitable; they are locatable in specific historically, socially, and contextually bound shared meanings. It is time for military personnel and the military organisation to facilitate new meanings, meanings through which both can productively make sense of their identities and lives.\textsuperscript{329}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{325} Ibid., 289
\item \textsuperscript{326} Ibid., 297
\item \textsuperscript{328} Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 617
\item \textsuperscript{329} Basham, An Analysis, 298
\end{itemize}
For Basham, it seems the problem is not difference per se, but the interpretation of that difference. Her suggestion that non-traditional recruits struggle to gain recognition on their own terms is interesting, raising questions about who decides the terms of recognition and whether they are effective. Do they ever fail? Would such a failure of the terms of recognition offer possibility for resignification? Thinking about the terms of recognition is thinking about the constitution and reproduction of subjectivity, and it is with these questions in mind that I explore the reproduction of homosexuality within the British Armed Forces in this thesis.

The Case Study: Homosexuality in the British Armed Forces

Zalewski and Parpart argue that ‘it remains vitally important to keep interrogating the question of why relations of gendered power are so intractable and so enduring.’ Jabri and O’Gorman have argued that the implication of the problematization of gendered subjectivity is that ‘the homogenizing effects of rhetorical globalizing pretensions must be countered through the effects of the personal and local struggles that create relations international.’ An analysis on the localised reproduction, negotiations and contestations of gendered subjectivity offers a way to engage with gender as it is produced in different contexts and to interrogate why gendered power is apparently so resilient. In chapters three, four and five I aim to do this by conducting an investigation of the regulation of homosexuality in the British armed forces.

The contemporary British armed forces is a particularly salient case study for examining the connections between sexuality and gender because of its traditional ‘ban’ on

---

330 Parpart and Zalewski, ‘Introduction’ 4
331 Jabri, and O’Gorman, ‘Locating Differences’ 187
homosexuality, a ban which the Ministry of Defence (MoD) only overturned in 2000 after losing a protracted legal battle to maintain the exclusionary policy. As I have discussed, several studies have demonstrated the ways that sexuality is central for understanding military gender norms that traditionally privilege male, heterosexual soldiers by rejecting homosexuality and denigrating the feminine. In particular, Herbert has suggested that the ‘control of sexuality may, in fact, not be so much a result of gender differences as it is a mechanism for ensuring their maintenance.’ If we accept that control of (homo)sexuality has been critical for maintaining the hegemonic masculinity of militaries, the repeal of the ban on homosexuality in 2000 has potentially radical implications. Yet there has been relatively little analysis or interrogation of military gender norms since the ‘inclusion’ of LGBT personnel. Gay and lesbian personnel are now permitted to serve ‘openly’ alongside their heterosexual comrades, and transsexual personnel are permitted to undergo gender reassignment without risking dismissal. This prompts some interesting feminist questions about gender norms in the contemporary British military. Firstly, how has the ‘integration’ of homosexuals been managed by the military? Can the repeal of the ban be considered to have effected a ‘crisis’ in the hegemonic masculinity of that institution? What can we make of overt displays of a ‘military homosexuality’ seen when servicemen and women from all three branches of the military marched, in uniform, at London Pride in 2008? Finally, what can the apparent ‘inclusion’ of homosexuality tell us about the gendered economy of the military more generally?

332 For example: Bower, (Im)Possible Women; Heggie, Uniform Identity?; Herbert, Camouflage
333 Herbert, Camouflage, 16
334 Heggie, Uniform Identity? (2003), Basham, An Analysis of Social Diversity (2006), and Woodward and Winter, Sexing the Soldier (2007) do analyse gender relations in the British military post 2000, but as far as I am aware there has not been any detailed analysis of policies towards LGBT personnel similar to the analysis I carry out in this thesis.
335 Gourley ‘Armed Forces march’
Heggie argues that the introduction of both women and gay men into the military challenges the ‘prevailing masculinist (maschio) status quo’.336 Similarly the analyses by Herbert and Cohn both suggest that lifting the ban on homosexuality has the potential to seriously disrupt the gender norms of state militaries.337 Others have a less optimistic view ‘given the maliciousness that had characterized the identification and removal of homosexuals from the armed forces in the very recent past.’338 This thesis goes some way towards evaluating whether gender norms have been challenged since the ban was lifted by carrying out a systematic analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects in military policy and practice.

It is hoped that carrying out an analysis of the ‘integration’ of sexual minorities into the British armed forces will generate insights which will contribute to a better understanding of the reproduction of gendered subjects, and the resilience of gendered hierarchy. The potential for intervening in or subverting this reproduction of gender will also be explored.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that interrogating the reproduction of gendered subjectivity is an essential and ongoing task for feminist scholars. The analytical logics used to interpret the reproduction of gendered subjects is a crucial factor in determining what can be seen and not seen, what can be questioned and where and how political intervention is possible. Ferguson summarises this succinctly:

336 Heggie, *Uniform Identity?*, 143
337 Cohn, ‘Gays in the Military’; Herbert, *Camouflage*
338 Higate, ‘Concluding Thoughts’ 209
The questions we can ask about the world are enabled, and other questions disabled, by the frame that orders the questioning. When we are busy arguing about the questions that appear within a certain frame, the frame itself becomes invisible; we become *enframed* within it.\(^{339}\)

What has become clear from the review of feminist interventions in IR is that feminists are acutely aware and reflexive about the ways sex and gender are reproduced in practices of research. Debates about ‘difference,’ the implications of productive understandings of subjectivity and how feminism can effectively disrupt and transform gendered hierarchies are ongoing, and it is as a contribution to this conversation that I situate this thesis.

I have argued that the ‘integration’ of lesbian and gay personnel provokes important questions about how the military has responded and managed this process, and whether gender norms have been transformed as a result. It is hoped that the analysis of the integration of sexual minorities into the ranks of the British armed forces is a contribution to a growing body of work which explores the dynamics underpinning the reproduction of gendered subjects and the resilience of gender power, and in doing so, endeavours to open up new ways to intervene and resist it. In this way my engagement with the case study should generate insights about the resilience of gender and help to answer the primary research question this thesis seeks to address.

Zalewski and Stern document the ‘sexgender predicament’ that feminism itself comes to reproduce the sexed identities it claims to represent and the gendered harms it seeks to challenge, in an endless performative process.\(^{340}\) Feminist praxis is then implicated in the resilience of gendered hierarchy. However, rather than becoming disillusioned they

---

\(^{339}\) Ferguson, *The Man*, emphasis in original  
\(^{340}\) Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’
invite us to ‘recast feminist failure as aporetic and concomitantly implicated in the process of intervening politically.’ Feminist failure then becomes an occasion for a re-imagining of what it means to make a feminist intervention. This engagement with aporia, impossibility and disruption is a potentially very useful avenue to pursue, and I argued that Stern’s deconstruction of in/security and identity is so effective precisely because it focuses on the impossibility of discourse to ever capture, or secure, meaning or identity. Carver can also be understood to be engaging with the sex/gender predicament. His call for a ‘more effective and genuinely deconstructive critique’ suggests that this would ‘promote destabilization through immanent contradictions and instabilities.’ The implication of this might be a shift in focus from deconstructive ‘diagnosis’ of attempts to order gender to an alternative strategy of looking for points of failure and contestation, in order to exploit their instability more effectively. Such a critique would not resolve the sex/gender predicament but it might engender a form of political intervention which disrupts and reproduces sex/gender in a different way. This approach would ask how gender is produced or performed in a particular context, what practices enable gender to appear so effective and where these attempts fail. This requires a methodology that looks for instability and incoherence, points of paradox and failure in order to make non-sense of gender, and arguably requires greater use of methodologies which can access the complexity and ‘messiness’ of social processes, such as interviews. The next chapter looks for analytical strategies and vocabularies in the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler in order to develop a methodology that might enable this kind of feminist intervention.

341 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 611
342 Stern, Naming Security
343 Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 122, my emphasis
Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to better understand how and why gender hierarchy remains so resilient and entrenched in contemporary political life. I approach this problematic by analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects, which I argue is an integral part of reproducing gender as such. In the previous chapter I offered a survey of the key theoretical moves made within feminist IR with concern to the gendered subject, and set up a rationale for the use of the contemporary British armed forces as a case study in the thesis. The literature review of feminist work within IR demonstrated that there is much at stake in the reproduction of subjectivities, in terms of research agendas, methodologies and conclusions drawn. Parpart and Zalewski have suggested that because we know so little about how sex/gender is sustained there is a constant need to ‘rethink how we conceptualise and re-create gender, sex and the violent international.’344 Thinking about how gendered subjects are reproduced is an important aspect of this and in this thesis I aim to explore the implications of this reproduction.

I identified several key interventions made by feminist IR scholars which are the point of departure for the work carried out in this thesis. I discussed the ‘sex/gender paradox’ or ‘predicament’, identified by Stern and Zalewski, the unavoidable conundrum that feminist narratives inevitably reproduce the sexed identities and the gendered harms

344 Zalewski and Parpart, ‘Introduction: Rethinking’ 15
they seek to challenge.\textsuperscript{345} Stern and Zalewski’s ambition is to ‘recast feminist failure as aporetic and concomitantly implicated in the process of intervening politically’,\textsuperscript{346} and they invite a re-imagining of feminist failure as bringing possibility.\textsuperscript{347} Carver argues that the production of men and women should be the focus of feminist critique, and he calls for a ‘more effective and genuinely deconstructive critique [which] would promote destabilization through immanent contradictions and instabilities.’\textsuperscript{348} The present chapter looks for resources in the thought of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler in order to investigate how sex/gender is sustained, consider what a genuinely deconstructive critique might entail and to engage with Stern and Zalewski's invitation to rethink a politics of failure.

The decision to turn to Foucault, Derrida and Butler is as a result of my exploration of feminist poststructural work in IR. The review of the literature found that their deconstructive work has effectively shown the ways in which the gendered subject can be conceptualised as an effect of power.\textsuperscript{349} However, whilst this work has undoubtedly politicised the reproduction of gendered subjects in world politics and feminist research, I argued that these approaches tend to emphasise how this productive power is coherent and effective. I suggested that aspects of poststructural thought might be underexploited in feminist analyses, aspects which investigate the incoherence, failure and ‘messiness’ of all attempts to order social life. I proposed that one way to rethink a politics of failure and to engage with the sex/gender predicament would be to emphasise how ‘gender’ fails to guarantee the intelligibility it promises in world politics. In terms of data

\textsuperscript{345} Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’
\textsuperscript{346} Ibid., 611
\textsuperscript{347} Ibid., 629
\textsuperscript{348} Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 122, my emphasis
gathering methodologies, I identified a tendency in feminist poststructural work to privilege policy documents, which whilst important for political analysis, offer a partial account of how subjectivity is reproduced. I discussed the potential of interviews as a research methodology for generating 'messier' accounts which might offer greater potential for destabilising and undermining gendered power.

The review of the literature concerning gender and militaries demonstrated that whilst there was a substantial amount of research concerning women entering western militaries, and a growing number of studies examining military masculinities there was a need for further research into the politics of sexuality within modern militaries. Existing research has shown that the official exclusion of homosexuality is essential for maintaining the homosocial bonding between military men, and for preserving the masculine identity of the institution.\(^\text{350}\) Consequently the repeal of the ban on homosexuality in the British armed forces in 2000 has potentially significant implications for the gender relations of that institution, and prompts questions about how the 'integration' of openly gay and lesbian personnel has been achieved. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a critical theoretical methodology for the investigation of the reproduction of subjectivity within the British armed forces, which follows in chapters three, four and five.

This chapter begins by investigating how ‘the subject’ has been conceptualised in the work of Foucault, Derrida and Butler, looking particularly for analytical strategies and concepts which contain the potential to more effectively exploit failure, crisis and incoherence inherent in attempts to reproduce subjects. Following a brief exegesis of the main theoretical innovations and contributions of each thinker I identify a common

\(^{350}\) For example: McGhee, ‘Looking and Acting’; Herbert, Camouflage; Heggie, Uniform Identity?; Basham, An Analysis
theme of ‘exposure’ that characterises the deconstructive and genealogical approach of all three thinkers, and I offer three interpretations of how this might be understood and mobilised for investigating the reproduction of gendered subjects. The first interpretation views genealogy and deconstruction as ‘revelatory methods’ which can be employed to expose the subject as an effect of power. The second interpretation mobilises genealogy and deconstruction as methods for revealing the inherent failure, paradox and aporia which haunts attempts to reproduce subjects in particular contexts. The third interpretation considers how Foucault, Derrida and Butler critically challenge what a discourse, text, or performance of gender is such that the notion of 'exposing' something within a text is called into question. This interpretation conceptualises deconstruction and genealogy as a mode of critical praxis, which is critically transformative of the text. I examine the advantages and limits of each of these interpretations, and ultimately suggest that the third interpretation contains more radical potential for exploiting failure and destabilising gender.

I use these theoretical insights to generate a critical methodology for investigating the reproduction of gendered subjects in the contemporary British armed forces. I develop the term ‘gender order’ as a heuristic device and conceptual model which conveys a particular understanding of the regulation of gendered life that depends on the reproduction and ordering of gendered subjects. I then generate a series of research questions, informed by the theoretical discussion, which structure my engagement with gender and sexuality in the British military. The theoretical insights allow a ‘fine tuning’ of research questions, which further develops the rationale for the focus on the ban on homosexuality, and its subsequent repeal, as an important site of negotiation and contestation over gender and sexuality.
The final section of the chapter considers the implications of the theoretical approaches for data collection and analysis, specifically discourse analysis of policy documents and official texts, and qualitative interviews with personnel. I show that in the light of the theoretical framework military policies become conceptualised as ‘attempts’ to secure the gender order, rather than a way to directly access ‘how subjects are reproduced.’ This is a significant distinction because it undermines the power of these regulatory documents and actively seeks out occasions where they fail, produce incoherent outcomes and break down in paradox. I then develop an analysis of 'the research interview' which reconceptualises the interview as a political encounter itself, which contains the potential for disruption of gender norms through careful questioning ‘at the limits’ of intelligibility. I suggest that ‘data gathering’ can then be reconsidered as critical praxis itself, which has the potential to disrupt and subvert dominant political logics and hierarchies.

The Subject as an Effect of Power

The works of Foucault, Derrida and Butler offer rich resources for thinking about the reproduction of subjectivity. The mobilisation of concepts and critical practices derived from these three thinkers has enabled feminists to construct significant critiques of the core concepts of IR as a discipline, and to reveal the gendered logics which structure processes of world politics. The decision to return to these three thinkers is not to offer a re-interpretation or a criticism of the use of these thinkers in feminist IR but to look for further critical insights, vocabularies and analytical strategies which might

351 For example see: Hooper, Manly States; Masters, ‘Bodies of Technology’; Hunt and Rygiel, (En)gendering; Shepherd, ‘Veiled References’; Sjoberg, ‘Agency’; Parpart, and Zalewski, Rethinking; Shepherd, Gender, Violence
open up opportunities to reveal the inherent failure and instability of gender. It is not my intention to provide a definitive account of these thinkers, nor attempt to encompass the breadth of their theoretical oeuvres. The aim of this brief exegesis and exploration of some of their work is to inform a critical methodology for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces. Consequently I do not engage with competing interpretations of their work offered by different commentators, nor attempt to reconcile the differences or tensions within their approaches to make them 'cohere' as a whole. Rather I attempt to offer a ‘rhizomatic’ reading which involves the ‘invention of different connections’ and emphasises the similarities in their approaches in order to generate creative engagement with their work.

**Power/Knowledge: Michel Foucault**

Foucault's work can be broadly characterised as an investigation into how subjects, practices and systems of thought come to be constituted. Foucault aims to critically investigate the 'ontology of ourselves' through the practice of critique, understood to be both the 'historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the

---

352 Of course the very possibility of any attempt to provide ‘definitive’ or ‘authoritative’ accounts of anything are undermined by the wider epistemological challenge that Derrida, Foucault and Butler are posing. See for example: Foucault, M. "What is An Author?" in Foucault, M. *Aesthetics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 volume 2*, Ed. Faubion, J. D. (London, Penguin, 2000).


possibility of going beyond them.\textsuperscript{355} This form of criticism does not search for formal transcendental structures with universal value, but rather involves:

a historical investigation into the events that have led to us constituting ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying ... its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method.\textsuperscript{356}

For Foucault, 'the problem of the present time, and of what we are' is perhaps the 'most certain of all philosophical problems.'\textsuperscript{357} He explores this problem through critical historical investigations into social institutions and practices including the human sciences, psychiatry, prisons, hospitals, and sexuality.\textsuperscript{358} Foucault’s approach analyses the order of problematization in the history of thought, conceived as ‘the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that seem to me to pose problems for politics’.\textsuperscript{359} Crucially, problematization does not just 'express' or represent already existing problems, it is productive: 'it develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to.'\textsuperscript{360} Furthermore:

To one single set of difficulties, several responses can be made. And most of the time different responses are actually proposed. But what must be understood is what makes them simultaneously possible: it is the point in

\begin{footnotesize}

356 Ibid., 315


360 Ibid., 118
\end{footnotesize}
which their simultaneity is rooted; it is the soil that can nourish them all in their diversity and sometimes in spite of their contradictions.\textsuperscript{361}

The work of a history of thought is then to 'rediscover the root of diverse solutions, the general form of problematization that has made them possible.'\textsuperscript{362} Through this analytical method Foucault aims to denaturalise contemporary practices, regimes of rationality and domains of knowledge, arguing that 'it's a matter of shaking this false self-evidence, of demonstrating its precariousness, of making visible not its arbitrariness but its complex interconnection with a multiplicity of historical processes.'\textsuperscript{363} This revelatory motif is evident in much of Foucault's work, as he meticulously interrogates historical discontinuities, never searching for a 'hidden' continuity which would explain the metamorphosis of knowledge and practices, but instead identifying and exposing the conditions of possibility which enable historical change in concepts, practices and subjects.\textsuperscript{364}

\textit{The Production of Knowledge}

Foucault begins his investigation by examining how 'things' become objects of knowledge through discourse. In the preface to \textit{The Order of Things} (originally published 1966) Foucault asks:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{361} Ibid., 118
\item \textsuperscript{362} Ibid., 118-9, my emphasis
\item \textsuperscript{364} It is crucial to note that by 'discontinuity' Foucault does not mean 'chaos' or a transcendental notion of general discontinuity. Rather it involves an investigation into multiple discontinuities within and between different discourses. As Foucault himself says 'no one is more of a continuist' than he is because 'to recognize a discontinuity is never anything more than to register a problem that needs to be solved' in Foucault, 'Questions of Method', 226. See also the introduction of Foucault, M. \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge}, Trans. Sheridan Smith, A.M. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1969])
\end{itemize}
When we establish a considered classification... what is the ground on which we are able to establish the validity of this classification with complete certainty? On what ‘table’, according to what grid of identities, similitudes, ana-logies, have we become accustomed to sort out so many different and similar things?..... in fact, there is no similitude and no distinction, even for the wholly untrained perception, that is not the result of a precise operation and of the application of a preliminary criterion. A ‘system of elements’ – a definition of segments by which resemblances and differences can be shown, the types of variation by which those segments can be affected, and lastly, the threshold above which there is a difference and below which there is similitude- is indispensible for the establishment of even the simplest form of order.\footnote{365}

His initial question concerns what gives rise to perceptions of similarity and difference, in order to evaluate and order objects and persons. These networks of simultaneity and difference define and constitute a 'field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges may be deployed.'\footnote{366} The evidence of these orders and networks is found in the material traces of a particular historical epoch, described by Foucault as 'the archive.' The archive is 'first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events...it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset the system of its enunciability.'\footnote{367} It is through an examination of the archive that Foucault deduces the 'historical a priori' of that particular epoch, the rules, logics and concepts which structure thought in that period.\footnote{368} Foucault summarises this approach when he says:

\begin{quote}
If things are said - and those only - one should seek the immediate reason for them ... not in them, nor in the men that said them, but in the system of discursivity, in the enunciative possibilities and impossibilities that it lays down.\footnote{369}
\end{quote}

\footnotetext{365}{Foucault, The Order, xxi}
\footnotetext{366}{Foucault, The Archaeology, 143}
\footnotetext{367}{Ibid., 145-6, emphasis in original}
\footnotetext{368}{Ibid., 142-8}
\footnotetext{369}{Ibid., 145, my emphasis}
For Foucault access to the history of thought is only through discourses, and there is no underlying or pre-discursive reality, truth or origin which can be excavated or revealed. What can be excavated is only the historical knowledge of struggles or ‘subjugated knowledges,’ those knowledges that have been masked by systematising thought. In order to do this it is necessary to:

Entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.  

For Foucault, this is only possible through a particular mode of research activity: a genealogical investigation.

**Genealogy**

Integral to Foucault's critical project of problematization, and his analysis of knowledge production is the concept of truth. Foucault asks whether the 'most general of political problems' might be the problem of truth. As he explains, his 'problem' is 'to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth' understood as the establishment of domains of knowledge which *enable the distinction between true and false to be made*. This understanding emphasises the political and strategic nature of knowledge, and explicitly links knowledge to power. This is different from juridical understandings of power, which for Foucault are actually an ‘inverted image of

---

371 Foucault, ‘Questions of Method’, 233
372 Ibid., 230
power,\textsuperscript{373} because they limit power to something which can be wielded to repress or censor another.\textsuperscript{374} On the contrary, Foucault argues that power is productive and regimes of truth are linked in a 'circular relation' with systems of power that produce and sustain them, and to the effects of power they induce:

power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.\textsuperscript{375}

In this way 'truth is already power.'\textsuperscript{376} In terms of his wider political project Foucault's aim to 'resituate the production of true and false at the heart of historical analysis and political critique' can also be considered as an investigation of power relations.\textsuperscript{377} An important feature of power is that it must 'mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms.'\textsuperscript{378} Power is most effective when it is invisible, when regimes of truth and knowledge are accepted as natural and inevitable.

In order to reveal power relations Foucault conducts genealogies of social institutions, practices and subjects. Foucault defines genealogy as:

a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.\textsuperscript{379}

\textsuperscript{373} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality Volume 1}, 60
\textsuperscript{374} Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’ 88
\textsuperscript{375} Foucault, \textit{Discipline}, 27
\textsuperscript{377} Foucault, ‘Questions of Method’, 230
\textsuperscript{378} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality Volume 1}, 86
\textsuperscript{379} Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, 118
Genealogy opposes the search for origins and finds in history ‘not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated.’\textsuperscript{380} In practice this means that genealogy does not attempt ‘to restore an unbroken continuity’ or to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues ‘secretly to animate the present.’\textsuperscript{381} Rather, the work of a genealogist is to identify accidents, to follow ‘descent.’\textsuperscript{382} It is only through genealogical investigation that ‘subjugated knowledges’ can be revealed, and it is through the reappearance of these knowledges that ‘criticism performs its work.’\textsuperscript{383}

\textit{Subjectifying Technologies}

Foucault has located his study of power explicitly to his wider project of interrogating the constitution of the subject in knowledge:

\begin{quote}
My objective.. has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects... Thus it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research.\textsuperscript{384}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{381} Ibid., 146
\item \textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 146. In Foucault's work it is not always clear whether archaeology and genealogy can be considered as two distinct methodologies. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this in any detail and so I shall instead cite Foucault's response to a question asked during one of his lectures at the University of California, Berkeley (1983) about the difference between genealogy and archaeology: 'Genealogy defined the target and aim of the work. Archaeology indicates the field in order to do genealogy [sic].' Similarly in ‘Two Lectures’ Foucault says ‘if we were to characterise the two terms, then ‘archaeology’ would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and ‘genealogy’ would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play.’ Both of these quotes suggest that archaeology and genealogy might be usefully considered as interrelated elements within his critical work. See Foucault, M. ‘Foucault replies to questions from the audience at Berkeley’s History Department in 1983’ Transcribed by Arianna Bove from audiofiles available at University of California, Berkeley Media Resources Center: Online Media Collections at the. Transcript available at: http://www.generation-online.org/p/fffoucault4.htm (accessed 15 July 2011) and Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’ 85
\item \textsuperscript{383} Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’ 82
\item \textsuperscript{384} Foucault, ‘The Subject’, 326-7
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
His studies of the social divisions enacted through discourses of madness, illness and delinquency considered these in relation to the constitution of a rational and 'normal' subject. In his historical investigations Foucault asks: 'How was the subject established, at different moments and in different institutional contexts, as a possible, desirable, or even indispensible object of knowledge?'

Foucault articulates the methodology of genealogy, as it relates to the subject:

One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework.

He identifies three modes of objectification that perform this function: firstly, modes of inquiry that try to obtain the status of sciences (for example, the study of economics which analyses labouring subjects), secondly, “dividing practices” that separate subjects into oppositional categories (for example, the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy), and thirdly the way subjects ‘self-subjectify’ by recognising themselves as subjects. He explains:

This form of power that implies itself to immediate everyday life categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.

It is the increasing power of such discursive mechanisms that lead Foucault to characterise contemporary Western civilization as a ‘society of normalisation’.}

386 Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, 117
387 Foucault, ‘The Subject’, 327-8
388 Ibid., 331
389 Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’ 107, emphasis in original
He develops his analysis of productive power in the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* (originally published 1976) though a genealogical investigation into sex. In this text Foucault provides a survey of the technologies and practices through which subjects of sexuality are produced. He demonstrates how this production is simultaneously concealed through the discourse of sexual repression, what he calls the ‘repressive hypothesis.’ In this discourse sex is portrayed as having been repressed and concealed in the West since the seventeenth century, and of having only been recently revealed through a counter discourse which exposes this repression and challenges sexual taboos and prohibitions. Foucault challenges both the repressive hypothesis and the critique of that repression by showing that they are both part of the same historical complex. Foucault finds that rather than a repression there was actually a proliferation of discourses about sex:

> an incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.

Foucault endeavours to show that the explosion of technologies of sex constituted ‘an entire social practice……furnished this technology of sex with a formidable power and far reaching consequences.’ One of the consequences of this was the growth of a science of sexuality in the nineteenth century which classified peripheral sexual practices as medical disorders, producing terms such as ‘auto-monosexualists’, ‘gynecomasts’ and ‘presbyophiles.’ Crucially these were definitive markers of subjects, not descriptions of their actions, and the machinery of power that determined these categories did not aim to suppress them, rather to make them visible and

---

390 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, 176.
391 Ibid., 10
392 Ibid., 18, emphasis in original
393 Ibid., 119
394 Ibid., 48
intelligible, to create a ‘natural order of disorder.’\textsuperscript{395} Homosexuality became understood as ‘a hermaphrodisism of the soul’\textsuperscript{396} and whereas sodomy was previously through to be a temporary misdemeanour, the homosexual ‘was now a species.’\textsuperscript{397} Sexual practices that deviated from the norms of the marriage bed became annexed, categorised, analysed, and treated within asylums, penal colonies, and houses of correction.\textsuperscript{398} To summarise:

Imbedded in bodies, becoming deeply characteristic of individuals, the oddities of sex relied on a technology of health and pathology. And conversely, since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it- as a lesion, a dysfunction, or symptom- in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behaviour.\textsuperscript{399}

Alongside the production of sexual subjects through legal, medical and scientific discourses by institutions and authorities Foucault also investigates 'techniques of the self,' the production of subjects through relations of self-mastery and self-knowledge.\textsuperscript{400} Foucault argues that since the Middle Ages western civilisation has established the confession as one of the primary strategies for producing truth.\textsuperscript{401} The confession is a unique discursive ritual because the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement, and there is always an authority, not simply an interlocutor, who requires the confession and intervenes to judge, forgive or console. The validity of any truths produced through confession is considered in direct relation to the obstacles that had to be surmounted in order to reveal them, and the practice leaves the confessor transformed after the act, regardless of the actual consequences – it is the act of confessing itself which exonerates, liberates, purifies and unburdens the confessor.\textsuperscript{402} In his discussion of the clandestine nature of sex, the confession was required to uncover it not from a subject

\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., 49
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid., 43
\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., 48
\textsuperscript{398} Ibid., 38-40
\textsuperscript{399} Ibid., 44
\textsuperscript{400} Foucault, 'Subjectivity and Truth' 87
\textsuperscript{401} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality Volume 1}, 59
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid., 61-2
who wished to hide it, but crucially, from a subject from whom sex itself was hiding- she could not ‘know’ herself without the help of a questioner- ‘it had to be exacted by force, since it involved something that tried to stay hidden.’\textsuperscript{403} The truth did not reside solely in the subject, the truth was constituted only through this relationship between confessor and receiver for ‘he was the master of truth.’\textsuperscript{404} Through his study of sexuality Foucault demonstrates that the ‘will’ to uncover, to know, to explain and to render visible, is productive of subjects and the ways that individuals are ‘the vehicles of power’ not just the inert targets or effects of power.\textsuperscript{405}

\textit{Deconstructing the Metaphysics of Presence: Jacques Derrida}

Derrida’s work investigates the complex relationship between language, thought and philosophy. He is concerned to locate and question the linguistic conditions that govern the possibility of conceptualisation:

What has seemed necessary and urgent to me, in the historical situation which is our own, is a general determination of the conditions for the emergence and limits of philosophy, of metaphysics, of everything that carries it on and that it carries on.\textsuperscript{406}

Derrida’s work charts the way that philosophy characteristically defines itself in opposition to writing, viewing itself as a discipline above or beyond language, concerned with truth, logic and reason.\textsuperscript{407} The ‘problematic’ with which Derrida engages, is that posed by logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence which he argues

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 66  
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid., 67  
\textsuperscript{405} Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’ 98  
\textsuperscript{407} Particularly in \textit{Writing and Difference}
\end{flushright}
characterises and acts as a ‘foundation’ of Western thought. Derrida identifies binary oppositional categories, for example between presence/absence, cause/effect, speaking/writing and truth/falsity, upon which the structure Western thought is based. His work interrogates how these terms are able to appear as separate through the complex play of signifying traces.

Derrida argues that there is a symbiotic relationship between logocentrism and phonocentrism, the superiority of speech over writing. For philosophy, language is an unfortunate necessity for communication, a risky barrier between pure thought, consciousness and truth, and the rest of the world. This leads philosophers to privilege speech over writing, for in speech meaning is supposedly immediate and transparent. In speech there is less chance for ambiguity of meaning and unlike writing, there are no permanent ‘traces’ left behind, no visible remains of this necessary recourse to signification that could be misinterpreted. Derrida explains:

phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence…….(temporal presence as point [stigmê] of the now or of the moment [num], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomena of the ego, and so forth). Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being as entity as presence.

Derrida’s work interrogates the inscription of meaning and challenges the ideal of perfect self-presence and the immediate possession of meaning. In this sense Derrida’s work can be considered an exposure of the impossibility to secure, or enact closure, on any text.

Derrida, Of Grammatology, 12, emphasis in original
**Generalized Text and Différance**

The binary oppositions which Derrida argues structures Western thought are not peacefully coexistent but instead organised in a violent hierarchy where the prior term, the logos, belongs to a higher presence and governs the other in order to centre meaning and act as a foundation or origin. For Derrida, the production of meaning is hierarchical and violent: 'force is the other of language without which language would not be what it is.'

However, Derrida finds that these oppositional terms are neither complete, nor discrete, and the distinction between them is necessarily blurred. This is because one can invert presence/absence and displace the terms to show that for presence to functions as it does, it must have the qualities of its opposite absence. This is shown by the logic of the supplement and the endless differing and deferral of the text (absence). Paradoxically presence is the effect of a generalized absence or *différance*. Jonathan Culler provides an instructive illustration of this in relation to motion:

The presence of motion is conceivable, it turns out, only insofar as every instant is already marked with the traces of past and future. Motion can be present, that is to say, only if the present instant is not something given but a product of relations between past and future ……if motion is to be present, presence must already be marked by difference and deferral…. The notion of presence and of the present is derived: an effect of differences.

The same deferring and differing occurs in language, which is composed of signals:

The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence.

---

411 Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 31
412 Culler, *On Deconstruction*, 94-5
Derrida explains that ‘there is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language.’\textsuperscript{414} Therefore instead of writing being a representation of speech, speech turns out to be a form of writing, characterised by the deferred presence embodied in the sign. This is why Derrida says that ‘there is nothing outside of the text.’\textsuperscript{415} He explains:

If ‘writing’ means inscription and especially the durable instituting of signs (and this is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing) then writing in general covers the entire domain of linguistic signs….The very idea of institution, hence the arbitrariness of the sign, is unthinkable prior to or outside the horizon of writing.\textsuperscript{416}

Thus for Derrida this general text is not limited to ‘writings on the page’\textsuperscript{417} but is instead both the ‘mark’ of a sign and the excess of attempts to produce meaning: ‘What I call text is also that which “practically” inscribes and overflows the limits of such a discourse.’\textsuperscript{418}

One of the key moves from Derrida has been to show that the meaning of a sign cannot have any origin. This is because the structure of language is itself a product of events, the result of prior speech acts, yet any speech act must already have been made possible by the structure of language:

There is a circle here, for if one rigorously distinguishes language and speech, code and message, schema and usage, etc., and if one wishes to do justice to the two postulates thus enunciated, one does not know where to begin, nor how something can begin in general, be it language or speech. Therefore one has to admit, before any dissociation of language of language and speech, code and message, etc. (and everything that goes along with such a dissociation), a systematic production of differences, the production of a system of differences-a \textit{différance}- within whose effects one eventually, by

\textsuperscript{414} Derrida, \textit{Of Grammatology}, 7
\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., 158
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., 44
\textsuperscript{417} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, 52
\textsuperscript{418} Ibid., 52
abstraction and according to determined motivations, will be able to demarcate a linguistics of language and a linguistics of speech, etc.\textsuperscript{419}

Derrida posits \textit{différance} as an alternative to the metaphysics of presence: presence becomes ‘a determination or an effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but of \textit{différance}, a system that no longer tolerates the opposition of activity and passivity, nor that of cause and effect, or of indetermination and determination.’\textsuperscript{420}\textit{Différance} is not a ‘concept’ or simply a ‘word’, but this does not stop it from producing conceptual effects:

Since it cannot be elevated to a master-word or a master-concept…..\textit{différance} finds itself enmeshed in the work that pulls it through a chain of other ‘concepts,” other “words”, other textual configurations.\textsuperscript{421}

What this movement does is prevent a totalizing closure of the meaning of the text, because although it produces an infinite number of semantic effects, there is no way to trace an origin or an eschatological presence, and therefore no way to create an exhaustive taxonomy of its themes, its signified and ultimately, its meaning.\textsuperscript{422} As Derrida notes, if this ‘seminal \textit{différance}, cannot be summarized into an exact conceptual tenor, it is because the force and form of its disruption explain the semantic horizon.’\textsuperscript{423} Without \textit{différance}, the play of differences, the spacing which produces the intervals, the metaphysical terms could not signify, yet paradoxically the terms also rely on suppressing this movement to maintain the illusion of metaphysical presence. Given the central role that it plays, demonstrating or exposing the movement of \textit{différance} can only result in a profound destabilisation and decentering of the terms, and this exposure is ‘deconstruction.’

\textsuperscript{419} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, 25, emphasis in original  
\textsuperscript{420} Derrida, \textit{Margins}, 16  
\textsuperscript{421} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, 38  
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 42. This does not mean however that the text is open to inexhaustible possible meanings or ‘semantic excess’  
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid., 41, emphasis in original
Deconstruction

Deconstruction consists of two simultaneous moves or phases, a ‘double writing’ or double gesture, of overturning the hierarchy and neutralising the terms within the oppositional concepts that are central to Western metaphysics. The first step is to overturn the hierarchy; to proceed too quickly to the second stage, to neutralizing the terms, would risk leaving this hierarchy intact and fundamentally limit any means of intervening politically in the given field (because we are left with a position that argues for neither this or that term). This first phase is not to be understood as a single, definitive move, because there is a structural necessity to be constantly vigilant— the hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself. At this point we are still operating within the terms of metaphysical terrain and it becomes necessary to breach, dislodge and displace the terms and the entire system they operate within. Therefore the second move is to mark the interval between the two terms, to mark the ‘emergence of a “new”, a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime. This concept inhabits, resists, and disorganises philosophical oppositions without ever constituting a third term— neither inside nor outside, identity nor difference, veil or unveiling— and beyond any regulation by a transcendental signified, this concept, or movement is différance. These two conceptual moves are essential to what Derrida describes as ‘a kind of general strategy of deconstruction…to avoid both simply neutralizing the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply residing within the closed field of oppositions, thereby confirming it.’

---

424 Ibid., 38
425 Ibid., 39
426 Ibid., 38, emphasis in original
Deconstruction is not without risks however: ‘the risk of metaphysical reappropriation is ineluctable… it happens very fast, as soon as the question of the concept and of meaning, or of the essentiality that necessarily regulates the risk, is asked.’ This is why we cannot strike terms from our vocabularies, but instead need to borrow the old term in order to demarcate it, and prevent the interval from being reappropriated by metaphysics.

The aim of deconstruction is to expose what has been concealed in the production of meaning:

to ‘deconstruct’ philosophy is thus to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts in the most scrupulous and immanent fashion, but at the same time to determine, from a certain external perspective that it cannot name or describe, what this history may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as history through this repression in which it has a stake.

This exposure is not simply a revelation of something within the text, something waiting to be ‘uncovered.’ This exposure demonstrates that concealment is actually productive and integral to the constitution of meaning.

**The Subject and (Con)Text**

For Derrida the subject is always inscribed in language and is not a meta-linguistic presence or identity. The text operates to delineate subjects, through the play of signification, which can then be ‘read.’ This means that, like all texts, it must also be

---

427 Ibid., 51
428 Ibid., 51-2
429 Derrida, cited in Culler, *On Deconstruction*, 86
'read' critically, as Derrida emphasises when he says ‘I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed.’ By questioning the hidden assumptions that produce the subject, Derrida ultimately demonstrates that the subject is an effect of difference, differentiation and deferral and that the concealment of this non-presence is the only way the subject, or indeed any sign, can function.

Having no presence, the subject must be continually reproduced. Derrida’s concept of ‘iterability’ is essential for understanding how this process of reproduction occurs, and that in fact there is only (re)production, that any production is always already a copy and never an original, foundational essence. Derrida explains:

The unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united— a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are always already transcriptions. Originary prints. Everything begins with reproduction.

What this means is that for anything to signify, it must be legible or intelligible. This intelligibility can only come from prior signifying acts that are mutually constituted along with the structure of language, ‘such iterability …structures the mark of writing itself’. In his engagement with speech act theory Derrida argues that ‘it does not depend on the subjective identity but on the field of different forces, the conflict of forces, which produce interpretation.’ Therefore it is not authorial intention that produces effects, but a network of discursive forces and signification. This means that subjects are not reproduced according to their own desire, but instead as an effect of discursive forces within which they are enveloped. Consequently what signs mean is necessarily contextually derived. Derrida goes on to ask ‘are the conditions [les réquisits]

431 Derrida ‘Dialogue with’ 125
432 Derrida, Writing and Difference, 265-6, emphasis in original
433 Derrida, Limited Inc. 7
of a context ever absolutely determinable? He demonstrates that context, and therefore meaning, is boundless because any context is open to further description and alteration as new possibilities of meaning have to be accounted for, and because any attempt to codify context can always be grafted onto the context it sought to describe, yielding a new concept in the process. As Derrida explains ‘this is my starting point: no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation.’ Therefore ‘reading’ the reproduction of subjects will always be contextual and not definitive: ‘Writing is read; it is not the site, “in the last instance,” of a hermeneutic deciphering, the decoding of meaning or truth’. Derrida’s concept of iterability, or citationality, means that the reproduction of subjects is always open to reinscription and resignification.

**Making Gender Trouble: Judith Butler**

Butler’s deconstruction of gender ontology has been influential in feminist politics. In *Gender Trouble* (1990) Butler begins her investigation of gender by questioning ‘women’ as the subject of feminism. Engaging with Foucault’s critique of juridical systems of power, she argues that the question of ‘the subject’ is:

> crucial for politics, and feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not “show” once the juridical structure of politics has been established.

---

435 Ibid., 238
436 Derrida cited in Culler, *On Deconstruction*, 123
437 Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 21
439 Butler, *Gender Trouble* 3
What this means is that subjects are produced but that this production is concealed. This concealment is for Butler, a mechanism to invoke a certain discursive formation ‘as a naturalized foundational premise that subsequently legitimates that law’s own regulatory hegemony.’ Exposing this mechanism, and revealing the instability of foundations then becomes politically imperative for a politics which aims to disrupt systems of power.

In the case of feminism, the category ‘women’ comes to be understood as a discursive formation and effect of a representational politics which actually produces what it claims to represent. If subjectivity is itself an effect of systems of power, appealing to those systems of power in the name of that subject becomes problematic, and this prompts Butler to ask: ‘Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations?’ She suggests that:

The identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics, if the formation of the subject takes place within a field of power regularly buried through the assertion of that foundation.

In response to this dilemma Butler argues that the political task is to conduct a critical genealogy of the legitimating practices of representational politics. To this end, Butler develops a genealogical critique that refuses to search for the origins or truth of gender but rather ‘investigates the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories that are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin.’ In doing so Butler attempts to expose and deconstruct gender ontology such that the foundational categories of sex, gender and

---

440 Ibid., 3
441 Ibid., 7
442 Ibid., 8
443 Ibid., 7
444 Ibid., xxxi, emphasis in original
desire can be recognised as effects of a specific configuration of power. Butler asks several questions:

What configuration of power constructs the subject and the Other, that binary relation between “men” and “women,” and the internal stability of those terms? ... What happens to the subject and to the stability of gender categories when the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality is unmasked as that which produces and reifies these ostensible categories of ontology? How can an epistemic/ontological regime be brought into question?\footnote{Ibid., xxx}

These questions frame Butler's investigation in *Gender Trouble* and her subsequent works on gender.\footnote{Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Butler, *Bodies that*; Butler, *Undoing*}

*Sex: Always Already Gender*

Butler begins her genealogy by questioning the 'compulsory order of sex/gender/desire' through an interrogation of the ways in which gendered bodies are regulated and reproduced. Questioning the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' which feminists originally employed to challenge the hegemonic ideas that biology is destiny, Butler suggests that sex itself may be as culturally constructed as gender, or that 'perhaps it was always already gender' all along.\footnote{Butler, *Gender Trouble* 9} In order to arrive at this conclusion, Butler explores the way in which culture has been understood to be the meanings attached to sexed bodies, conceptualised as the 'discursive' gender acting upon the pre-discursive, biological sex. The problem with this formulation is that it cannot explain why female sexed bodies then become “women” or feminine, and male sexed bodies become “men” or masculine. Moreover even if we assume bodies are binary in their morphology, if
sexed bodies are separate from gender, there is no reason to assume that genders ought to remain as two. She writes:

The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.\textsuperscript{448}

She then asks a series of questions about the nature of “sex”- is it natural, hormonal, anatomical, chromosomal? Does it have a history? How was the duality of sex established? Is the ostensibly scientific discourse of sexual difference constructed for political and social interests? How do sex, gender and sexuality relate? If the immutable character of sex is contested, disputed and found to be contingent, then the distinction between sex and gender 'turns out to be no distinction at all' and gender paradoxically becomes the discursive means of producing sexed difference as pre-discursive.\textsuperscript{449} In \textit{Bodies that Matter} (1993) Butler develops her critique of the sex/gender distinction, positing sex as regulatory fiction:

If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this "sex" except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that "sex" becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access.\textsuperscript{450}

For Butler, the tactical production of discrete and binary sexual categories conceals the strategic aims of that apparatus of production by positing an original, natural “sex” as a cause of sexual experience and desire. She writes that ‘sex does not describe a prior

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid., 9, emphasis in original
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid., 10
\textsuperscript{450} Butler, \textit{Bodies that}, 5
materiality or body; rather sex produces and regulates the intelligibility of the materiality of bodies. It violently designates what will and will not signify’.  

This radical deconstruction of gender ontology has profound implications for political analysis of gender because any analysis which ‘makes that category presuppositional uncritically extends and further legitimates that regulative strategy as a power/knowledge regime.’

In contrast, an analysis which demonstrates that the sex/gender distinction is discursively constituted renders visible and problematises the discursive frame, or norms, through which gendered subjects are reproduced.

**Matrices of Intelligibility**

Having shown that sex is always already gender, Butler investigates the regulatory practices which create the appearance of stable identities. Referring to a 'cultural matrix' or a 'matrix of coherent gender norms' Butler argues that there is an underlying logic through which gender materialises:

The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional sexuality. The institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces the univocity of each of the gendered terms that constitute the limit of gendered possibilities within an oppositional, binary system.

The heterosexualization of desire ‘requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine,” where these are

---


452 Butler, *Gender Trouble* 130

453 Ibid., 30-31
understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female.”\textsuperscript{454} For Butler, the institution of a ‘compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality’ both \textit{requires and produces} the gendered subjects such that the subjects and the binary frame within which they are constituted cannot be distinguished. She explains:

> The norm governs intelligibility, allows for certain kinds of practices and action to become recognizable as such, imposing a grid of legibility on the social and defining the parameters of what will and will not appear within the domain of the social.\textsuperscript{455}

The matrix of intelligibility is the regulatory framework which governs what will and will not signify, what is legitimate and legible. Consequently the very act of differentiating between men and women consolidates the binary itself and enacts a retrospective concealment of the production of those subjects such that they appear stable, natural and beyond question.

In order for the cultural matrix of intelligibility to perform its regulatory function, it requires that some identities cannot exist- those whose gender does not follow from their sex, or those whose desire is not for their ‘opposite’ sex. These individuals fail to conform to the norms which govern intelligibility and ‘appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities.’\textsuperscript{456} For example, dominant gender norms do not ‘allow’ for a ‘feminine’ heterosexual man to desire a ‘masculine’ bisexual woman, or for two gay men to inhabit legitimate subject positions – they appear only as the abnormal, the pathological exception to the norm. Their existence is also constitutive of the matrices of intelligibility, but as the subjects recognised as ‘outside’ legitimacy thus re-securing and reinstituting the norm ‘inside’. Yet Butler argues, the ‘persistence and proliferation’ of such non-normative gender identities provide critical opportunities for

\textsuperscript{454} Ibid., 24
\textsuperscript{455} Butler, \textit{Undoing}, 42
\textsuperscript{456} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble}, 24
exposing the limits of gender norms, to unsettle the matrix of intelligibility itself, and in
doing so promote subversive gender disorder which troubles the logics of gender.\textsuperscript{457}

**Performativity**

Having shown that gender is governed by norms of intelligibility and that there is no
natural sex or gender Butler is able to assert that ‘there is no gender identity behind the
expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very
“expressions” that are said to be its results.’\textsuperscript{458} This is the perhaps the most innovative
aspect of Butler’s theorisation of the gendered subject. A performative act is one that
brings into being that which it names, and as such ‘there need not be a “doer behind the
deed,” ... the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed.’\textsuperscript{459} To understand
identity performatively is to understand identity ‘as a signifying practice.’\textsuperscript{460} Crucially,
if identity is a practice, rather than a stable foundation, it requires repetition of bodily
acts and language that 'congeal over time' to give the appearance of coherence and
substance.\textsuperscript{461} This appearance of substance, of gender as a stable marker of identity, is
the performative accomplishment which conceals the disunity, unoriginal, and
inherently unstable nature of gender by positing gender as a cause or origin, rather than
an effect.

Performative actions have temporal and collective dimensions; they are public acts, not
‘owned’ by the subject. Butler explains that ‘the force of effectivity of a performative
will be derived from its capacity to draw on and reencode the historicity of those

\begin{footnotes}
\item[457] Ibid., 24
\item[458] Ibid., 34
\item[459] Ibid., 195
\item[460] Ibid., 198
\item[461] Ibid., 45
\end{footnotes}
conventions in a present act."\textsuperscript{462} The power of the reiteration therefore does not lie with the individual, but is an effect of historically sedimented conventions of language. As such one cannot choose one's gender identity for ‘one who decides on its gender, is clearly not its gender from the start and fails to realize that its existence is already decided by gender.’\textsuperscript{463} This is why the concept of performativity must be understood in relation to the matrix of intelligibility which governs the intelligibility of performative identities, and which renders performativity a social, rather than individual, process. Arguably one of Butler’s most important insights is that ‘the terms that make up one’s own gender are, from the start, out-side oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author.’\textsuperscript{464} This prompts a radical collapse between the subject, and the social realm she inhabits, which dramatically politicises the terms of one's identity within the wider cultural regulation of identity through gender norms.

\textbf{Genealogy and Deconstruction as Revelatory Method?}

Although they approach subjectivity in different ways Foucault, Derrida and Butler all aim to ‘expose’ the production of subjectivity as an effect of power and as such they offer valuable resources for interrogating the reproduction of gendered subjects and the exploring the resilience of gender. Each thinker offers an account of the reproduction of subjectivity and the simultaneous concealment of that production, in order to demonstrate that subjectivity is not as stable as it appears. Furthermore their work shows that the ‘concealment’ of the production of subjectivity is not a neutral occlusion, but is an essential and necessary condition of that production. The strong emphasis on

\textsuperscript{463} Butler, Bodies that, x, emphasis in original
\textsuperscript{464} Butler, Undoing, 1
'revealing' power or violence in the work of Foucault, Derrida and Butler could be understood to infer that deconstruction and genealogy are methodologies that can be mobilised to investigate discourses, read texts and gendered performances in order to ‘show’ something that was previously hidden.

Mobilising genealogy and deconstruction in this way makes it possible to trace the discursive conditions of possibility which enable the reproduction of subjectivity in particular contexts, and to expose the discursive mechanisms which serve to conceal this production. The exposure of the subject as the effect of discourse re-politicises the terms of identity and the reproduction of subjectivity.465 This move opens up the subject, and the political systems through which the subject is reproduced, to critical scrutiny. As a method for feminist IR this approach can politicise what is meant by ‘woman' or 'man' and can be deployed to offer critical readings of policy texts, media representations and other cultural productions of world politics. Indeed as I discussed in chapter one, this is precisely what contemporary poststructural feminist work has done with great effect.466

This approach to genealogy and deconstruction does have its limits however. Whilst it offers a way to demonstrate very effectively how power is productive, it tends to present the reproduction of subjectivity as effective and coherent. Yet there are many resources for interrogating failure and paradox within the works of Foucault, Derrida and Butler and these tend to be overlooked when the analysis is focussed on showing how power works. Might there be political gains to be made if genealogy and deconstruction were used to reveal how power is paradoxically characterised by failure, contradiction and

465 Edkins, J. Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In (Boulder and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1999)
466 For example see: Hooper, Manly States; Masters, ‘Bodies of Technology’; Hunt and Rygiel, (En)gendering; Shepherd, ‘Veiled References’; Coleman, ‘The gendered violence’; Griffin, ‘Sexing the economy’; Kantola, ‘The gendered reproduction’; Sjoberg, ‘Agency’; Parpart, and Zalewski, Rethinking; Shepherd, Gender, Violence
crisis? The following discussion looks specifically for insights which suggest how this failure might be exposed, and crucially, how this might be exploited.

**Revealing Paradox, Failure and Crisis in the Reproduction of Subjectivity**

Although Foucault’s critique of knowledge demonstrates how power and knowledge are intertwined, an important aim of his work is to demonstrate the instability of knowledge:

> A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence – even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and to our everyday behaviour.\(^{467}\)

This fragility is exposed through genealogical investigations into social practices and knowledges which are found to have no transcendental or pre-discursive essence. For Foucault, 'what is at stake in all these genealogies is the nature of this power which has surged into view in all its violence, aggression and *absurdity*.\(^{468}\) His historical studies have sought to reveal the paradoxical character of rationalities and social practices such as the 'strategic games that subject the power relations they are supposed to guarantee to instability and reversal.'\(^{469}\) Rather than analyzing power relations 'from the point of view of its internal rationality,' Foucault analyses power relations through the ‘*antagonism* of strategies.’\(^{470}\) This aspect of Foucault's critique might be mobilised to trace discontinuities, paradoxical rationales of social practices and unintended outcomes of knowledge in ways which undermine and expose the fragility of knowledge.

---

467 Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’, 80
468 Ibid., 87, my emphasis
470 Foucault, ‘The Subject’, 329, my emphasis
There is similar potential in the work of Derrida. Deconstruction shows how the terms of binary oppositions are never mutually exclusive because 'the outside penetrates and determines the inside.'\textsuperscript{471} When talking about literature, Derrida refers to texts that have ‘worked around the limits of our logical concepts, certain texts which make the limits of our language tremble, exposing them as divisible and questionable.’\textsuperscript{472} For Jenny Edkins deconstruction offers a way to dispel illusions: ‘the notion of différance is Derrida’s attempt to show how two opposing terms function within thought. The opposition relies on an illusion.’\textsuperscript{473} There is a clear application of this conceptualisation for thinking about the reproduction of subjects which understands the ‘subject’ as illusory, an effect of textuality, commanding an impossible presence and identity that can be revealed through deconstruction. Moreover texts can be conceptualised as ‘self-deconstructive.’ For Derrida the play of différance that ‘interrupts every self-identity and exposes its metaphysical claims to transcendence.’\textsuperscript{474} Derrida explains:

\begin{quote}
I have tried to describe and to explain how writing structurally carries within itself (counts-discounts) the process of its own erasure and annulation, all the while marking what remains of this erasure.\textsuperscript{475}
\end{quote}

This auto-deconstruction appears to be ultimately unavoidable. As Derrida explains:

\begin{quote}
There is such a general text everywhere that (that is, everywhere) this discourse and its order (essence, sense, truth, meaning, consciousness, ideality, etc.) are overflowed, that is, everywhere that their authority is put back into the position of a mark in a chain that this authority intrinsically and illusorily believes it wishes to, and does in fact govern.\textsuperscript{476}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{471} Derrida, \textit{Limited Inc.} 152-3
\textsuperscript{472} Derrida ‘Dialogue with’, 112
\textsuperscript{473} Edkins, \textit{Poststructuralism} 68
\textsuperscript{474} Williams, C. \textit{Contemporary French Philosophy: Modernity and the Persistence of the Subject} (London: Athlone, 2001) 129
\textsuperscript{475} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, 58, emphasis in original
\textsuperscript{476} Ibid., 52, emphasis in original
In this understanding then, the deconstruction of the subject is both necessary and unavoidable. It suggests that it is not possible to maintain the concealment of this reproduction, that everywhere there is a challenge to this illusion. Derrida summarises:

Deconstruction is neither a theory nor a philosophy. It is neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens, what is happening today in what they call society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on and so forth. Deconstruction is the case. 

In this understanding the subject 'bears within itself the necessity of its critique.'

For Butler, gender is similarly haunted by impossibility. Her work demonstrates the way that gender norms constitute the domain of intelligible bodies, but also produce a domain of unthinkable, abject and unliveable bodies. This unintelligible domain is not the opposition of the intelligible domain but rather is integral to the constitution of what is intelligible because:

Oppositions are, after all, part of intelligibility; the latter is the excluded and unintelligible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit to intelligibility, its constitutive outside.

Thus the subject is constituted through 'the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation.' Butler maintains that this failure to embody the natural is a ‘constitutive failure of all gender enactments for the very reason that these ontological locales are fundamentally uninhabitable.

---

478 Derrida, Writing and Difference, 358
479 Butler, Bodies that, xi
480 Ibid., 3
481 Butler, Gender Trouble, 200
possible to show that abject gendered subjects, such as homosexuals, function as the 'constitutive outside' of heterosexual majority.

Butler's concept of performativity similarly emphasises that gendered identity 'is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end.'\textsuperscript{482} The necessity of reiteration 'is a sign that materialization [of 'the body' of natural "sex"] is \textit{never quite complete}, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled.'\textsuperscript{483} In turn the norms governing this reproduction are 'continually haunted by their own inefficacy; hence, the anxiously repeated effort to install and augment their jurisdiction.'\textsuperscript{484} Performativity thus contains the possibility of failure as a necessary condition of its possibility. Butler illustrates this in her classic analysis of drag which she uses to ‘expose the tenuousness of gender “reality” in order to counter the violence performed by gender norms.’\textsuperscript{485}

For Butler, drag demonstrates the performative, distinctly unoriginal and unauthentic nature of gender. When one sees a man dressed as a woman, or a woman dressed as a man, then one assumes the first term to be the gendered reality whereas the gender ‘impersonated’ is illusory, false: ‘In such perceptions in which an ostensible reality is coupled with unreality, we think we know what the reality is.’\textsuperscript{486} She argues that when one performance of gender is judged to be ‘real’ and another fake, a judgement is made based on a certain ontology of gender. However for Butler, the very ontology used to make these judgements is put into crisis by drag performances because these judgements become difficult or impossible to make. For Butler:

\textsuperscript{482} Ibid., 45
\textsuperscript{483} Butler, \textit{Bodies that}, 2, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid., 237
\textsuperscript{485} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble} xxv
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid., xxiii
The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy.\footnote{487}

This, Butler argues, reveals the original to be nothing other than 'a parody of the idea of the natural and the original.'\footnote{488} Equally transsexualism, whether pre or post-operative, or transitional, occasions a crisis where in ‘seeing’ the body ones cultural perceptions fail and we are no longer sure whether the body in question is a man or woman, leaving us with the crucial question: ‘what are the categories through which one sees?’\footnote{489} For Butler, drag is not necessarily subversive, but it can point out that these ontological presumptions are at work and that they often fail.\footnote{490}

The norm, which operates to delimit the domain of the social, simultaneously constitutes its own failure in the form of those individuals, social practices and spaces which exceed the norm and are neither ‘within’ nor ‘outside’ it:

There are middle regions, hybrid regions of legitimacy and illegitimacy that have no names, and where nomination itself falls into a crisis produced by the variable, sometimes violent boundaries of legitimating practices that come into uneasy and sometimes conflictual contact with one another. These are not precisely places where one can chose to hang out, subject positions one might opt to occupy. These are nonplaces in which one finds oneself in spite of oneself; indeed, these are nonplaces where recognition, proves precarious if not elusive, in spite of one's best efforts to be a subject in some recognizable sense. They are not sites of enunciation, but shifts in the topography from which a questionably audible claim emerges: the claim of the not-yet subject and the nearly recognizable.\footnote{491}

Consequently, within the field of intelligible sexuality ‘the binary relation does not exhaust the field in question.’\footnote{492}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[487] Ibid., 43, emphasis in original
\item[488] Ibid., 43, emphasis in original
\item[489] Ibid., xxiv, emphasis in original
\item[490] Butler, Undoing, 214
\item[491] Ibid., 108, my emphasis
\item[492] Ibid., 108
\end{footnotes}
It is clear that there are significant resources within the thought of Foucault, Derrida and Butler for rethinking how it might be possible to 'show' the ineffective, contradictory and paradoxical character of attempts to reproduce subjects. This would be a politically attractive approach because it emphasises the inherent failure of attempts to secure meaning and reproduce subjects, and *refuses* to grant power to the terms, logics and regimes of truth underlying that production. As a research methodology this would involve actively pursuing the limits of intelligibility, questioning the terms employed and exposing their instability. This approach then undermines attempts to secure subjects by actively pursuing the limits, failures and paradoxical (im)possibility of these attempts, and as an effect, performatively reconstructs subjectivity in a different way. However whilst there are many political advantages in 'revealing' where power fails to produce its desired effects, a question remains unanswered: Is 'revealing' failure and paradox the same as 'exploiting' it? Butler suggests that it is not when she writes that the 'task' is to:

Consider this threat and disruption not as a permanent contestation of social norms condemned to the pathos of perpetual failure, but rather as a critical resource in the struggle to rearticulate the very terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility.\(^493\)

Accordingly the next section explored how failure might be used as a critical resource, and considers what 'critical practice' might entail.

---

\(^{493}\) Butler, *Bodies that*, 3
The first two interpretations of genealogy and deconstruction understand them as methods which can reveal something within a text, discourse or bodily performance. These interpretations are predicated on there being a position of critique from outside discourse, the text, or the regulatory regimes of heteronormativity. Yet Foucault, Derrida and Butler find that this is not possible, there is no ‘position’ from which to do this. Foucault explains this as follows:

> We have to give up hope of ever acceding to a point of view that could give us access to any complete and definitive knowledge \([\text{connaissance}]\) of what may constitute our historical limits. And, from this point of view, the theoretical and practical experience we have of our limits, and of the possibility of moving beyond them, is always limited and determined; thus, we are always in the position of beginning again.\(^{494}\)

For Foucault, even where it is possible to ‘bring to light’ subjugated knowledges there is always the possibility that they will be put back into circulation and that ‘they run the risk of re-codification, re-colonisation’ through their interaction with unitary discourses.\(^{495}\)

Similarly Butler argues that there is no way to 'stop' the repetition of gendered logics:

> That the power regimes in heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply that repetition itself ought to be stopped- \(\text{as if it could be}.\)\(^{496}\)

\(^{494}\) Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', 316-7
\(^{495}\) Foucault, 'Two Lectures' 86
\(^{496}\) Butler, Gender Trouble 44, my emphasis
If there is no way to go beyond the text, might a 'subversive reading' of a particular text be offered instead? Derrida addresses this when he talks about the possibility of transgression:

There is *not* a transgression, if one understands by that a pure and simple landing into a beyond of metaphysics ... even in aggressions or transgressions, we are consorting with a code to which metaphysics is tied irreducibly, such that every transgressive gesture reencloses us – precisely by giving us a hold on the closure of metaphysics – within this closure. But by means of the work done on one side and the other of the limit the field inside is modified, and a transgression is produced that consequently is nowhere present as a *fait accompli*... Transgression implies that the limit is always at work.\(^{497}\)

This inability to ‘go beyond,’ or occupy a position 'outside,' might appear politically unsatisfactory, or even an apolitical. It certainly precludes any notion of ‘exploiting’ failure in an instrumental fashion through recourse to particular methodologies or practices. However, the very condition of always acting from within the text, discourse or norms simultaneously opens up avenues for political intervention which are potentially radical. Critical resources for thinking through the possibility of exploiting this failure can be found in the work of Foucault, Derrida and Butler but they require a deeper interpretation of genealogy and deconstruction that goes beyond 'revealing' something hidden in the text, and instead considers how they reconceptualise what a text *is*. The impossibility of going outside is simultaneously the possibility for working at the limits of the boundary between inside/outside. The possibility of working at the limits of discourse, offers the possibility of making an active, performative intervention which causes disruption *from within*.

In 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (originally published 1971) Foucault offers a detailed explication of genealogy which emphasises that is an active disruption and dislocation of

\(^{497}\) Derrida, *Positions*, 9-10, emphasis in original
knowledge, including knowledge about the self and subjectivity: 'The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events.'\textsuperscript{498} Foucault argues that genealogy will 'push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of the time where masks are constantly appearing.'\textsuperscript{499} This suggests that genealogy is not a static uncovering of hidden reality, but instead that there is no single mask to lift, no static reality to be revealed. It means that knowledge is itself a mask, that reality and history is composed only of masks. This moves genealogy into a different register of revelatory practice, beyond that offered in the first two interpretations.

The affirmative aspect of genealogy is emphasised by Foucault when he discuses criticism:

Criticism - understood as analysis of the historical conditions that bear on the creation of links to truth, to rules, and to the self - does not mark out impassable boundaries of describe closed systems; it brings to light transformable singularities. These transformations could not take place except by means of a working of thought upon itself; that is the principle of the history of thought as critical activity.\textsuperscript{500}

However, criticism is a complex activity and the possibility of ‘transgressing’ or subverting thought or logics of rationality is not a simple process or act. This is because:

The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusion and shadows. But can the limit have a life of its own outside of the act that gloriously passes through and negates it?... Does transgression not exhaust its nature when it violates the limit, being nothing beyond this point in time?\textsuperscript{501}

\textsuperscript{498} Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy', 145-6
\textsuperscript{499} Ibid., 161, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{500} Foucault, 'Preface to the History', 201, my emphasis
Transgression, then cannot be an ‘end’ in itself. This does not mean that transgression is futile, rather that the *process*, the crossing, contains the disruptive potential as it:

serves as a glorification of what it excludes: the limit opens violently onto the limitless, finds itself suddenly carried away by the content it had rejected and fulfilled by this alien plenitude that invades it to the core of its being.\footnote{Ibid., 73}

Moreover, transgressing the limit cannot be a single act:

Transgression, then, is not related to the limit as black and white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a *spiral that no simple infraction can exhaust.*\footnote{Ibid., 73-4, my emphasis}

This suggests that transgression and the limit are mobile, and that criticism is an ongoing practice. It is a paradoxical practice which in pursuing and crossing the limit, re-constitutes it. This is a radically different understanding of what it might mean to expose failure or reveal the paradoxical and aporetic character of discourse.

In a similar vein Derrida has 'insisted' that deconstruction 'is not *neutral*. It *intervenes.*'\footnote{Derrida, *Positions*, 76, emphasis in original} This is because there is no way to ‘reveal’ something within a text without altering the text itself, for that which is concealed is not merely a mask, or a disguise. The:

Structuality of structure- although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin.\footnote{Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 352}
The concealment which produces meaning is a form of neutralisation and a reduction. Concealment is in this sense an active move that neutralises and acts upon and within the totality. Deconstruction unsettles the borders and framing of texts in such a way that ‘everything which should preserve their immanence and make possible an internal reading, or merely reading in the classical sense of the term’ 506 is profoundly problematised and rendered contingent and unstable. There is no ‘presence’ to reveal, only the illusion of presence rendered through a boundless and unstable context, thus deconstruction is an unceasing call that impels endless re-reading without any hope of a definitive revelation, only a revelation to come.

Unlike revelation as a move to restore what was already there, or simply to remove a barrier to our seeing, deconstruction is a positive response to alterity, it is an affirmative vocation:

The other, as the other than self, the other that opposes self identity, is not something that can be detected and disclosed within a philosophical space and with the aid of a philosophical lamp. 507

The text, in this case the reproduction of subjectivity, will always be changing according to the reading (having no essence or presence) and this process of reading or revealing becomes a transformative enterprise in itself, a process of writing. There are no essential subjects to be read or be revealed, on the contrary these subjects are simultaneously constituted by this reading. Deconstruction, is

Not only a search for, but itself a consequence of, the fact that the system is impossible; it often consists, regularly and recurrently, in making appear….a force of dislocation, a limit in the totalization, a limit in the movement of syllogistic synthesis. 508

506 Derrida, ‘Some Statements’, 92
507 Derrida ‘Dialogue with’ 118, my emphasis
There cannot be a neutral or static reading of the text and thus any revelation would be an active intervention that would alter it. This is why, for Derrida:

Texts are not to be read according to a hermeneutical or exegetical method which would seek out a finished signified beneath a textual surface. Reading is transformational.  

This does not enable a text to mean anything (therefore nothing), on the contrary:

No one is free to read as he or she wants. The reader does not interpret freely, taking into account his own reading, excluding the author, the historical period in which the text appeared and so on.

Reading thus becomes reintegrated into writing once more and the radical distinction between reader and text becomes untenable. In terms of reading as a revelation, this means that it is not possible to reveal the concealment of subjects as if there was a separation between the reader of the text and the text itself. In this sense, you can read subjects as autonomous metaphysical presences, or you can read them as an effect of **différance**, but crucially, both framings are still ‘just’ reading.

Further questions arise when the terms ‘concealment’ and ‘revelation’ are themselves interrogated, for as metaphysical terms they rely on some notion of presence in order to function. Revelation is usually seen as the remedy, the sister to concealment and as such it could be understood as the secondary term, in the oppositional hierarchy. In this understanding ‘concealment’ is the cause or origin of any subsequent revelation. If we invert this hierarchy we come to understand that to conceal something it needs to have been revealed already, in order for it to be

---

509 Derrida, *Positions*, 54-5
510 Derrida, ‘An Interview’, 238-9
511 Of course, given the legacy of the Enlightenment, revelation could be seen as the dominant term in other contexts.
(considered) concealed in the first place. Concealment thus loses its metaphysical privilege and it is demonstrated that concealment, as a concept, in fact relies on revelation as a condition of (im)possibility. This is because if concealment were metaphysically complete, then it wouldn’t make sense to call it concealment, it would be something else. If either concealment or revelation can occupy the position of origin then origin is no longer originary and becomes a ‘nonoriginary origin….a “concept” that cannot be comprehended by the former system’\textsuperscript{512}- thus effecting a disruption in the system. The distinction between concealment and revelation is rendered ultimately undecidable. It then becomes a distinctly political question for we have to think about \textit{what is at stake in the very claim that something is concealed, and the claim to reveal something,} and what the limits are to these conceptualisations. This is, of course, exactly what Foucault’s investigation of sex in volume one of the \textit{History of Sexuality} interrogates. Foucault asks ‘what led us to show, ostentatiously, that sex is something we hide?’\textsuperscript{513} He demonstrates how they very notion of something to be revealed is itself a product of discourse, in this case the repressive hypothesis, which requires a retrospective revelation, a \textit{knowing} of the past from the perspective of the present. What Foucault does is raise the question of what the revelation of sex might itself conceal. Derrida asks a similar question in relation to the critical value of structuralism: ‘But what does this opening hide? And hide, not by virtue of what it leaves aside and out of sight, but \textit{by virtue of its very power to illuminate.}’\textsuperscript{514} This raises the issue that whenever we are revealing something we are simultaneously concealing something else, a concealment enabled by a condition of generalised revelation. This radically deceters any notions we might have about revealing the concealment of the

\textsuperscript{512} Culler, \textit{On Deconstruction}, 88
\textsuperscript{513} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality Volume 1}, 9
\textsuperscript{514} Derrida, \textit{Writing and Difference}, 5, my emphasis
reproduction of subjects because we can see that what we consider concealed or revealed is not definitive but ultimately contingent and contextual.

This inability to reveal what is hidden within the text because the reader is simultaneously the writer of that text opens up opportunities to intervene and transform that text, to act within it. In Bodies that Matter (1993) Butler explicitly links performativity with Derrida’s concept of citationality, in a move which allows her to explicitly theorize the possibility of rearticulating sex in ways which destabilize heterosexual hegemony:

The process of that sedimentation or what we might call materialization will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citation of power, a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the "I"... The paradox of subjectivation (assujetissement) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms.515

This has radical implications for notions of ‘agency.’ However as Butler writes, ‘that my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It only means that paradox is the condition of its possibility.’516 Drawing on Foucault, Butler suggests that 'the practices of the subject' as a site where social norms are continually reworked through performative practice:

When we do act and speak, we not only disclose ourselves but act on the schemes of intelligibility that govern who will be a speaking being, subjecting them to rupture or revision, consolidating their norms, or contesting their hegemony.517

515 Butler, Bodies that, 15, first and second emphases in original
516 Butler, Undoing, 3
517 Butler, Giving An Account, 132, my emphasis
Agency becomes located as a 'reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power.\textsuperscript{518} Butler poses an important series of questions:

If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?... What constitutes the possibility of effective inversion, subversion, or displacement within the terms of a constructed identity?\textsuperscript{519}

The 'repetition' which might call regulating norms into question, is not a 'reading' of a text- it is the text itself. Butler's discussion of the materiality of the body demonstrates how understandings of the referentiality of language itself is altered through the concept of performativity. Butler argues that when one 'refers' to something one is inevitably demarcating and delimiting that to which we refer, although our references conceal this prior delimitation:

This delimitation, which often is enacted as an untheorized pressuposition in any act of description, marks a boundary that includes and excludes, that decided as it were, what will and will not be the stuff of the object to which we refer. This marking off will have some normative force and, indeed, some violence, for \textit{it can construct only through erasing}; it can bound a thing only through enforcing a certain criterion, a principle of selectivity.\textsuperscript{520}

This understanding of referentiality posits failure and concealment as integral and constitutive of the production of subjectivity. Consequently any attempt to institute boundaries paradoxically contains the seeds of its undoing:

If we call into question the fixity of the structuralist law that divides and bounds the "sexes" by virtue of their dyadic differentiation within the heterosexual matrix, it will be from the exterior regions of that boundary (not from a "position," but from the discursive possibilities opened up by the constitutive outside of hegemonic positions), and it will constitute \textit{the

\textsuperscript{518} Butler, \textit{Bodies that}, 15
\textsuperscript{519} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble}, 44, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{520} Butler, \textit{Bodies that}, 11, my emphasis
disruptive return of the excluded from within the very logic of the heterosexual symbolic.\textsuperscript{521}

She emphasises that this is 'not only as an imaginary contestation that effects failure in the workings of the inevitable law, but as an enabling disruption, the occasion for a radical rearticulation of the symbolic horizon.'\textsuperscript{522}

Butler suggests that 'cultural configurations of gender confusion,' those cultural practices which are incoherent and ambiguous, operate as sites for 'intervention, exposure and displacement.'\textsuperscript{523} These are sites in which ‘the force of regulatory law can be turned against itself’ to spawn rearticualtions that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law.\textsuperscript{524} She then talks about 'practices which underscore disidentification' with regulatory norms that might facilitate a reconceptualisation of which 'bodies matter'.\textsuperscript{525}

As a sedimented effect of reiterated practice or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. This instability is the deconstructing possibility of the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects of which "sex" is stabilised, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of "sex into a potentially productive crisis."\textsuperscript{526}

This crisis might provide the opportunity for a 'critical reworking' of constitutive gender norms.\textsuperscript{527}

\textsuperscript{521} Ibid., 11-12, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{522} Ibid., 23, emphasis in original
\textsuperscript{523} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble} 43
\textsuperscript{524} Butler, \textit{Bodies that, 2}
\textsuperscript{525} Ibid., 3
\textsuperscript{526} Ibid., 10, first emphasis in original, second emphasis mine
\textsuperscript{527} Ibid., x
Although potentially subversive, those gendered expressions that fall outside recognition are only thinkable in relation to those that do, and as such they are simultaneously productive of, and produced by gendered norms of intelligibility. They are therefore both possible sites of resistance whilst simultaneously productive of the status quo. This is a point that Butler acknowledges when discussing practices of parody, she writes:

Practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic- a failed copy, as it were.  

As she explains, given the performative and unstable undeterminability of gendered life, what is subversive is always contextual and cannot be made to endure through time: ‘The effort to name to criterion for subversiveness will always fail, and ought to.’ As Butler explains:

Criticality is thus not a position per se, not a site or a place that might be located within an already delimitable field, although one must, in an obligatory catachresis, speak of sites, of fields of domains.

Given the lack of guarantees for subversive acts, might it be possible to instead refuse the norms? Foucault suggests that perhaps the aim should be to 'refuse what we are' rather than to discover what we are. For Butler there is always 'the possibility of savouring the status of unthinkability, if it is a status, as the most critical, the most radical, the most valuable... a site of pure resistance, a site unco-opted by normativity.' However, as Butler asks: ‘how does one think a politics from such as

---

528 Butler, *Gender Trouble*  200  
529 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxiii  
530 Butler, *Undoing*, 107  
531 Foucault, ‘The Subject’, 336  
532 Butler, *Undoing*, 106
site of unrepresentability?"  Although equally, ‘how can one think a politics without considering these sites of unrepresentability?’  If politics demands that ‘we take a stand,’ then critical reflection demands that we ask ‘why and how this has become the question [because] the question defines what will and will not qualify as meaningful political discourse.’  For Butler a 'more radical transformation is precisely at stake when we refuse' the terms of a given debate.  If we engage in the terms ‘we ratify the frame at the moment in which we take our stand.’  However, the urgency of the need to stake political claims, to be recognized and legitimised creates a dilemma. Butler does not aim to resolve this dilemma but rather:

Develop a critical practice which is mindful of both. I want to maintain that legitimation is double-edged: it is crucial that, politically, that we lay claim to intelligibility and recognisability; and it is crucial, politically, that we maintain a critical and transformative relation to the norms that govern what will and will not count as an intelligible and recognizable.

Such a critical praxis would involve attending to the necessary foreclosure enacted at the point of making a political claim and maintaining an immanent critical reflexivity towards norms, terms and concepts which structure politics as such. As a critical methodology for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects it calls for a careful examination of the terms of that reproduction, with a particular focus on political claims made by, or on behalf, of particular subjects.

The use of deconstruction and genealogy as a revelatory method, restricted to the task of revealing the reproduction of subjectivity, or revealing where it fails, reflects a limited understanding of the transformative power of these concepts. A more effective critique
would ‘exploit’ the paradoxical nature of all attempts to secure meaning, order subjects and legitimise particular regimes of truth. Unlike the first and second interpretations of deconstruction and genealogy which conceptualise critical methodologies as tools through which to ‘read’ the text and reveal what is hidden within it, this final section has explored deconstruction and genealogy as transformative critical praxis. This third interpretation collapses the distinction between the reader and the text and conceptualises deconstruction and genealogy as a mode of critical praxis, which is transformative. However, it questions the notion of ‘subversion’, ‘transgression’ and ‘resistance’ and suggests that failure, crisis and paradox cannot be ‘exploited’ in an instrumental fashion. As Butler explains:

The questioning of taken-for-granted conditions becomes possible on occasion; but one cannot get there through a thought experiment, an *epoché*, an act of will. One gets there, as it were, through suffering the dehiscence, the breakup, of the ground itself.\(^{539}\)

As a critical methodology for investigating the reproduction of subjectivity, it involves actively pursuing the limits of intelligibility, enacting a crisis through the exposure of the fallibility of attempts to secure those subjects, performatively reproducing subjectivity in and through critical praxis itself.

**Interrogating the Gender Order of the British Military: Research Methodologies**

Drawing on the insights generated through the engagement with Foucault, Derrida and Butler it is possible to develop a methodological framework for investigating the reproduction of gendered subjects within the contemporary British armed forces. I adopt the term ‘gender order’ as a heuristic device throughout my discussion of gender in the

---

\(^{539}\) Ibid., 107-106, emphasis in original
armed forces, in order to convey a particular understanding of the regulation of gendered life that depends on the reproduction and ordering of gendered subjects. As the term ‘gender order’ has been used by other authors in different contexts a brief consideration of these is necessary so as to distinguish my specific use of the term. The term is probably most commonly associated with the work of Connell who uses the term gender order throughout her various works concerning masculinity.\(^{540}\) Her conceptual approach is designed to analyse changes in masculinity whilst emphasising ‘the dynamics of the gender order as a whole.’\(^{541}\) As such Connell examines the role of men within the wider relational dynamics of sexuality and gender, paying attention to the way the ‘gender order itself is the site of relations of dominance and subordination, struggles for hegemony, and practices of resistance.’\(^{542}\)

The term ‘gender order’ has also been adopted by various contemporary scholars investigating gender, and is often used as a descriptive term. For example Hooper, in her book *Manly States*, refers to a ‘gender order’ on many occasions employing it to refer generally to the gendered relations she is discussing.\(^{543}\) Pettman also refers to a ‘gender order’ in a similar way.\(^{544}\) Shepherd refers to the ‘gender order’ in her discussion about theorising gender which explores gender as a noun, a verb and ‘a logic’.\(^{545}\) Whilst these authors all use the term without developing it into a concept as such, I would argue that the current usage of ‘gender order’ can be understood to reflect a commitment to relational analysis, an acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of gender identity along a ‘spectrum’ of gendered possibilities and the diverse and


\(^{541}\) Ibid., 735

\(^{542}\) Hooper, *Manly States*

\(^{543}\) Pettman, *Worlding*

contingent expression of the ordering principles of gender in different times, places and contexts.

Pierre Bourdieu develops a more comprehensive approach to the ordering of gender using similar methodological and theoretical approaches as I do in this thesis. Bourdieu examines the ‘masculine order’ which he argues structures patterns of domination and subordination between men and women: ‘The division between the sexes appears to be “in the order of things”, as people sometimes say to refer to what it normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable.’ 546 Bourdieu develops his theorisation of the masculine order in order to understand and explain how gender hierarchy reproduces itself, how the relations of domination between men and women seem to be so resilient. He argues that the strength of the masculine order is ‘seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification.’ 547 For Bourdieu the concept of an ‘order’ has a specific analytical and theoretical meaning. By referring to the ‘order’ as such, he attempts to render it visible and to question the ‘dehistoricization’ and ‘eternalization’ of the structure of sexual division and the corresponding gendered hierarchy. 548

My use of the term ‘gender order’ is similarly intended to be understood in a specific methodological and theoretical sense. It refers to the discursive ordering of gendered bodies, places and modes of representation through which gender and sexuality are understood, reproduced and negotiated. In this chapter I have discussed Foucault's genealogical approach to the history of thought which interrogates how things, or 'systems of elements,' are classified and objectified according to particular regimes of rationality. 549 In The Order of Things Foucault provides a useful definition of order:

547 Ibid., 9
548 Ibid., viii
549 Foucault, The Order, xxi
Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.\textsuperscript{550}

The order manifests itself only in the effects it produces, it has no existence outside of the elements it manifests. The system of elements that are the focus of this thesis are the gendered subjects of the military. Rather than begin with \textit{a priori} categories of ‘men,’ ‘women’ or ‘lesbians’ I instead interrogate how gendered and sexual similarity and difference is inscribed, or produced. Butler has argued that gender norms can be considered as an ordering structure, or what she terms a 'grid of legibility' or ‘matrix of intelligibility.’ These regulatory practices institute a compulsory heterosexuality, sustaining the binary regulation of gender that reproduces man/woman, masculine/feminine, and heterosexuality/homosexuality as hierarchical and oppositional categories. This understanding means that any policy changes with regards to particular gendered subjects (such as 'women' or 'homosexuals') must be analysed within the wider context of the gender order.

Although performing this crucial social process, norms are not visible in themselves, moreover:

Norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they produce.\textsuperscript{551}

In this way the concept of a ‘gender order’ remains immanent, and not a pre-discursive category for analysis. Invoking the concept of a gender order instead requires us to ask

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{550} Ibid., xxi
\item \textsuperscript{551} Butler, \textit{Undoing} 41
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
questions about how gender and sexuality is conceptualised in a particular time and place, what forms of knowledge are being used to interpret and render intelligible particular gendered bodies, acts and spaces and how this order is negotiated. This ordering is not static, but instead is constantly reproduced and reified through social processes. Having established how dominant understandings of sexuality and gender serve as a ‘frame’ which enables and constrains possibilities and interpretations of gendered reality it is then imperative to specifically pursue the contradictions, paradoxes and limits of these dominant understandings. This crucial step is vital to more effectively destabilise, denaturalise, and undermine the power or the gender order as such, opening it up to alternative interpretations and transformation. Rather than describing how the gender order works, this essential move allows the analysis itself to inhabit the terms, disrupt them more effectively and reproduce them differently.

Butler explains that this cultural matrix requires that ‘certain kinds of “identities” cannot “exist”..... they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain.’\(^{552}\) Those deviant subjects whose identity is discontinuous, incoherent and unintelligible, such as transgender men and women, are thus ‘excluded’ from the gender order, occupying a space that is simultaneously included by its very exclusion, functioning as what Derrida calls the ‘constitutive outside’ of naturalized gender.\(^{553}\) This suggests that a particular focus on those 'abject' gendered subjects might be a good strategy for revealing the operation of the gender order, and exploiting where it fails. This thesis focuses on homosexuals within the British armed forces, who were arguably abject military subjects prior to 2000. The investigation of the 'integration' of lesbian and gay personnel in the contemporary armed forces explores how the military

\(^{552}\) Butler, Gender Trouble, 24

\(^{553}\) Derrida, Limited Inc.
has responded to their inclusion, questioning whether the military gender order has been fundamentally challenged as a result.

In answering these questions I aim to conduct a genealogy and deconstruction of gender ontology within the British armed forces. I hope to understand more fully how the British armed forces are able to ‘integrate’ women yet remain ‘masculine’ and to explore whether this is the case with the inclusion of LGBT personnel. This requires an investigation of the general order of 'problematisation' through which gender and sexuality are managed, and a careful examination of the terms through which the challenge to the ban was made, and through which lesbian and gay personnel were ‘integrated.’

Throughout my analysis of the British armed forces I systematically interrogate how the military gender order is reproduced, reified and re-secured, and in doing so I seek to expose the logics of the order, denaturalising it and rendering it visible. Simultaneously I will pursue occasions where the order fails, is put into crisis and examine how it responds to those failures. Understanding this as a form of critical praxis, the research performatively reproduces subjectivity differently, not escaping the sex/gender predicament identified by Stern and Zalewski, but offering a different way to work with that paradox.

Having outlined a theoretical/methodological approach to the analysis of gender in the contemporary British armed forces, the final section of this chapter turns to explore the implications of this approach for the 'data gathering' process.

---

554 Foucault, 'Polemics'
Despite the theoretical sophistication of feminist approaches in IR it has been noted that very little has been written specifically about methodologies used for pursuing such research. Feminist Methodologies for International Relations, edited by Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (2006) was published to address this, providing a resource for feminist researchers and students and facilitating an explicit methodological conversation between feminist scholars. The volume contains a diverse selection of chapters which outline and reflect on the challenges and methodological considerations of pursuing feminist research. The contributors explore methodologies for ‘studying silences,’ using feminist standpoint theory, conducting ethnography, and using the fine arts in research. The editors suggest that feminist methods are ‘question-driven’ but not dependent on one methodology or method. They emphasise that as a result of this methodological diversity feminist IR is ‘a collective, open and ongoing project in which dialogue and diversity are seen as significant strengths.’ Other commentators on methodologies of feminist IR have been less generous. Wanda Vrasti is particularly critical of the way ethnographic research methods have been utilised in feminist IR and offers a powerful critique of the adoption of these methodologies. Vrasti cites Carol Cohn's ethnographic research into

558 Ackerly, et al. ‘Feminist Methodologies’
American defence intellectuals\textsuperscript{560} as an example where ethnography has been reduced to a series of methodological choices - participant observation and interviews - designed to gather empirical data according to a linear spatial-temporal logic of home-field-home or theory-method-theory.\textsuperscript{561} For Vrasti the limitation of this use of ethnography is that the possibility of making an ontological distinction between experience 'out there' and text 'in here' is precluded by the fact that both spheres are enmeshed in writing.\textsuperscript{562} Her concern with Enloe's monological books is her lack of fieldwork which results in the women described in her books having no voice, which she argues allows Enloe to preserve an 'innocent authority' throughout the text.\textsuperscript{563} Vrasti finds in this another separation between researcher and researched: 'Enloe is not engaging in a conversation with her subjects, nor do she and her subjects take part in a shared world of experience.'\textsuperscript{564} She suggests that as a result of her overarching narrative about gendered power Enloe needs to objectify the voices of women and 'hollow out their subjectivities,' ironically employing the same violent objectification as the masculine-military complex she is seeking to critique.\textsuperscript{565} She also criticises 'critically-inclined scholars who, possessing only a superficial grasp of his [Foucault’s] work, have mistaken genealogy for yet another social science method of inquiry.'\textsuperscript{566} She concludes with a discussion of contemporary anthropological research which has come to terms with the 'failings' of ethnography as a method, and instead works with the 'inherent violences and vulnerabilities' of ethnographic praxis.\textsuperscript{567}

\textsuperscript{561} Vrasti, ‘The Strange Case’, 285
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid., 286.
\textsuperscript{563} Ibid., 288, emphasis in original. See: Enloe, \textit{Bananas}; Enloe, \textit{Manoeuvres}; Enloe, \textit{The Curious Feminist};
\textsuperscript{564} Vrasti, ‘The Strange Case’, 289
\textsuperscript{565} I share this concern, as outlined in the chapter one of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{566} Vrasti, ‘The Strange Case’, 293
\textsuperscript{567} Ibid., 297
One might object to Vrasti’s tendency to offer caricatures of the work she is critiquing, but undoubtedly, she draws attention to important methodological issues about how it is possible to 'access' reality, and indeed whether this is even possible. One way to do this would be to re-problematise the distinction between researcher and the subject of analysis in a way which fundamentally challenges the very notion of research 'methodology' as an instrumental set of practices.\(^{568}\) In the light of the theoretical insights generated in this chapter, the distinction between the 'empirical' subject of analysis and the researcher becomes untenable. This has serious implications for the generation of research methodologies as they are no longer conceptualised as 'data gathering' practices but as political practices. The implications of the theoretical analysis I offered in this chapter suggest that both the collection and analysis of such 'empirical data' becomes a political intervention in itself, one that actively engages in \textit{writing} the text.\(^{569}\) The research process does not access, analyse or reinterpret texts, it actively constitutes and reproduces them. This renders the reproduction of gendered subjects in research methods worthy of significant reflection. It is with this in mind that I offer several initial reflections about the research methodologies adopted for my investigation of the reproduction of gendered subjects within the British armed forces.\(^{570}\)

\(^{568}\) I say 're-problematise' to indicate that feminist researchers in IR are not as naive about research methodology as Vrasti seems to suggest, and are very aware of the power dynamics involved in the research process. See: Ackerly \textit{et al.} 'Feminist Methodologies' 15

\(^{569}\) Feminists are very aware of the power dynamics between researcher and researched, and how this impacts on the research process so in this sense they do understand research methods as distinctly political. However I do not think many would conceptualise research as 'an intervention' as such.

\(^{570}\) I return to the implications of the theoretical framework for research methodologies in the conclusion of the thesis.
Feminist scholars have developed sophisticated discourse theoretical methodologies for analysing media texts and official documents.\textsuperscript{571} Policies provide a framework for practices which are informed by particular regimes of rationality which govern how subjects are reproduced. These policy narratives are understood to be 'frames' through which gendered subjects become intelligible, and are both productive and produced by gender norms which structure 'everyday' interactions between people. This means that policies of the MoD and the Royal Navy can reveal much about the gender order of that military institution. However, in the light of the theoretical analysis in the first half of this chapter, the policies and practices of the MoD and the armed forces are understood to be attempts to order gender. As attempts, they represent the ordering practices of the institution which are necessarily subject to failure, paradox and instability. Policy documents do not give direct access to 'the way that subjects are reproduced,' which, arguably, some feminist poststructural work in IR has implied.\textsuperscript{572} The emphasis on these discursive practices as attempts shifts the focus from conducting an analysis which traces the conditions of possibility through which policies and practices arose, and encourages instead a more effective deconstruction of the terms through which policies are articulated.

Drawing on the theoretical framework generated for the investigation of the British armed forces, it is possible to outline a general approach to 'reading' policy texts. This approach asks questions of the texts such as 'how is gender and sexuality conceptualised in the military gender order?' Other questions concern whether the gender order ever

\textsuperscript{571} Hooper, \textit{Manly States}; Hunt and Rygiel, \textit{(En)gendering}; Shepherd, 'Veiled References'; Coleman, 'The gendered violence'; Griffin, 'Sexing the economy'; Kantola, 'The gendered reproduction'; Sjoberg, 'Agency'; Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence}

\textsuperscript{572} For an illustration of this tendency see the critique of the way 'women' are reproduced in UNSCR 1325, in Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence}
fails to guarantee the intelligibility it promises, and how the military responds to these failures. In relation to homosexuality, the policy texts will be used to identify official constructions of 'the homosexual' and to locate these within the general mode of problematisation which made a ban on homosexuality ‘the solution.’ Careful attention will be paid to official policy concerning lesbian and gay personnel since 2000, with a particular focus on whether the logics underpinning the military gender order have been transformed.

**Interviews**

Feminist researchers have often rejected positivist approaches in favour of qualitative and interactive methodologies such as interviews which are valued ‘for respecting the understandings and experiences of research subjects, and making explicit the politics of knowing and the possibilities of empowerment.’\(^5^7^3\) In the previous chapter I discussed Stern’s innovative use of interviews with Mayan women to make a profound political intervention in the debates about in/security, identity, sovereignty. I argued that it was precisely the messiness and complexity of the accounts generated through interviews that enabled Stern to demonstrate the limits of dominant political imaginaries and undermine them. In *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* Stern explains the rationale for methodologies she used in her research.\(^5^7^4\) Finding the security studies literature inadequate, she used the interviews as a way of generating alternative narratives which would allow her to explore the constitution of identity through discourses of security. She explains how she aimed not to impose an analytical

---


framework on their narratives but rather interpret the texts on their own terms. She emphasises that her study does not 'pretend' to be representative and that the narratives themselves were the material of her study. The interviews were not an attempt to 'access' an authentic account of Mayan women's experience, and were not intended for use as 'evidence' for other claims.

I also saw very particular advantages in the use of interviews for exploring the reproduction of gendered subjects in the contemporary British armed forces. The purpose of interviewing personnel was to investigate how they reproduce, negotiate and challenge the gender order of the military. My use of the interviews is similar to Stern's, in that I make no claims to be representative of the British armed forces, or the Royal Navy, and I am not seeking to make generalisations on the basis of the interview data. The purpose of the interviews was to generate additional texts for investigating how gendered subjectivity is performatively reproduced and as such it is the narratives, in and of themselves, that are of interest in the thesis.

It is important to clarify how the relationship between official documents and interview data is understood in the thesis. One option would be to ‘juxtapose’ policy and the personnel I interviewed in a way which reproduces them as distinctly separate spheres, or in a way which portrays the interview data as generating a more valid account about the reality ‘on the ground.’ However, the theoretical framework generated in this chapter understands both policy and the accounts of particular gendered subjects within a wider economy of gender norms and performative practice. Whilst the interviews complement the policy analysis by offering insight into how gendered norms are

---

575 So far as this is possible - Stern acknowledges the multiple challenges posed when analysing research narratives.
576 Stern. ‘Racism, sexism’, 187
actively reproduced by gendered subjects, they too must be understood to be attempts at
constructing selfhood. Butler demonstrates the way in which the "I" or the self 'defies
narrative capture' which renders all attempts to articulate it prone to paradox. Consequently both modes of generating ‘texts’ for analysis provide opportunities to
interrogate how gender norms are articulated, negotiated and how they break down and
are challenged.

The theoretical analysis in this chapter has significant implications for the
understanding of interviews methodologically. ‘Orthodox’ social scientific
understandings of interviews tend to describe them as ‘a face-to-face, interpersonal role
situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers
pertinent to the research hypotheses.’ However in the light of the theoretical approach
advanced above the interview comes to be understood as an intersubjective and
performative process whereby subjectivity is reproduced and negotiated. This is because
in order to speak about gender, the participants in the interview are constrained by
norms and the limits of language which govern intelligibility, such that the very
condition of possibility for their dialogue is simultaneously the constraining condition
over what can be said. Moreover this paradox necessarily implicates the questioner in a
reproduction of those norms and terms which are re-invoked in the process of asking of
questions. Through asking interviewees for their experiences as a woman, or as a
lesbian the interview becomes a site of subjection itself, performatively re-instituting
subjectivity: another sex/gender predicament. However, whilst 'the terms' or the
norms which regulate intelligibility impose limits, the work of Foucault, Derrida and
Butler has shown that the terms themselves have limits which can be exploited through

---

577 Butler, Giving An Account, 80
578 Frankfort- Nachimas and Nachimas, Research, 232
579 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ pp.611-630. See chapter one for a more detailed discussion
of the sex/gender predicament.
particular modes of questioning. This conceptualisation suggests that 'the research interview' is potentially a critical site for political intervention. Butler has suggested that subversion of gender norms must exploit the weakness in the norm and is 'a matter of inhabiting the practices of its rearticulation.'\textsuperscript{580} This suggests a mode of questioning which actively engages with the terms, and ultimately aims to destabilise those terms by exposing contradictions, failures and aporias. This mode of questioning might appear counterintuitive as researchers often aim to minimise their 'impact' on the interviewees and limit ‘interviewer bias.’\textsuperscript{581} For example Stern notes that she tried to make minimal 'interjections' into the narratives offered by the Mayan women she interviewed.\textsuperscript{582} However, if the interview is recognised as a site for the reproduction of gender norms, any act of questioning will necessarily invoke, and have a political position with regard to those norms. As a practical strategy, a mode of questioning which actively aims to expose paradoxes and occasion crises in representation has the potential to encourage the interviewee to reflect on the instability of those terms. The performative reproduction of the terms in the interview then works to open up discursive space for alternative perspectives or, at the very least, confounds the logics upon which the questions were made possible.

Having established the advantages of interview methodologies and outlined the approach to them taken in the thesis, the next section outlines the strategies used to gain access to personnel in the armed forces and provides the context for the ensuing use of interview material in the thesis.

\textsuperscript{580} Butler, Bodies that, 237, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{581} Frankfort- Nachimas and Nachimas, Research, 238
\textsuperscript{582} Stern. ‘Racism, sexism’, 188
Although in the thesis I analyse policy and practice across the three branches of the British armed forces, the interviews carried out as research for this thesis were all with serving or former Royal Navy personnel. The decision to focus on one particular branch of the armed forces, rather than attempting to draw interviews from all three branches was made for several reasons. Unlike Basham’s research on equality and diversity, my research was not designed in collaboration with the MoD and access to a variety of bases and personnel could not be guaranteed. Practically, it appeared advantageous to focus on one branch of the military, as it would be easier to build networks and relationships within one Service which it was hoped would increase the opportunities for access to military bases and serving personnel. Indeed this is exactly what happened, as after I had made initial connections at Royal Navy Air Station (RNAS) Culdrose I was 'officially introduced' to personnel at the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre (CTCRM) at Lympstone, and Royal Navy Command Headquarters in Portsmouth. The backing of two senior individuals within the Service was essential for the success of the project, as it was only because of their negotiations within the Service that I was able to meet many of the interviewees whose narratives animate this research.

Comprising of sea going personnel, air crews and Royal Marine commandoes the Royal Navy is particularly diverse and this enabled me to talk to a variety of personnel who had served in different environments. The Royal Navy is also particularly interesting for exploring the effects of changing policies regarding gender and sexuality. The Service experienced considerable upheaval when ‘women went to sea’ in the early 1990s and although women now serve onboard Her Majesty’s Ships they remain

---

583 Basham’s doctoral research was funded by an ESRC Collaborative Research Studentship with the MoD as sponsor. See: Basham, An Analysis, 158
excluded from the submarine service and the Royal Marines. In terms of homosexuality, the Royal Marines was found to be particularly hostile to lifting the ban on homosexuality according to the HPAT report (1996). For these reasons the Royal Navy was thought to be a particularly appropriate branch of the British military for the case study.

In total, fifteen interviews were carried out with current and former Royal Navy personnel. The interviews were facilitated by Royal Navy personnel who were enthusiastic about my research and who put me in contact with others who might be willing to participate. Consequently, the selection of interviewees was largely influenced by those ‘insiders’ although I was able to give indications that I was interested in talking to a variety of personnel (for example younger and older service members, men and women, those who had worked at sea as well as within air crews) to gain insight into their experiences. All of my interviews were with officers in the Royal Navy, and I was not granted access to lower ranks. The interviews were informal in style, each lasting approximately one hour. I explained the purpose of the research in general terms, gave each interviewee an information sheet, answered any questions and asked them to sign the required consent forms. The interviews were conversational and whilst at the beginning of the interview I might suggest several areas we might discuss, the questions I asked were not pre-determined. Where opportunities arose I asked more challenging questions which destabilized the terms used to articulate particular positions, in an attempt to force a dislocation and emphasize the immanent

---

584 Ministry of Defence ‘Women in the Armed Forces Factsheet’ [http://www.MoD.uk/DefenceInternet/FactSheets/WomenintheArmedForces.htm](http://www.MoD.uk/DefenceInternet/FactSheets/WomenintheArmedForces.htm) (accessed 6 February 2010). However, recent reports suggest that women will be allowed to serve on Vanguard-class submarines (which carry Trident nuclear missiles) in the future: The Telegraph.co.uk ‘Royal Navy to allow women on submarines’ 9 March 2010 [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/7402575/Royal-Navy-to-allow-women-on-submarines.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/7402575/Royal-Navy-to-allow-women-on-submarines.html) (date accessed 23 September 2010)

585 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’
deconstruction of these terms. However, this strategy did not always generate the instability I intended and this is something I discuss in chapter five. All interviewees were offered a copy of their interview recording on CD-ROM.586

I conducted eight interviews at RNAS Culdrose. RNAS Culdrose is one of Europe’s largest helicopter bases and specialises in Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare and Airborne Surveillance and Control. Frontline Squadrons are deployed to ships involved in global operations, and the Air Station also trains aircrew, engineers, air traffic controllers, fire fighters and flight deck crews. In addition the ‘Search and Rescue’ Squadron responds to emergencies throughout the Southwest region.587 I conducted three interviews with Royal Marines at CTCRM. CTCRM is a training facility for the Royal Marines, and conducts all of the recruit and officer training, overseeing the training of an average 1,200 recruits and 400 officers per year.588 I conducted three interviews at Royal Navy Command Headquarters, which is responsible for maintaining fleet readiness, planning for future challenges, keeping adequate records and ensuring oversight and accountability of all Royal Navy operations.589 A significant amount of policy concerning Equality and Diversity is produced and monitored at Royal Navy Command Headquarters and this was of particular interest for the research. My connections with Equality and Diversity officers within the Service also lead to my interview with a former medic who was discharged for homosexuality before the ban was lifted. This interview was conducted at a private residence in London.

586 In total, fourteen of the interviewees were sent their recording (and one did not want a copy).
587 royalnavy.mod.uk ‘RNAS Culdrose’
588 royalnavy.mod.uk ‘The Structure of Lympstone’
589 royalnavy.mod.uk ‘Navy Command Headquarters’
Feminist researchers are very sensitive to power relations between researcher and the research subjects.\textsuperscript{590} Yet as Stern suggests, there is a danger in overestimating the power of the researcher for, as she notes, 'the people with whom we converse also wield power over what, whether, and how they chose to narrate. They are not only victims, but also agents in the forming of their own subjectivity.'\textsuperscript{591} Indeed one of the central aims of this thesis is to demonstrate how gendered subjects are not only effects, but agents in reproducing their subjectivity. In my analysis of the interviews I do not write my experiences and presence into the interviews in an explicit way, as auto-ethnographic work might.\textsuperscript{592} This is not to suggest my presence was neutral or objective nor to imply my own identity did not influence the research process. Rather in terms of understanding the reproduction of subjectivity in the military it seemed pertinent to focus on the narratives of those working and living within the military, rather than my reflections as a researcher. Nevertheless it is important to provide some reflections about my experiences in order to contextualise the accounts. As a critical and feminist researcher it is perhaps unsurprising that I generally oppose the use of military force. This made interviewing military personnel uncomfortable at times, and I was sometimes disturbed by casual phrases used by military personnel, such as 'fire and forget.'\textsuperscript{593} The experience of being on a military base was interesting, although I found the guns, the barbed wire and the military exercises I witnessed intimidating. I was able to easily observe military personnel on the base, although I was aware that I was particularly conspicuous, being dressed in civilian clothes. In terms of the interviews the interviewees tended to assume I was looking for evidence to show the Service was

\textsuperscript{591} Stern. M. ‘Racism, sexism’ 190, emphasis in original
\textsuperscript{592} There is increasing interest in autobiographical ethnography in IR, see: Inayatullah, N. (ed.) Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR (London and New York: Routledge, 2011)
\textsuperscript{593} Interview with James, CTCRM, Lympstone, Exmouth (date of interview 28 June 2010). Recording in possession of author.
homophobic or sexist so I have no doubt that they made an effort to show me otherwise. However, they were also surprisingly candid about their experiences and the women in particular were often keen to share their experiences with me. Most of the interviewees told me that they had enjoyed talking to me, particularly the older personnel, who enjoyed telling me stories from their younger days.

Where possible I have given information about interviewees to contextualise their accounts, but to protect their anonymity all names have been changed, and specific ranks, roles or other identifying information has not been given. During the analysis of the interview data I questioned the politics of identifying the interviewees by gender or sexuality. My concern not to reify gendered subject positions by performatively reproducing them in the thesis was ultimately overruled by the need to contextualise their accounts and to work within these categories in order to destabilise them. In this way I quickly realised for myself that there was no position I could adopt that would escape the sex/gender paradox, no position outside the text.\textsuperscript{594} My hope is that the analysis offered, and the inclusion of the 'messy' interview data, serves to destabilise and undermine those identifications from ‘within’ in a way which renders my failure to escape sex/gender categories an occasion for political intervention.

\textbf{Chapter Conclusions}

In response to Carver’s call for a more ‘genuinely deconstructive’ critique, and Stern and Zalewski’s invitation to rethink a politics of failure, this chapter has sought to develop a theoretical methodology for analysing the reproduction of gendered

\textsuperscript{594} Derrida, \textit{Of Grammatology}, 158
subjectivity.\textsuperscript{595} It has demonstrated that the works of Foucault, Derrida and Butler offer many useful critical insights, vocabularies, and analytical strategies for tracing, locating, and revealing unseen operations of power that are productive of subjectivities. I offered two interpretations of genealogy and deconstruction as methods to expose the reproduction of subjectivity, and the incompleteness and failure of that production. Whilst these interpretations both offer useful methodologies for feminist critique, they are based on a partial understanding of the wider epistemological challenge that Foucault, Derrida and Butler are making. Consequently these two approaches remain limited in their ability to effectively destabilise the reproduction of gendered subjects and exploit the failure inherent in any attempt to secure subjectivity.

I have argued that the potential for exploiting the failure and paradox of all attempts to reproduce subjects can only be 'found' through a more effective understanding of the transformative potential of genealogy and deconstruction. This understanding moves beyond the analytical separation between reader/text and instrumental methods for revealing and exploiting things within the text and responds to the more fundamental epistemological challenge that Foucault, Derrida and Butler are making about what a text, discourse or gendered performance \textit{is}. Whilst their work offers no way to go beyond or outside the text, this condition of always being within the text simultaneously opens up possibilities for intervening and disrupting it. Reconceptualising genealogy and deconstruction as a form of critical praxis it becomes possible to think about enacting disruption from \textit{within} the text, both in the design and write up of the research, but also during the data gathering process. In this way, whilst not escaping the sex/gender predicament, it offers a different way to work with that paradox which contains the possibility of effecting a more effective destabilisation of gender.

\textsuperscript{595} Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 122; Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’
I introduced the concept of the ‘gender order’ and developed a critical methodology for investigating the reproduction of gendered subjectivity within the British armed forces. This methodology involves a systematic interrogation of how the military gender order is reproduced, reified and re-secured through the reproduction of gendered subjects. It will actively pursue occasions where the order fails or is put into crisis, and examine how it responds to those failures. In doing this it should be possible to gain a greater understanding of how gender remains so resilient, despite efforts to challenge it. The chapter further developed the rationale for focusing on the British armed forces policies and practices towards homosexuality. Drawing on the theoretical insights generated in this chapter, a methodology for this investigation was outlined. This involves an investigation of the general order of problematisation through which gender and sexuality are managed, and a careful examination of the terms through which the challenge to the ban was made, and through which lesbian and gay personnel were ‘integrated.’ In this way the research acknowledges the ‘double-edged’ nature of legitimation and maintains a ‘critical and transformative relation to the norms that govern what will and will not count as an intelligible and recognizable.’

This chapter has also suggested that the research process is itself an intervention into the text, a site with potential for disruption. Official policies and interview narratives are reconceptualised as attempts to order and reproduce gender. Thus both contain paradox, failures and aporias which can be revealed and exploited to undermine the power of gender. Whilst policy documents are important texts for an analysis I suggested that they are necessarily partial, and that interviews offered several advantages in terms of generating ‘messier’ accounts and in emphasising that gendered subjects actively reproduce, negotiate and challenge the gender order. I also suggested that interviews are

596 Foucault, 'Polemics'
597 Butler, *Undoing*, 117
a site of the reproduction of subjectivity, where any act of questioning will necessarily invoke, and have a political position with regard to gender norms – there is no ‘neutral’ position for an interviewer adopt. Consequently, interventions can be made in asking questions which actively pursue the limits of intelligibility and which emphasise the instability of terms used to articulate sex, sexuality and gender. In this way the interview has potential to enact a disruption and encourage interviewees to have a ‘critical relation’ with the norms through which they are themselves constituted.\textsuperscript{598}

The next chapter begins the substantive analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjectivity within the British armed forces, with an interrogation of the way ‘gender’ is conceptualised and regulated. Chapters four and five focus on the construction of (homo)sexuality. This structure of the discussion reflects the analytical separation which the military makes between issues of sexuality and gender, although as will become apparent, this distinction is ultimately untenable.

\textsuperscript{598} Butler, \textit{Giving An Account}
Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have considered how feminist IR has conceptualised the gendered subject, and I identified several areas for further development and research. I conducted a genealogical investigation into the gendered subject of feminist IR, examining how s/he has been conceptualised, analysed and reproduced in feminist IR scholarship and what the implications of this were for feminist research agendas, methodologies and conclusions reached. This preliminary review of the literature identified the need for further work to understand how gender is reproduced, and to carry out a more effective deconstruction of gender ontology which would emphasise internal contradictions and failures. In particular the sex/gender predicament, or paradox, identified by Stern and Zalewski, provided a valuable starting point for the analysis in the thesis. I argued that this unavoidable conundrum that feminist narratives inevitably reproduce the sexed identities and the gendered harms they seek to challenge deserves urgent critical reflection if feminism is to respond to increasingly complex relations of gender hierarchy. Stern and Zalewski’s ambition is to ‘recast feminist failure as aporetic and concomitantly implicated in the process of intervening politically’ and they invite a re-imagining of feminist failure as bringing possibility. Chapter one considered contemporary poststructural feminist work and argued that it has effectively demonstrated how gendered subjects can be understood as the effects of power. However I argued that there might be aspects of poststructural

600 Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)
601 Ibid., 611
602 Ibid., ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 629
thought which were underexploited in feminist work, aspects which emphasise failure, paradox and contradiction. I argued that this was an important area for further research as it might open up new modes of feminist praxis and a different way to engage with the sex/gender paradox.

In chapter two I developed an alternative critical theoretical methodology for investigating the reproduction of gendered subjectivity, based on my reading of Foucault, Derrida and Butler. This approach focuses on the potential of failure, paradox and contradiction and reconceptualises the reproduction of gendered subjects as attempts which are never complete, coherent or stable. I adopt the term ‘gender order’ as a heuristic device to convey a particular understanding of the regulation of gendered life that depends on the reproduction and ordering of gendered subjects. To understand how the gender order functions it is necessary to trace the conditions of possibility which occasion the reproduction of gendered subjects, paying attention to the ordering principles, or norms, which continuously reproduce and reify naturalised knowledge of gender. In order to render the production of subjects visible it is necessary to carry out a careful examination, or a genealogy, of the epistemic regimes through which gendered knowledge which delineates gendered subjects, is legitimised. It requires detailed consideration of the various articulations, performances, and policing of gender, the institution of boundaries, categories and the imposition and privileging of particular gender truths. It is also imperative to pursue occasions where the gender order fails, is put into crisis or produces paraadoxical outcomes. It will be important to look carefully at how these failures are resolved, or negotiated.

Having generated a different way to explore what is at stake in the reproduction of gendered subjects, several additional questions arise: Is this alternative analytical
methodology able to explain the resilience of gender hierarchy? Can it better explain how gendered subjects are reproduced? Does this approach open up new possibilities for subversion, resistance and feminist interventions? In order to address these questions, chapters three, four and five employ the critical methodology generated in chapter two to analye the reproduction of gendered subjects in the contemporary British armed forces.

The analysis draws on MoD policy documents, reports and research concerning sexuality and gender, and interviews I conducted in 2009 and 2010 with serving Royal Navy personnel. In my analysis I interrogate the ‘military gender order’ by investigating how dominant understandings of gender and sexuality reproduce and regulate particular gendered subjects in military spaces, and explore how a small number of Royal Navy personnel negotiate and ‘live with’ these gender norms. As outlined in chapter two, this entails two, albeit simultaneous, moves: the first is to critically examine how attempts are made to order and regulate gendered subjects in policy and practice and to determine how dominant understandings of sexuality and gender serve as a ‘frame’ which enables and constrains possibilities and interpretations of gendered reality. The second move requires a careful reading of these attempts which specifically pursues the contradictions, paradoxes and limits of these dominant understandings. This crucial second step is intended to more effectively destabilise, denaturalise, and undermine the power of the gender order as such, opening it up to alternative interpretations and transformation.

_all names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. I conducted a total of 15 interviews with former and serving Royal Navy personnel. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately an hour. 14 interviews took place at two Royal Navy establishments in the South and South-West of England, and one took place in London at a private residence. See chapter two of this thesis for a fuller explanation of the interview process._
The analysis is organised in three chapters which reflect the content of the data. As I will show in these three chapters, in military policy and practice ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ are considered as distinct and separate issues, and those gendered subjects that embody these norms are viewed as distinct, autonomous and essentially determined by their biological sex difference, or their sexual orientation. In order to interrogate what is at stake in this discursive separation of sexuality and gender, and to fully understand how the military gender order functions, I begin in this chapter by examining how military policy conceptualises and mobilises ‘gender,’ and I turn to ‘sexuality’ in the following chapters. Although this ‘mirroring’ of military practice risks reproducing problematic distinctions, throughout the analysis I understand these practices as ‘attempts’ to demarcate these two concepts and aim to problematise and expose the instability and impossibility of these distinctions.

The aim of the present chapter is to establish how the British armed forces have traditionally ordered, regulated and managed their personnel, sketching an outline of the military gender order. To do this I investigate perceptions about the formal ‘integration’ of women into the British armed forces in the 1990s, analyse the rationale for the exclusion of women from ground close combat, and reflect on how serving naval personnel negotiate this gender order in their ‘everyday lives’. Ultimately this chapter demonstrates how the segregation of men and women, based on naturalised heterosexuality, serves as the foundation for the military gender order, and this then provides the context for the subsequent analysis of military policy regarding homosexuality.

604 This is apparent not only in traditional policies which dealt with ‘women’ and ‘homosexuals’ separately but is also evident in contemporary equality and diversity policy of the British Armed Forces which conceptualises ‘women’ and ‘LGBT’ as distinct ‘diversity strands’, without any explicit acknowledgement of the connections between those two. For the most explicit example of the attempt to separate sexuality and gender (and how this necessarily fails) see the discussion of transsexualism in chapter five).
The chapter proceeds in two main sections. The first section considers the construction of ‘female difference’ in military policy and practice and interrogates policies of segregation which ostensibly respond to this difference, with particular reference to the exclusion of women from ground close combat units. I show how particular conceptualisations of gendered subjectivity directly inform policy on this issue, reproducing men and women in ways that enable a justification to be made for the permanent exclusion of women. The MoD commissioned research into the impact of women’s presence during combat incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this research provides a valuable opportunity to interrogate how gender and sexuality are conceptualised in the framing of ‘the problem’, in the research design, and by personnel themselves who were interviewed as part of the research. The critical analysis of this research shows how sex/gender is reproduced at different sites, by different means and with varying effects. It also shows that this reproduction is paradoxical, unstable and requires constant re-securing to maintain its facade of coherence. It is as a result of this investigation that I argue that the underlying logics of the military gender order require men and women be produced as binary opposites to make sense. This diagnosis also means that heteronormativity is a core organising principle of military spaces, policies and functions. In this way I show that sexuality is constitutive of gender in this context, and that attempts by the military to maintain the distinction between gender and sexuality necessarily break down.

The second section of the chapter explores the perceptions and attitudes of several Royal Navy personnel about gender and the integration of women into the Service. Through an exploration of their recollections of women first going to sea, and their perceptions of equality and diversity procedure in the Service I further illustrate the dynamics outlined in the previous section, outlining how gendered subjects are...
simultaneously the effects, the embodiment, and the agents of gender norms which are constantly re-inscribed through the everyday interactions, practices and material realities of military life. The particular value of these accounts by naval personnel is in what they show about how gendered subjects reproduce themselves, in relation to gendered others. It also becomes apparent that many servicemen, and particularly servicewomen, are critically reflective about their own identity and subjectivity. I will argue that taking everyday experiences of personnel seriously deepens understandings of how sex/gender is reproduced, and how that reproduction is actively negotiated and challenged on a daily basis.

In this chapter I identify several dynamics that are necessary to sustain and reproduce the military gender order: the hyper visibility of women, the concurrent invisibility of men, the reproduction of biologically determined subjects, and the naturalisation of heterosexuality. All of these dynamics and discursive mechanisms allow ‘the military’ to be produced as a gender neutral space; an ungendered arena in which biologically determined subjects interact, thus concealing and entrenching the operation of productive power of which gendered subjects are the effects. The effect of this is that women are continually reproduced as ‘problems’ to be solved, requiring management policies that mitigate the effects of their inclusion in the military whilst leaving the behaviour of ‘men’ and the effects of institutional culture beyond scrutiny. Contrary to several feminist accounts, I argue that women in the military are not inherently subversive simply by virtue of being ‘not men.’ Rather I show that what it means to be a woman, in a military context, is governed by a gender order which protects masculine privilege and which reproduces women in ways which do not undermine the

605 See, for example: Kronsell, ‘Method for studying silences’; Heggie Uniform Identity; Turenne Sjolander and Trevenen, ‘One of the Boys?’
masculine status of the institution. Far from being disruptive, or subversive, reproducing women’s hyper visibility through men’s corresponding invisibility is a mutually constitutive process that is essential for shoring up the gender order. I demonstrate that the ‘integration’ of women into the British armed forces was achieved through strategies of segregation and marginalisation which did not unsettle the heteronormative norms upon which the gender order is based.

**Segregating Women**

Women have been traditionally excluded from the British armed forces. Women’s official association with military service began at the end of the nineteenth century, when fourteen hundred women were recruited as military nurses during the Boer Wars. Until the end of the Second World War, women were called up or enlisted voluntarily in response to national emergencies and then were de-mobbed after the crisis was over. After the Second World War women were initially allowed to serve in all-women corps, so-called ‘Women’s Services’. In the Royal Navy women served in the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRENS), the RAF recruited women to the Women’s Royal Air Force and the Army allowed women to serve in the Women’s Royal Army Corps (WRAC). These separate Women’s Services were officially disbanded in the early 1990s and women were ‘integrated’ into the three main service branches. From 1998 onwards women were allowed to serve in the front line on board ships, as pilots of combat aircraft, and in combat support roles in the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. This

---

606 Heggie, *Uniform Identity?* 11
607 The Women’s Royal Air Force was never officially a separate Service, although the the term was used until the early 1990s. Ministry of Defence ‘Women in the Armed Forces Factsheet’; Heggie, *Uniform Identity?*
608 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., *Study of Women in Combat- Investigation of the Quantitative Data* (Reading, 2010) 7
expansion in posts was equated with modernity, progress and gender equity as well as the ‘business case’ for a more diverse workforce. The number of women in the British armed forces has been steadily increasing year on year from 1997 onwards. In 2010 there were 18,320 women in the Regular Forces, comprising 12.2% of Officers and 9.0% of Other Ranks. The Royal Air Force (RAF) has the greatest percentage of female personnel (13.7%), but due to the relative size of the Army in relation to the other Services, the Army has by far the greatest number of women (8,570), although they make up just 7.9% of British soldiers. These figures may also reflect the varying number of posts open to women: 96% in the RAF, and just 71% of posts in the Royal Navy and the Army. Women are excluded from all posts where the primary duty is ‘to close with and kill the enemy’ which includes the Royal Marines General Service (as Royal Marine Commandos), the Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps, the Infantry and the Royal Air Force Regiment (although women are allowed to provide support and administration to these services). Women are also excluded from mine clearance diving and submarines for health reasons relating to fertility. Recent reports suggest that women will be allowed to serve on Vanguard-class submarines (which carry Trident nuclear missiles) in the future but there are concerns that having men and women in such close quarters could lead to ‘inappropriate’ behaviour. Equal opportunities policies have certainly improved the treatment of women in the armed forces, for example women are now entitled to maternity leave, instead of being sacked when becoming pregnant as almost 5,000 female personnel were in the period 1978-

---

609 Woodward and Winter, Sexing the Soldier, 41-53
611 Ministry of Defence ‘Women in the Armed Forces Factsheet’
612 Ibid.,
613 The Telegraph.co.uk ‘Royal Navy to allow women on submarines’

192
Despite this the armed forces continues to have high levels of sexual harassment against women and experiences ongoing problems with the recruitment and retention of women.\footnote{Woodward and Winter, \textit{Sexing the Soldier}, 33}

This brief summary of the position of women in the contemporary British armed forces demonstrates well that women are treated differently to men, and that they face particular challenges in the military institution. However, in order to understand how the military is able to do this, it is necessary to look carefully at how this gendered difference is reproduced, and to explore what is at stake in the construction of ‘women’ in policy and practice. The exclusion of women from posts where the primary duty is ‘to close with and kill the enemy’ is arguably one of the most important mechanisms for reproducing military service as a naturally masculine pursuit, and it has been argued that this exclusion maintains all military women’s status as second-class soldiers.\footnote{See: Ministry of Defence, \textit{Women in the Armed Forces}, (London, 2002). Available at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A9925990-82C2-420F-AB04-7003768CE02/0/womenaf_fullreport.pdf (accessed 16 October 2010); Basham, \textit{An Analysis}; Maley, J. ‘Sexual Harassment Rife in the Armed Forces’ The Guardian, 26 May 2006 http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/may/26/gender.military/print (site accessed 8 June 2011); Dietmann, A. Edwards, J. And Whitfield, M. \textit{Sexual Harassment: Servicewomen & Servicemen’s Views 2009 Technical Report} (2009) Available at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EA09647E-8994-439B-9231-818859B3E149/0/views_servicewomen_servicemens_2009.pdf (accessed 27 March 2011); Woodward and Winter, \textit{Sexing the Soldier}, 56–59} In terms of the investigation in this thesis, it is not the effects of the policy which are of primary concern but rather the MoD reports and the research used to justify that exclusion. These documents provide an excellent opportunity to interrogate the general order of problematisation through which women, and gender, are reproduced.\footnote{Woodward and Winter, \textit{Sexing the Soldier}; Heggie, \textit{Uniform Identity}?; 243}
Assessing the Potential Impact of Women in Ground Close Combat Units

Under Section 85 (4) of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) the British Armed Forces are exempted from applying the law where adhering to it would jeopardise or degrade combat effectiveness. In practice this has meant that women in the armed forces are excluded from ground combat units, or in media discourse, are excluded from the ‘front line’.\footnote{Henley, J. ‘Women on the frontline: the right to fight’ The Guardian, 23 June 2010 http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jun/23/women-in-armed-forces (accessed 22 September 2011)} Under the European Community Equal Treatment Directive the MoD is legally obliged to re-assess the combat exclusion periodically and must notify the European Commission of the results of such reassessment at least every eight years.\footnote{Ministry of Defence, Report on the Review of the Exclusion of Women From Ground Close-Combat Roles (published in 2010).} In the following discussion I draw extensively on two MoD reports that assess the policy of exclusion: Women In the Armed Forces (published in 2002) and the Report on the Review of the Exclusion of Women From Ground Close-Combat Roles (published in 2010).\footnote{Ministry of Defence, Women in Combat- Investigation of the Quantitative Data, 7} The 2002 report aimed to assess the impact on combat effectiveness if women were allowed to join ground close combat units based on a variety of criteria. The study included formal literature reviews of ‘bio-medical’ aspects of women’s performance relevant to the performance of military tasks, and analysed the impact of gender on group task performance.\footnote{Ministry of Defence, Women in the Armed Forces (London, 2002); Ministry of Defence, Report on the Review of the Exclusion} The 2002 report ultimately concluded that the exclusion of women from ground combat units should remain.

The 2010 report was intended to ‘build upon’ the findings in the 2002 report, and was based upon research conducted that involved three main areas of analysis: a review of recent academic literature on the effectiveness of mixed gender teams in a combat environment, consideration of the experience of other nations who employ women in...
ground close combat roles, and an assessment of women’s impact on unit cohesion in recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. 622 Although women are not officially involved in ground close combat, the reality of war in Iraq and Afghanistan means that a number of servicewomen have been involved in ground close combat incidents, defined as ‘combat with the enemy over short range on the ground.’ 623

The assessment of women’s roles in recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are of central importance because they provide information on women’s role in conflicts where the distinction between ‘close combat’ and other roles is increasingly blurred. The definitions used in the research for the 2010 report enabled a distinction to be made between those personnel whose primary role is to close with and kill the enemy, which ‘involves not only the use of weapons such as assault rifles and machine guns, but also grenades, bayonets and hand to hand fighting’ and those other ‘front line’ personnel who might be involved with close combat as a result of their role, but whose role is not primarily defined by closing with and killing the enemy. 624 This research is particularly significant because it is the first time the MoD has commissioned research into servicewomen’s performance in combat situations.

The research was carried out by Berkshire Consultancy Ltd, an independent business consultancy whose clients include the National Health Service, British Airways, the Metropolitan Police Authority and British Sky Broadcasting. 625 They claim to offer ‘a thorough, rigorous and objective approach to research’ which enables clients to take

---

622 Ministry of Defence, Report on the Review of the Exclusion, 2. See also the separate reports that informed the outcome of the MoD report: Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat; Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Study of Women in Combat- Investigation of the Quantitative Data; Cawkill, P., Rogers, A., Knight, S., and Spear, L. (The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory part of the MoD) Women in Ground Close Combat Roles: The Experiences of other Nations and a Review of the Academic Literature (Fareham, 2009)


624 Ibid.,

625 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd. ‘Our Clients’
http://www.berkshire.co.uk/our-clients (site accessed 4 September 2011)
informed action in a changing world where ‘old assumptions no longer hold’. The research conducted by Berkshire Consultancy Ltd involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative research was a ‘unique’ study based on questionnaire responses from 800 men and 1728 women who had been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2002. The research aimed to ‘measure cohesion’ in small mixed gender teams, and to find statistically significant factors associated with group cohesion in combat and non-combat situations which would provide ‘objective evidence’ about the impact of gender on these factors. The qualitative research aimed to provide ‘objective evidence’ of the impact of mixed gender teams on group cohesion through semi-structured interviews with personnel who had been involved in ground close combat incidents in mixed gender teams. A total of 105 interviews were held (28 with women, and 77 with men) and the interviewees were asked about their perception of group cohesion at the time of the incident, the importance of leadership for group cohesion, their perceptions of the impact of the presence of a woman on the rest of the group and their attitudes towards the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles. As a rich source of interview and survey data, the research carried out by the Berkshire Consultancy Ltd is useful for exploring how personnel interviewed reproduce their own subjectivity through understandings of gender and sexuality.

In the analysis which follows I investigate how subjectivity is reproduced by the researchers and their research design, by the MoD and military authorities, and by the personnel interviewed as part of the research. I ask what ‘matrix of intelligibility’ is governing gendered possibilities in this context, and seek to expose the gender norms

---

626 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd. ‘Research’ http://www.berkshire.co.uk/leadership-research (site accessed 4 September 2011)
627 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Study of Women in Combat: Investigation of the Quantitative Data.
628 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat (Reading, 2009) 5
629 8 interviews were not included in the analysis as they did not involve combat incidents where a woman was present. See: Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat (Reading, 2009) 13
which ‘usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they produce.’

This involves asking questions of these texts, such as: how is the ‘problem’ of women’s involvement in particular military roles understood? What does this enable? What does this close down, or leave beyond scrutiny? Where does this attempt fail, or break down? What does this reveal about the gender order of the military?

*Biological difference*

The biological essentialism that reproduces women as the weaker, more vulnerable sex has continued legitimacy in military policy and discourse. The Ministry of Defence’s ‘Diversity Mission’ states that:

> Diversity is core business for the Ministry of Defence in order to encourage people throughout society to join us, remain with us, make their distinctive contributions and achieve their full potential.

Despite this commitment women continue to be excluded from posts in the military on the basis of their ‘biological difference’ as a social group, and not their individual achievements or potential. The justification for the exclusion of women from submarines and mine clearance diving is made on the grounds of ‘health and safety.’

The rationale for this exclusion was explained by the Minister of State for Defence in 1999, Doug Henderson, who stated that contaminants which could build up during the lengthy periods that submarines are submerged were a potential threat to an unborn foetus. Similarly, the high pressures involved in mine clearance diving was also felt to

---

630 Butler, *Undoing* 41
632 Ministry of Defence ‘Women in the Armed Forces Factsheet’
be a risk to unborn children and pregnant women, as well as there being potential risks related to menstruation. As Basham highlights in her analysis, this biological determinism excludes women on the basis of their biological potential to bear children – meaning that servicewomen who are either unable to have children, make the decision not to, or who accept the risks voluntarily, are not permitted to carry out those roles on the basis of their biological difference. The biological determinism employed with regards to women’s’ childbearing capacity also reproduces women as passive agents of reproduction without any control or autonomy over that capacity.

The 2002 report, Women In the Armed Forces, begins with an analysis of the biological limitations that women face in terms of strength and endurance, aerobic fitness, and capacity to reach required levels of fitness for close-combat roles. The report found that:

Anatomical and physiological factors disadvantage women in most aspects of physical performance.... Muscle strength, endurance and power are 30 – 60% lower in women, and only 1% of women match the mean level of these attributes in men. Similarly in aerobic fitness, only the fittest 1% of women reach the level of fitness of the average man.... Men and women exhibit similar gains in fitness as a result of training, but women may not have the same overall capacity. In part this is due to a lower capacity for increasing muscle bulk because of lower levels of testosterone.

Moreover the report warns that ‘irregular menstrual cycles pose health risks, and painful menstruation can impair performance.’ These physiological differences were found to account for the largest area of comparable gender difference in terms of performance relevant to performing military tasks. However despite the apparent biologically inferiority of women the report concluded that 1% of ‘elite women’ would be as physically able as their average male counterparts. Thus the biological inferiority of

---

633 Doug Henderson, cited in Basham, An Analysis 56-7
634 Basham, An Analysis, 56-7
635 Ministry of Defence Women in the Armed Forces 4
636 Ibid., 4
637 Ibid., 4
women cannot be used as the basis for the blanket exclusion of women from ground combat units:

The Secretary of State is satisfied that as some women will certainly be able to meet the standard required of personnel performing in close combat roles, the evidence of women’s lower physical capacity should not, in itself be a reason to maintain the restrictions.  

The report also reviewed literature on the psychological differences between men and women. In terms of the ‘mental characteristics’ of men and women it found that the ‘second largest area of gender difference was apparent in the capacity for aggression.’ However there was evidence that given social licence to show aggression (women tend to be socialised into fearing the consequences of aggressive behaviour), and enough provocation, the gap between male and female aggression could be closed. With regards to other gender differences, such as differences in spatial ability, the report found that ‘on the whole there are more similarities in male and female abilities than differences.’ The report concluded that there was ‘no decisive evidence for the existence of any uniquely female characteristic that would have a significant negative impact on the performance of high-intensity combat tasks.’ These findings meant that excluding women could not be based on their particular mental characteristics as a group.

Although these investigations failed to find a biological or psychological reason for excluding women from close combat posts, studies aimed at assessing the biological inferiority and vulnerability perform an important discursive function – by rendering

---

638 Ministry of Defence Women in the Armed Forces (Summary) (London, 2002) paragraph 16
639 Ministry of Defence Women in the Armed Forces, 5
640 Ibid., 5
641 Ibid., C-2
women hyper visible, and continually reaffirming them as different. This reproduces women as ‘problems’ to be solved, requiring management policies that mitigate the effects of their inclusion in the military. Moreover, as will become clear in the following analysis, this discourse of physical inferiority is still used by personnel to explain their resistance to women joining close combat units, and to denigrate women’s military performance in general. Perhaps the most insidious effect of these discourses of biological difference is that they are too easily used to account for perceptions about gendered differences that are social in origin.

**Female Combatants in Iraq and Afghanistan: The Quantitative Research**

The quantitative research conducted by the Berkshire Consultancy Ltd found that a number of non-gender-related factors seemed to contribute to higher levels of cohesion during combat incidents, including how well the team knew each other, how long they had operated together, and how long individuals had been in the armed forces. Those who were in a leadership role, or were more senior were also more likely to report higher levels of cohesion. At this point it is useful to note that women, in general, tended to know their team members less well, have operated with the team for shorter period of time, have a shorter length of service, and were less likely to occupy senior rank. This made it very difficult to isolate findings related to cohesion that could be attributed to an individual ‘being a woman’ and for this reason a variety of ‘regression’ and ‘further analyses’ were carried out in order to try to find statistically significant trends.

---

642 Basham has also described servicewomen as ‘hypervisible.’ See: Basham, *An Analysis* 181, and 271-74
643 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., *Study of Women in Combat- Investigation of the Quantitative Data*, 3
644 Ibid., 2
The key findings from the quantitative data showed that during combat incidents ‘a comparison of cohesion reported by men in mixed gender teams with those in all-male teams showed no differences for either overall cohesion or any of the cohesion sub-scales.’ 645 There was no evidence of a female presence having a negative impact on team cohesion as perceived by men. Interestingly, it was the women who consistently experienced lower overall cohesion, both in ground close combat incidents and non-combat situations. 646 Regression analysis found that cohesion was reported lower in incidents where there were more females (with a steady impact up to 3), although ‘approximately three-quarters of the apparent negative impact from women on cohesion’ was found to be a reflection of the fact that women tended to know people less well, be less senior and have operated with the team fewer times rather than a result of their gender per se. 647 It was stated that the ‘remaining impact’ appears to be due to ‘cohesion being lowered specifically when there are three or more women in a section.’ 648 It is noted in the report that regression techniques make assumptions about the data, that it is linearly related to dependent variables and that ‘real-world data sometimes cannot fit with such assumptions.’ 649 Ultimately the report concluded that it was uncertain whether women experienced lower cohesion on account of their gender or because women tended to be those who knew their team less well and be less likely to occupy senior ranks – this was called a critical ‘chicken and egg’ challenge to interpreting the data. 650 Yet the question remains: Could ‘being’ female really be a ‘cause’ of women’s experience of lower cohesion? This is an excellent example of ‘the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories that are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of

---

645 Ibid., 3
646 Ibid., 3
647 Ibid., 30
648 Ibid., 30
649 Ibid., 29
650 Ibid., 40
As Butler writes, ‘all that appears is “sex,” and so “sex” is perceived to be the totality of what is, uncaused, but only because the cause is nowhere to be seen.’ The nonsensical pursuit of biological sex as a cause of women’s experience of lower cohesion highlights the limits of this quantitative survey for exploring how gender influences team cohesion on military operations, and exposes more fundamentally how the sex/gender distinction employed in the research breaks down under closer scrutiny.

Despite these limitations, the survey data did provide incontestable evidence that the overwhelming majority of men surveyed did not perceive unit cohesion to be any lower when women were present during combat, as compared to combat incidents involving only men. The rationale for the continued exclusion of women from ground close combat roles in 2002 was based on the perceived risk to unit cohesion that the inclusion of women presented. The findings of the quantitative report in 2010 seriously challenge this judgement.

“I forgot I was a woman”

The qualitative research found unit cohesion to be rated consistently highly by both men and women who were involved in ground close combat in mixed gender teams. Of the 97 personnel interviewed ‘around half of all interviewees rated cohesion during close combat incidents in mixed-gender teams as excellent, and around three-quarters rated it

---

651 Butler, *Gender Trouble* xxi, emphasis in original
652 Butler, *Gender Trouble* 155
654 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., *Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat* (Reading, 2009) 21
as excellent or very good.’ The majority of interviewees also felt that women were treated as equals by male commanders. One servicewoman said of her commander:

I forgot I was a woman. The Commander focused on priorities, getting the rounds down and getting out, not focused on me. I didn't feel treated differently in any way or afterwards at debrief.

Other servicewomen commented that their commander ‘made us women feel equal - treated us as equals,’ or that they were treated as ‘one of the lads.’ The majority of men and women also felt that women were treated equally by their team members. One serviceman described his experience of working with a servicewoman:

There was no difference in the professional manner in which she conducted herself compared with a similar rank - she performed better than the 2IC [second in command]. She was a highly professional and effective team member, she showed genuine courage, and gave an exemplary performance.

Another servicewoman felt that she had been treated as equal ‘in every way- I was Captain of the Royal Artillery doing an FST Commander role- not a female in the Royal Artillery doing a female FST Commander role.’ Another was emphatic in her response to the same question: ‘No doubt about it,’ although she did say that ‘you have to prove yourself more as a woman, but it’s not a problem once you have.’

The interviewees were also asked about the impact of ‘female presence’ on the team and to consider whether she would have been treated differently had she been a man. As this is ‘the crux’ of the issue, being the official reason for excluding women from close combat

655 Ibid., 46. Although 105 interviews were carried out in total, 8 of the interviews with men were not included in the analysis because they were not actually working with women during the combat incident being discussed, see: Ibid., 13
656 Ibid., 20-24
657 Ibid., 20
658 Ibid., 20
659 Ibid., 20
660 Ibid., 23
661 Ibid., 23
662 Ibid., 24
units, there is a considerable amount of detailed quotes presented in the report.\textsuperscript{663} When asked what the impact was of having a female present during an incident was, the majority of men said ‘none.’\textsuperscript{664} One serviceman remarked: ‘I got my head down quicker than she did!! It became quickly apparent she was part of the team.’\textsuperscript{665} Another man explained that ‘when adrenaline is pumping you don't have time to think about it- it’s just about protecting the 'person' and keeping them safe, not gender based at all.’\textsuperscript{666} A minority of men felt that the woman’s presence had had an impact on others in the group. One man told the interviewer that ‘a colleague had a chip in [sic] his shoulder about working with females, he made her life difficult.’\textsuperscript{667} Another explained that ‘one person had difficulty taking orders from a woman, I pulled him up for it’ but that ‘during contact there was a focus on the task all differences were put aside.’\textsuperscript{668} There were also men that viewed the women as ‘competition’ and others who said that they felt protective over women and that this tended to lead to them being seen as a distraction.\textsuperscript{669} Despite this the report found that ‘overall, there was little actual evidence of any detrimental impact of women being present during incidents.’\textsuperscript{670} This evidence challenges the rationale for the exclusion of women, yet as a result of the 2010 review, the exclusion remained in place, how did this happen?

\textbf{A Step Too Far}

The key findings of the qualitative research showed that the interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about the experience of working with women in incidents

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{663} Ibid., 24-32
\item \textsuperscript{664} Ibid., 24
\item \textsuperscript{665} Ibid., 25
\item \textsuperscript{666} Ibid., 31
\item \textsuperscript{667} Ibid., 30
\item \textsuperscript{668} Ibid., 30
\item \textsuperscript{669} Ibid., 30-1
\item \textsuperscript{670} Ibid., 64
\end{itemize}
involving close combat. As I have already explained, cohesion in mixed gender teams was ‘consistently reported to be high.’\textsuperscript{671} Moreover ‘around half the men whose attitudes have changed now have a more positive attitude than before their experiences with women in incidents.’\textsuperscript{672} However, despite these positive experiences, when the interviewees were asked whether women should be allowed to serve in ground close combat units:

Key concerns (expressed by men and women) were around women being a distraction and the dangers associated with close relationships, men’s desire to protect women and women’s lower strength and stamina. In spite of having positive experiences of women in the roles they currently fill, a significant number of men felt that they would not want women in the Infantry; they would not feel comfortable asking a woman to close with and kill the enemy at very close range, and were concerned about the woman’s and others’ response to this situation should it arise. \textit{This final step is felt to be different, and a step too far.}\textsuperscript{673}

Only a minority of interviewees felt that these roles should be open to women.\textsuperscript{674} In the light of the positive evidence cited in the report, the opinions expressed about the exclusion of women from ground close combat units seem somewhat counterintuitive. The most commonly cited reasons against allowing women to serve in ground close combat roles were (in order): lack of women’s robustness/physical capacity, women being a distraction and there being problems with relationships, men’s protective instincts over women, women not being mentally tough or aggressive enough, and the primeval nature of ground close combat.\textsuperscript{675}

Discourses around women’s physiological inferiority are often implicated in negative perceptions of female personnel generally. This may be why women feel they have to

\textsuperscript{671} Ibid., 2
\textsuperscript{672} Ibid., 33
\textsuperscript{673} Ibid., 1, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{674} Ibid., 65
\textsuperscript{675} Ibid., 34-5
'prove themselves’ before gaining acceptance from men. One servicewoman explained how:

You're really looked down on until you do a good job. I did get tired of having to prove myself every time into [sic] a new group of men. And every mistake a woman makes is highlighted therefore our job is more difficult.\textsuperscript{676}

Another woman expressed a similar opinion:

We were taught at Sandhurst "you need to work double hard as a girl and you have to cut it with the best of them". As a female officer entering a male dominated environment, you have to prove yourself, being true to your word and physically capable.\textsuperscript{677}

Men also acknowledged that women did have an extra burden because they were required to ‘prove themselves time and time again."\textsuperscript{678} As one man explained:

If a man cocks up, well, it's just one of those things. If a woman cocks up, it's because she's a woman and shouldn't be doing the job. Therefore, it’s more difficult to gain the respect initially.\textsuperscript{679}

Discourses of female difference can be seen shaping men’s perceptions of servicewomen with the consequence of making it harder for women to do the job for which they have been trained. Men, on the other hand, are perceived as naturally suitable for their roles, and unlike women they are able to make mistakes without it being a reflection of their gender.

The inevitability of relationships was the most commonly cited reason given to continue to exclude women, after women’s physiological inferiority. Relationships between men and women were considered to be inevitable and natural:

\textsuperscript{676} Ibid., 42
\textsuperscript{677} Ibid., 41
\textsuperscript{678} Ibid., 41
\textsuperscript{679} Ibid., 42
Tensions and conflicts are going to happen with [the] presence of opposite sexes. Not so much if female is of high rank, but big issue if lower rank embedded with blokes. Prime problem would be damage to male cohesion and the effect of the presence on families back home.\textsuperscript{680}

Another man explained that ‘it’s built-in, the sexual part of natural habitat - women/men always look at each other. It gets easier as the lads get used to having women around.’\textsuperscript{681}

However, this naturalisation of heterosexuality conceals a very unequal hierarchy between men and women in relation to heterosexuality. Women, by virtue of men feeling sexually attracted to them, become a ‘distraction.’ For example one serviceman explained that a woman in his unit ‘wasn't unattractive and when we were at base she was a distraction. The lads treated her differently- made a bit more of a fuss of her.’\textsuperscript{682}

Although it is the men who are becoming distracted, the onus seems to be on women to manage their behaviour so as not be a ‘distraction.’ This was noted in the conclusion of the report:

Many people expressing positive attitudes spoke about the fact that some women have proven themselves capable in theatre in these ways and are just as capable of fulfilling the role demands as men. We also heard how everything really depends on the individual – some women do everything they can not to be a distraction, to muck in, to overcome any potential issues with facilities, and to spend all their time with their teams, joining in the all-important banter and becoming “one of the lads”\textsuperscript{683}

Several servicewomen admitted making special efforts not to become a distraction. One servicewomen said that whilst ‘some women used their feminine wiles to get what they wanted- I made sure I never did that, I never flirt. I have strong opinions about relationships in units- other females don't.’\textsuperscript{684} Another explained: ‘I didn't attract unnecessary attention at FOB, I kept covered up in the showers and didn't sunbathe; I

\textsuperscript{680} Ibid., 35-6
\textsuperscript{681} Ibid., 41
\textsuperscript{682} Ibid., 53
\textsuperscript{683} Ibid., 65, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{684} Ibid., 36
didn't want to tease them. Notably it is the behaviour of women that seems to be highly important for team cohesion, rather than the behaviour of men. 12 men and 4 women mentioned ‘female’s behaviour at base’ as a factor positively influencing cohesion. Men’s behaviour is not reported to be a factor at all.

The focus on women as a distraction reproduces their hyper visibility in military environments, and allows women to be categorised by their behaviour with relation to men. This is apparent in distinctions made between different types of women, distinctions that were made by both men and women. For example, one servicewoman said:

I feel my presence was different to some other females; I mixed in well, was a bit of a tomboy and had the same banter. I know that there are many women out there who flirted and that would make a big difference to the way the men treated them.

Another woman also felt that there were women who should change their behaviour:

There are women who can do attached roles (medics, dog handlers etc) which is acceptable, but I do believe there are women who shouldn't even be allowed to do these roles. You need to be professional and they are flirty and inappropriate.

One servicewoman felt very strongly that women should not be permitted to serve in close combat units on the basis of their ‘bitchiness’ and their potential to make things awkward:

There are women who are physically capable but these are small percentages - the idea is ridiculous. I am really against women going into infantry roles. It would have a detrimental effect, it’s not even appropriate for training. If there are women who think they can go in for these roles then they are thinking of themselves, not of the effects on the team. There is always a

---

685 Ibid., 54. FOB usually stands for ‘forward operating base.’
686 Ibid., 48
687 Ibid., 29
688 Ibid., 33
chance that male instinct would kick in and they would think more of protecting the women than doing their jobs. I wouldn't join up even if I could, and if there were more than one or two female infantry soldiers in the team I was due to join, I would refuse to go. *Women are bitchy and could make things awkward. Women trust men, men trust men, but women don't trust women.*

In this discourse of ‘male distraction’, heterosexuality is naturalised, and relationships between men and women seem to be considered as inevitable, and a threat to cohesion and combat effectiveness. What is striking about these comments is that the behaviour of servicemen is entirely beyond question, with the responsibility falling on the women to ‘fit in’ and manage the sexuality of men so as not to distract them: ‘The female has got to be one of the lads.’ The attitudes of men towards women are accepted as natural, inevitable and unproblematic when it comes to assessing combat exclusion for women. Throughout the report it seems as if women ‘introduce’ the problem of sexuality into male domains, and consequently they must take responsibility for it. Men’s sexual attraction to women, and their vulnerability to distraction, is presented as immutable biological fact that must be mitigated through the careful management, or exclusion, of women. Consequently what it means to be a woman, in this context, is linked to her sexuality, or rather, men’s presumed sexuality, through which she is defined. What this illustrates is that the reproduction of subjects depends upon, and re-constitutes, the norms which govern that reproduction.

Discourses around the primordial, carnal and ugly nature of close combat were invoked as justification for excluding ‘the fairer sex’ from such situations. One man described ground close combat as ‘an ugly, disgusting, violent business,’ while another described it as ‘primeval,’ saying that ‘women would adversely affect cohesion.’ It

---

689 Ibid., 32, my emphasis
690 Ibid., 43
691 Ibid., 37
692 Ibid., 37
was felt that ‘the closing stages of battle are a man's world.’ Others simply did not want to fight with women: ‘I never wanted a woman fighting beside me and I still don't.’ What it means to be in the Infantry is intimately bound up with what it means to be a military man, and allowing women into these units, would by definition, challenge those understandings. There was also concern about men’s protective instincts: ‘In GCC the situation is wholly unpleasant, carnal, animal and men will protect women.’ This evocation of combat in this way reinforces the protector/protected dichotomy identified by many feminist researchers as being essential to discourses of war, militarism and masculinity. Some women also felt that women would be treated differently: ‘If a woman fell, the male instinct would be to go and help. A woman would expect help.’ Another serviceman even drew an analogy with fatherhood:

It got to stages where, as a father with daughters, I was concerned with the girls, where are they, are they safe – it’s the male instinct to protect women more. It’s not wrong to have them there but in the front line... older men would worry 110% re the woman, 100% for male soldiers.

The opposition to allowing women the opportunity to serve in close combat units, voiced by both men and women, is striking in the way that it mobilises traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity and conventional ideas about the roles of men and women. Arguments often rely upon, and reify, essentialised conceptualisations of gendered subjectivity which in many ways are paradoxical, defining men as uncontrollably virile yet protective of the weaker sex, and women as inherently vulnerable whilst also being agents of sexual temptation. What these responses show is

---

693 Ibid., 33  
694 Ibid., 34  
695 Ibid., 37  
697 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., *Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat*, 36  
698 Ibid., 36
that the underlying connection between masculinity and close combat is sustained only through the comparison with women, as the opposite of men. This oppositional relationship between men and women is reproduced only through naturalised heterosexuality. Finally, men occupy the norm so women are always defined through their relationship with men. These underlying logics of the military gender order continue to frame the debate about women’s role in the contemporary military, despite a large number of women being involved in ground close combat incidents, regularly putting themselves in the ‘line of fire’ alongside their male colleagues and performing well as professional soldiers. This reveals much about how entrenched these norms are, and also how implicated individual men and women are in perpetuating them in the way they render intelligible their worlds.

**Challenging the Exclusion, Challenging Gender Norms**

Not all of the interviewees thought the exclusion should remain. A minority of personnel were in favour of permitting women to serve in ground close combat roles, ‘with the absolute proviso that they were assessed, on selection and training, exactly equally to men.’\(^699\) These comments made by those who wanted to challenge the policy are particularly interesting because they demonstrate much about how different conceptualisations of the subject shape the mode of critique, and which forms of critique are most effective at challenging the underlying logics upon which the exclusion is based.

\(^{699}\) Ibid., 65
For those who felt that women should have the opportunity to serve in ground close combat roles, individual merit and ability was privileged rather than stereotypes about male and female behaviour. These responses either did not mention gender, or claimed gender was irrelevant. For example, one serviceman said he was ‘all for it, it’s no different if they are male or female, as long as they can do the job.’ Others emphasised the importance of character: ‘More serious incidents/the whole tour gives me the view that it's all character-based, we're not all built the same, some take the big bang, others break down.’ Or, as one servicewoman explained: ‘If a woman wants to do it, fine. As long as the woman is capable. Once you prove yourself, everyone thinks of themselves as a soldier, not a woman.’ These interviewees invoke an ‘equal opportunities subject,’ who with barriers removed should be able to perform a role based on ability. The limit of this rationale is that is cannot effectively deal with the knowledges which enabled the exclusion in the first place. Another serviceman, when asked to compare cohesion in all male units and mixed gender teams, explicitly refused to answer the question: ‘the same person under rocket attack can be fine one day, then wetting themselves the next. It’s nothing to do with gender.’ What both the rejection of gender as important, and the refusal to answer questions about gender have in common is they both leave ‘the terms’ of the question intact, they do not inhabit, undermine and performatively reproduce them in a different way.

There were others in support of allowing women to serve in close combat posts, who explained specifically that their experience of working with women had altered their perceptions:
It has changed my attitude. I was not used to working with women. I thought I would have a problem but I didn't. In my experience females have reacted well, proved their robustness within the boundaries of the role/task.704

One serviceman explained how the experience of working with women in conflicts since 2002 has:

strengthened my view [that women should be allowed to serve]. All 3 women were exceptional, 2 were special - all quite robust and their personality/attitude towards their job made our job a lot easier. Having women with the right attitude in close combat is key. One went out on patrol more than I did, another went out 2 or 3 times a day and sometimes she was ahead of me, closer to the enemy.705

Others argued that women could be as good as men and therefore should be treated equally. One man commented that ‘the biggest factor should be that they are good at what they do, some women are just as strong as the men- it’s all about perceptions.’706

Another serviceman emphasised the need for women to meet the same fitness as men: ‘If you can do your job the same as a man. You should be judged the same.’707 Whilst the responses above all argue that some women can be as good as men, they reproduce men as the assumed and obvious gender to carry out the majority of these roles, and allow them to continue to embody the norm, without effectively disrupting the connections between masculinity and close combat.

There were also others who suggested ‘all female’ platoons as a solution: ‘If they meet the physical requirements and can do the job, not a problem if in an all female platoon. Social dynamics are the real problem, with guys arguing about the woman.’708 Given

---

704 Ibid., 34
705 Ibid., 33-4
706 Ibid., 38
707 Ibid., 39
708 Ibid., 39
social groups in British military, it perhaps unsurprising that ‘solutions’ suggested include the formation of all women platoons. Another woman suggests all women units as an attempt to preserve male identity and ego:

Men and women work differently - men need 1 person to take charge, women better if [they] can work it out together, sparking ideas off each other. Also, there would be conflict if you had women in with men - men wouldn't feel we were doing [an] infantry role.... men wouldn't feel like it was the Infantry any more "it can't be" – [it] would damage their egos.  

The problem with these solutions is that they all continue to segregate, marginalise and exclude people on the basis of their gender, reproducing essentialised identity, and leaving fundamental institutional structures and norms (of which the combat exclusion is a result) unquestioned.

Certain individuals pointed to examples when men had failed to cope well with ground close combat, thereby explicitly critiquing the masculine warrior ethos upon which the exclusionary policy is based:

There have been some females that are more a hindrance than a help. They tend to stay in the camp. The effective ones go out of camp. But the same applies to lads; I’ve had lads who have never left.

They also challenged the distinction between different roles:

I think even more we [women] should be allowed to join the Infantry. There is no distinction in any roles - I came close to someone with a pistol 20 feet away because my protection let me down - he froze, he was an 18 year old kid. We sign on the dotted line the same as men, it's no worse to lose a woman than a man.

A female medic drew attention to men who found the experience of soldiering difficult:

---

709 Ibid., 39
710 Ibid., 40
711 Ibid., 34
If you're mentally/physically strong enough you should be allowed. There were some things I didn't do because I wasn't fit enough or strong enough. I'm so emotional, some things really affected me; I don't know if it was because I'm a girl, some men had problems when they came home too ... There are no roles women shouldn't be doing if they can do it.\footnote{Ibid., 38}

Those who directly challenged the ideas about the appropriate or expected behaviour of servicemen and servicewomen arguably offer the most effective resistance to the policy because they destabilise the reproduction of gendered subjectivity more fundamentally.

Time will tell whether these discourses are able to effectively contest the gendered ideas upon which the current policy of exclusion relies and reproduces, but as one woman remarked, ‘50 yrs ago we didn't think Blacks could be in the military – I don't see why [it is] not the same with Women [in combat roles].’\footnote{Ibid., 40} However, as Woodward and Winter argue, the difficulty of this notion of linear progress towards ‘full equality’ is that it obscures the ‘circularities and the similarities’ of patterns of marginalisation, segregation, and exclusion which surround women’s participation in the British military.\footnote{Woodward and Winter, Sexing the Soldier, 37} These patterns simultaneously respond to, and reify, discourses of female difference to gain their legitimacy, and it is these discourses which have ensured that women’s participation in the British armed forces has not been subversive of the gender order, or endangered masculine privilege. On the contrary, the way that sex/gender is reproduced through discourses of female participation serves to further entrench masculine privilege, highlighting well just how much is at stake in the reproduction of gendered subjects. Without unsettling these discourses and, as a consequence,
challenging the masculine hegemony secured through the gender order, it is unclear how real ‘progress’ can be made in terms of women’s ‘inclusion.’

A Question of Research Methodology

In the analysis I have carried out, I have treated all policy documents, research and interviews as ‘texts’ that reproduce and construct gendered subjects in particular ways with particular effects. Whilst I have offered a critique and re-interpretation of the findings, I have not fully demonstrated the ways that the ‘doing’ of the research itself, and the assumptions reflected in the methodology employed, reproduce gendered subjects in particular ways that constrain gendered possibilities as a result. Gary Lehring makes the point that ‘the policy process can often appear objective, rational, and scientific, so completely have we been implicated in the framing of the questions during the policy-making process.’ Both the quantitative and qualitative reports that formed the basis of the 2010 review on the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles claim to be ‘objective.’ As such the reports implicitly attempt to be value-neutral, aiming simply to ‘measure’ social attitudes with a view to assessing whether female presence could be detrimental to combat effectiveness. The MoD even claimed that the review would be ‘based on the premise that recommendations for changes to the existing policy be gender free,’ although at no point is it explained how a

---

715 Obviously the discourses of ‘progress’ and ‘inclusion’ are problematic in themselves such that they assume what the ‘goal’ to be reached is, and they reproduce ‘difference’ in numerous ways. Nevertheless there is a strong case to be made that the lives of women in the armed forces could be made easier if some male attitudes were challenged.

716 Lehring, Officially Gay, 14

717 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Study of Women in Combat - Investigation of the Quantitative Data, 8; Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat, 5
gender free decision about a gendered exclusion might be possible.\textsuperscript{718} The limitation of this positivist methodology is that it conceals the starting assumptions that define and shape the development of research questions, the selection of literature and the way data is used to draw conclusions.\textsuperscript{719} The research into the impact of female presence on unit cohesion is demonstrably not just ‘measuring’ social reality scientifically; it is actively constructing a story about servicemen and servicewomen that influences policy and practice. The basic assumption underlying the 2010 research assessments was that women are a potential problem, and the aim was to assess whether they were or not. Not only does this assumption close down alternative readings about ‘gender’ in the military in its attempt to simplify and ‘measure’ what are complex socially produced relations, it leaves servicemen beyond scrutiny and reproduces them as passive performers of cultural stereotypes, rather than social agents who make choices. To fully explore what is at stake in this it is necessary to expose the ways that the underlying problematisation of gender and sexuality frames the entire production of the research.

Throughout the research the behaviour, attitudes and masculine status of men is reproduced as the norm, or standard against which all others are measured; thus they appear ‘ungendered.’ This was apparent in the question design for the semi structured interviews that took place as part of the qualitative research. Several of the questions addressed to female personnel referenced her gender, asking her to consider the question ‘as a woman.’ For example she would be asked ‘as a woman, do you think your presence had an impact on anyone else during contact?’ and ‘as a woman, do you think your presence had an impact on getting the task done?’\textsuperscript{720} The questions to servicemen did not reference gender or ask him to consider his ‘maleness’ in his

\textsuperscript{718} Ministry of Defence, \textit{Report on the Review of the Exclusion}. See the ‘Terms of Reference’ in Annex A.
\textsuperscript{719} For a discussion of positivist social science see: Frankfort- Nachimas and Nachimas, \textit{Research Methods}; Denscombe, \textit{Ground Rules}; \textsuperscript{720} Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., \textit{Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat}, 86
response, asking instead ‘Do you think having a woman present had an impact on anyone else during contact?’ and ‘Do you think having a woman present had an impact on getting the task done?’ In this way, as Carver has argued, women bear the mark of gender and the relationship between men and women is asymmetrical.

The invisibility and ungendered status of men protects their dominant position and prevents it from being questioned. For example, the quantitative report found that in non combat situations, cohesion was higher where there was a female in command (IC). However, this ‘statistically significant’ finding is unlikely to prompt any research into discovering men’s relative inferiority in the area of leadership skills - it was merely reported, and not elaborated on. There was no ‘further analysis’ or special regression techniques employed to isolate the particular causes of men’s poorer performance in terms of promoting cohesion as IC, nor any attempt to find out if this was due to them ‘being a man.’

The 2002 Women In the Armed Forces report was similarly evasive when it came to the behaviour of servicemen. In that report no evidence was found to support the notion that single sex groups performed tasks better than mixed gender groups, however it was noted that several studies:

illustrated the negative and positive attitudes to gender that exist within groups, and showed that the perception of status, and prevalent stereotypes, can affect group dynamics and ultimately group effectiveness.

The report also refers to ‘organizational culture’ as a ‘strong determinant’ of attitudes about appropriate conduct. It is noted that:

---

721 Ibid., 77
722 Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’115
723 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., Study of Women in Combat- Investigation of the Quantitative Data, 4
724 This is not to suggest that this would be a desirable way to proceed.
725 Ministry of Defence, Women in the Armed Forces, 5
studies have shown that some military groupings derive their group identity from a set of masculine values. ... violation of norms that express the identity and values of a group can have a major impact on the group’s performance.\textsuperscript{726}

The ‘observation’ offered by the authors of the report is that ‘it may be easier to achieve and maintain cohesion in a single sex team, and there is resistance to inclusion of members who do not conform to group norms.’\textsuperscript{727} There is no discussion of this social aspect of cohesion, or any suggestion that particular cultural values and norms, or the behaviour of men may be the cause of lower levels of unit cohesion. The corollary of women’s hypervisibility is that men remain conspicuously invisible. The 2010 qualitative report actually states ‘the majority of interviewees felt that the presence of a woman had had no impact on getting the task done in contact. Of those who felt there was an impact, the majority felt this was positive.’\textsuperscript{728} However there is no room for discussion of the positive impact of women within the discursive framework that sees women as ‘a problem.’

There is also a serious problem with the construction of ‘attitudes’ in the qualitative report. The research assumed that ‘their attitudes will reflect their actual experiences as well as their underlying beliefs and values.’\textsuperscript{729} As I have already shown, there was a clear discrepancy between the way interviewees reported on their experience, and the way the majority explained why they were against women being able to serve in ground close combat units. As a justification for looking at attitudes the report states that ‘attitudes are one \textit{determinant} of behaviour, and understanding them is an important part of this research.’\textsuperscript{730} Whilst attitudes do indeed influence behaviour, they are

\begin{itemize}
\item 726 Ibid., 5-6
\item 727 Ibid., 6
\item 728 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., \textit{Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat}, 31
\item 729 Ibid., 32
\item 730 Ibid., 32, my emphasis
\end{itemize}
socially mediated, subject to change and always in the process of being made and re-made. The way the report uses the data about attitudes implies that they are rather more static, fixed and beyond engagement, as another factor or ‘variable’ affecting levels of cohesion. The importance of attitudes was highlighted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), who were given the opportunity to contribute to the review of the exclusionary policy.\textsuperscript{731} The EHRC felt that the MoD needed to ensure:

that the justification for a continued exclusion does not rely on societal attitudes towards the idea of women being involved in close-combat. The Commission’s view is that such views are themselves manifestation of stereotypical attitudes towards women and their roles. Any continued exclusion should be based on tangible, objective evidence on ‘combat effectiveness’ at ground level rather than on such stereotypes.\textsuperscript{732}

The EHRC had previously highlighted the role of servicemen’s attitudes towards women, and they re-submitted their statement about this to the MoD during the 2010 assessment:

The report of the 2007 Servicemen’s survey identified a need to address stereotypical views of the relative qualities of servicemen and servicewomen. The report suggested that one means of doing this would be to publicise the contribution of servicewomen on the frontline..... Section 10.2 of the same report notes the evidence that greater experience of working alongside women ‘is linked with more positive attitudes towards working with women and less agreement that the stereotypical and biological differences between men and women pose challenges to mixed teams’. This underlines the ‘virtuous circle’ that can be created by not only increasing the number of women recruited but ensuring they work alongside servicemen. The findings suggest that the more this happens, the better the attitude of servicemen towards women.\textsuperscript{733}

There is evidence of the ‘virtuous circle’ in the qualitative report. For example one serviceman said: “The more the girls go out with the guys on patrol, the less they think

\textsuperscript{732} Ibid., See the ‘Text of Letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission dated 18 November 2009’ in Annex C.
\textsuperscript{733} Ibid., See the ‘Text of Letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission dated 18 November 2009’ in Annex C.
of her in a sexual way. Time together at camp makes a big difference.'\textsuperscript{734} A servicewoman commented: ‘The IC was from Artillery, grounded, used to women. Not like the paras we were supposed to be out with whose reaction was "oh God we know what sort of operation this is going to be" when they saw girls.'\textsuperscript{735} Another woman was confident that ‘attitudes/behaviour did change. It took about 1 day to win people over then treated as equal. With time, women will be equal.’\textsuperscript{736} However positive experiences of working with servicewomen in Iraq and Afghanistan were not enough to change the majority of attitudes about women’s exclusion from ground close combat units which suggests that a more fundamental transformation of gender relations would also need to occur.

The quantitative research found that women generally experience less cohesion than men in combat and non-combat situations. In the ‘Conclusions’ of the report it was stated that:

The critical question is whether this is fundamentally due to the fact of them being female, or a reflection of other impediments to cohesion, that happen to be generally true for females – they tend to have shorter lengths of service, know other team members less well, have operated less often and over a shorter time period with their small team/section and to be less likely to be a leader (IC or 2IC).\textsuperscript{737}

It is unclear what is to be gained from asking whether women’s experience of lower cohesion could be explained by virtue of them ‘being’ women. Given the evidence from the qualitative research which demonstrated that women repeatedly have to ‘prove’ themselves, work alongside male colleagues who often doubt their strength, robustness and technical skills, arguably the critical question would be to ask whether it is the

\textsuperscript{734} Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., \textit{Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat}, 41
\textsuperscript{735} Ibid., 41
\textsuperscript{736} Ibid., 41
\textsuperscript{737} Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., \textit{Study of Women in Combat- Investigation of the Quantitative Data}, 40, my emphasis
attitudes and behaviour of servicemen that are lowering the cohesion experienced by women - and by definition whether it is men who are jeopardising combat effectiveness, not the women who serve alongside them. However, this would require rendering visible the behaviour of servicemen, something the discourse of female difference, and this research in particular, does not, indeed cannot, do.

The findings of both the quantitative and qualitative reports demonstrate that attempts to ‘assess’ women’s impact on unit cohesion are fraught with difficulty and illustrates well the limitations and dangers of using positivist methodologies for analysing complex social relations. However despite my criticisms of the research methodology and some of the conclusions drawn (and not drawn), the research does seem to show that men and women can work cohesively in teams when in close combat incidents, and that for the most part, servicewomen performed their roles well and were treated like equals by their male colleagues. For these reasons I was dismayed to read the final paragraph of the ‘Conclusions’ in the qualitative report. Astonishingly, the report ends with a question which invokes ‘men’s instincts’ to protect women, reproducing Elshtain’s classic Beautiful Souls/Just Warrior dichotomy:

A question remains: to what extent would the women’s proven capability, behaviour and attitude overcome men’s instincts to protect women in the most extreme situations and their potential unwillingness to deliberately put women into these situations? Also, interviewees consistently said that in contact, training kicks in and everyone just gets on with their job; again, would the training/ getting on with the job override these same concerns?

Although this is posed as a question, it is a question that only makes sense if you posit men’s instincts and women’s vulnerability as immutable biologically determined facts. There is no evidence that gives any reason to doubt the interviewees when they say that ‘training kicks in and everyone just gets on with their job.’ This final move in the report

---

738 Berkshir... Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat, 65, my emphasis
not only reproduces women’s secondary status as soldiers who require the protection of men, but also casts doubt on the professionalism of servicemen.

The ‘objective’ and problem-solving approach of the research replicates problematic understandings about gendered difference and in doing so contributes to a discourse that privileges the ‘uniqueness’ of combat as grounds for the marginalisation of an entire social group on the basis of stereotypical assumptions about gender and sexuality. The methodology employed to assess the exclusion in both the 2002 and 2010 reviews imposed a discursive framework on the design and write up of the research that reflects masculine norms and disadvantages women. To this extent it is unable to explain or question the production of gender, and instead becomes a vehicle for the reproduction of the military gender order. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that this attempt to impose a discursive framework is not entirely successful. As some of the interviewees I’ve cited demonstrate, there are ongoing active engagements with the gender order, and it is regularly challenged in different ways by different people. It is also riven with internal contradictions, as the nonsensical pursuit of women’s biological sex as ‘cause’ or origin of their experience of lower cohesion demonstrates. What the Berkshire Consultancy Ltd call the ‘chicken and egg’ challenge to interpreting the data can be more accurately understood as a point where their attempt to conceptualise women’s subjectivity in a particular way breaks down and fails.

**The Permanent Exclusion of Women?**

In 2002 the decision was taken that women should continue to be excluded from ground close combat roles because it was impossible to answer the key question of the impact
of gender on the cohesion of combat teams in close combat conditions. The report concluded that ‘none of the work that either has been, or could be, done can illuminate the key question of the impact of gender mixing on the combat team in close combat conditions,’ and so admitting ‘women would, therefore, involve a risk with no gains in terms of combat effectiveness to offset it.’

This axiomatic conclusion was drawn once again in 2010, despite evidence of women performing well in ground close combat incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan, and evidence in both the qualitative and quantitative Reports clearly demonstrating that the presence of women in close combat incidents did not affect the group cohesion, as perceived by servicemen.

The Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans met with Service Chiefs in October 2010 to assess the research carried out as part of the review, and to make a decision about whether the combat exclusion for women should remain in place. Drawing a distinction between ground close combat incidents, and ground close combat roles enabled them to reproduce the uniqueness of ground close combat roles, and disregard the findings of the qualitative and quantitative research in particular. Deeming the research for the review ‘inconclusive,’ the decision was taken that the consequences of opening up close combat roles to women was unknown, and potentially very risky, and therefore the exclusion should remain:

The continued exclusion of women from ground close-combat roles was a proportionate means of maintaining the combat effectiveness of the Armed Forces and was not based on a stereotypical view of women’s abilities but on the potential risks associated with maintaining cohesion in small mixed-
gender tactical teams engaged in highly-dangerous close-combat operations.\textsuperscript{742}

Rather than being based on stereotypical attitudes about women’s abilities (biological difference), excluding women is based on stereotypical notions of women’s ‘disruptive’ presence in all-male units. It is disturbing that, given that there is no way to ever ‘know’ what would happen if posts were open to women without changing the policy first, this rationale is actually grounds for the permanent exclusion of women from what is ideologically the core function of the military. This has consequences for all women in the armed forces, as it reproduces military activity as a masculine pursuit, and prevents full equality with their male colleagues.\textsuperscript{743}

**Negotiating Gender in the Royal Navy**

Having considered how the discourse of female difference enables the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles I now offer a discussion of some of the ways the military gender order is reproduced, negotiated and contested by Royal Navy personnel I interviewed. These informal, messy, everyday experiences are important because they reveal how complex the gender order is, and how unstable it is. In my engagement with these interview texts I ask how different gendered subjects understand themselves in relation to gendered others and how they perceive and explain the gender order of the Royal Navy.

In the Royal Navy women served in the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRENS), until 1994 when it was officially disbanded and women were allowed to serve on HM ships

\textsuperscript{742} Ministry of Defence, *Report on the Review of the Exclusion*, 3

\textsuperscript{743} Woodward and Winter, *Sexing the Soldier*
at sea, at all ranks and rates. The Royal Navy Equal Opportunities Policy states clearly that:

Our ethos is inclusive; it welcomes and appreciates differences in gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital status and social and educational background while accepting the limitations imposed through being a deployable fighting force.

Today women make up just 9.6% of the Royal Navy which means that there are 3,710 women serving alongside 38,730 men. Women now make up a sizeable minority in the Royal Navy, and have been serving at sea alongside their male colleagues for 20 years. In August 2000 the University of Plymouth published its third and final report into the integration of women into Royal Navy ships. The report found that ‘significant progress’ had been made since their 1993 report, with women ‘increasingly accepted as a normal part of Naval life’ and women reporting less harassment and hostility. Yet one of my interviewees, who has direct experience of Equality and Diversity issues, told me that the Navy still has ‘major issues about women at sea’ and Jenny, a Royal Navy officer who is openly gay, told me that she thought there was ‘more of a glass ceiling there’ because she is female rather than because she is a lesbian. In the analysis that follows I ask what thinking about the reproduction of subjectivity can reveal about the ongoing challenges facing women in the

---

745 Royal Navy, Equal Opportunities Policy http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/equal-opportunities-policy (accessed 29/04/10)
747 Review of the research cited in Ministry of Defence Women in the Armed Forces, 8
748 Ibid., 8
749 Interview with Susan, Navy Command Headquarters, Whale Island, Portsmouth (date of interview 23 February 2010). Recording in possession of author.
750 Interview with Jenny, Navy Command Headquarters, Whale Island, Portsmouth (date of interview 23 February 2010). Recording in possession of author.
contemporary armed forces and I consider the ways ‘everyday’ activities reproduce
gendered subjects spatially, materially and socially.

When Women went to Sea

Allowing women to go to sea created significant upheaval for the Royal Navy. Robert, a
commander with 20 years experience, described it as the ‘most significant change
across the period.’ He also said that ‘a lot of people didn’t like to have the WRENS at
sea because that wasn’t the Navy they joined.’ This unease and awkwardness
manifested itself in women being called by their first names, unlike the men who were
addressed by their surname and more serious resistance from men such as refusing to
salute women who held the Queen’s commission. Heggie identifies a common theme
across the American, Canadian and British Armed Forces response to the integration of
women:

Simply stated, the concern is - how will the introduction of women in to an
exclusively male environment affect male efficiency, male bonding and
male aggressiveness?

The concerns raised about relationships and the ‘inevitable’ problems that woman
would cause illustrate Heggie’s point well. Robert explained this apprehension:

751 Interview with Robert, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 16 November 2009). Recording in possession of author.
752 Interview with Robert, my emphasis
753 Interview with John, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 16 November 2009). Recording in possession of author.
754 Interview with Ian, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 4 May 2010). Recording in possession of author.
755 Interview with Mark, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 4 May 2010). Recording in possession of author.
756 Heggie, Uniform Identity?, 143 emphasis in original
all of a sudden you are a commander in the Navy, you are a captain of a
carrier and you’ve got a bunch of 18-20 year old females joined your ships
company and you’ve got 450 blokes. Now that’s your worst nightmare, how
are you going to police all that? 

The ‘naturalness’ of heterosexuality was emphasised: ‘when boys and girls go ashore,
boys and girls are boys and girls. Things happen.’

What was striking in the accounts from the men and women I interviewed was their
different perspective on that period in the mid 1990s. The men I interviewed
documented the changes they witnessed, and noted things like a move from violent
games such as mess rugby or piggyback fighting and the introduction of disco dancing
instead, \textsuperscript{758} and how the presence of young women suddenly encouraged the men to
shine their shoes and iron their trousers. \textsuperscript{759} Robert described having a BBQ on the flight
deck: ‘Here we were when the rest of the world were doing Gulf War one in the early
90s [and] we were having a bit of a barbeque on the flight deck,’ he continues, ‘it was
like a cruise in the Caribbean.’ \textsuperscript{760} Mark, a senior officer with over 30 years in the
Service, described how during an inspection of a ship he’d seen an unusual ‘cage’ in
one of the drying rooms:

There was a cage that had very fine, strong mesh on it, with one of the
biggest padlocks you’ve ever seen and that was the part of the drying room
for the girls. So they could hang their underwear up without it being
stolen. \textsuperscript{761}

Several of the women who were among the first women to go to sea also recalled their
experiences, although their perception of the transition differs quite substantially. Susan,
a senior officer with over 30 years of experience in the Royal Navy, talked about the need ‘to be twice as good just to prove yourself as good’, because ‘if you made a mistake it was because you were a woman not because you were a human being’.  

Harriet, an engineer who joined the Navy in the 1980s, told me that the women were overloaded and given the ‘worse jobs.’ She admitted that ‘it wasn’t a nice place to be’ and said that if she had not had so much drive for being in the Navy she would have left. She explained:

> Stag ships... they have this sort of bonding... the boy, men sort of thing, you know, they do strange things and that’s how they get through their seven months... then you throw women into the equation... it was a constant battle because I think some people wanted to see it fail...

Harriet felt the management structures were not in place to support the young female junior rates. There were initially a lot of reports of sexual harassment and intimidation when women joined male ships, something she attributes to this structural deficit. She also talked about the way women perceived that they should act like the men to be ‘accepted’, something Mark also commented on: ‘they used to try and be like Matlows themselves...they’d go out and do all of the drinking and all of the eating that the blokes were doing... it was as if they were trying to lose their femininity.’ These examples all indicate that both men and women felt that they were entering a masculine space, a space where ‘women’ did not belong and where women had to change their behaviour in order to fit in.

---

762 Interview with Susan, 
763 Interview with Harriet, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 4 May 2010). Recording in possession of author. 
764 Interview with Harriet 
765 ‘Stag ships’ is naval vernacular for all-male ships. There are still stag ships in service because they do not have separate facilities for women. When they are refitted they will be able to accommodate women. 
766 Interview with Harriet 
767 Interview with Mark (‘matlow’ is slang for sailor in the Royal Navy)
“I'm as good as any bloke”

To explore how some women negotiate life in the contemporary Royal Navy I discuss the experiences of Julia and Kate, both officers currently serving in the Royal Navy. Julia joined the Service in the early 1990s, just as women were going to sea for the first time. She is a mother of two young children and reflects on her career in the Royal Navy and her perceptions about the position of women. Kate is a young officer in the Royal Navy, with 5 years experience. She has performed a variety of roles in the Service, including sea going posts. As a woman who has joined a Navy in which allowing women on board ships is the norm and sexuality is ostensibly not an issue, Kate offers a fascinating account of life in the ‘equal opportunities’ Navy.

At the start of the interview with Julia, she explained how her opinion about the Navy had changed from when she joined:

I was joining the Navy because I’m as good as any bloke… I knew I was joining a men’s Navy but I was going to show them I was just as good as them. But now I have quite a different take on it, the whole issue of is that right?\textsuperscript{770}

Julia admitted to being ‘disappointed’ with the Navy since having children and becoming ‘more alive to the gender debate.’\textsuperscript{771} Julia’s disappointment has caused her to question how women are managed in the Service and caused her to question a lot of its institutional values. When I asked Julia if she thought the Navy was a ‘fundamentally’ different place since she joined and she replied: ‘Do I think attitude and the culture and

\textsuperscript{770} Interview with Julia, Navy Command Headquarters, Whale Island, Portsmouth (date of interview 23 February 2010). Recording in possession of author.

\textsuperscript{771} Interview with Julia
the organisation has changed? Not that I’m aware of. I think you’d be better off asking a bloke about that.” As an example she explained that if you:

Put two or three women around a table the assumption is it’s not work, it’s gossiping…. I think that is a clear demonstration of the kind of, the sort of culture.

Julia’s complaints centred about how men and women are perceived differently in ways which disadvantage women. In this way she is questioning the ‘gender neutral’ status of men and the military institution, and acknowledging how men are always the standard against which others are measured. She cites report writing, saying that when it comes to leadership potential the favouring of ‘male-centric’ traits and the language used in reports is heavily biased towards ‘male’ characteristics:

the wording, the terminology which in a military environment with promotion boards that are all conducted by men... Male attributes sit with them because that’s what they are. Female attributes don’t quite resonate.

She believes that women show their leadership ability in a different way, and that as it is men who are identifying this potential they look for traits they see in themselves, thinking “He’s just like me and I am clearly quite great.” She also felt that this problem is exacerbated because ‘too many women try to be like the blokes that are above them.’ This is a particularly good example of one way in which the military gender order reproduces itself through ‘mundane’ activities such as report writing, and women’s participation within this order. Julia also talked about the perception of women who use flexible working hours to manage childcare commitments as turning up ‘late’ for work, which in a military context has particularly negative implications. In terms of childcare responsibilities, Julia felt that women and men were viewed differently:

---

772 Interview with Julia
773 Interview with Julia.
774 Interview with Julia.
775 Interview with Julia
776 Interview with Julia
If a bloke takes time off to care for a child, chicken pox whatever, the attitude of the majority of people around him who are blokes is “good lad, what a bloke you are, you know you are really doing well there holding down a job and you’re looking after your sick child.” Where the feeling is and I can’t quantify this but the feeling is .... Oh you’re taking more time off for a sick child if it comes from a female’s voice. It’s that, how it’s perceived.  

She calls these invisible barriers ‘not calculated sex discrimination.’ What all of these examples clearly demonstrate is that what it means to be a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ changes according to the context or environment. Masculine traits are continually reaffirmed as ideal types that females can only ever hope to approximate, reaffirming that women are somewhat ‘out of place’ in military environments. This is not to say that these ‘traits’ are inherent in men or women, but that particular traits are continuously *reproduced* as being more appropriate to male bodies, and military spaces. Women can, and do, try to ‘adopt’ those traits but they will never inhabit them as comfortably as a man will. What these examples show is that the same activities, such as looking after a sick child, are perceived differently for different gendered subjects, always against an unspoken ‘norm’ that delineates what is appropriate for each gender. These examples highlight how important thinking about the reproduction of subjectivity is, because it renders visible complex ‘discrimination’ in ways which equal opportunities policies, with its limited understanding of autonomous ‘equal but different’ subjects who simply require ‘barriers’ to be removed, cannot even begin to explain or engage with.

Kate, offers a different perspective of life in the Royal Navy for women because she feels that the Navy deals well with diversity and is confident that any harassment she ever

---

777 Interview with Julia
778 Interview with Julia
779 Although this might be Julia’s perspective
encountered would be dealt with.\textsuperscript{780} She even told me about the advantages of being a minority because she often gets to attend official functions as the ‘token’ woman. When she met the Queen in 2009 after operations in the Gulf, she said ‘I know the reason I was one of the ones that went because I was a girl.’ She continued ‘like duty skirt, sort of thing! That’s a term that’s used quite a lot.’\textsuperscript{781} However, some of the same themes from Julia’s account recur despite Kate’s different perception of her position as a woman. She talked about ‘integration’ in terms of being a ‘tomboy’: ‘I played football, watched football, so I suppose I was a bit of a tomboy. And I think a lot of women in the Navy maybe are...or the ones that tend to... integrate a bit better [are].’\textsuperscript{782} To illustrate this she compared herself with ‘quite a girly girl’ that she shared a cabin with, and explained that she might ‘let more things slip than she would, so if there was a comment or something... she might take it up the line.’\textsuperscript{783} Kate is highlighting the need to tolerate a certain amount of banter and not alienate male colleagues by complaining about their behaviour in order to fit in.

Kate explains that she sometimes finds it difficult being the only woman and feels excluded. On one ‘away’ training course she explained how it could be hard to join in ‘boy’s night drinking’:

\begin{quote}
I went out initially, and like had some drinks, but then once they went to the club and they were like looking at girls, I just thought, well, I should go home.\textsuperscript{784}
\end{quote}

She also talked about her time at sea where she was one of only two female officers, sharing a social area with twenty five or thirty male officers. She explained that as a

\textsuperscript{780} Interview with Kate, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 4 May 2010). Recording in possession of author.
\textsuperscript{781} Interview with Kate
\textsuperscript{782} Interview with Kate
\textsuperscript{783} Interview with Kate
\textsuperscript{784} Interview with Kate
female minority ‘it can be quite hard, because it’s just really stupid things....but they would always have what they wanted on the telly.’ She also said if there were problems at sea ‘it was usually [about] toilets.’ For example, Kate explained that often when shutting the toilets for cleaning or maintenance:

they [cleaners] wouldn’t say, come and tell you. So they wouldn’t tell you where there was an alternative place you could go, because there was only like one female toilet on board. And you’re like, well, shall I just go in the blokes’ or whatever?

As well as these more mundane problems, Kate also explained that she sometimes had to deal with unwanted advances from male colleagues:

It can be hard when you’re... away for long periods, and you can get quite a lot of attention... maybe attention that you don’t want, sort of on a night out, you might have, if guys have a few too many to drink, [they] will come up to you and, you know, maybe a bit inappropriate, but... it is something you’ve got to get used to.... and it can be quite hard to start with, but you do just get used to it, and tell them just to “F” off.

Kate accepts male behaviour as part of the job and takes responsibility for managing it herself. This seems to be a common ‘survival strategy’ adopted by women, but it is inseparable from the ways that military policy and practice consistently render male behaviour invisible and beyond scrutiny. The problem is that arguably, this strategy normalises and perpetuates those behaviours. These behaviours are widespread, according to Roger, a Royal Marine, who told me about what he found out on a course at Staff College: ‘every single one of them [women] had been, subject to a bit of sexual harassment at some particular point in... her career.’

---

785 Interview with Kate  
786 Interview with Kate  
787 Interview with Kate  
788 Interview with Roger
Embodying the Norm

The Royal Navy has invested a significant amount of time and resources into developing its equality and diversity strategy, undoubtedly to deal with ongoing problems such as sexual harassment. Two strategies are used to deliver equality and diversity policy: ‘policing’ and ‘education.’ The education includes comprehensive information regarding what to do if you are being bullied or harassed and it seems that equality and diversity policy is often equated with the policing and management of harassment. There is a comprehensive complaints procedure managed by the Service Complaints Commissioner of the Armed Forces, who is independent of the MoD and the Armed Forces. However, these policies are not intended to try and change institutional cultures, but instead focus on isolating and managing individual E & D complaints. For example within policy and practice any complaint related to equality and diversity issues is known as ‘E and D event’. John explains that ‘a joke might, for 25 people in the room, be funny but if one person does not find it funny, because for whatever reason, then that is an E and D event’. The language of the ‘event’ suggests a discrete occurrence within particular temporal boundaries that requires procedure be followed to resolve it. Roger, an officer in the Royal Marines, described equality and diversity procedure as ‘formalising commonsense,’ while Robert, a commander with 20 years experience repeatedly referred to ‘pragmatic management,’ stressing the similarity to organisations on ‘Civvy Street.’ This ‘problem-solving’ approach leads to an individualisation and de-politicisation of gender hierarchy and discrimination, rendering

789 One illustration of this tendency is a current Royal Navy publication given to recruits entitled Equality, Diversity & You: Combating Bullying & Harassment in the DglyphUBzaval Service (Portsmouth, Booklet given to Naval recruits 2010)

790 ‘Service Complaints Commissioner: An independent voice within the Service complaints system’ http://armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/ (date accesses 23 September 2010)

791 Interview with John

792 Interview with John.

793 Interview with Ian

794 Interview with Robert, ‘Civvy Street’ is military vernacular for the civilian sector
it as simply an inevitable management issue. The language of the ‘event’ also isolates
the incident from the wider culture of the military, ‘containing’ and mitigating the worst
effects of the gender order. This is because they formalise commonsense assumptions
about gender which generates pragmatic management solutions to alleviate the worst
symptoms of a gender order which inscribes hierarchical relations between gendered
subjects in their very production. Ultimately these policies, whilst offering avenues for
redress and some protection from discrimination, are far from effective at dealing with
gender hierarchy directly.

In the light of Kate and Julia’s experiences I was particularly interested to find out how
some of the men I interviewed felt about Equality and Diversity policies. I found that
while equality and diversity initiatives were broadly welcomed by the male personnel I
spoke to, many of them had concerns about ‘favouritism’. John, a Lieutenant
Commander with 25 years’ service, explained that ‘the biggest fear was that people
would be positively discriminated not against but for.’\textsuperscript{795} Henry, a Lieutenant
Commander, was also generally in favour of equality and diversity initiatives ‘as long as
we don’t go overboard and start to make us feel there is favouritism for that particular
group... there is always a danger... that they might go too far with it.’\textsuperscript{796} Roger even
went so far as to say that activities to promote minority groups such as LGBT were
‘almost unequal .... because they’re putting so much effort into such a minority.’\textsuperscript{797} I
was interested to find out whether Equality and Diversity policy was felt to be more
about treating everybody the same, or respecting their difference. I asked Mark, who
now delivers Equality and Diversity education across the Royal Navy, if he considered
the minority groups were starting on an equal footing or whether they are disadvantaged

\textsuperscript{795} Interview with John.
\textsuperscript{796} Interview with Henry. RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall (interview date 16 November 2009).
Recording in possession of author.
\textsuperscript{797} Interview with Roger
with policy needed to redress that. He went on to say that initially some ‘minority-minority groups’ might need ‘preferential treatment’ but the question is ‘when do you start treating them as equal?’ Robert also voiced similar concerns: ‘in a way by having equal opportunities and saying she’s a female you’re singling her out already as needing some sort of different treatment. Wrong. Everybody is the same and it’s just managing the situation.’ It is as if with a slight of the hand, equality and diversity policy (re)inscribes difference whilst claiming to erase it. The discourse of equality and diversity effectively conceals the role that military cultures play in producing subjects and the creation of culture through intersubjective means and daily interactions. Yet perhaps it is the attempt at line drawing between people, the boundaries marked between spaces and times that is part of the problem, not the solution. For, as Roger helpfully summarises:

all of our Equality and Diversity issues come from where something’s different... where Civilian and Military work together.. where female and male work together, that’s where the potential Equality and Diversity issues come from...... you very rarely get Equality and Diversity problems from a Troop of Royal Marines all working together... it’s always down these sorts of lines....

The individualising and problem-solving approach to equality and diversity neutralises and removes any discussion of how these groups are produced in relation to the unspoken ‘majority’ and fails to promote any understanding of the privilege or advantage that comes from being within the male, heterosexual majority group. Masculine privilege is thus secured in the very naming and disclaiming of difference, and this explains in part why equality and diversity initiatives have not fundamentally altered the gendered organisation and culture of the Royal Navy. This inability to resolve the conceptual tension between the concepts of ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ also

798 Interview with Mark
799 Interview with Robert
800 Interview with Roger
exposes the limits of the attempt to reproduce service personnel as autonomous subjects with innate gendered identities by showing how the reproduction of difference is always relational.

Equality and diversity policy produces gendered subjects in ways which render gendered ‘others’ hyper-visible while simultaneously producing the unseen ‘male’ subject as the standard against whom the others are produced and considered. This invisibility is reproduced by the gendered ‘others’ as much as by the men who benefit from it. When talking to Kate about LGBT personnel in the Navy she said she had never seen anything to make her feel that the Navy was homophobic:

I’ve known a few guys... like homosexuals that have been in the Navy, on my last ship, and there was banter, but no more banter than I would get as a female.801

Kate does not compare herself with men, she compares herself with another gendered ‘other.’ The invisibility of men has serious practical consequences because it is only through asking who we are seeking equality with, that those in the majority or dominant position understand and recognise their comparative advantage. Perhaps unsurprisingly most of the male personnel I interviewed did not bring up their relative advantage in comparison with female and LGBT personnel. Mark recounted an exchange with a female colleague which demonstrates this well:

I was feeling particularly undervalued by a certain person in authority and I just mentioned it to her [the female colleague] and she said, “Is that the first time in your career?” and I said “yeah” and she said, “I've had it all of my career because I'm female” and it suddenly made me think crikey, yes you have, haven’t you.802

801 Interview with Kate
802 Interview with Mark
Julia also told me about the inability of men to ‘see’ or understand what it is like to be a woman in a predominantly male fleet:

On board [HMS] Illustrious we used to have girl’s nights where we would all sit at dinner around a table and the men were like ‘What the hell’s going on there?’ and to really miff them off you’d invite one bloke as a guest… they would say “well why do you need it? Well, we’ll have one.” You have one virtually every day because you’re virtually all men around the table!… Do they get that? I don’t think they do. \(803\)

This anecdotal evidence supports the suggestion that there is significant blindness of majority heterosexual male personnel with regards to those who are in a ‘minority’ group. Julia voiced her extreme frustration with the lack of understanding and engagement with the issue of gender discrimination. When talking about senior male officers she says ‘I just don’t think they can get it. I think there is a real struggle for some of them.’ \(804\)

It also seems that even the men who do acknowledge that there are additional challenges for minority groups have low expectations about equality and diversity initiatives. Mark explains, ‘I don’t think we’ll ever totally get away from the fact that there is going to be some form of discrimination.’ \(805\) This is because he feels ‘macho culture’ is ‘always there’ on single sex and mixed ships. \(806\) The inability of Equality and Diversity policy to effectively confront and challenge these attitudes is evidenced in the results of the Plymouth report about the integration of women, which found that 50% of ratings still expressed negative opinions about mixed crewing, and 37% of male junior ratings expressed a preference to serve on an all-male ship. \(807\) The military gender order continues to marginalise women in the Royal Navy, as noted by Harriet who told me

\(803\) Interview with Julia
\(804\) Interview with Julia
\(805\) Interview with Mark
\(806\) Interview with Mark
\(807\) Review of the research cited in Ministry of Defence, *Women in the Armed Forces*, 8
about a recent experience on an all male ship: ‘[it] was quite awkward because you go in to their Mess....And it’s like, what’s this woman doing here? You get that feeling.’

What this exploration of the experiences of several naval officers has demonstrated is that the logics underpinning the gender order which I indentified in the debate around women’s participation in ground close combat units, also structure the everyday lives of different personnel.

Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored some of the ways that gendered subjects are reproduced in research agendas and methodologies, policy and practice, and in the everyday interaction by men and women in particular contexts, demonstrating that we are all ‘theorists’ of gender. I have demonstrated how particular framings of sexuality and gender operate to reproduce gendered subjects in different ways, with different effects. The aim of this chapter was to understand how the gender order of the military is reproduced, and to ‘diagnose’ the underlying logics or problematisation within which debates around gender and sexuality take place. This chapter has considered how ‘women’ and ‘gender’ are conceptualised and reproduced, and I have argued that the military gender order is fundamentally organised around the construction of men and women as oppositional, biologically determined genders, and that the naturalisation of heterosexuality is integral to this production. As well as being pervasively heteronormative I have shown that the gender order is hierarchical and privileges servicemen. I have identified an important dynamic that is necessary to sustain the

---

military gender order: the hyper visibility of women and the concurrent invisibility of men. I have shown that it is only possible to understand what ‘women’ and ‘men’ are in the military if they are considered relationally, as the effects of particular configurations of gender. This has implications for theorising gender relations in the military and specifically for assessing the impact women’s presence has. Contrary to several feminist accounts, I have argued that women in the military are not inherently subversive simply by virtue of being ‘not men.’Rather what it means to be a woman, in a military context, is governed by a gender order which protects masculine privilege and which continually reproduces women in ways which do not undermine the masculine status of the institution. Far from being disruptive, or subversive, reproducing women’s hyper visibility is inseparable from securing men’s corresponding invisibility, and seen in this way the reproduction of ‘men’ and ‘women’ is a mutually constitutive process that is essential for shoring up the gender order. In this reading strategies of segregation and marginalisation which limit women’s participation do not simply respond to gendered difference, and attempt to contain it, but rather they actually produce that difference. Arguably the ongoing problems with sexual harassment and the retention of servicewomen support this claim.

I have demonstrated that there is much at stake in the reproduction of gendered subjects. In practice, the dynamics and discursive mechanisms I have identified allow ‘the military’ to be produced as a gender neutral space; an ungendered arena in which biologically determined subjects interact, thus concealing and entrenching the operation of productive power of which gendered subjects are the effects. I have argued that as a result of this, military women are continually reproduced as ‘problems’ to be solved, requiring management policies that mitigate the effects of their inclusion in the military

---

810 See, for example: Kronsell, ‘Method for studying silences’; Heggie, *Uniform Identity*?; Turenne Sjolander and Trevenen, ‘One of the Boys?’
whilst the behaviour of servicemen remains beyond scrutiny. Throughout my analysis I have ‘read’ gendered subjects as simultaneously the embodied effects and agents of these norms, continually articulating themselves in relation to those norms, demonstrating in different ways how gender is performative.\footnote{Butler, Gender Trouble} I have explored how challenges to the gender order have been articulated by different personnel, and have evaluated how effective they are by considering whether they disrupt the underlying logics of the gender order. I have also looked for inconsistencies and sites where norms have failed to function as expected, or have resulted in paradox. I offered a critique of the qualitative and quantitative research methods employed to assess the exclusion of women from ground close combat units, arguing that it imposed a discursive framework on the design and write up of the research which reflected, and was itself a product of, particular understandings of gender. By pursuing occasions where this discursive framework fails, such as the nonsensical pursuit of women’s gender as the cause of their reported lower experience of cohesion, this critique also serves as a re-interpretation of the research findings, a performative intervention which inhabits and reproduces the gender order differently.

This chapter has provided the necessary context for the investigation of military policy towards homosexuality which follows. In the present chapter I have shown that that the ‘integration’ of women into the British armed forces was achieved in ways which did not unsettle the heteronormative norms upon which the gender order is based. What this shows is that the resilience of gender hierarchy in the military is sustained and reproduced through a set of logics and rationalities which ‘frame’ women’s participation. This finding is important because it indicates that the ‘integration’ of LGBT personnel since 2000 is potentially far more disruptive for the gender norms in
the military because they cannot be so easily accommodated into those logics. However, before analysing how this was achieved it is necessary to carry out an investigation into the reproduction of ‘the homosexual’ before 2000. The next chapter explores this in order to establish how ‘the ban’ on homosexuality functioned and with what effects.
Chapter Four

Constructing the Homosexual Threat

Introduction

The previous chapter began the interrogation of the military gender order by looking at how ‘gender’ is conceptualised, regulated and reproduced in military policy and practice. Drawing on Foucault’s genealogical method I sought to show how ‘systems of elements,’ in this case gendered subjects, are classified and objectified according to particular regimes of rationality. It interrogated the construction of female difference, with particular reference to the exclusion of women from ground close combat units. I demonstrated how particular problematisations of gendered subjectivity directly inform policy, research and debate on this issue, reproducing men and women in ways that enable a justification to be made for the permanent exclusion of women, on the basis of their ‘distractive’ presence. As a result of this investigation I was able to offer a ‘diagnosis’ of the underlying logics which reproduce sex/gender in the contemporary British armed forces. These logics require men and women to be reproduced as essentially different, oppositional subjects, and this production is based on the presumption of heterosexuality. Moreover, men and women are reproduced hierarchically in ways which privilege male personnel. The hyper visibility of women, achieved only through the invisibility of men, ensures that women are continually reproduced as ‘problems’ to be solved, whilst the behaviour of men is beyond scrutiny. These dynamics ensure that what it means to be a woman, in a military context, is governed by a gender order which reproduces women in ways which do not undermine the masculine status of the institution. Consequently, far from being disruptive, or

---

812 Foucault, *The Order*, xxi
subversive, the ‘integration’ of women into the British armed forces was achieved through strategies of segregation and marginalisation which did not unsettle the heteronormative norms upon which the gender order is based.

Having explored the conceptualisation of ‘gender’ it is necessary to examine how the military conceptualises ‘sexuality’. The previous chapter analysed (presumed heterosexual) men and women, those subjects who are ‘included’ in the gender order. The present chapter turns to explore those ‘abject’ subjects who inhabit a space outside the cultural matrix of gender, those subjects who are excluded, unintelligible and exist as ‘developmental failures or logical impossibilities’. In the context of the British armed forces, until 2000, ‘the homosexual’ was constructed as this abject presence, the abnormal and threatening subject who must be discovered and excluded. Accordingly the present chapter interrogates how homosexuality was reproduced, classified and treated under ‘the ban’ on homosexuality, and considers how important this was for sustaining the military gender order. Questions guiding the investigation include: How was the ‘problem’ of homosexuality understood? How did the military attempt to manage or solve the problem? As Foucault explains, there are multiple answers to the same questions; but what we must do is ‘rediscover the root of diverse solutions, the general form of problematisation that has made them possible’. Accordingly if there are different solutions to the ‘problem’ of homosexuality put forward by the MoD the point is not to debate the virtues of either solution but to look for the conditions of possibility and discursive structures that enable different solutions to ‘make sense’.

Following the critical methodology advanced in chapter two I will also look for the limits, paradoxes and failures of attempts to reproduce homosexuality under the ban.

---

\(^{813}\) Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 24

\(^{814}\) Foucault, ‘Polemics’, 115
The chapter proceeds in three sections. After providing a brief outline of the historical context of the ban on homosexuality, the first section analyses the reproduction of ‘the homosexual threat’ in military policy and practice. I show how homosexuality was produced as an ever present danger which legitimised strategies of suspicious watchfulness and the surveillance of all personnel. I analyse the classification of homosexuals on the basis of their visibility, demonstrating how there was a clear distinction made between covert’ and ‘known’ homosexuals. The analysis demonstrates that the ban failed in two senses. Firstly the rationale for the ban was undermined by the presence of covert homosexuals who demonstrably were compatible with service life and did not induce ill discipline. Secondly, I show that it was the potential for discovery (something the ban itself produced) that rendered all homosexuals (even ‘non-practicing’ homosexuals) a threat, hence the need for a ban. Seen in this light the ban is inherently paradoxical, and fails in the sense that it continually creates and sustains the problem it promises to resolve. However, I ultimately argue that it was this paradoxical ‘failure’ that actually enabled the ban to act as a self perpetuating mechanism that safeguarded the heteronormative gender order, and in this way, it ‘worked’.

The second section offers an analysis of the reproduction of (heterosexual) servicemen. I argue that while the ban functioned to reproduce homosexuals in particular ways, by simultaneously producing and being seen to deal with the ‘homosexual threat’ it also enabled the reproduction of servicemen as inherently heterosexual, and the military institution as masculine. This reveals that the ban was an important regulatory mechanism, and that ‘the homosexual’ functioned as what Derrida calls the ‘constitutive outside’ of the gender order. I argue that this explains why servicemen in particular

815 Derrida, Limited Inc.
were so vehemently opposed to lifting the ban, but also exposes how fragile and unstable gender is, because it requires constant reinforcement through discursive distinctions and borders which are ultimately always contingent.

The final section analyses the threat posed to the gender order, should the ban be lifted. I argue that whilst an analysis of the reproduction of subjectivity exposes how gender is ordered and regulated in ways that protect masculine and heterosexual privilege, it also reveals as much about the limits of these attempts to capture gendered life. Through an analysis of issues raised about ‘privacy and decency’ I demonstrate that the potential ‘integration’ of homosexuals exposes this gender order because the problem of accommodating homosexuals cannot be resolved within the military’s understanding of (hetero)sexuality and sexually segregated forces. Moreover, allowing ‘known’ homosexuals to serve alongside comrades of the same gender does threaten the ability of the military to be seen to control sexuality, which threatens its ability to secure the masculine status of the institution. The chapter demonstrates and ultimately concludes that, unlike integrating women, integrating ‘homosexuals’ as conceived by the military, does pose a significant ‘problem’ for, and threat to, the gender order of the military. In doing so, this chapter sets the stage for the discussion of how the military responded to this threat after 2000, which follows in chapter five.

**Context: Homosexuality and the British armed forces**

The British armed forces have a complex relationship with homosexuality. Jeffery Weeks notes that the sodomy law was always particularly severe of members of the Armed Forces. The punishment from the Royal Navy was extremely severe. Buggery
had been mentioned in the Articles of War since the seventeenth century and was
treated as seriously as desertion, mutiny or murder. The Armed Forces is traditionally
fearful of a loss of discipline and order that would result if homosexual activity was to
occur within its ranks. The death penalty was ruthlessly applied, you were more likely
to be hanged from the yardarm for buggery than for mutiny or desertion and sentences
of a thousand lashes were not uncommon.816 Yet by the mid nineteenth century there
was a growing homosexual subculture in the major cities, especially London and Dublin
and in the garrison and naval towns. The hallmark of these towns was sailors and
guardsmen selling themselves as male prostitutes.817 Between 1939 and 1960 the British
state conscripted young men into the armed forces. Packaged as ‘National Service’, men
between the ages of 18 and 21 were required to serve up to 2 years in uniform for the
British state. Military service for these young men provided plenty of opportunity for
sexual experimentation, and did much to foster a homosexual subculture in Britain.818
Anecdotal historical accounts indicate that less attention was paid to suspicions of
homosexual orientation during the Second World War when the need for manpower
was the overriding concern.819 It appears to be from the 1970s onwards that efforts to
police homosexuality were most intense.

Although homosexuality was always prohibited in the Armed Forces until 2000, there
was never a specific offence of homosexuality in military law.820 The ban on
homosexuality was enforced under the Air Force Act 1955, Army Act 1955 and the
Naval Discipline Act 1957 and classified as offences such as Section 64 (Disgraceful

816 Weeks, J. Coming out: Homosexual Politics from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (London,
Quartet Books, 1990) 13
817 Xavier Mayne (1910) cited in Weeks, Coming out, 12-13
818 Crisp, Q. The Naked Civil Servant (1968), cited in Higgins, P. Heterosexual Dictatorship: Male
Homosexuality in Postwar Britain (London, Fourth Estate Limited, 1996) 63
819 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’
820 Deakin, ‘The British Army’ 120
Evidence given to House of Commons ‘Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces
Bill Session 1990-91’ (London, 1991) 87
Conduct by Officers), Section 66 (Disgraceful Conduct of an Indecent Kind) and Section 69 (Conduct Prejudicial to Good Order and Service Discipline) of the 1955 Acts and Sections 36, 37 and 39 of the Naval Discipline Act.\footnote{Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 76} The ‘Armed Forces Policy and Guidelines on Homosexuality’\footnote{Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ Annex B} issued in 1994 were the first explicit tri-Service guidelines issued by the MoD. They were ‘not a formulation of new policy on behaviour or orientation in any way’\footnote{Evidence given by Mr Ian Hamil (Director of Service Personnel Policy) in House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 101} but were intended to change the way cases were handled by Military Police because it would no longer be necessary to prove guilt for criminal proceedings (despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality in UK civil law in 1967, homosexuality remained an offence under military law until 1994 and many ‘discovered’ gay men and lesbians served prison sentences for their crime\footnote{Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 4}). It is hard to estimate numbers of personnel discharged for homosexuality and the MOD claims it does not have any figures prior to 1990.\footnote{Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 4} The 1996 ‘Report of the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team’ (HPAT report) gives figures for the total number of service personnel leaving the Armed Forces between 1990 and November 1995 as 361\footnote{Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 13-14} although Edmund Hall, himself discharged from the Royal Navy for homosexuality estimates the figures to be at least double that for the period 1991 to 1994 based on the membership of Rank Outsiders, a support group for individuals affected by the policy.\footnote{Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 3} Discharge was painful and traumatic. During research for this thesis I was fortunate enough to meet Jonathan, a former naval medic who was discharged from the Navy in the mid-1990s when, after confiding in a friend that he was gay and HIV positive, they subsequently informed the military authorities:

\begin{quote}
Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 76
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Evidence given by Mr Ian Hamil (Director of Service Personnel Policy) in House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 101
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 4
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 4
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 13-14
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Hall, \textit{We Can’t Even}, 3
\end{quote}
The next thing I knew I had a telephone call saying “Jonathan, will you please come to my office” ... and as soon as he said it I knew, I just knew why. When I got to his office there were two guys dressed in civilian clothes. They were the SIB, the special investigations branch, and they said they had reasons to believe that I was homosexual and I didn’t deny it I just said “yes I am.” I just thought why should I have to deny it? I probably broke down in tears at that point. They said that they needed to interview me. It was a recorded interview... It was on 2 cassettes so it was just like being treated as a criminal. I just wanted advice on what I should do... I was going to lose my job. My family didn’t know that I was gay or that I was HIV positive and they still don’t. They know I am gay but not that I am HIV positive. I contacted the solicitor, he said all you can do is tell them you believe the decision is unfair, unlawful and unjust. So I put that down in writing and gave it to them. He said no matter what you tell them you are going to get discharged, there is nothing we can do about that. It didn’t take them long to get rid of me, so I lost contact with a lot of friends because I didn’t have time to say goodbye. I was just expected to go. I didn’t know what to tell my parents, my grandparents, my family.

The financial cost of the policy was great. Hall estimates the cost of the policy between 1990 and 1994 alone to be between £40 million and £50 million taking into account the cost of training, the loss of experience and the cost of investigations themselves. For those who remained in the armed forces by concealing their homosexuality the emotional cost was almost as high. During the research for this thesis I also interviewed Jenny, a lesbian in the Royal Navy. Jenny joined in the 1980s and had to conceal her sexuality from her military colleagues and superiors. The constant fear of discovery, investigation and dismissal was extremely stressful. Jenny described living under the ban as ‘exhausting’ because ‘you are always leading a double life... you couldn’t really concentrate on actually just being yourself’.

The ban on homosexuality was clearly extremely costly, both financially and in terms of the emotional trauma suffered by the hundreds of servicemen and women who lost their livelihoods, friends, and dignity as a result of intrusive investigations into their personal

---

829 Hall, We Can’t Even, 6
830 Interview with Jenny
lives. Yet what was it about homosexuality which warranted such a response? The analysis which follows draws predominantly on data from the 1990s, the decade in which the legal challenge opposing the policy was mounted and the MoD had to defend the policy. I draw primarily on two key sources of data, the Select Committee Reports for the Armed Forces Bill 1990-1 and 1995-6 and the report of the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team (HPAT report) which was published in 1996. The Select Committee Reports contain detailed examinations of the policy of exclusion and document the justifications offered by representatives of the Armed Forces and the MoD, as well as evidence given, either in person or in memoranda, by Stonewall and Rank Outsiders. As such, they provide a good opportunity to interrogate how different conceptualisations of gender and sexuality informed the debate on the exclusionary policy. The Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team was commissioned by the MoD to carry out an internal assessment of the current policy banning homosexuals and the resulting report formed the basis of evidence given by the Department at the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill in 1995-6.\footnote{Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 16} The HPAT report presents a range of evidence that ultimately supports maintaining the exclusion of homosexuals from the Armed Forces and is arguably the most explicit articulation of ‘the problem’ of homosexuality as understood by the MoD and Armed Forces. The report is important because it was accepted by the MoD and the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995-6 as an accurate representation of the attitudes of service personnel and it was also on the basis of this report that the Select Committee decided to uphold the ban.\footnote{House of Commons ‘Special Report (1990-91)’, xiv; Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 16} Drawing on single and tri-service regional focus groups, attitude surveys, individual interviews and a large number of letters solicited from all three services, the HPAT
The report provides a lot of useful data that can be used to investigate how gender and sexuality were conceptualised by military personnel in 1996.  

Reproducing Gendered Subjects: Homosexuals

The overarching construction of the problem of homosexuality concerned the threat it was thought to pose to unit cohesion and morale and as a consequence, operational effectiveness. It was justified by the MoD as ‘a practical military judgement of the implications of homosexuality for Service life.’ The policy was enforced by police for each Service: the Royal Military Police and Special Investigating Branch, the RAF Police and Security Services, the Royal Navy’s Regulating Branch and Special Investigations Branch. Gay and lesbian personnel could be ‘outed’ in various ways, from allegations or a tip-off from someone else, as a result of being involved with someone else who was being investigated, or for being seen in gay bars, or being found to be in possession of ‘suspect’ items such as a safe sex leaflet aimed at gay men. The investigations that preceded discharge would include ‘undercover’ surveillance, highly intrusive questioning, interviews of the ‘suspect’s’ acquaintances, searching of home and possessions, and examination of personal effects such as diaries, letters and address books. Crucially personnel did not have to be proven to have engaged in homosexual acts, simply being homosexual, was enough to warrant discharge. The policy stated that:

---

833 I acknowledge the criticisms of the validity and impartiality of the report advanced by Stonewall and Rank Outsiders (House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ p.99) but even if its ‘findings’ are questionable, as a document that outlines the framing of ‘the problem’ and the terms of the debate as understood by the MOD and many military personnel it is still extremely useful.
834 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’
835 Hall, We Can’t Even, 5
836 Anecdotal evidence of this type of treatment (gained from interviews) can be found in: Hall, We Can’t Even; Heggie, Uniform Identity?; Bower, (Im)Possible Women; House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’
Homosexuality, whether male or female, is considered incompatible with service in the Armed Forces, not only because of the close physical conditions in which personnel have to work, but also because homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and, as a consequence, damage morale and unit effectiveness.\footnote{Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 7}

It is not clear from this statement exactly why homosexuality was considered incompatible with service life. Why did close physical conditions make homosexuality incompatible? Why might homosexual behaviour cause offence, polarise relationships and induce ill discipline? What was it about homosexuality that was thought to damage morale and unit effectiveness? Answers to some of these questions can be found within the HPAT Report in which 12 potential ‘Problem Areas’ should the ban be lifted, were identified and assessed. The report overtly seeks to distance itself from any moral judgement about homosexuality and instead adopts a ‘pragmatic’ approach that is ‘comprehensive,’ ‘objective’, and ‘well substantiated’\footnote{Ibid., 26}. Accordingly it appraises the exclusionary policy towards homosexuality in terms of ‘anticipated effects on Fighting Power’\footnote{Ibid., 27} should the policy be changed. The report clearly states that:

The starting point was an assumption that homosexual men and women were in themselves no less physically capable, brave, dependable and skilled than heterosexuals. Problems, if there were any, would lie in the difficulties which integration of declared open or strongly suspected homosexuals would pose to the military system, largely staffed by heterosexuals. The best predictors of the reality and severity of such problems would be Service people themselves.\footnote{Ibid., 26}

As Hall notes the root of the reason for the ban seems to be the relationships between heterosexual and homosexual personnel, and not something intrinsic to homosexuals.\footnote{Hall, We Can’t Even, 77}

This is explicitly stated by a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy:
The RN is disciplined service; discipline is dependent on mutual respect. I can foresee scenarios where a serious breakdown of discipline will occur should homosexuals be granted the right to join the Service. [Their] ability to do the day to day job is not relevant, but what is relevant is the effect they would have on the Service and on the people who would be expected to serve alongside them.\footnote{Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 68}

Yet it is still not clear from these explanations exactly what difficulties homosexuals were thought to pose for the military, or why their integration was deemed so threatening. If the problem was thought to be found in the relations between homosexuals and heterosexuals then perhaps an examination of military policy towards sexuality in general might be a useful starting point for understanding the rationale for the ban.

\textit{Suspicious Sexualities}

It is apparent from the Committee Reports for the Armed Forces Bill 1990-1 and 1995-6 and the HPAT report that sexuality (in general) is conceived as a threat to discipline which needs to be policed. The summary of the Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill in 1990-91 states that: ‘To have men and women living and working together in such very close quarters as a ship provides \textit{inevitably} entails potential disciplinary problems.’\footnote{House of Commons ‘Special Report (1990-91)’, xiii, my emphasis} Written and oral opinion from serving personnel in the HPAT report demonstrates that it is widely believed that ‘any relationship which is sexual between members of frontline operational units degrades operational effectiveness.’\footnote{Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 99} These attitudes were also found to be underpinning justifications for women’s exclusion from ground close combat units, discussed in
chapter three. What is given greater importance in the discussions about homosexuality is that it is not just sexual acts or relationships that are dangerous; the suspicion of them is also potentially dangerous and threatening. Giving evidence for the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1990-91, Captain Lyons explains the position of the British Armed Forces with regards to sexuality:

It is the Services judgement that sexual bonding, the physical or merely emotional, between two men, two women, or even in the heterosexual sense, can be very disruptive to discipline. If there is not necessarily the actuality of that bond, the suspicion of it can be just as destructive. If suspicion alone can be destructive this suggests that the military must be seen to be controlling sexuality so that suspicion cannot arise. The ‘need to be seen’ to regulate sexual behaviour might explain why the British Armed Forces are so vigilantly ordered along gendered and sexual lines. This understanding of sexuality enables and legitimises particular practices of surveillance and regulation of all men and women in the services. The traditional mechanisms employed by the British Armed Forces to control sexuality are the segregation of women and the exclusion of gay men and lesbians. Segregated accommodation and strict rules governing male access to female-only dorms are some of the mechanisms employed by the military in order to be seen to manage and control heterosexuality. In terms of homosexuality, the military was seen to control homosexuality through elaborate surveillance procedures and watchfulness for ‘suspicious’ behaviours and the discharge of known homosexuals. However, just what constituted suspicious behaviour is vague. The 1994 guidelines state that:

It is not possible in a document of this nature to set out every circumstance which might lead to suspicion that a Serviceman or woman is a homosexual. It would be invidious to try and define all behaviour that might lead to suspicion.

---

845 House of Commons ‘Special Report (1990-91)’, 89 my emphasis
The need to be seen to be in control of sexuality is evidenced by the need to ‘prove’ homosexuality through medical examinations and the investigation and classification of deviant behaviours, ‘symptoms’ even when the ‘suspect’ has admitted his or her homosexuality. This is a particularly good example of what Foucault describes as the reinscription of confessional strategies of truth production ‘in a field of scientifically acceptable observations.’ Joanne Bower argues that the purpose of investigation and the need to ‘prove’ guilt was a way for the military to ‘recover power and control from the individual who has confessed and [to retain] authority over validity or censure’. In this reading the apparent ‘loss of control’ evidenced by the presence of the incompatible homosexual within its ranks is then recovered through investigation, validation and punishment.

The potential loss of control was a central concern of military personnel and the MoD during the debate surrounding homosexuality in the 1990s. There is evidence in both the HPAT report and the Select Committee Reports of considerable anxiety over loss of control should homosexuals be allowed to serve. ‘Problem Area 1: Controlling Homosexual Behaviour and Animosity’ details anticipated problems that would be created though the ‘introduction of a new source of division, homosexuality into a unit’. This is broken down into specific issues including, ‘preventing, investigating and punishing conflict between homosexuals and heterosexuals,’ silencing abuse and disputes about sexuality and ‘controlling sexual behaviour and regulating sexual tensions by keeping apart both the mutually antagonistic and the potentially over-friendly.’ The report also states that ‘an important background concern in all this

---

847 Foucault, The History of Sexuality Volume 1, 65
848 Bower, (Im)Possible Women, 228
849 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 63
850 Ibid., 63
would be “not what might happen but what would be said to have happened.”

Consequently the need to control and prevent conditions for suspicion is just as important as preventing compromising sexual bonds from developing.

Although both heterosexuality and homosexuality were understood to require policing and regulation, they were not conceptualised as equally valid ways of expressing sexuality and ‘the homosexual’ was produced as particularly disruptive, abnormal and problematic. Unlike with homosexuality, there were limits to the military's control of heterosexuality. The summary of the Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995-6 states that:

Rules are laid down forbidding intimate behaviour or open displays of affection on board ship-a “no touching” rule- but we were assured that—“there is no intention of regulating normal relationships between the sexes ashore.”

Whilst heterosexuality is considered to be a threat that needs careful management it is nevertheless constructed as normal, natural, and inevitable. It is this conceptualisation of heterosexuality that makes the segregation of women appear to be the ‘common sense solution’ to an obvious problem. Homosexuality is constructed in an entirely different way. Far from being inevitable, homosexuality is construed as particularly problematic and threatening. A Squadron Leader describes homosexuality as a unique threat to service life: ‘The effect on all aspects of service life would be far more deeply felt than the introduction of [other] minority groups, for example [if homosexuals were permitted to join].’

Similarly a Captain in the Royal Navy remarks, ‘in all circumstances sexual impropriety [reduces morale], but cases of homosexual

---

851 Ibid., 64 emphasis in original
852 House of Commons ‘Special Report (1990-91)’, xiii, my emphasis
853 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 137
misconduct are infinitely more damaging.'\(^\text{854}\) This is also clearly expressed by one Warrant Officer in the Royal Air Force who says ‘the RAF has a proven method of overcoming threats to smooth running. We remove them…. The threat though of homosexuals amongst us is actually being introduced.'\(^\text{855}\) Homosexuality, described by one Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy as ‘particular, peculiar, pleasures’\(^\text{856}\) is conceived as unnatural and as one Commander in the Royal Navy explains: ‘Whilst the integration of women at sea has undoubtedly required additional management effort, it has not involved fundamental spiritual or moral questions, since heterosexual relations are accepted as both natural and normal.’\(^\text{857}\) Crucially not only is homosexuality conceived as deviant, it is also seen as more difficult than heterosexuality to control, police and manage within the Service environment. This is admitted by one captain in the Royal Navy when he says ‘it is relatively easy to control heterosexual activity on a warship but homosexual activity is a much more difficult problem.’\(^\text{858}\) The anxiety over a loss of control is evident when one Commodore also in the Royal Navy says: ‘The ‘no touching rule’ between male and female personnel in the same ship is difficult enough to apply; between [those] in the same mess deck it would be impossible.’\(^\text{859}\)

Throughout the report are homophobic references to gay men in particular and evidence of serious prejudice. One Sergeant in the Royal Marines describes homosexuals as the ‘weak link’: The beefer (homosexual) would be the weak link. No one would want to work with the beefer.’\(^\text{860}\) Another Marine openly declares: ‘I personally hate the idea of working with gays and would make this openly known to them if I ever had to.’\(^\text{861}\) This

\(^{854}\) Ibid., 67  
\(^{855}\) Ibid., 151  
\(^{856}\) Ibid., 150  
\(^{857}\) Ibid., 90  
\(^{858}\) Ibid., 65  
\(^{859}\) Ibid., 125  
\(^{860}\) Ibid., 90  
\(^{861}\) Ibid., 77 underline in original
sentiment is echoed by one Major in the Army who, when considering the potential difficulty of homosexuals being ostracised by their peers, states that ‘it’s the natural law of selection.’ 862 There also seems to be a construction of homosexuals as particularly predatory, evidenced in concerns for young recruits, 863 and as having particularly voracious sexual appetites, for example another concern raised was: ‘How could homosexuals on the same ship be kept from having relationships?…. A ship is a big place at 3am.’ 864 It is not explained why this would not apply to heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. Fears about violence that would occur should homosexuals be allowed to serve openly are addressed in ‘Problem Area 2: Assaults on Homosexuals.’ 865 Part of the ‘evidence’ in the report to show that this would indeed be a problem is this disturbing quote from a Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy:

Ultimately [to get rid of homosexuals] there is violence, an attractive option to some of the more mindless in our company. Violence can be very subtle, there are a hundred opportunities in the rush of an exercise, when shutting a hatch, following someone down a ladder or during a replenishment at sea on a slippery deck, for an accident of course... No, I am not a homophobe and I don’t know anyone who is. But there are a lot of us who, purely because of the extreme conditions we happily tolerate at sea, are just not prepared to accept homosexuals amongst us. 866

Throughout the report the ‘uniqueness’ of the military environment emphasised by the MoD and policymakers was found to be reflected by the Service personnel interviewed. 867 It is this uniqueness that allows military personnel to claim not to be homophobic, whilst objecting to having open homosexuals within the ranks.

862 Ibid., 90
863 See ‘Problem Area 4: Accusation Against Homosexuals of Sexual Harassment’ in Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 83-88
864 Ibid., 71
865 Ibid., 73-4
866 Ibid., 30
A Taxonomy of Homosexuals

‘We’re here already so please let us stay.’ This quote, taken from an anonymous letter from a serving homosexual received by the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team, exposes an absence in the discourse surrounding ‘the ban’: the presence of covert homosexuals who were already serving under the ban. If, as the MoD policy claims, homosexuals are disruptive, incompatible with Service life and damaging to unit cohesion and fighting power, how then can we account for the hundreds, possibly thousands of homosexual Service personnel who served under the ban? As I discussed in chapter one, McGhee argues that the hidden, and demonstrably ‘compatible’ gay men and lesbians serving in the Armed Forces already are a discursive absence which ‘haunts’ the MoD’s discursive deployment of the disruptive and incompatible homosexual who must be forbidden to serve. He argues that this homosexuality is compatible with military Service by a ‘project of non-disclosure and non-legibility,’ and, therefore, disruption avoidance. This apparent failure of the ban is important; however how important it is depends on what the function of the ban actually was. If the ban was intended to actually exclude homosexuals then this is a clear failure that the discourse of the ban tries to conceal through producing the threatening, hyper-visible homosexual. However, as is evident in the HPAT report and the Select Committee reports, service personnel readily acknowledge that homosexuals do serve within their ranks but that so long as they remain covert they are not a problem. One Lieutenant Colonel in the Army explains:

The fact that homosexuals may have served in the past, and done so with distinction, does not change the argument. It is homosexuality which is overt or becomes known which is the problem. That which is successfully concealed and suppressed might as well not exist. To permit open

868 Ibid., 37
869 McGhee, ‘Looking and Acting’ 216
homosexuality is to remove any incentive for concealment and self-restraint.\textsuperscript{870}

This suggests that the regulatory function of the ban was to prevent ‘open’ homosexuals from serving. Indeed what is immediately apparent upon reading the HPAT report and the evidence given to the Select Committees about the issue of homosexuals is that ‘the homosexual’ in military discourse is not always used as a single category; some homosexuals are more dangerous than others. The Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team provides definitions of 9 different sub-categories of homosexual that are used in the report. This taxonomy of homosexuals represents an attempt to generate knowledge, in the Foucauldian sense, about the homosexual, and be seen to control homosexuality despite acknowledging the presence of undetected, unknowable, covert homosexuals.\textsuperscript{871} This is also an excellent illustration of Derrida’s argument that the subject is always inscribed in language and has no meta-linguistic presence, as the same individual would be classified according to who was ‘reading’ him or her.\textsuperscript{872} I quote the typology of ‘potential and actual’\textsuperscript{873} homosexuals produced by the MoD at length:

\begin{itemize}
  
  \item[i)] A \textit{homosexual activist} would work openly for the expansion of homosexual acceptance and opportunities in the Services;
  \item[ii)] A \textit{flamboyant homosexual} would emphasise his or her sexual orientation so that it was a constant factor in relations with fellow personnel;
  \item[iii)] A \textit{declared homosexual} would explicitly inform fellow Service personnel of his or her orientation in such a way that it became generally known;
  \item[iv)] A \textit{open homosexual} would, by his or her consistent, expressive behaviour or reported conduct, clearly indicate a homosexual orientation to fellow Service personnel, though without necessarily explicitly declaring it;
  \item[v)] A \textit{strongly suspected homosexual} has by his or her expressive behaviour or reported conduct given strong grounds for fellow Service personnel to assume a homosexual orientation to fellow personnel;
  \item[vi)] A \textit{suspected homosexual} has given some indication of homosexual orientation;
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{870} Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 152, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{871} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality Volume 1}
\textsuperscript{872} Derrida ‘Dialogue with’
\textsuperscript{873} Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 18
vii) A covert homosexual has by controlling his or her actions, expressive behaviour or outside conduct prevented the Service authorities gaining compelling evidence of homosexual orientation;

viii) A known homosexual has become generally understood by his, or her, fellow Service personnel and the Service authorities to be homosexual whether or not his, or her, intention was to remain covert;

ix) A celibate or non practising homosexual has a homosexual orientation which may be declared but has demonstrated that he or she will not engage in any homosexual activity in either Service or civilian contexts.\textsuperscript{874}

Evidently the attempt to know the unknowable ‘covert’ homosexual is paradoxical and destined to fail. Nevertheless these distinctions, based on the openness or visibility of one’s orientation, appeared to be important in the case for maintaining the ban. Giving evidence at the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995-6, when asked about whether homosexuals did actually serve in the forces despite the ban, Rear Admiral Lees explains: ‘one has to be careful to distinguish exactly what one means by "known"; there may well be suspicion, there could be strong suspicion, and then there is actual knowledge.’\textsuperscript{875} What is striking about this typology is that while these categories all concern how ‘visible’ the homosexual is what to look for is left vague: what does homosexual behaviour and ‘self expression’ look like? It is clear from the HPAT report that there was considerable anxiety over the loss of control through being unable to ‘see’ homosexuals. In ‘Problem Area 6: Cliquishness and Pairing’ the HPAT report details concerns about ‘Pink Ghettos’\textsuperscript{876} in particular specializations or units and fears about being unable to detect and therefore control homosexual bonding across rank boundaries in the same unit. The report states in the overview: ‘as in civilian life, homosexual personnel would learn to recognise each other without alerting heterosexuals to their orientation. (A term for this in the homosexual subculture is “Gaydar.”)’\textsuperscript{877} Other concerns outlined in the HPAT report include the ability of

\textsuperscript{874} Ibid., 17-18
\textsuperscript{875} House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 92
\textsuperscript{876} Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 96
\textsuperscript{877} Ibid., 96
homosexual couples to serve together (within the chain of command—something heterosexuals are forbidden to do) undetected.\textsuperscript{878} This fear is twofold, firstly the inability to see, know and therefore, control, the homosexual, and secondly the fear that homosexuals \textit{can see each other}. Indeed as I explained in chapter one, Heggie cites one of her interviewees who describes this ability to be seen by other lesbians whilst remaining undetected by military surveillance as ‘hiding in plain sight.’\textsuperscript{879} McGhee also argues that it is because of the reliance by the military on panoptical surveillance that the covert homosexuals are ‘tactically resisting’ their exclusion through ‘passing’ as straight.\textsuperscript{880} Clearly, under the ban remaining ‘unintelligible,’ was a prerequisite for survival.\textsuperscript{881} Whilst this ability to serve unseen can be conceptualised as evidence of individual resistance, and it does indeed demonstrate the failure of the ban to exclude homosexuals, it does not reveal the failure of the ban in a general sense. On the contrary if the ban was primarily designed to prevent ‘overt’ displays of homosexual behaviour, the ban can be seen to have worked very well. In this light the ban and the surveillance it enabled actually performed the regulatory function through requiring homosexuals to self-regulate and self-censor their behaviour. The HPAT report actually acknowledges this when it states that ‘at present the discharges and dismissals, and the incentive they provide for concealment, mean that homosexuals in the Forces produce only ... intermittent and localised effects on Fighting Power.’\textsuperscript{882}

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that it was visible, or ‘open’ homosexuals who were perceived as the problem. The HPAT report documents fears about ‘expressions (and not necessarily flamboyant displays) of homosexual identity’\textsuperscript{883} including through

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{878} Ibid., 97
\item \textsuperscript{879} Heggie, \textit{Uniform Identity?}, 216
\item \textsuperscript{880} McGhee, ‘Looking and Acting’ 222
\item \textsuperscript{881} Butler, \textit{Undoing 3}
\item \textsuperscript{882} Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 197
\item \textsuperscript{883} Ibid., 113
\end{itemize}
style of dress, pin-ups, magazines, pornography, befriending and influencing younger personnel, and bringing partners to social functions.\textsuperscript{884} One Flight Sergeant in the RAF asks ‘Are we to turn a blind eye to the 2 young men holding hands and having a snog in the corner?’\textsuperscript{885} When discussing experiences of foreign militaries that have lifted the ban on homosexuality, Mr Paul Schulte, leader of the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team, explains:

The crucial fact is that homosexuals remain almost totally invisible; that although the formal policy had been changed the practical pressures at unit level meant that homosexuals, although maybe increasingly suspected, would not and did not "come out".... you do see the beginnings of difficulty in integration precisely at the point where homosexuals within the Forces are prepared to come out and assert their, or express their identity.\textsuperscript{886}

The expression of identity to which he refers in this case is the Australian Defence Force float at the Gay Mardi Gras in Sydney which he argues caused considerable tension and resentment. Given the central concern with visible or known homosexuals, the HPAT report suggests an asymmetrical code as a possible alternative if the ban must be lifted.\textsuperscript{887} Mr Schulte explains:

an asymmetrical code would apply differently between heterosexuals and homosexuals, that would be its basis. \textit{If the problem of homosexuality within the forces is, as our analysis exposes that is, knowledge or strong suspicion, this attempts to deal with that.}\textsuperscript{888}

An asymmetrical code is not a ban on homosexual orientation but it forbids people to act in such a way as their homosexuality would become known. There seems to be support for this in the HPAT report with one RAF Flight Lieutenant saying that ‘if the policy is changed there should be guidelines to ensure homosexuals are not overt about

\textsuperscript{884} Ibid., 113
\textsuperscript{885} Ibid., 115
\textsuperscript{886} House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 93
\textsuperscript{887} Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ Team’ 213-225
\textsuperscript{888} House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 98, my emphasis
it it and one Corporal in the Royal Marines arguing that ‘if homosexuals and lesbians wish to serve...[they should understand] it is not what we want and keep their private lives PRIVATE.\textsuperscript{889} Despite legal frameworks allowing homosexuals to serve in foreign militaries there are very few open homosexuals serving in them and this leads the report to conclude that ‘it is the informal functioning of the actual military which is largely incompatible with homosexual self-expression.’\textsuperscript{891}

It is clear from my reading of the HPAT report and the Select Committee reports that despite concerns about homosexual self expression, homosexuals were not considered a problem if they were not ‘discovered’. The forces admitted that there are most likely unknown homosexuals serving without any problems.\textsuperscript{892} The ‘problem’ clearly concerned known or suspected homosexuals. Giving evidence at the Select committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1990-91, Major General Stone explained this clearly:

\begin{quote}
I am in no doubt that in the Army there is probably a small minority of excellent Service people who are non-practising, suppressed homosexuals. The problem arises only when they themselves volunteer to surface or come clean for whatever reason- I do not mean to be derogatory- or they are discovered. I can assure you that at that stage it is generally a problem.\textsuperscript{893}
\end{quote}

If it was only known or suspected homosexuals that were a problem perhaps then ‘non-practicing’ homosexuals, those with homosexual orientation but who did not act on it, were not a threat and therefore should be able to serve? This issue was discussed in the Select Committee for the Armed Forces Bill 1990-91. When questioned about non-practicing homosexuals, Mr Gainsborough, Assistant Under Secretary (Army) explained why non-practising homosexuals would still be discharged: ‘Because there is concern that there will be a risk of that fact becoming known and it will have a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[889] Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 114
\item[890] Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 115, capitalised in original
\item[891] Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 53
\item[892] House of Commons ‘Special Report (1990-91)’, 95
\item[893] Ibid., 95 my emphasis
\end{footnotes}
disruptive effect.' Consequently, the potential for discovery (something the ban itself produces) renders all homosexuals, even ‘non-practicing homosexuals’, a threat, hence the need for a ban. Seen in this light the ban acts as a self perpetuating mechanism that safeguards a heteronormative gender order by creating the problem it promises to solve. This was in fact recognised by one Major in the Royal Military Police who wrote in to the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team suggesting that ‘deregulation, far from exacerbating the problem, may well diffuse it. Once homosexuals are seen as good (or as bad) as heterosexual Service personnel then their sexual orientation will cease to be an issue.’ Consequently the paradoxical ‘failure’ of the ban, the fact that it produced the problem it promised to solve, becomes its greatest success. Having established how the ban functioned, and with what effects what still remains unclear, is why open homosexuals were deemed so threatening. The next section considers this question, by looking at another subject reproduced by the ban: (heterosexual) servicemen.

Reproducing Gendered Subjects: Servicemen

Given the historic construction of the military as the pinnacle of manhood and masculinity perhaps one of the appeals of the military to young men is the promise it offers to eradicate any ambiguity about your sexual and gendered identity. Ex-soldier (Engineer Regiment) Robinson explains his decision to sign up: ‘I was also realising my attraction to men at the time and I wasn’t best happy about the situation so I thought joining the Army would make a proper man of me, whatever that means.’ This

---

894 Ibid., 92
896 The Lesbian and Gay Foundation ‘Military Pride’
statement both highlights the elusive and phantasmal nature of gender and exemplifies well that the norm of masculinity, embodied by being a ‘proper man’ (whatever that means), has no ontological status of its own and ‘is itself (re)produced through its embodiment, through the acts that strive to approximate it, through the idealizations reproduced in and by those acts.’\textsuperscript{897} Having no ontological status of its own, military masculinity has to be performed every day by male personnel and constructed through discourses that give meaning to certain performances or behaviour. It also requires the reproduction and exclusion of ‘abject’ subjects. Butler explains:

This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet “subjects” but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those “unliveable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unliveable” is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject.\textsuperscript{898}

Gay and lesbians serving in the Armed Forces while the ban was in place certainly occupied ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life. What is striking however, is the extent to which servicemen in the HPAT report articulated their objections to lifting the ban in terms of \textit{their} identity.

One of the central concerns in the HPAT report is the fear felt by personnel that they would be themselves open to the suspicion of being homosexual should the ban be lifted. ‘Problem Area 10: Increased Dislikes and Suspicions: ‘Polarised Relationships’’ concerns: ‘Increased uncertainty about the sexual orientations of fellow Service personnel which could no longer be taken for granted as heterosexual.’\textsuperscript{899} However this uncertainty and fear seems to be something felt particularly by male personnel. One

\textsuperscript{897} Butler, \textit{Undoing}, 48, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{898} Butler, \textit{Bodies that}, 3
\textsuperscript{899} Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 130
Private female driver exclaimed: ‘Don’t we have Don’t Ask Don’t Tell already? Men are so childish about this.’\textsuperscript{900} The HPAT report notes that servicewomen who participated in the HPAT survey generally had more tolerant attitudes to male and female homosexuality\textsuperscript{901} and that there was more tolerance generally (by male and female personnel) of lesbianism than of male homosexuality.\textsuperscript{902} The report also states that violence is ‘much more likely to occur among men than women.’\textsuperscript{903} The major concern seems to be that without the ban it would be harder to ensure that one is perceived as heterosexual. One Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy describes his concerns about how to manage harassment of homosexual personnel: ‘Does he/she protect the person, rightly, which may lead [him or her] open to some suspicious minds: ‘why is he/she protecting that queer? Maybe he/she is one?’\textsuperscript{904} Or, as expressed by a Corporal in the RAF: ‘The very fact that a heterosexual has shared a room or tent with a homosexual leaves them open for accusation or suspicion’\textsuperscript{905} This anxiety even extends to doubting one’s own sexuality and motivation for joining the military for one Company Commander in the Royal Marines who comments:

> It would upset the extremely happy hard working status quo that we have at present, by introducing doubt and speculation about everybody's motivation to join the Corps. Men will ask themselves: was it the physical challenge, travel and excitement or was it for the possibility of finding a partner?\textsuperscript{906}

The need to formally exclude homosexuals was also perceived as necessary to enable homosocial bonding between men. A Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy articulates this clearly:

\textsuperscript{900} Ibid., 47
\textsuperscript{901} Ibid., 42
\textsuperscript{902} Ibid., 43
\textsuperscript{903} Ibid., 71
\textsuperscript{904} Ibid., 78
\textsuperscript{905} Ibid., 68
\textsuperscript{906} Ibid., 136, my emphasis
Their [Royal Navy Ratings] friendships can become reasonably physical with horseplay and banter and, dare I say it, affection…. [Though on a messdeck] there was no modesty allowed in their lifestyles, nor needed….there was no stigma and no threat attached to [nakedness] so it was not unnatural or of any importance. Introduce homosexuals and the whole playing field changes, [like RN ratings] Officers develop healthy friendship [sic] and can spend many hours in each others company or in each others cabins, putting the world to rights. This would be instantly taboo or at the very least (questionable) because everyone would have to build artificial barriers against the introduced possibilities. Not because either suspected the other was queer, but because previously the issue never arose…. One never had to defend oneself from the implied accusations….Removing the ban will lead to insecurity and a crisis of morale. 

The ban was certainly not the only mechanism that ensured the military environment was aggressively heterosexual. Informal behavioural norms such as ‘banter’ around sexuality and sexual exploits are equally important. According to one female Junior Rate in the Royal Navy the job is carried out in ‘a constant environment of banter and sexual connotations’. A Major in the Army explains that ‘soldiers talk about their sexual exploits all the time and homosexuals could not fit in.’ There are a range of mechanisms, formal and informal that ensure that servicemen are produced as heterosexual. McGhee articulates this succinctly:

The military subject is dependent upon the strict boundary creation and maintenance between the homosocial environments of the Armed Forces, with their “non-sexualised” same-sex bonds; and the homoeroticism associated with homosexuality….protecting the boundary of the de(homo)sexualised space of the masculine Forces’ environment under threat from “that which must be excluded” from this space, “the homosexual”.

Without the ban that preserves the homosocial space of the military, the identity of every male soldier is potentially questionable. Moreover Cohn emphasises how constitutive heterosexuality is of masculinity, and male subjectivity in general:

---

907 Ibid., 135, my emphasis
908 Ibid., 78
909 Ibid., 115
910 McGhee, ‘Looking and Acting’, 225
Keeping the appearance of no homosexuality in the military makes the military safe for rampant homoeroticism…With the exclusion of homosexual desire in the military, as embodied by the gay ban, all that homoerotic activity is simply what men do in the military. And because the military is defined as the apotheosis of heterosexual masculinity, such activity could not be gay. If the military includes gays, what assures military men that all homoerotic activity doesn’t mean that they are gay? And then what assures them that they are men?\(^\text{911}\)

Moreover, it is clear from the HPAT report that it is not just the identity of individual male personnel that is at stake, but units or regiments, and even the military institution itself. There are references in the HPAT report to the ‘stigma’ attached to units that had a reputation for being staffed by homosexuals.\(^\text{912}\) One Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy explains:

> I joined the RN [Royal Navy] in 1965 as a Junior Sick Berth Attendant and entered a branch that was rife with homosexuals…… Fortunately it was realized that the homosexual population was growing…and increasingly insidious and so homosexuals were sought out and discharged… I, along with many of my heterosexual peers spent many years trying to remove the stigma left on the branch…\(^\text{913}\)

One Sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps explains:

> It is very hard to see how homosexuals would be accepted into this very macho environment without violence and bullying. Regimental pride would be dented if there were any homosexuals within the ranks and this would not be accepted.\(^\text{914}\)

Here, ‘regimental pride’ in a ‘very macho’ environment is equated with heterosexuality. The HPAT report writes that ‘it was frequently stated that the men in front line units were too “hard” and “macho” ever to accept homosexuals amongst them’.\(^\text{915}\) The need

\(^{911}\) Cohn, ‘Gays in the Military’, 142 my emphasis
\(^{912}\) See pages 96-100 of Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ for anecdotal evidence from interviews, focus groups and letters
\(^{914}\) Ibid., 73
\(^{915}\) Ibid., 50
to exclude homosexuals can be understood in terms of protecting and producing the military as heterosexual and masculine.

Ultimately the objection to lifting the ban is framed in terms of unit cohesion. Unit cohesion is given the upmost importance in military discourse: ‘A sense of unity, cohesion and loyalty are decisive factors in any armed conflict. Nothing must be allowed to detract from the forging of close bonds based on mutual trust and respect.’ 916 The Adjutant General’s Standards Paper outlines that ‘the majority of armed forces personnel are young, robust heterosexual people.…To allow any element to affect adversely the morale, cohesion and hence operational efficiency of a unit would be detrimental to its role…’ 917 In ‘Problem Area 10: Increased Dislikes and Suspicions: ‘Polarised Relationships’ the HPAT report identifies:

> Very serious concerns the attempted inclusion of known homosexuals would undermine the interpersonal dynamics necessary for effective cohesive of military teams. 918

In the HPAT report the definition used for ‘cohesion’ is “…unity… a quality that binds together constituent parts thereby providing resilience against dislocation and disruption.” 919 However this ‘resilience’ proves to be fragile, maintained through the exclusion of women (in ground close combat units) and homosexuals. One Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy identifies ‘unique male bonding’ that would not form if homosexuals were allowed to serve. 920 This is echoed by a Major in the Army who states that ‘The British Army works on trust; inclusion of homosexuals would destroy it.’ 921 A Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Marines describes unit cohesion:

---

917 Ibid., 31-2
918 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 130
919 Ibid., 20
920 Ibid., 132
921 Ibid., 134
It is a form of love but an unjealous, indiscriminate, and above all asexual, love for one and one for all. Introduce a sexual element, either homosexual or heterosexual, and sooner or later the nature of this attachment will tend to change and one will start getting one to one relationships…and the cohesion of the fighting group is weakened.\textsuperscript{922}

There are concerns about ‘the inevitable sub-division of personnel occurring, ‘Them and Us’ no longer ‘The Team’\textsuperscript{923} and ‘undermining the solidity of the foundation on which comradeship and fellowship are built….forcing us to allow outsiders in our midst.’\textsuperscript{924} This discourse about ‘outsiders’ and ‘division’ conceals the fact that categories of social difference are produced in discourse and practice, and that the ban was one of the primary mechanisms for constructing a division between heterosexuals and homosexuals (‘Them and Us’) within military contexts.\textsuperscript{925}

**Repealing the Ban: A threat to the gender order?**

The analysis in the present chapter, and in chapter three, has provided an account of the military gender order, prior to 2000. I have shown that the gender order is pervasively heteronormative, and that this is reflected in the segregation of women and the exclusion of lesbian and gay men. There are similarities in the way that women are reproduced, and the way that homosexuals were reproduced under the ban. Both gendered others are conceptualised as ‘problems’ to be solved, and in both cases it is the women and the homosexuals who are thought to cause those problems, leaving the behaviour of servicemen beyond scrutiny. I argued in chapter three that the ‘inclusion’ of women in the British armed forces did not disrupt the gender order because the

\textsuperscript{922} Ibid., 100
\textsuperscript{923} Corporal in the RAF quoted in Ibid., 89
\textsuperscript{924} Ibid., 135, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{925} Basham, An Analysis
military was able to segregate and marginalise women in ways that did not undermine the heteronormative logics of the institution. Indeed I argued that the inclusion of women has been an occasion for the further reification of the gender order, as seen in the debate over the exclusion of women from ground combat units. This prompts questions about how homosexuals could be similarly integrated and whether this could be achieved without undermining the gender order. This final section explores this question, firstly by considering the lack of obvious physical difference of gay men and lesbians, and then through a discussion of the more ‘practical’ concerns about suitable accommodation for gay and lesbian personnel.

During the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995-6 military representatives were asked to consider their previous objections to women serving. Specifically one member asks:

Were there not similar levels of opposition to the integration of women in the Services, particularly on ships, and have the fears of sexual harassment, discrimination, improper relationships etc., been justified so far as the presence of women particularly on ships is concerned, and is there not a parallel to be drawn between those original objections to the presence of women and the objections to homosexuality in the Armed Forces?\(^\text{926}\)

The response was that parallels could not be drawn because they were separate issues. There is significant evidence to indicate that integrating homosexuals was thought to pose a far greater threat than integrating women, or ethnic minorities.\(^\text{927}\) As one flying officer in the RAF writes: ‘The problems in the short term of accepting homosexuals will be enormous. In the long run they will be more significant than race or gender.’\(^\text{928}\)

There is clear distinction made between the integration of women and the integration of homosexuals. In the HPAT Questionnaire 78% of those surveyed strongly

\(^{926}\) House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 94
\(^{927}\) For a summary of the integration of ethnic minority personnel see: Basham, *An Analysis*
\(^{928}\) Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 90
agreed/agreed that ‘it would be more difficult to integrate homosexual men into the military than it has been to integrate heterosexual women.’ 929 61 % felt it would be harder to integrate lesbians than heterosexual women, 930 79% agreed that it would be harder to integrate homosexual men than ethnic minorities, 931 and 67 % felt it would be harder to integrate lesbians than ethnic minorities. 932 These survey findings show that homosexuals were considered more threatening than women or ethnic minorities and also that gay men were seen as more problematic than lesbians. The HPAT report provides an answer as to why this was the case in ‘Problem Area 5: Ostracism and Avoidance’ which states that ostracism and avoidance seem likely to occur through:

Fears of seeming too friendly in the eyes of the heterosexual majority. (The problem is unlike the integration of women or ethnic minorities where members of the majority group remain indisputably white and male however much time they spend with members of those military minorities.) 933

The inability to easily distinguish a heterosexual identity from a homosexual one exposes how fragile gendered identity is, particularly heterosexual male identity. Whilst this does offer an explanation for why admitting homosexuals to the military was deemed so much more threatening than admitting women there might be a more fundamental reason for the vehement opposition: the fact that according to the logics of the gender order, homosexuals could not be integrated. For a gender order which must reproduce men and women as oppositional categories, the ban on homosexuality was an integral component of this reproduction, because:

Oppositions are, after all, part of intelligibility; the latter is the excluded and unintelligible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit to intelligibility, its constitutive outside. 934

929 Question 116 of HPAT Questionnaire, Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 92
930 Question 117 of Ibid., 92
931 Question 118 of Ibid., 92
932 Question 119 of Ibid., 92
933 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 89
934 Butler, Bodies that, xi
This means that integrating homosexuals would necessarily undermine that gender order. To illustrate how this works I now provide a discussion of the specific ‘practical’ problems that were anticipated should the ban be lifted.

In the HPAT report many concerns are raised about heterosexuals having to live, wash and sleep in close proximity to homosexuals. These discussions are located explicitly in relation to the segregation of women. The HPAT report specifically states that ‘women are given segregated accommodation precisely to prevent such problems [around privacy and decency.]’\(^{935}\) In fact the successful integration of women into the Services is directly attributed by Rear Admiral Lees to the segregation of women and men. He tells the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995-6 of the lessons learned from having “women at sea”: ‘It is absolutely essential to provide that privacy as between male and female, without which I do not believe the policy would be sustainable.’\(^{936}\) This position is epitomised by Wing Commander RAF who says:

> To be blunt... in my unmarried youth I would have relished the opportunity to share a bed, room, tent, bath or shower with a [female]. What then would be in the mind of a homosexual in similar circumstances? If his thoughts and desires were as devious as mine, it would lead to a total disintegration of the trust and comradeship I have totally relied on till now.\(^{937}\)

Although sharing mess decks with homosexuals is identified as a serious problem and a central reason for keeping the ban, the HPAT report notes that ‘women tended not to be as worried as the men,’ but this is something it does not examine in any detail.\(^{938}\) The assumption that homosexuals would be as predatory as heterosexual males is a serious concern voiced by military personnel in the HPAT report. However, rather than a fear

\(^{935}\) Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 121
\(^{936}\) House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 95
\(^{937}\) Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 126
\(^{938}\) Ibid., 49
of unwanted sexual advances, the anxiety seems to have centred on ‘the gaze’ of homosexuals upon their heterosexual colleagues. In Problem Area 9: ‘Privacy, Decency’ Issues’ living with homosexuals would mean that heterosexuals would be:

unable to escape the sexualised gazes of others who might see potential objects of physical desire rather than simply the often naked bodies of comrades. It would also mean unwillingly colluding in potentially erotic situations through touching, lying alongside or having to constantly brush past homosexuals.  

79% of personnel who responded to the HPAT Questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ‘I would object to sharing a bedroom with someone of my own sex who was a known homosexual.’ Other military environments were also identified as being especially troublesome including: snow holes in Arctic conditions, shared sleeping bags, tents, observation posts, mess decks with “hot bunking” where bunks are occupied in shifts, and washing rooms on submarines with only one shower for 53 men. One Lieutenant Royal Marine explains: ‘it is completely unreasonable to expect a normal man to sleep cheek by cheek with a homosexual.’ Or, as one Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy explained: ‘Men don’t like taking showers with men who like taking showers with men’. The anxiety over unwittingly being involved in a sexualised encounter, or being objectified by another man are at the heart of these concerns: ‘The insidious problem is that.... [some] one may be enjoying a sexual buzz during what the other believes to be routine activity.’ One Major in the Royal Logistic Corps describes the gaze of a homosexual man as ‘a real form of sexual harassment.’ It interesting to observe that the unwanted gaze of a heterosexual man

---

939 Ibid., 120
940 Ibid., 127
941 Ibid., 120-1
942 Ibid., 125
943 Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy quoted in Ibid., 124
944 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 125-6
945 Ibid., 124
on women is not considered in the same light, but rather as natural and inevitable, as was demonstrated in chapter three.

The crux of the issue, however, seems to be how to accommodate homosexuals. During discussions with Stonewall representatives (who were challenging the ban) during the Select Committee for the Armed Forces Bill 1995-6 Dr Reid states that:

We separate heterosexuals on the grounds of separating them from the object of their sexual preference in circumstances of social intimacy, and therefore men do not, as a general rule, shower with women.... what you are asking for, and this is the crux of the problem, which is not a question of morality, it is a question of operational effectiveness, you asking the opposite, in the case of homosexuals, you are saying that homosexuals should be put together, sleeping, dressing, undressing, in showers, in sleeping bags, whatever, with people who are the object of their sexual preference and inclination. Do you see the problem? 946

The ‘problem’ is that according to the logics which regulate gender in the military homosexuals cannot be accommodated within an environment that sexually segregates personnel. This point was widely acknowledged by Service personnel. One Commander in the Royal Navy asks: ‘What is the homosexual’s view of how women are accommodated in ships? Presumably they see no justification for separate mess decks, heads and bathrooms.’947 A Senior Aircraftman remarks: ‘I consider it very strange when we are not allowed someone of the opposite sex into out accommodation after midnight….. would this mean that 2 people (known homosexuals) would be allowed in the same room after midnight?’ Given that the military is segregated along lines of sexual difference, ostensibly to control the (presumed hetero) sexuality of military personnel, allowing ‘known’ homosexuals to serve alongside comrades of the same gender does threaten the ability of the military to visibly control sexuality, and therefore to produce itself as masculine and heterosexual. However, rather than accepting these

946 House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 102 my emphasis
947 Ministry of Defence ‘Report of the Homosexuality’ 125
comments as evidence of another ‘management problem’ that justified the rationale for the ban, I also want to suggest that privacy and decency arguments actually expose the limits of the gender order and that this is partly why homosexuality was considered so threatening. Both of the above comments expose a military gender order that cannot be seen to accommodate homosexuals because of the logic of sexually segregated forces, but at the same time must produce them in order to sustain that logic of the order, as the constitutive ‘outside’ of heterosexuality.

The limits of the gendered conceptualisation of subjectivity are further exposed when one considers the ‘logical’ alternatives for accommodating homosexual personnel. It could be argued that homosexuals should have their own accommodation so that heterosexuals do not have to shower in front of homosexuals. However this would then mean that homosexuals were living with the objects of their sexual attraction which is prohibited in Service regulations. Lesbians and gay men could be accommodated together (in pairs) to ensure they were not attracted to each other but this would mean that men and women were accommodated together, something also prohibited by Service regulations. Thus ‘the homosexual’ cannot be located within the ‘matrix of intelligibility’ that regulates gendered subjectivity in the military, and consequently exposes a system of ‘compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality [that] requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term... [which] is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire.’

Butler, Gender Trouble, 31

Within the organisational principles of the military there is simply no way to resolve the problem of accommodation short of isolating individual homosexual personnel. Thus ‘the homosexual’ confounds the logic of the system of segregation and the wider conceptualisation of gendered subjectivity by his or her illegibility within the
gender order. It is for this reason that admitting homosexuals was a very real threat to the gender order of the military because it could not be resolved with the military’s understanding of (hetero)sexuality, and had the potential to occasion a real crisis of intelligibility. The next chapter investigates how the military responded to this threat, considering how LGBT personnel have been integrated and exploring whether this has significantly disrupted the gender order of the military.

**Chapter Conclusions**

This chapter has examined how homosexuality was managed in the British armed forces prior to 2000. I have explored how the ban on homosexuality functioned within the wider gender order identified in chapter three. I have argued that the ban on homosexuality was an integral mechanism for securing the gender order of the military because it allowed the military and servicemen in particular, to appear heterosexual and therefore unquestionably masculine. By simultaneously producing, and being seen to respond to, the ‘homosexual threat’ the ban became a self-perpetuating mechanism which secured the gender order, and as I demonstrated in chapter three, masculine privilege. However, through the analysis of the reproduction of servicemen’s subjectivity it was also demonstrated that gendered subjectivity is inherently unstable, fragile and in need of constant reinforcement. I have argued that servicemen were particularly opposed to lifting the ban because of anxieties over how they would be perceived if homosexuals were no longer excluded, and the resulting ‘loss of innocence’ between men.
The chapter also conducted a detailed examination of ‘the homosexual’ as the abject subject of the military gender order. The analysis showed how there were distinctions made between ‘covert’ and ‘known’ homosexuals and that these distinctions were important for understanding how the ban functioned. Whilst the covert homosexuals who serve without detection are evidence of the failure of the ban, this assumes the main function of the ban was to remove homosexuals. Further analysis showed that military personnel did not think covert homosexuals were a problem. Rather it was the known homosexuals who posed a threat, and in this light the ban was a regulatory mechanism which prohibited open displays of homosexuality by constraining informal behaviours in military environments. This then ensures that homosocial bonding between men can take place without any acknowledged sexual connotations.

Concerns about where homosexuals will sleep and shower bring into sharp relief the effort needed to sustain the gender order of the military. I have argued that the inability to provide ‘suitable’ accommodation for homosexuals reveals the limits of the gender order. According to the organisational and regulatory logics of the military institution men and women are accommodated separately in order to manage, and be seen to manage, their (presumed) heterosexuality. What it means to be a man, or a woman, under this schema, means to be heterosexual, thus highlighting how sexuality and gender are mutually constitutive in this context. A gay man thus confounds the logic of sexually segregated forces because he can neither be accommodated with women, or men. As the logical failure or impossibility, the problem of accommodating homosexuals reveals the limits of the gender order, and the contingency and vulnerability of that order.
Ultimately this chapter argues that the ban on homosexuality was an integral mechanism which secured this order, because in appearing to exclude homosexuals it secured the logics governing the segregation of the sexes and reproduced servicemen as heterosexual. In this light the ban was both product, and productive, of the military gender order. Consequently, unlike the integration of women, who as I demonstrated in chapter three, can be reproduced in ways which do not challenge or undermine the gender order, the integration of homosexuals poses a far greater problem for the gender order. The inclusion of openly gay personnel threatens to undermine the foundational logics which govern the reproduction of gendered subjects, and as such they have the potential to disrupt that gender order. In terms of the primary research question, this is a significant finding. How resilient is the military gender order? How have LGBT personnel been integrated and has this challenged the gender order? In the next chapter I aim to respond to these questions as I investigate how the military responded when it was forced to repeal the ban and to end discrimination against gay men and lesbians.
Chapter Five
Re-securing the Gender Order

Introduction

The previous two chapters have analysed the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces, an institution which has been traditionally ordered through the segregation of women and the exclusion of homosexuals. I have exposed how the construction of ‘female difference’ and the ‘homosexual threat’ relied upon and reified particular logics and truths about gender and sexuality. I have argued that the hypervisibility of women and ‘known’ homosexuals reproduced these gendered others as ‘problems to be solved’ and that crucially it was only through their hypervisibility that servicemen remained invisible, as the ‘unseen’ subjects against which all others are measured. This protects masculine privilege and ensures that the behaviour of servicemen remains beyond scrutiny and critique. Throughout the two previous chapters I have demonstrated how gendered subjects are reproduced in ways which perpetuate a gender order that is patriarchal and heteronormative. The resilience of this gender order has been shown to rely upon policies, practices, and gendered subjects themselves reproducing gender according to dominant logics or framings.

In the previous chapter I focussed on the reproduction of the homosexual under the ban. I demonstrated that the construction of the homosexual was also central for reproducing what it means to be a ‘man’ in the military, and that this explains why servicemen were particularly opposed to lifting the ban. I also argued that the ban was an integral part of the gender order, operating as the ‘constitutive outside’ of the institution which was
organised around the assumption of heterosexuality. Through a discussion of how homosexuals might be accommodated in the military I demonstrated that the integration of homosexuals could not be ‘resolved’ within the military’s understanding of gender. This brought into sharp relief the limits of a gender order which spatially regulated subjects according to their gender identity and their assumed heterosexuality. I ultimately concluded that, unlike the inclusion of women, the integration of homosexuals was a real threat to the gender order because it highlighted and challenged the logic of the order and exposed the limits and contingent nature of that order. In terms of the overarching research question this thesis seeks to address, this is an important moment in the thesis. How resilient was the gender order? Would the inclusion of LGBT personnel effectively undermine it? What would an analysis of their integration reveal about the dynamics of the gender order?

The present chapter investigates how the military responded when the ban was lifted in 2000. The legality of the ban against homosexuality was successfully challenged at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 1999 and on 12 January 2000 the Secretary for Defence, Geoff Hoon, announced the Government’s new policy on homosexuals in the armed forces. The new policy ended the compulsory discharge of known homosexuals and introduced a Code of Social Conduct that applied equally to all sexualities and genders. Homosexuals, now known as LGBT personnel, became one of the many ‘diversity strands’ recognised within the equality and diversity policies of the armed forces. It is clear that the prophesied demise of unit cohesion and morale has not taken place and an MoD report stated that ‘the overwhelming majority’ of

---


950 See previous chapter for evidence of serious anxiety about lifting the ban, and for a review in 2002 see Belkin and Evans, ‘The Effects of Including’. See also: MoD News ‘First LGBT conference held in
personnel attending the Tri-Service Equal Opportunities Training Centre saw sexuality as a ‘non-issue’ just two years after the ban was lifted. The 2002 MoD Tri-Service review of the policy changes towards sexuality concluded that the policy change has been a success and had not had any negative impact on operational effectiveness. The military now promotes itself as an equal opportunities employer that welcomes homosexuals into the ranks, even advertising in the pink press.

Given the palpable resistance to lifting the ban, and the analysis in chapter four which showed the ban to be a central mechanism for regulating gendered life in the military, several questions arise: How was the ban challenged? How did the military respond to this policy change? How have LGBT personnel been integrated? And, crucially, has the gender order, and masculine privilege, been undermined by the policy change? The present chapter explores answers to these questions by analysing the reproduction of subjectivity in the equal opportunities military. The chapter proceeds in three sections. The first section provides an account of the challenge and overturning of the ban which focuses on the arguments made by Stonewall and Rank Outsiders, analysing the terms of their engagement with the MoD position. The aim of this analysis is to identify what their understandings of gender, sexuality and homosexual subjectivity were, and to understand how their claims engaged with the underlying logics of the gender order. I demonstrate that those challenging the ban relied upon a strikingly similar conceptualisation of sexuality and subjectivity as the MoD - that individuals are autonomous, with discrete and permanent identities. This also meant that ‘the ban’ was conceived in a restrictive sense, that once ‘lifted’ would enable access to military space.

MOD Main Building’ 2 July 2010

951 Ministry of Defence ‘Tri-Service Review’
952 Ibid.,
953 Hellen, N. ‘Navy signals for help to recruit gay sailors’ Times Online, February 20, 2005
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article516647.ece (site accessed 16 February 2010)
I show that the arguments based on ‘equality’ and ‘privacy’ were fraught with difficulty for the challengers, because they failed to engage with the heteronormative assumptions underpinning the military’s organisation of gendered bodies. Ultimately I argue that the limited engagement with the regulatory nature of the ban, and the gendered subjects produced as an effect of it, severely impeded the ability of those challenging the ban to effectively confront discrimination and unsettle gendered hierarchy within the armed forces.

The second section begins the substantive analysis of the regulation of sexuality since the ban was lifted, with a specific focus on the Royal Navy. Drawing on MoD and Royal Navy policy documents and publications, as well as interviews with serving and former Royal Navy personnel, I interrogate how sexuality and gender are regulated and managed. I carry out an analysis of how LGBT bodies are ‘mapped’ in equal opportunities and diversity policies and explore what is at stake in this. I then examine the deployment of sexuality as a ‘private matter’, considering how the distinction between public and private space is mobilised and how different gendered subjects are reproduced in relation to this distinction. I argue that although lifting the ban did pose a real threat to the gender order of the military, this has been neutralised by a series of responses that attempt to ‘contain’ and accommodate LGBT personnel without confronting the heteronormative and patriarchal norms that continue to structure engagements with issues of inclusion, equality and diversity. I suggest that privatising (homo)sexuality was an essential move for shoring up, and re-securing the gender order. However I also demonstrate that the attempt to designate sexuality as private is particularly unstable and paradoxical because implicit in the notion of ‘coming out’ is a disclosure of the hidden, private self to the public realm.
The final section considers the participation of military personnel at national Pride parades, as a site where the carefully policed boundaries between private and public break down and are vulnerable to critique. I consider the subversive potential of such events and how the public parade of an ostensibly private sexuality does undermine the logics upon which the gender order of the military relies to perpetuate itself. However, this does not necessarily mean that the event is subversive of the gender order. Through a careful examination of some of the responses of serving Royal Navy personnel about the marches, I show that for some they were perceived as inappropriate, deviant and served to reify their existing understanding that (homo)sexuality should remain private and consequently invisible.

Challenging the Ban

Rank Outsiders\textsuperscript{954} was co-founded in 1991 by Robert Ely and Elaine Chambers, both of whom had been discharged from the Armed Forces on account of their sexuality. The aim of Rank Outsiders was to provide support, advice and information to anyone similarly affected by the military’s policy of homosexual exclusion, and to campaign ‘on an apolitical basis, to overturn the blanket Ban on homosexuals serving in the British Armed Services, to seek justice for all those who have, and would be affected by the Ban, and to challenge discrimination and ignorance regarding sexuality.’\textsuperscript{955} Angela Mason, then the Chief Executive of Stonewall, described the ban on lesbians and gays serving in the British armed forces as ‘inhumane, unnecessary and wrong.’\textsuperscript{956} Stonewall

\textsuperscript{954} Rank Outsiders became the Armed Forces Lesbian and Gay Association (AFLAGA) when the ban was lifted; but AFLAGA no longer exists.
\textsuperscript{955} Armed Forces Lesbian and Gay Association (AFLAGA) - A History http://www.rank-outsiders.org.uk/info/history2.shtml (date accessed 30 April 2010)
\textsuperscript{956} BBC News ‘UK Army gay ban could be Lifted’ 27 February 1999 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/287212.stm (date accessed 1 May 2010)
is a prominent organisation in the UK which carries out research, educational campaigns and professional lobbying on different issues which affect gay men, lesbians and bisexuals.\textsuperscript{957} Stonewall supported Rank Outsiders in their campaign to overturn the ban, and they gave evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill in 1992, the first time lesbians and gay men ever attempted to challenge the ban.\textsuperscript{958} This evidence resulted in the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the armed forces, but the discharges continued.\textsuperscript{959} During the 1990s Stonewall and Rank Outsiders continued to challenge the ban, supporting individual men and women who had been discharged, and those who decided to take legal action against the MoD.

In chapter four I introduced Jonathan, who had been discharged from the Royal Navy after confiding in a friend that he was gay and HIV positive. He was advised by the medical officer discharging him not to fight such a big organisation but to save his energy for his life outside the Service. However, he did eventually decide that he did want to challenge the Royal Navy. I asked him why he felt he wanted to do this. He explained:

\begin{quote}
I didn’t want to go back into the forces because of what they’d done to me, I wasn’t bothered about compensation, I wasn’t out to get loads of money... I just didn’t want anyone to go through what I was going through and have to hide away from the fact that they are gay. They don’t have to, they can be who they are, who they want to be.\textsuperscript{960}
\end{quote}

Jonathan became one of many discharged service-members to join the fight against the MoD and ultimately claim compensation. The decisive case, which would lead to the

\textsuperscript{957} Stonewall, UK ‘About Us’
http://www.stonewall.org.uk/about_us/2532.asp (accessed 8 September 2011)

\textsuperscript{958} Stonewall ‘Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the Armed Forces’
http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_work/2708.asp (date accessed 16 September 2010)

\textsuperscript{959} Prior to this armed forces personnel were criminally prosecuted if discovered- even though in civil society homosexuality had been decriminalised (to the extent that private acts between two men over the age of 21 were no longer illegal) in UK Houses of Parliament, 1967 Sexual Offences Act

\textsuperscript{960} Interview with Jonathan
repeal of the ban, was brought by Jeanette Smith (formally a RAF nurse), Duncan Lustig Prean (a former lieutenant-commander in the Royal Navy), John Beckett (formerly a naval rating) and Graeme Grady (formally an RAF administrator). Following rejection of their case by the Appeal Court in London they took their case to the ECHR. They won a decisive victory in 1999 when the court ruled that the ban violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to respect for private and family life. The Court ruled that the investigation process was of an ‘exceptionally intrusive character’ and argued that homophobic feeling evidenced in the HPAT report was not justification enough for upholding the ban:

To the extent that they represent a predisposed bias on the part of a heterosexual majority against a homosexual minority, these negative attitudes cannot, of themselves, be considered by the Court to amount to sufficient justification for the interferences with the applicants’ rights outlined above, any more than similar negative attitudes towards those of a different race, origin or colour.

As a result of this ruling on 27 September 1999, all pending disciplinary cases of suspected homosexuality in the armed forces were suspended, and on 12 January 2000 the ban was officially lifted. Gay rights campaigners have ‘hailed the move as an important and long overdue step on the road to equality’ and Mr Lustig-Prean said the policy change was ‘a new beginning.’ Not everyone was pleased with the victory however, and General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, the former allied forces commander, told the BBC that the decision was ‘ridiculous,’ and that it was ‘striking at

---

961 Lustig-Prean and Beckett v UK (application numbers 31417/96 and 32377/96), ECHR judgement of 27 September 1999.

Smith and Grady v UK (application numbers 33985/96 and 33986/96) ECHR judgement of 27 September 1999.

962 Lustig-Prean and Beckett v UK

963 Ibid.,

964 BBC News ‘Services gay ban lifted’ Wednesday, 12 January, 2000
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/599810.stm (date accessed 20 April 2010)

965 Ibid.,
the root of discipline and morale to have a policy whereby you knowingly enlist people who are homosexual.'

Iain Duncan Smith, the Conservative Shadow defence spokesman expressed regret at the ‘creeping tide of political correctness’ that threatened the primacy of military effectiveness. Despite this continued opposition, the feared mass resignations, loss of team cohesion, and violence against known lesbian and gay servicemen and women did not happen. Stonewall view the success of one of their first and longest campaigns as ‘a happy ending’ and an important victory in the fight to secure equal rights for lesbians and gay men. The MoD apologised for the persecution of gay and lesbian personnel and it was reported in 2006 that the MoD had already paid £850,000 in compensation to affected gay men and lesbians who were sacked as a result of their sexuality. The successful challenge of the ban is an important legal and moral victory, but it was not one without significant resistance from the MoD and considerable difficulties in terms of articulating their case.

Championing the Right to Equal Treatment

During the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1995-1996 Stonewall and representatives of Rank Outsiders were invited to give evidence to the committee. The analysis that follows focuses on a particular exchange between Dr Reid and Angela Mason, then Chief Executive of Stonewall, at this Select Committee to illustrate the

---

966 BBC News ‘UK Delight and despair at gay ban ruling’ 27 September, 1999
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/458842.stm (date accessed 16 September 2010)
968 See Ministry of Defence ‘Tri-Service Review’ and Belkin and Evans, ‘The Effects of Including’
969 Stonewall, UK ‘Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the Armed Forces’
970 The Independent ‘MoD says sorry over ‘persecution’ of gay service personnel’ Thursday, 28 June 2007
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/mod-says-sorry-over-persecution-of-gay-service-personnel-455047.html (site accessed 13/03/09)
971 The Independent ‘MoD pays £850, 000 to servicemen and women sacked for being gay’ 26 July 2006
difficulties the challengers faced when articulating their case in terms of equality and privacy. Mason introduces the case of Stonewall as follows:

Our starting-point, in looking at this issue..... is that discrimination on any grounds not related to individual merit and capacity is morally wrong and economically wasteful. Our case is that there is not anything intrinsic to the nature or behaviour of lesbians and gay men as a class which warrants discrimination against us in the Armed Forces... The only issue, it seems to us is, whether fear of lesbians and gay men or downright prejudice should lead you to depart from the principle of equal treatment.

Stonewall’s case was that homosexuality and heterosexuality should be viewed as comparable activities and that the military should introduce a ‘uniform’ policy that restricted both sexualities equally. Dr Reid asks Mason: ‘You would contend very strongly that what you are seeking is equal treatment with heterosexuals?’ She replies that she is. The notion of ‘equality’ between heterosexuals and homosexuals relies upon a conceptualisation of the sexualised subject as autonomous, and essentially different. Making a claim to equality also assumes that there is a neutral, apolitical social space to which all can gain access if barriers, such as the ban, are removed. However, as the discussion in chapter two demonstrated, this separation between ‘the social’ and ‘the individual’, or group of individuals, is untenable. In this context what it means to be lesbian, gay or bisexual is intimately connected to a social reality that structures and reproduces different subjects in relation to each other. In this light the claim to equality is a discursive mechanism which necessarily conceals the reproduction of subjectivity through making that claim, illustrating what Butler means when she writes that ‘there need not be a “doer behind the deed,” ... the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed.’ When Mason claims equality for homosexuals with heterosexuals, she erases the way that the two terms are mutually constituted in a hierarchical ways.

---

973 Ibid., 104
974 Butler, Gender Trouble, 195
The problem with this approach is that it is destined to fail because it does not challenge the gender order. This is illustrated well in Dr. Reid’s response to Mason. He says that it could be argued that in practical terms what she is asking for is not equal treatment but ‘special treatment’:

Everyone accepts, I think, that there is a particular intimate social relationship forced upon members of the Armed Forces, showering together, dressing together, sleeping together? That, in itself, may be prejudicial to good order and morale with heterosexuals, but heterosexuals are separated, in other words, a person is separated from the object of his sexual inclination or preference by virtue of the separation of the sexes. What you are asking for is not that, how could you; what you have to ask for is the opposite, you have to ask, and are asking, that an individual be put together in these intimate social circumstances precisely with the object of his, or her, sexual preferences or inclinations.\(^{975}\)

Within the heteronormative framing of the gender order Mason cannot respond effectively to this question.

There is an alternative way to ‘read’ this exchange however, a way that brings into sharp relief the operation of gender norms and their limits. As Dr Reid himself acknowledges, lesbians and gay men cannot ask to be treated equally in terms of accommodation because opposite sexes, whom are sexually attracted to each other are accommodated separately - and lesbians and gay men simply do not ‘fit’ into this arrangement. A lesbian does not belong with the women (because she may be sexually attracted to them) or the men (because she is a woman). Consequently a lesbian is not intelligible as a ‘woman’ because she is reproduced as someone outside of the gender order. However this refusal of recognition is paradoxical for in actively denying recognition to an individual or social group, one has already recognised them, rendered their existence intelligible in one way or another. Consequently 'to defend the limits of what is recognizable against that which challenges it is to understand that the norms that

\(^{975}\) House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 102, my emphasis
govern recognizability have already been challenged. According to this reading Dr Reid’s question quoted above presents an opportunity to call into question the ‘founding’ logics of this regulation of gender, logics which posit the gay man or lesbian as ‘outside’ or ‘unintelligible’ but Mason, being constrained by the discourse of equal rights cannot make this move.

The ensuing discussion between Dr Reid and those wishing to challenge the ban further illustrates the dangers of letting these unspoken assumptions go unchallenged. Mason responds to Dr Reid’s question quoted above, by saying that it is not the conduct of individual lesbians and gay men that is the problem but rather the fear of the heterosexuals who are showering or sharing accommodation with them. This move brings the discussion back to the pragmatic and avoids seeking refuge in supposedly neutral abstraction and generalised principles. Yet Dr Reid immediately responds by asking if Mason accepts the right of a woman in the Armed Forces to refuse to shower with a man. Edmund Hall, who is presenting evidence with Mason, responds that as a ‘gentleman’, yes, he does. Dr Reid then follows up with:

You do; so do I. This is based on the perception of the woman, of her sense of decency, of her belief in privacy, perhaps on the fact that she thinks she would be regarded with sexual curiosity by the man, or perhaps that there would be a threat…. Do you accept the right of a woman to refuse to shower with a lesbian?

The reference to a woman’s sense of decency and privacy and her desire to avoid sexual curiosity from potentially threatening men is raised as if this is normal and natural, yet it hard to imagine similar arguments being made about protecting male decency and men from the threatening sexual advances of women. By acknowledging the threat to women

---

976 Butler, Undoing, 113
977 Author of Hall, We Can’t Even
from men Reid is alluding to the basic inequality between the sexes. However, despite this tacit admission, Reid continues to articulate his questions in terms of ‘equal’ rights between individuals and groups of individuals. His next question refers to the ‘balance of rights’:

This is the balance of rights, I am talking about, is it the rights of heterosexuals against homosexuals, and I want to try to find out how far your extension of rights, individual rights, goes towards the rights of heterosexuals?\textsuperscript{979}

It is at this point that Mason overtly refuses to engage in terms of abstract principles of equality and instead locates her response firmly within the context of a distinctly unequal relationship between the sexes. Mason’s response is that the fears women feel about sharing space with men are based on real and justified concerns based on their experience with men and she mentions sexual harassment. Crucially she argues that these fears are not reasonable with regards to lesbians and gay men. When pushed by Reid about the difference between a straight woman’s fears with regards to a man, and her fears about a lesbian, Mason maintains that the fears about lesbians are not justified whereas the threat from men in justifiable on the basis of lived experience. This move allowed Mason to successfully negotiate a series of questions that are framed in such a way that they are literally impossible for her to answer without challenging the assumptions they are based upon. By acknowledging that subjectivity is negotiated and produced in different situations, Mason recognises that there are different subjects within heterosexuality. Her refusal to engage within the terms Reid advances marks a crucial resistance to the logic of this ‘balance of rights’ which assumes different subjects are equal and autonomous, and that heterosexual and homosexual are apolitical and permanent categories. Although not an explicit questioning of Reid’s ‘common sense’ reasoning, highlighting the profound inequality between different subjects was

\textsuperscript{979} Ibid., 103
arguably more unsettling than the hazardous language of equality which in this case only served to mask the heteronormative context through which gendered subjects are produced.

*The Right to Private Life*

The notion of right to ‘privacy’ for gay servicemembers was also not without complications. The right to privacy was utilised to argue that sexuality was a private matter and consequently should have no impact on employment in the armed forces. During the Select Committee examination Mason states that:

> Our case, and it is the crux of the court case that will go to the European Court of Human Justice [*sic*], is that we are arguing for a right of privacy, we are not arguing for a license, we are arguing for respect for people’s private sexual lives. ⁹⁸⁰

The ‘license’ to which Mason refers is ambiguous however she seems to be suggesting that most gay men and lesbians in the forces will not necessarily be open about their sexuality. ⁹⁸¹ During a discussion with Mr Turner there is concern about how ‘out’ homosexuals in the forces would be if they were allowed to serve. Mr Turner opens the discussion with the question:

> If the ban was lifted, would you expect many serving homosexuals to declare their orientation, and do you believe many homosexuals would be attracted to a career in the Armed Services? ⁹⁸²

---

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid., 99
⁹⁸¹ See page 99 of House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ for the context of the quote that suggests this interpretation
⁹⁸² Ibid., 103
Mason responded by saying that research suggests that most lesbians and gay men would not view serving in the armed forces as attractive employment and goes on to say:

I do not believe, that many lesbians and gay men would then choose to “come out” and exhibit and display their sexual orientation in a very public fashion. I think people are, as I said at the beginning, our case is a case for the right to a private life. Now the question that really is before us is to what extent that right impinges or is likely to enter into the public domain…. Lesbians and gay men are extraordinarily sensitive to the views of others, we live in that climate, it is not the case, I think, that lesbians and gay men are going to “come out” and start really upsetting the whole culture and morale of the Armed Forces.  

The HPAT report expressed a preference for an asymmetric code of conduct should the ban be lifted. This would mean that although lesbians and gay men could serve, ‘open homosexuality’ would be prohibited. Mason argued that such a code would not satisfy serving gay men and lesbians or the European Court of Human Rights. Mason outlines their proposal of a uniform code of sexual conduct that would make clear what forms of sexual behaviour are acceptable. Stonewall also proposed that a code of guidance be issued which would:

Deal particularly with the issues of privacy that we are arguing are at the heart of this whole debate….a code of guidance which respected the rights of individuals, whether homosexual or heterosexual, and was based on individual respect and respect for each other’s privacy.

The idea that sexuality is a private matter for the individual reproduces subjects that are autonomous, and erases the regulatory norms that govern that production. As demonstrated in the previous chapter that traced the production of the ‘homosexual’ under the ban, sexuality and gender are connected in complex ways that enable the regulation of gendered life along patriarchal and heterosexist axes. It is illustrative to

---

983 Ibid., 103
985 House of Commons, ‘Special Report (1995-96)’ 104
986 Ibid., my emphasis
think about how the military *knows* what a woman *is*, by virtue of her assumed heterosexuality. This production of (heterosexual) ‘woman’ then informs their policies about appropriate accommodation (separate from men) and combat exclusion (women potentially upset male bonding by introducing sexuality). In this sense sexuality is never ‘private’ because it is always already part of the regulatory norms that produce gendered difference.

Perhaps more importantly, Mason, in appealing to privacy, is reifying the ‘public’ space as neutral, apolitical, and desexualised. This serves to conceal the institutional heterosexism that regulates military space and that produced ‘the homosexual’ as a threatening outsider in the first place. A right to privacy also suggests that ‘public’ self expression of alternative sexuality might contradict this, which is why Mason says they are not arguing for a ‘license,’ that gay people will not necessarily ‘come out’. Yet this assertion itself breaks down, alluding as it does to the heteronormative public that will not tolerate open expressions of homosexuality while simultaneously claiming sexual lives are private. In this light Mason’s position is paradoxical; being both an acknowledgement that military ‘public’ space is heteronormative, and an erasure of the sexualised nature of public space through the claim to a right of private sexual lives. Arguably this was a pragmatic response intended to placate those with concerns about lifting the ban, and it was the basis upon which the ban was eventually repealed. However, claiming a right to privacy had serious consequences for policy and practice once the ban was lifted as will be shown in the next section of this chapter.

What is clear from this discussion is that in order to challenge the ban Stonewall and Rank Outsiders were constrained by the need to appeal on the basis of ‘equality’ and

---

Ministry of Defence, *Women in the Armed Forces*
‘privacy’. Claims made on this basis were fraught with difficulty for the challengers, because they failed to engage with the heteronormative assumptions underpinning the military’s organisation of gendered bodies. The limited engagement with the regulatory and productive nature of the ban, and the gendered subjects produced as an effect of it, severely impeded the ability of those challenging the ban to effectively confront discrimination within the armed forces. More importantly the challenge to the ban actually reified dominant framings of sex/gender, with the potential effect of further entrenching gender hierarchy.

**Integrating LGBT Personnel**

Sexual orientation is now considered as one of the ‘diversity strands’ within MoD Equality and Diversity policy and the armed forces now consider themselves an ‘equal opportunities employer’:

> The Armed Forces are an equal opportunities employer and are committed to ensuring a working environment free from harassment, intimidation and unlawful discrimination, in which each individual is not only valued and respected- but encouraged to reach their full potential. Our equality and diversity policies are not about political correctness. Operational effectiveness depends on cohesion and teamwork, which are enhanced by treating everyone fairly, with dignity and respect.\(^8\)

Sexuality is now considered to be a ‘private matter’ for the individual and a new ‘Code of Social Conduct’ which regulates personal relationships applies to both heterosexuals

---

\(^8\) Ministry of Defence ‘Equality and Diversity in The Armed Forces’
http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/EqualityAndDiversity/EqualityAndDiversityInTheArmedForces.htm (accessed 29/04/10)

Interestingly, in stating explicitly that equal opportunities policies are ‘not about political correctness’, the MoD appears to be aligning itself with the ‘business case’ for equality and diversity policies rather than seeing equality as an end in itself.

See also: Ministry of Defence, ‘Equality & Diversity Schemes’

There are exemptions for the armed forces with regards to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, and Maternity and Parental Rights- see Annex A
and homosexuals.\textsuperscript{989} There is no doubt that the policy change has had a direct impact on lesbian and gay servicemen and women. Lifting the ban has enabled LGBT personnel to carry out their work without fear of persecution, and there are now LGBT ‘activists’ within all branches of the armed forces who work tirelessly to improve the representation and treatment of sexual minorities.\textsuperscript{990} There is a ‘Proud2Serve.net’ website, which is ‘the british [sic] armed forces LGBT e-network’\textsuperscript{991} This website contains information and advice about issues affecting LGBT personnel, as well as providing a discussion forum and network that military personnel can access. Jenny, the lesbian officer I introduced in chapter four, is heavily involved with LGBT activism within the Royal Navy. I asked her if she thought the Royal Navy was a fundamentally different place since she joined in the 1980s. Her response was emphatic:

Oh yes absolutely..... I joined up knowing that I wasn’t going to go to sea. Women couldn’t even wear trousers, women had to leave the Service when they had children and you most certainly couldn’t be gay in the armed forces. Yes, absolutely fundamentally, I’m sat here as an openly gay officer in trousers.\textsuperscript{992}

However, she did not rush to ‘come out’ when the ban was lifted:

The ban was lifted in 2000 and yes whilst it was an absolute relief for me, it probably took me the best part of 4 or 5 years to think about whether to introduce myself as being gay or my partner being female. It did take a long time, because for all that time before that I had lied, I suppose, for want of a better word. Lied to colleagues, close friends and bosses who I respected hugely and so I suddenly had to think about how they would behave towards me once I’d told them.\textsuperscript{993}

\textsuperscript{989} Hoon, G ‘Ministerial Statement’
\textsuperscript{990} I use ‘LGBT activism’ to describe any activity directly concerned with supporting LGBT personnel in the British armed forces, raising awareness of issues facing LGBT personnel in the wider community, and advising LGBT personnel of key policy initiatives and their rights in employment
\textsuperscript{991} ‘Proud2Serve.net: the british armed forces LGBT e-network ’ website
\textsuperscript{992} Interview with Jenny
\textsuperscript{993} Interview with Jenny
For those in the Service who freely admitted they used to be homophobic in their younger days, some said that recent equal opportunities initiatives had changed their perceptions of lesbians and gay men. I asked Ian, a commander who joined in the 1960s, whether the Navy was a fundamentally different place now than when he joined and he responded:

Yeah, oh yeah. I mean, in a way it was almost like you’d hunt them [homosexuals] out in the first... like devils, you know? You’d hunt them out.... and then you would, you know, put a stake through the heart - in other words, dismiss them from the Service. But not today. It has fundamentally changed, and so have I.994

Although the feared homophobic backlash did not occur when the ban was lifted, it is important to acknowledge that the transition was not without problems, even if they were confined to particular units or individuals. Ian explained:

When it happened and gays became legal, and some of them delightedly came out, it was...quite sad, in my view, to see that there was some prejudice existing on the lower deck, most particularly in terms of physical violence. So some that came out, and some that tried to rejoin, were beaten up.995

Despite these initial difficulties Alan Wardle, a spokesman for Stonewall, said the Navy had undergone an ‘amazing transformation’ since 2000.996 The Royal Navy was the first Service in Britain’s armed forces to join Stonewall’s ‘Diversity Champions’ programme, which promotes fair treatment of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees.997 At the time, Stonewall’s Chief Executive, Ben Summerskill, said the Navy had been ‘very courageous to engage with this [homosexuality] so publicly.’998 In 2010 Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel), Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson, said: ‘The misgivings surrounding the lifting of the ban have not materialised. Acceptance has

994 Interview with Ian
995 Interview with Ian
996 Maley ‘Hello sailor’
997 BBC News ‘Royal Navy to promote gay rights’ 21 February 2005
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4282175.stm (site accessed 13 October 2010)
998 Ibid.,
grown to the point that being gay is much less of an issue.’ Jonathan, who had not had any contact with the Royal Navy since his discharge, attended the Tri-Service LGBT conference in 2009. He told me ‘it’s just amazing how far, to see how far they’ve progressed.’ I asked him to explain what he thought was so different:

Just the fact they are not so bigoted anymore. I mean before they just couldn’t wait to get rid of them [homosexuals] really.... Now they are actually helping people who are in the forces. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender they are actually supporting them which is just fantastic. What it should be, how it should be in the first place.

It is clear that the last few decades have witnessed immense changes in the makeup of the armed forces, with the integration of women, and more recently, the inclusion of lesbians and gay men. Yet despite these changes, problems persist with regards to the retention of women, sexual harassment, misunderstandings about LGBT personnel and homophobic incidents. In my discussion with Jenny we had an interesting exchange about ‘military culture’. I asked her whether she would define Navy culture as ‘straight culture’ and she responded by saying ‘Yeah, absolutely’ and ‘I think it’s, I would always describe it as white heterosexual male culture.’ Although Jenny describes the Royal Navy as a fundamentally different place than when she joined, she still identifies it as a predominantly straight, white and male institution. If this is the case, then this raises a lot of interesting questions around how the Royal Navy has responded to changes in personnel in ways which have allowed this culture to remain.

999 MoD News ‘First LGBT conference held in MOD Main Building’ 2 July 2010
1000 Interview with Jonathan
1001 Interview with Jonathan
1002 Basham, An Analysis; Maley, ‘Sexual Harassment Rife’; Dietmann et al. Sexual Harassment; Woodward and Winter, Sexing the Soldier, 56–59. During my interviews with Jenny, George, Roger, Ian, Susan and Julia they each mentioned knowledge or experience of homophobic incidents or sexual harassment.
1003 Interview with Jenny. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider race alongside gender and sexuality, however I acknowledge the intersectionality of various ‘identities’ in reproducing subjectivity and appreciate that gendered identities are racialised as much as racial identities are gendered. For a comprehensive analysis of diversity in the British armed forces that includes race see Basham, An Analysis
Within the armed forces, each Service has their own policies and practices that ensure they meet the requirements set by the MoD. The Royal Navy Equal Opportunities Policy states clearly that:

> Our ethos is inclusive; it welcomes and appreciates differences in gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital status and social and educational background while accepting the limitations imposed through being a deployable fighting force.\(^{1004}\)

When the ban on homosexuality was lifted in 2000, lesbian and gay servicemen and women became formally incorporated within Royal Navy Equality and Diversity strategy. Within this framework minority groups are conceptualised as ‘diversity strands’, and among these strands are women, LGBT, and minority ethnic personnel. This means that LGBT personnel are now protected from discrimination and guaranteed the same rights to fair treatment as their heterosexual colleagues. A significant trope that recurs throughout Royal Navy discourse about equality and diversity is the importance of ‘being able to be oneself.’ Vice Admiral Adrian Johns, Second Sea Lord of the Royal Navy explains: ‘I am committed to ensuring that the Royal Navy has a culture in which all our people are valued for themselves and are thus able to give 100 per cent to their jobs.’\(^{1005}\) At the 2009 Joint Service LGBT Conference the key note speaker talked about how people are more productive when they can be themselves.\(^{1006}\) What this appears to mean in relation to LGBT personnel is that they can ‘come out’ to their colleagues if they want to. In the context of equality and diversity policy this means that

---

\(^{1004}\) Royal Navy, Equal Opportunities Policy

\(^{1005}\) Proud2Serve.net members’ update 12 May 2008

\(^{1006}\) Conference notes for ‘Out and in: Recruiting and Retaining LGBT Personnel in the Armed Services’ 3-4 December 2009
people can ‘be’ what they ‘are’ without fear of intimidation or harassment. Jenny even felt there was an expectation that LGBT personnel should disclaim their ‘difference’:

I probably wouldn’t march into somewhere and say to somebody, ‘hello I’m Jenny and I’m gay.’ Equally so neither would a heterosexual person walk in and say that. But there is that expectation that if people think you are then you should announce it.1007

This discourse of ‘being yourself’ relies both on an essentialist conception of subjectivity, that what you are is intrinsic and unchanging irrespective of context, as well as an understanding of the military or military culture as separate from those subjects.

The MoD website provides information pages on ‘homosexuality’, ‘transsexualism’ and ‘gender’ (which focuses on women).1008 Definitions of different gendered minorities are provided, and they all emphasise how this difference is inherent to those subjects. For example, in terms of homosexuality, the Ministry of Defence offers the following explanation: ‘Everyone has a sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a combination of emotional, romantic, sexual or affectionate attraction to another person.’1009 The understanding of sexual orientation is that we all have one, and that it is innate. It further explains that:

The words ‘heterosexual’ and ‘heterosexuality’ come from the Greek word heteros meaning ‘different’ or ‘opposite’......‘The terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘homosexuality’ come form [sic] the Greek word homos, meaning ‘the same’. Other women and men can experience erotic and romantic feelings for both their own and the opposite sex and such people are bisexual.1010

---

1007 Interview with Jenny, my emphasis
1008 MoD Equality & Diversity Policy
See ‘LGBT definitions’
Also see ‘Gender’
http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/PersonnelPublications/EqualityAndDiversity/Gender/ (site accessed 29 January 2011)
1009 Ministry of Defence ‘LGBT Definitions: Homosexuality’
1010 Ibid.,
The ‘definitions’ reproduce (heterosexual) ‘men’, (heterosexual) ‘women’, ‘gay men’, ‘lesbians’, ‘bi-sexual men,’ ‘bi-sexual women’, ‘transgender men,’ ‘transgender women,’ ‘transsexual men’ and ‘transsexual women’ as if they are separate and autonomous identities. They simultaneously produce, and rely on, an analytical distinction between sexuality and gender (understood as biological sex) to make the definitions appear natural and discrete. The Proud2Serve website explains ‘The Difference between Sexuality and Gender’:

A common confusion exists in many people's minds regarding the relationship between sexuality and gender. For example, many people believe that a gay man is not a 'real man': that he wants to be a woman, and that he looks, acts and talks in a 'feminine' manner. Conversely, many people think that a lesbian is not a 'real woman' - that she is somehow 'manlike' ... The important thing to remember is that a person's sexual orientation is a different matter than his or her gender identity or gender characteristics ... A gay man is not a woman in a man's body, and a lesbian is not a man in a woman's body. You cannot 'tell' if a person is homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual by referring to that person's gender identity, or the way they talk, act or dress.  

The aim of the webpage is to explain that biological sex, gender presentation (masculinity and femininity) and sexuality do not necessarily align in ways we expect. However, in order to do this it offers a range of definitions that are only possible in relation to the governing set of norms that produce ‘normal’ alignment of biological sex, gender and sexuality. These different subjects can only be conceived of in relation to each other and are only possible because of a ‘cultural matrix’ which governs their intelligibility. Rather than question the discursive foundations for this expected alignment, the definitions offered render sexual minorities only as natural ‘deviants’ of the established order. In this way the very defining of gendered difference is an effect

---

1012 Butler, Gender Trouble 24
of the gender order. However, an analysis of the reproduction of subjects reveals that gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive. As Butler writes:

> The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional sexuality. The institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces the univocity of each of the gendered terms that constitute the limit of gendered possibilities within an oppositional, binary system.¹⁰¹³

This cultural matrix, or gender order, remains invisible only through discursive mechanisms which conceal its productive power, and the separation of sexuality and gender is one such mechanism. To further illustrate what is at stake in this separation, the next section offers an analysis of the reproduction of transsexuals in military policy and practice.

**Reproducing Gendered Subjects: Transsexuals**

It is perhaps surprising that transsexuality was permitted in the British armed forces before the ban on homosexuality was lifted. It is not unreasonable to expect transsexuals to pose a number of problems for an institution which is so strictly regulated in terms of gender and sexuality. The MoD revised its regulations and guidelines to clarify its position in 1999 when Sergeant Major Joe Rushton, announced he was to have a sex change operation and would henceforth be known as Joanne. The decision to allow her to stay was down to the Army’s commitment to equal opportunities after The European Court of Justice ruled that it was unlawful to discriminate against transsexuals.¹⁰¹⁴ Stonewall were baffled by the decision in light of the continuing resistance to allowing

¹⁰¹³ Ibid., 30-31
homosexuals to serve in the forces. However, the Ministry of Defence spokesman said that the ban on homosexuality would remain because "there is a clear difference between homosexuality and transsexuality. Transsexuality is a gender issue not one of sexuality." According to the Telegraph, ‘senior officers said that the transsexual guidelines had no bearing on their policy on practising homosexuals. A sex change was seen as a medical matter, they said; homosexuality posed a serious risk to discipline and morale’. However the difficulties with this position were highlighted by Christine Burns, the vice-president of transsexual rights group Press for Change, who asked whether, in light of the ban against homosexuality, Joanne would be able to have a relationship with anyone, being physically a woman but legally a man.

In 2010 the MoD released its ‘Policy for the Recruitment and Management of Transsexual Personnel in the Armed Forces.’ It is a lengthy document detailing what transsexualism is, and how transsexual personnel should be treated in the armed forces, during and after ‘transition’. This includes regulations and procedure concerning appropriate uniform, accommodation and bathroom facilities, fitness standards, the reissuing of medals in the appropriate gender and how to educate and inform the rest of the unit sensitively. It explains what transsexualism is:

The incongruity between identity and body can be so strong that individuals wish to present themselves in the opposite (also referred to as acquired) gender. This is a widely recognised medical condition variously referred to as gender dysphoria, gender identity disorder or transsexualism.

---

1016 Davies and Jones ‘Sex-change soldiers’
1017 BBC News report ‘Army backs’
1019 Ibid., Para 3 my emphasis
The ‘incongruity’ between identity and body only makes sense with reference to the gender order that assumes biological sex determines the correct and appropriate gender and sexual identity. The reference to the ‘opposite’ gender re-inscribes the dimorphism that limits gendered identity expression to a series of heteronormative binary oppositions (male/female, masculine/feminine) against which all other forms of gendered and sexual life are defined. However, the policy document maintains that ‘gender identity and sexual orientation are two distinctly different issues ... It is not appropriate to treat a transsexual person at any time as belonging to a “third gender”.

In order for arrangements to be made the armed forces must be able to categorise the transsexual person as either a man or a woman at a given point in time. The agreement of a ‘transition programme’ enables the services to manage the process and identify precisely when a person will be identified in their acquired gender. In this way the military retains control over the transsexual subject, and can physically, as well as discursively, locate her. It is only once ‘social reassignment’ has begun that she is treated as being in her acquired gender for the purposes of accommodation and toilet facilities. It is stated that it would be unlawful to expect a transsexual person to use separate facilities, such as the disabled toilet, on a permanent basis. In relation to military posts open to the transitioning person it is stated that a male to female transsexual person who is undergoing, or has undergone, transition will be barred from joining or continuing in specialisations of the armed forces that women are excluded from. However, ‘a female to male transsexual person will not be debarred from joining

---

1020 Ibid., Para 5 my emphasis
1021 Ibid., Para 59
1022 The person is dressing and presenting in their acquired gender
1023 Ministry of Defence ‘Policy for the Recruitment’ Para 79
these specialisations, subject to fulfilling the physical entry requirements.\textsuperscript{1025} Thus the only way for a ‘woman’ to join these specialisations is to become a man. Whereas women cannot access these roles, \textit{even if they achieve the required levels of fitness}, simply because they are women. This is a good example of the way the policy regarding transsexuals, works to explicitly to re-affirm the sexual and gendered segregation of the armed forces, rather than challenge it.

The policies about transsexual personnel reveal several things about the regulatory norms that secure the gender order through the reproduction of gendered subjects. Firstly the policy illustrates how the transsexual subject has been relocated from an undesirable and excluded member of the armed forces to someone deserving equal opportunities. Secondly, the production of transsexualism as an issue of gender identity, and not sexual orientation (which is a ‘distinctly different’ issue), further conceals the production of subjectivity and the operation of the gender order. The transsexual subject, who is rejecting the sexual morphology of their body and acquiring the ‘opposite’ gender, actually presents a significant challenge to the coherent ordering of gendered subjects where binary oppositions of biological sex, gender identity, and (hetero)sexuality correlate neatly to produce ‘men’ and ‘women. Thirdly, it highlights how transsexualism is conceptualised as \textit{medical problem}. The transsexual person then becomes ‘the problem’ to be solved, and this problem-solving approach assumes and reproduces the gendered ordering of subjects as biologically driven and therefore natural, permanent and beyond question. Through this medical discourse the transsexual subject is reconstituted as someone needing a ‘cure’ in order to change genders and ultimately reposition themselves within the opposite camp. This move transforms transsexualism from an aberration or deviancy into something which can be diagnosed,

\textsuperscript{1025} Ibid., Para 35
treated, and ultimately dealt with in a way that does not challenge or disrupt the heteronormative status quo. Butler argues that the practice of ‘diagnosis’ of gender identity disorder ‘seeks to uphold the gender norms of the world as it is currently constituted and tends to pathologize any effort to produce gender in ways that fail to conform to existing norms.’\textsuperscript{1026} Crucially for Butler ‘the diagnosis’:

\begin{quote}
Does not ask whether there is a problem with the gender norms that it takes as fixed and intransigent, whether these norms produce distress and discomfort, whether they impede one’s ability to function, whether they generate sources of suffering for some people or for many people.\textsuperscript{1027}
\end{quote}

Hence while this repositioning of the transsexual subject as someone requiring diagnosis and treatment has opened up new possibilities for that individual, those possibilities are only within existing frameworks that regulate gendered reality. Moreover transsexuals can only gain access to legal, medical and social recognition by \textit{subjecting themselves}, and \textit{presenting} themselves, in ways that conform to ideas underpinning the diagnosis.\textsuperscript{1028}

The MoD policy and guidelines for transsexual personnel demonstrate clearly the ways in which the transsexual military subject, previously shunned and exiled, has now been re-appropriated and re-written back into dominant understandings of gender within the military institution. Through the mobilisation of gendered, sexual and medical knowledges the MoD can regain some ‘control’ over the meaning of ‘transsexualism’ and through management policies that ostensibly respond to the problem of transsexualism, the gender order remains invisible. The gender order thus re-secures itself through the reproduction of the transsexual person as a ‘medical’ problem, rather than a ‘problem’ \textit{for} the gender order. In this light transsexuals, far from being

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1026} Butler, \textit{Undoing}, 77
\textsuperscript{1027} Ibid., 95
\textsuperscript{1028} Butler makes a compelling case for this in her chapter ‘Undiagnosing Gender’ in Butler, \textit{Undoing}, pp. 75-101
\end{flushright}
subversive of the gender order, have instead been re-inscribed back into it. This process of re-inscription is an example of how Derrida’s concept of iterability, or citationality works in this context.\textsuperscript{1029} The transsexual cannot have any inherently subversive essence because she has no essence, and her being is subject to the ‘play of signification’ within a network of discursive forces. This move to re-appropriate the potentially disruptive transsexual re-secures the gender order which itself continually adapts and transforms.

\textit{LGBT Activists}

Having looked at how military policy reproduces transsexuals, this section considers how LGBT ‘activists’ in the Royal Navy reproduce, negotiate and engage with particular notions of subjectivity in their actions to promote equality in the Service. LGBT activists within the Royal Navy consider their work to be constrained by an organisation that is suspicious of change. Susan, a senior officer with over 30 years of experience in the Royal Navy, says that there was a ‘real misunderstanding’ that people were worried that ‘gays were all as they were portrayed on telly and a bunch of poofers that were not going to fit in or otherwise into the service ethos.’\textsuperscript{1030} To address these issues an ‘LGBT Forum’ was established to support the LGBT community:

I also think it is important for the community to not feel alone..... I have just returned from Bosnia and I was really the only gay in the Brit contingent on the camp. I know that for a fact but knowing that I have like minded people at the end of an email to just talk about different things, it was nice to know that.\textsuperscript{1031}

\textsuperscript{1029} Derrida, \textit{Limited Inc.}
\textsuperscript{1030} Interview with Susan
\textsuperscript{1031} Interview with Jenny
Although she explained how they needed to ‘sell it [LGBT Forum] as a management tool to get the buy in from the top management in the Royal Navy... it wasn’t there to rock the boat.’\(^{1032}\) The Forum also offers advice and policy updates to all Navy personnel who might need it, for example if they were unsure how to manage an issue with an LGBT recruit. Despite attempts to mollify naval authorities there are still those who perceive the LGBT Forum and those promoting LGBT rights with hostility. Susan, told me that recently she had to correct a ‘fairly senior individual’ because he thought the LGBT Forum were ‘a bunch of militant trade unionists’ who were trying to influence policy.\(^{1033}\) Misunderstandings such as this mean that LGBT activists are particularly sensitive to the way they are being perceived by the wider Navy.

*Navy News* announced the establishment of the forum with the headline ‘New forum seeks total equality.’\(^{1034}\) The forum contains ‘representatives’ from each of the different sexuality categories, including a heterosexual. Jenny explained:

> I wanted to have somebody from every element of LGBT so we have got a lesbian, a gay, a bi-sexual, transgender and I wanted a straight person to sit there as well. So they can rein us in when they think we’re going off too far to one side and *not perhaps being seen*, or really giving us a steer on how we are being seen by the greater Navy, *if we are being seen* by the greater Navy- and trying to get the publicity out there is always difficult.\(^{1035}\)

The idea that the ‘straight’ representative can provide this vision, and ‘rein in’ the other forum members when they are ‘going too far to one side’ also replicates the understanding that there are two distinct ways of ‘seeing’ that are determined on the basis of inherent sexual identity. Similarly the decision to have representatives also

---

1032 Interview with Jenny, my emphasis
1033 Interview with Susan
1035 Interview with Jenny
seems to be based on the idea that different gendered identities will have particular interests or experiences. This replicates understandings of subjectivity that underpin the MoD’s equality and diversity strategy, which I discussed (in relation to women) in chapter three. The LGBT Forum can be understood as a ‘subjectifying’ mechanism itself, reproducing and performing gendered subjectivity in ways which reify gendered difference upon which the gender order is based. This is not to suggest that the LGBT Forum does not have a valuable role with the Navy, but simply to highlight how those practices designed to challenge discrimination are both constrained by the gender order within which they work and understand themselves, and implicated in the ongoing reproduction of that gender order. This has serious implications for any ‘subversive’ potential there might have been for undermining the gender order and masculine privilege in the armed forces through lifting the ban on homosexuality.

**Sexuality: A Private Matter**

Since the ban on homosexuality was lifted in 2000 sexuality has been considered to be a ‘private matter’ for the individual. The MoD Policy on Homosexuality, published in 2001, states:

A number of options were examined with the clear recommendation for a policy underpinned by a code of social conduct based on sexual behaviour which applies equally to heterosexuals and homosexuals without the need to refer to sexual orientation .... The Code of Social Conduct firmly recognises the right to privacy, including sexual orientation..... In setting out this policy, no account or distinction is made on the basis of the individual’s gender or sexual orientation, which is taken to be a private matter for the individual. The Code of Social Conduct is based on an assessment of the potential or actual impact of social conduct on operational effectiveness and, as a start point, operates on the principle that the Services will only interfere in an individual’s private life where the actions or behaviour of an individual have adversely impacted, or are they likely to impact, on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the Service..... To summarise, the policy to bar
homosexuals from the Armed Forces was not legally sustainable and has
now been replaced with a new policy which recognises sexual orientation as
a private matter.1036

The new Code ‘applies to all members of the Armed Forces regardless of their gender,
sexual orientation, rank or status.’1037 I asked Susan about the concerns raised about
privacy and decency and she said (sounding exasperated) ‘Well what are we supposed
to do, separate accommodation for gays you know?’1038 In chapter four I argued that the
military could not accommodate lesbians and gay men without undermining the
rationale for the segregation of men and women, and with it the organising logics of the
gender order. However, the military has found a way to accommodate LGBT personnel
alongside their heterosexual colleagues, and it is through privatising sexuality. This
move enables the military to be produced as a public, de-sexualised space. This attempts
to resolve the concerns around privacy and decency by excluding it. However, despite
this there are still people who remain uncomfortable with sharing with lesbians and gay
men, as Simon, a senior naval officer with almost 30 years experience, explained:

Suddenly bans were lifted and it will be accepted but in our guidelines we
can’t, we’ve got to be discrete about it, it can’t be open. So yeah they were
allowed in. ‘They’ that sounds horrible doesn’t it. Homosexuals were
allowed in.1039

Simon’s interpretation of the policy change seems to suggest that the move to
privatise sexuality has informally prohibited ‘open expression’ of homosexuality.

He continues:

1036 Ministry of Defence ‘MoD policy on Homosexuality’ (2001)
January 2011)
http://www.proud2serve.net/military/codeofconduct.htm (accessed 10 October 2010)
1038 Interview with Susan
1039 Interview with Simon
I think we tolerate it. In our world it is a little bit different because again aboard a ship you live in close proximity and a room this size you could have 6 people living and the mess decks where the lads live anything up to 30 on a mess deck. And I know people don’t feel comfortable. If you knew someone was homosexual people have got a bit of a problem with that. I mean if you don’t know then it doesn’t matter but it’s very hard to keep that when you are away for 6 month trips living in that close proximity, it would be very hard to keep that under your belt, if you like. I do know that a lot of people do have slight issues with it.1040

This tacit prohibition of so-called ‘open’ expression is also in the Code of Social Conduct and guidelines. The Code is intended to outline how personal relationships are to be managed in order to maintain operational effectiveness and team cohesion. Examples of behaviour that might undermine trust and cohesion include:

unwelcome sexual attention in the form of physical or verbal conduct; over-familiarity with the spouses or partners of other Service personnel; displays of affection which might cause offence to others; behaviour which damages or hazards the marriage or personal relationships of Service personnel or civilian colleagues within the wider defence community; and taking sexual advantage of subordinates.1041

The Code also explains that in assessing cases of social misconduct, Commanding Officers (COs) are to use the ‘Service Test’ to evaluate whether intervention is necessary. The Service Test requires CO’s to ask: ‘Have the actions or behaviour of an individual adversely impacted or are they likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the Service?’1042 Guidance notes that accompany the Code of Social Conduct, includes examples of new situations that could arise, such as a gay or lesbian serviceperson bringing their partner to official functions and wanting to dance with them. Under the Code this could be considered as a display of affection that might cause offence to others, a case of social misconduct. The guidance notes explain:

1040 Interview with Simon
1042 Ibid.,
In general… it would be appropriate to extend to homosexual partners the same arrangements as apply to unmarried heterosexual partners in respect of the particular function. Any guest should be sensitive to the innately conservative attitudes of some Mess members and their partners and be cautious not to cause unnecessary offence … Where partners wish to dance together … this might pass unremarked and cause no difficulty, on other occasions it could cause offence … those responsible for the function should intervene as discreetly as possible with a view to minimising any disturbance. It will always be appropriate for couples attending such functions to bear in mind that any overt displays of a partner’s affection can cause offence. It would be sensible (and courteous) to consider beforehand whether any intended action or behaviour on their part might cause offence, and if in any doubt to avoid it.”

Heggie argues that the attitude of military is that lesbian and gay personnel should:

police their behaviour so as not to cause the ‘innately conservative’ heterosexual soldiers ‘offence’ or ‘disturbance’. Indeed, although the language is dressed up to suggest courtesy and consideration for the ‘team’, the implication is that homosexual behaviour is likely to cause offence and so should be best left at home - that homosexuals should be glad that they have won the right to ‘privacy’ and should therefore keep their sex life out of the public gaze.

In her research Heggie draws our attention to the way that the heterosexuality is normalised and naturalised in the public sphere. As Chris Brickell explains:

To insist on the privacy of sexuality appears more acceptable in a liberal democracy than to demand the prohibition of homosexuality itself, although such an insistence relies on the erasure of the ways in which heterosexuality is also a form of sexuality, and a public one at that.

In this way although the Code of Social Conduct does not need to refer to sexual orientation, because the mobilisation of the public/private distinction already reproduces gendered subjects differently in relation to those spaces. It also allows the military to

---


1044 Heggie, Uniform Identity?, 204

1045 Brickell, C. Heroes and Invaders: gay and lesbian pride parades and the public/private distinction in New Zealand media accounts’ Gender, Place & Culture, 7 (2), (2000) 174
continue to assume everyone is heterosexual unless told otherwise, which continually reaffirms heterosexuality as the norm.

LGBT personnel are aware of the need to respect the heteronormative public space. Jenny explained to me how important it was that LGBT personnel felt able to ‘come out’ if they wanted to because it ‘allows them to be out, open and 100% themselves.’ However, she also explained the importance of mediating behaviour that might cause problems. She explained why the LGBT Forum was set up:

there was just a feeling from those in the community who were openly out that we should be there for those who want some advice on behaviour either towards them or how they should behave towards others.

I asked Jenny what kind of problems particular behaviour might cause. She offered an anecdote in response to my question:

I had a young guy who is a Junior Rate onboard one of the carriers so, Junior Rate, big carrier, big community, big Naval community not big gay community. He is very openly out and very effeminate and in his body language to people he tends to be very tactile. When he was talking to me he said that he had been bullied because when he was talking to this chief, this chief took real offence that he was touching his arm and so I was able to say that’s totally inappropriate ... You as a Junior Rate have to remember that that chief is very senior to you and you going up and then being very effeminate and then touching his arm is going to offend him. Ok his use of the word Poof, that’s not correct, however it’s a two-way thing. Sometimes people just have to learn their own personal skills and not expect everyone to think their campness is funny or appropriate and so it’s being there, you know to advise them. You do sometimes have to temper your behaviour like we all do. ... It doesn’t matter, it doesn’t alter the whole scheme of things. So we all do it, we all alter our behaviour slightly and so it’s getting sometimes to get the Junior Ratings to understand that they have to do that.

These informal norms of military institutions seem to discourage those LGBT personnel who are not ‘openly gay’ in their behaviour, to ‘come out’ to their colleagues. Jenny
explained that for those who joined before the ban was lifted ‘it’s still a very, very considered decision on whether to come out.’\(^{1049}\) In 2002 it was reported by Commanding Officers representing the three branches of the armed forces that there had been a muted reaction to the policy change. The Army representative reported that ‘few homosexuals have decided to declare their sexual orientation’ because ‘they would prefer to keep their orientation private’ while the Royal Air Force reported that there had been no ‘pink crusades’ or ‘rushes of ‘coming out.’’\(^{1050}\) These informal social norms are not without cost however. In 2005 Lieutenant-Commander Craig Jones, the Navy’s most senior openly gay officer, said that the navy still loses highly-trained staff prematurely: ‘If you are still in the closet, it feels claustrophobic. I know many people who have left simply because they want to live a life which is more open.’\(^{1051}\)

Whilst the privatisation of sexuality appears to have ensured homosexuality remains marginalised in Britain’s armed forces, conceptually there is a problem with allowing people to ‘come out’ whilst also claiming sexuality is private. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that ‘the closet’ has been the defining structure of gay oppression in the twentieth century. She argues that:

> The energy and demarcation that has swirled around issues of homosexuality since the end of the nineteenth century, in Europe and the United States, has been impelled by the distinctively indicative relation of homosexuality to wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure, and of the private and public, that were and are critically problematical for the gender, sexual, and economic structures of the heterosexist culture at large, mappings whose enabling but dangerous incoherence has become oppressively, durably condensed in the certain figures of homosexuality. “The closet” and “coming out,” now verging on all-purpose phrases for the potent crossing and recrossing of almost any politically charged lines of

\(^{1049}\) Interview with Jenny

\(^{1050}\) Ministry of Defence, ‘Tri-Service Review’ 2

\(^{1051}\) Hellen, N. For The Sunday Times ‘Navy signals for help to recruit gay sailors’, 20 February 2005 http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article516647.ece (date accessed 17 February 2010)
Coming out ‘regularly interfaces the image of the closet’ and re-invokes notions of public and private, reifying the heteronormativity that enables the very notion of ‘coming out’ to the heterosexual majority. In terms of subjectivity it is important to emphasise that this is not to suggest that pre-discursive, essentialised subjects are defined in relation to the crossing but rather, the subjects that ‘cross’ and re-cross these lines of representation are simultaneously made and re-made in and through the crossing. The MoD assertion that sexuality is (and ought to be) private becomes somewhat paradoxical in the light of the historical and political context of coming out of the closet. ‘Coming out’ signifies a move from private to public, a disclosure of a hidden self. As such the attempt to produce sexuality as private is very unstable, and often results in paradoxical outcomes which, in my reading, reveal the aporia which is at the heart of the policy.

The Military at Pride

Throughout the analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British military I have highlighted the inevitable paradoxes, aporias and unintended outcomes that accompany military attempts to regulate gendered subjects since the ban was lifted. Butler explains that while it is essential to isolate and identify how a particular nexus of power and knowledge gives rise to the norms that govern intelligibility it is also ‘necessary to track the way in which that field meets its breaking point, the moments of its discontinuities, and the sites

---


1053 Sedgewick, *Epistemology*, 71
where it fails to constitute the intelligibility it promises.'

For Butler these moments of challenge, dispute and failure of governing norms call the ‘foundational’ categories of gender into question and in so doing reveal the malleability and transformative potential inherent in all performances of gender. It is at these points of rupture or paradox that subversion becomes possible. To explore the subversive potential of these moments of break down the final section of this chapter offers an analysis of the Pride parades where armed forces personnel have been permitted to march in uniform, in light of the MoD and military policy that sexuality is a ‘private matter.’

All three branches of the British Armed forces were permitted to march in uniform at London Pride for the first time in 2008. Prior to this the three branches had different policies regarding Pride parades and gay festivals, with significant concern voiced about whether a visible presence was desirable. Whilst the Royal Navy allowed its personnel to wear full uniform at EuroPride in 2006, any members of the RAF and the Army who wore their uniforms would face disciplinary action. The reasons given by the RAF and Army for their refusal to allow uniform explicitly state that sexual orientation is a private matter, and that marching in uniform would jeopardise this policy. Concern was also voiced about preserving the dignity of the military in a carnival atmosphere. In 2006 the Sunday Telegraph reported that an Army document had stated that the decision not to permit uniforms was ‘[in] line with the Army's 'Sexual Orientation Key Messages' which state that we regard sexual orientation as a private life matter.’ In 2007 General Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, was reported to be ‘apoplectic’ about having any

---

1054 Butler, Undoing 216, my emphasis
1055 Barr D. and Bannerman L. ‘Soldiers can wear their uniforms with pride at gay parade, says MoD’ The Times June 14 2008
1056 They were allowed to attend in civilian clothing. MoD Defence News ‘Pride at the parade’ 7 July 2006 http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/PeopleInDefence/PrideAtTheParade.htm (accessed 17 February 2010)
member of the Army marching in uniform at Pride.\textsuperscript{1058} The Times reported that General Dannatt was ‘worried that soldiers in uniform will be marching alongside a bunch of blokes dressed as Marilyn Monroe, and this might be seen to be disrespectful to the image of Her Majesty’s Armed Forces.’\textsuperscript{1059} The position of the RAF was similar to the Army position. In 2007 Group Captain Richard Castle, on behalf of the RAF Equality and Diversity unit, posted the decision of the RAF authorities on the Proud2Serve website:

The RAF is fully committed to, and indeed actively supports, the promotion of equality and diversity awareness, and understands the importance placed by some gay and lesbian personnel on an overt demonstration of pride in their sexual orientation and in the commitment of their employer towards the diversity agenda. Nevertheless, it has now been decided that the wearing of uniform by RAF personnel at the PRIDE London 07 Parade would be inappropriate and, therefore, is not authorised. This decision has been taken against the regulatory backdrop and, in the RAF view, Queens Regulations clearly militate against the wearing of uniform at the style of event which PRIDE London 07 represents. I am sure that all parties would agree that it is right for the RAF to control where and when uniform may be worn. Additionally, the RAF policy that sexual orientation is a private matter has served us well in recent times and we do not wish to jeopardise this position.\textsuperscript{1060}

It is clear that both the RAF and the Army felt that marching in uniform at Pride jeopardised the policy that sexuality was a private matter. Yet despite these reservations in 2008 the decision was taken to allow RAF and Army personnel to march in uniform, alongside their Royal Navy colleagues. It was reported that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) played a role in persuading the MoD and Service chiefs to allow servicemen and women to march in uniform. The EHRC chair, Trevor Philips, described the decision as a ‘landmark’ and a ‘historic moment, and a true sign of how much has changed.’\textsuperscript{1061}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{1058} Evans, M ‘Army chief ‘apoplectic’ over uniforms at Gay Pride march’ The Times June 16 2007 http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article1940392.ece (accessed 13 January 2011)  \\
\end{flushleft}
Derek Munn, Stonewall’s director of public affairs, welcomed the move, saying: ‘This is the latest in a series of strides made by the Forces to embrace lesbian and gay people in recent years.’

Jenny outlined why marching at Pride in 2008 was so meaningful for her:

> It was the first time that all three Services had marched in uniform so it really was an absolute moment in history, and that was my very first gay pride... I had not really felt comfortable doing it before but I wanted to be part of history.

Since 2008, all three branches of the armed services have participated in the annual Pride parade in London.

In light of the MoD policy that sexuality is a ‘private matter’ the marches become a crucial site for exploring the apparent break down or paradox produced when LGBT military personnel are prominently visible at such a ‘public’ event. The participation of servicemen and women, in full military uniform, at Pride invites critical reflection on two important questions: How can we make sense of a ‘public’ parade of what is, according to MoD policy, a ‘private’ sexuality? Does such a visible display of an ostensibly private sexuality undermine and challenge a gender order that must continually draw public and private boundaries to maintain its coherence? I explore these questions with a specific focus on the Royal Navy.

**Gay Pride in the Service**

The Royal Navy was the first of the three branches of the British armed forces to allow their personnel to wear full uniform at Pride events. Approximately 40 Royal Navy personnel

---

1062 Barr and Bannerman. ‘Soldiers can wear’
1063 Interview with Jenny
1064 See ‘Proud2Serve: Serving Britain’s armed forces’ website http://www.proud2serve.net/ (accessed 13 October 2010)
marched through London on 1 July 2006 as part of the EuroPride Parade.\textsuperscript{1065} The Vice-Chair of the MoD LGBT Forum commented that ‘allowing people to march in uniform was a significant commitment for the Navy.’\textsuperscript{1066} The Guardian newspaper published an article that proclaimed: ‘Decades of discrimination swept aside as uniformed personnel join march.’\textsuperscript{1067} The decision to allow gay and lesbian personnel to march in uniform marks a crucial departure from a more limited conception of ‘tolerance’ for the private lives of LGBT personnel and a move towards a public demonstration of a gay military identity. When I asked Jenny what she thought were the major successes of the Navy in terms of LGBT personnel she identified participating in Pride marches as particularly meaningful:

Major successes have been that we can march at Gay Pride, I think that is a visible success, a visible success to those outside of the Navy as well as those inside the Navy and the fact that the Navy allows us to have funding to get there....

It is clear that the ‘visibility’ of LGBT personnel at Pride is important for Jenny, and she identifies both those inside and outside the Navy as the audiences, or witnesses, of this visible success. As a declaration of difference, and pride in that difference, gay pride marches traditionally seek to affirm gay identity through increasing their visibility.\textsuperscript{1069} Arguably it is the ‘public’ nature of the marches that generates much interest and support.

To preserve military dignity and respect, the MoD issued orders in 2008 which stated that: ‘During the march, proper military discipline is to be maintained. Arms are to be swung above waist height throughout, eyes front, and with no acknowledgement to the public.’\textsuperscript{1070}

Uniformed personnel were not permitted to join the carnival after the parade and parade

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{1065} BBC News ‘Colourful Parade marks EuroPride’ 1 July 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/5131122.stm (site accessed 13 January 2011)
\bibitem{1066} MoD Defence News ‘Pride at the parade’
\bibitem{1067} Maley, ‘Hello sailor’
\bibitem{1068} Interview with Jenny
\bibitem{1069} Heckert, J. ‘Sexuality/identity/politics’ in Purkis, J. and Bowen, J. (eds)\textit{Changing Anarchism: Anarchist theory and practice in a global age} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 107
\bibitem{1070} Barr and Bannerman ‘Soldiers can wear’
\end{thebibliography}
paraphernalia such as whistles, banners or adornment was prohibited. The Royal Navy is very careful to ensure its personnel are properly attired and behave in a military fashion whilst marching in uniform. Strict protocol is observed and after marching at the front of the London Pride parade, they continue on to the Cenotaph to pay their respects. However, despite the best efforts of the Navy there appeared to be some initial confusion about what was appropriate attire for the march. Jenny recalled her experiences of inspecting the Junior Rates at London Pride 2008:

We went around and it was all the guys that had the diamond earnings in, the glitter makeup, and we had to remind them that they were in the armed forces and they were there to represent the Royal Navy. You wouldn’t wear that when you’re onboard ship so you don’t wear it today and so they all had to take it off… Yeah it’s interesting because they thought ‘gay pride, I can be gay’. Yes you can be gay but you are still a sailor and that’s your first, primarily you are a sailor today and you’re wearing the uniform and that’s what you do. You can wear the glitter tonight when you take the uniform off.

This quote introduces some of the tensions I will be exploring in this section. As Jenny points out, the Junior Rates thought ‘gay Pride, I can be gay’ and took this to mean wearing glitter and earrings to express that identity. Yet the notion of ‘being a sailor first,’ and representing the Royal Navy through wearing the uniform, prohibits that expression. Significantly, this understanding sets up ‘being gay’ and ‘being a sailor’ as mutually exclusive categories of subjectivity. Jenny told the Junior Rates that they could wear glitter when they took the uniform off, presumably because then they would be in the ‘private’ sphere.

---

1071 Ibid.,
1072 Interview with Jenny
1073 Interview with Jenny
Susan described it as ‘absolutely fabulous’ that they had sailors marching at Pride. She did admit having to explain to a ‘fairly senior individual’ who did not approve why he should change his opinion when she said:

No mate, understand the pride bit, these are people that are really proud of the Navy and proud that they are serving in the Navy so surely that’s a good thing... something to celebrate and be pleased about, and to think gosh these people are going out showing how great the Navy is.\textsuperscript{1074}

Several of the servicemen I interviewed were also uncomfortable about LGBT personnel marching at Pride. The fact that the personnel at Pride marched wearing ‘the uniform’ was central to their reservations, for reasons I explore below. Ian was particularly candid about his feelings:

I do actually think there is, um, something not quite right with having people in their military fighting cloth marching down the street holding hands... being a man, I would say that I intuitively don’t like that. I don’t mind, you know, gays marching... Although I’m perfectly happy with gays and lesbians, actually, seeing them marching hand in hand, er, with their medals on and so on, doesn’t seem to gel... it doesn’t seem to gel in my mind.\textsuperscript{1075}

I asked him why he thought that was, and he replied ‘Why doesn’t it gel? I expect a soldier to behave like a soldier, whether he be male or female.’\textsuperscript{1076} The implication is that ‘a soldier’ does not openly express their (homo)sexuality in public, and that homosexual expression does not gel with military subjectivity. Ian also explicitly references ‘being a man’ as a cause for his intuitive dislike of soldiers marching holding hands. This suggests that Ian attributes his male identity as something that is essentially, heterosexual in nature, and the way he ‘sees’ is derived from this, it is natural. He continued:

\textsuperscript{1074} Interview with Margaret
\textsuperscript{1075} Interview with Ian, my emphasis. It is interesting that Ian assumes those marching would be holding hands, for as I have documented above great care was taken to ensure the military marched in a military fashion, without holding hands.
\textsuperscript{1076} Interview with Ian
There’s still an element of, and the two don’t, just don’t go together, and in a way I think we’d say the same about, um, gays and lesbians behaving as gays and lesbians in uniform, in public, as opposed to behaving as a military person in public.\textsuperscript{1077}

It is clear from this exchange that Ian has a particular difficulty with the marches because they are in public. He later says that if a lesbian or gay couple were showing affection in ‘civvies’ he would be ambivalent ‘but to be wearing uniform, I don’t like’.\textsuperscript{1078} For Ian, marching at Pride, in uniform, is problematic because it renders the lesbian and gay military subject hypervisible, something which the policy that sexuality is private attempts to prevent. He continued:

If you’re in the military, you have a military bearing and you should display a military bearing...to, um, enhance the image of your military, your community. And I don’t think I’m ready to accept that behaving in a sexual manner in uniform in public is actually, um, representing the military in the sense that it was meant to be represented!\textsuperscript{1079}

When Ian describes marching at Pride as ‘behaving in a sexual manner’ he is inferring that public space is asexual and that sexuality should be confined to the private sphere. I asked Ian whether the prohibition on ‘sexual behaviour’ in public applied to heterosexuals as well, and he admitted that if he ‘saw a sailor and what used to be called a wren... If I saw them embrace then I wouldn’t find that so offensive.’\textsuperscript{1080} James, a Royal Marine, also highlighted the greater acceptance of wearing the uniform publically in a clearly heterosexual setting such as a wedding:

I’m not particularly happy in myself about the uniform [being worn at Pride], because you get people dressed up in all sorts of rigs ... you know, in what’s our best uniform, you know, with medals... I think these sorts of uniforms, you know, should be for funeral parades ... But ... I suppose you could argue [that] you wear them at weddings...\textsuperscript{1081}

\textsuperscript{1077} Interview with Ian, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{1078} Interview with Ian
\textsuperscript{1079} Interview with Ian
\textsuperscript{1080} Interview with Ian
\textsuperscript{1081} Interview with James
Ian explained that public displays of ‘sexual’ nature between gay and lesbian personnel such as holding hands, touching and kissing caused him some discomfort. He then went on to say: ‘But if it’s in a controlled manner, then I’m less, I have a lot less difficulty with it.’\textsuperscript{1082} The issue of control over representation and public expression of lesbian and gay identity brings to the fore questions about who polices what is acceptable behaviour. Ian explained the importance of behaving in a way that is appropriate:

I think the only thing that would bother me would be if they behaved in a sexual manner... during that parade, which I wouldn’t think it appropriate for military people... I think they should behave according to the environment in which they are committed to.\textsuperscript{1083}

This conceptualisation of appropriate behaviour for the ‘environment’ LGBT personnel are in, echoes Ian’s earlier comment that ‘diversity’s fine, so long as the behaviour fits the culture that they [LGBT personnel] are in.’\textsuperscript{1084} The separation of the military environment and culture from the personnel which interact within it, reproduces the understanding that equal opportunities policy promotes, that diversity is about lifting barriers and enabling access to an apolitical workplace.

Ian finally concludes that ‘it’s doing it in public’ that he doesn’t agree with, however he admits that ‘it is kind of difficult, isn’t it? Because \textit{where do you draw the line in the end}?\textsuperscript{1085} In acknowledging the difficulty Ian is alluding to the paradoxical nature of his opinions that differ towards homosexuals and heterosexuals, and the aporia in the heart of the policy that sexuality is private. When he raises ‘line drawing’ as a question that apparently has no answer he is acknowledging not only that lines \textit{are} drawn, but that these boundaries are contingent, in that it is not clear where one draws the line ‘in the end’. In the end Ian’s position is tautological, he cannot offer any grounds for what ‘a military person in

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1082} Interview with Ian, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{1083} Interview with Ian
\textsuperscript{1084} Interview with Ian
\textsuperscript{1085} Interview with Ian, my emphasis
\end{flushleft}
public’ is, except ‘having a military bearing’ - and this reveals a lot about the ontological status of all gendered identities, revealing that ‘there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.’

George, a senior Royal Marine with over 30 years in the Service, expressed some confusion about the motivations of LGBT personnel who chose to participate in Pride:

I don’t have a problem with it, if that’s what they want to do then great, but all they’ll do is draw attention to themselves.... that, in a way generates, you know, people getting up tight with them, whereas if they do normal things.... I don’t march in uniform in London and say “hey I’m not gay, I’m straight”, so why would you want to do it if you’re gay? ..... Why do they need to do that, to make a point that they’re gay and in uniform?

George feels that lifting the ban was making ‘a mountain out of a molehill’ from the Royal Marine Corps perspective. He explains: ‘I remember thinking to myself, as it was being sort of brought into the open and legalised, I thought we really don’t need to be doing this....’ For George, there was not an issue if homosexual behaviour remained covert and private, and in his career he had never known anyone discharged for their sexuality. As he explains: ‘I think most people, you know provided they’re not confronted with it, so to speak, and people do their job, it’s not really that big a deal.’ He described most lesbian and gay personnel as being ‘pretty discrete’, saying that he thought ‘the majority of the [gay] people don’t want to fly the flag at the top of the pole and say “I’m gay.”’ He continued:

the people who come out openly are probably, I don’t know, attention seekers or they’re, they’re after making a point so there’s really some ulterior motive.... it’s liable to cause them more problems than it’s going to resolve for them... I can’t see any reason why they would be jumping off the,
you know, the top of the building, waving a flag to say, “I’m different to everybody else, look at me.”

He recounted a recent incident of homophobic bullying that had taken place where an openly gay chef had been getting verbal harassment from other Marines. George comments that he was led to believe the homophobic comments were made in a ‘jokey manner’ and the incident was resolved at a low level with apologies made to the chef. George attributes this incident to the fact that the chef had ‘made it quite clear that he, clear that he was openly gay and they guys were taking the mickey out of him because he was saying “I’m different.”’

In George’s account of gay and lesbian military subjectivity, he reproduces notions of public and private, and their corresponding association with visibility and invisibility to make his points. Central to this is the idea that LGBT personnel are producing and affirming their ‘difference’ by coming out or performing their gay or lesbian gender in an ‘open’ way. The implications of this understanding are clear when George implicitly shifts the responsibility for homophobic bullying onto the chef who was experiencing it, and not the perpetrators. George’s understanding of LGBT difference negates the constitutive relationship homosexuality has with its ‘Other’, heterosexuality, and relies upon the assumption that it is LGBT personnel who bring their sexuality into the desexualised, public realm. This is clear in the way that George renders LGBT subjects hypervisible when he talks of flying the flag and declaring their difference, while leaving heterosexual personnel conspicuously invisible. Paradoxically it is the invisibility of heterosexuals, in the public realm which is normally associated with visibility, which ensures military institutions and military subjectivity continue to be reproduced as heterosexual.

---

1092 Interview with George
1093 Interview with George
I asked Jonathan, the former medic who discharged on account of his sexuality, what he thought the aim of LGBT activism in the armed forces was trying to achieve, and what he thought about seeing the Royal Navy march at Pride:

What do you want? Do you want to be able to go on a Stonewall march and have a pink Royal Navy bus going down through London or something like that? *If it opens people’s minds, even by force,* just to get them to realise that there are gay people and everybody’s got the right to be accepted, then yes.  

For Jonathan, the sight of the military marching at Pride had the potential to ‘force’ people’s minds open and make them realise gay people had the right to be accepted. Yet it is clear from the analysis offered above that seeing the military march at Pride festivals has provoked a diverse range of responses among servicemen and women, the media and the MoD. Jenny summarises this when, reflecting on her experience of marching at Pride, she says:

Yeah the reaction of the crowd when you march at Pride is absolutely phenomenal, it really is....... And the press interest is fantastic and again it is trying to get our own media people to match into this. They just do not see it as a positive story. Their constant attitude is “it’s a private matter”. *They don’t see it.*

Jenny feels that the Royal Navy suffers from ‘institutional blindness’ when it comes to viewing publicity about LGBT personnel in a positive way. She also explained that this blindness extends to media coverage of LGBT personnel, recruitment campaigns and advertising which is sensitive to the LGBT community. In 2009 Jenny did an interview for a major British broadsheet and it resulted in a front page article about gay and lesbian service personnel. However, she told me that ‘not once did anyone come back to

---

1094 Interview with Jonathan, my emphasis
1095 Interview with Jenny, my emphasis
me and say good article or well done or anything. Not one person.... I knew it had impact on the [LGBT] community.' Jenny also told me of the problems in getting Navy recruitment and marketing to advertise in magazines for lesbian and gay people. They do have some articles in prominent gay and lesbian magazines featuring Navy personnel but, as Jenny explains, it was ‘very difficult to get permission for those individuals to speak.’ It is clear that there is a degree of internal contestation and negotiation over how visible LGBT personnel should be. One reason for this might be to avoid over exposure for particular groups, and as Susan explained the Navy do not participate in every LGBT Pride event as it would be ‘slight overkill’ when they are not doing it in other areas.

Jenny refers to the ‘unease’ felt by ‘white heterosexual males’ about people being gay in the military might explain the reluctance to fully support or encourage publicity about LGBT personnel in the Navy. While this may be the case, thinking about the issue of ‘seeing’ raises important issues about visibility and intelligibility that go beyond simply attributing latent homophobia as a reason for reluctance to support Pride. In order to consider how homophobic and heteronormative norms are sustained, reified and reproduced it is important to ask how such public displays of military homosexuality are rendered intelligible and what ‘ways of seeing,’ or ‘not seeing’ govern their interpretation. Butler makes a key claim about gender identities that fail to conform to norms of cultural intelligibility when she says they:

Provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder.

---

1096 Interview with Jenny
1097 Interview with Jenny. For recent examples see Peter Lloyd ‘Proud to Serve’ in the Gay Times, February 2010, ‘Sea Change’ in g3 February 2010 at www.g3mag.co.uk, Paul Tierney ‘In the Army Now’ in attitude, January 2010
1098 Interview with Susan
1099 Interview with Jenny
1100 Butler, Gender Trouble, 24
For Ian, the public expression of lesbian and gay military identity did not ‘gel’ and he felt he could not reconcile the two identities. He attributed his discomfort and unease with LGBT personnel marching in uniform at Pride to this inability to reconcile his idea of ‘military bearing’ and homosexuality.¹¹⁰¹ In the case of LGBT personnel marching at Pride, as a military identity that fails to conform to heteronormative expressions of military subjectivity, such a visual representation of a gay and lesbian military identity provides a critical opportunity to question the gender order of the military that designates (homo)sexuality private and reproduces military subjects in relation to a masculine, heterosexual norm. In this light the ‘failure’ of LGBT personnel at Pride to appear ‘natural’, ‘appropriate’ and ‘normal’ in their military identity in the eyes of Ian and George, provides a critical opportunity for recognising and questioning the ontological impossibility of that gendered military identity they consider to be natural. The performance of homosexual military identity can be understood to ‘parody’ the heteronormative military, exposing the constitutive failure of all gendered performances, revealing them to be contingent, unstable and ‘fundamentally uninhabitable.’¹¹⁰² Yet for Ian and George the decision to allow servicemen and women to march, in uniform, at Pride does not cause them to question their assumptions about appropriate military behaviour or the heteronormativity which structures their understanding. Rather, the marches serve to reaffirm and reify their attitudes towards what is appropriate for military personnel, further entrenching the heteronormative ideal of military subjectivity. Nancy Duncan acknowledges this difficulty when she argues that ‘lesbian and gay practices which potentially denaturalize the sexuality of public spaces could be more effective if they were widely publicized.’¹¹⁰³ She cites marches, Gay Pride parades, public protests and overt homosexual performances such as kissing in public as possible ‘deconstructive spatial tactics’

¹¹⁰¹ Interview with Ian, see footnote 27
¹¹⁰² Butler, Gender Trouble, 200
that unsettle the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy by ‘destabilizing and eventually
overturning such repressively striated geographies of gender and sexuality’.

The notion that increased visibility in the public realm is important to challenge discrimination is not only found in academic debate. In 2009 a report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, titled Beyond Tolerance: Making Sexual Orientation a Public Matter, opens with: ‘The work we are publishing today calls for a new and radical approach. Traditionally, sexual orientation has been seen as a private matter, not the business of wider society.’ It goes on to say:

There is a vital difference between privacy and invisibility. People have not been asked about sexual orientation until recently in official surveys and for public purposes, for example workplace and service monitoring. As a result LGB lifestyles have remained largely invisible. This lack of visibility and awareness has meant that significant disadvantage and discrimination has gone unnoticed and remained unchallenged.

The ‘radical approach’ they advocate is collecting information about sexual orientation so as to better tailor services to meet LGB people’s needs, and to drive issues around sexual orientation up the public agenda. Similarly, the MoD explains that ‘heteroseixm’... serves to silence and erase the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.’ In all of these understandings ‘visibility’ is equated with the public realm, understanding the private/public dichotomy as regulating what we can and cannot see, and it is suggested that by making non-normative behaviour or identity more visible and public it can offer a challenge to discrimination based on the naturalization of dominant norms which disadvantage gay men and lesbians. However, my analysis of subjectivity in the British armed forces has demonstrated that the relative visibility and invisibility

1104 Ibid., 139
1106 Ibid.,
1107 Ministry of Defence, ‘LGBT definitions’
of different gendered subjects is more complex than these understandings suggest. Firstly these commonsense assumptions reproduce problematic associations between public (visible) and private (invisible). My analysis of the reproduction of servicemen however, has shown that it is their invisibility which secures their privilege, whilst women and LGBT personnel are rendered hypervisible. Moreover the heteronormativity of the ‘public’ military space is similarly invisible, and there is no guarantee that highly visible displays of LGBT subjectivity will bring this heteronormativity into view. Indeed as I have shown they can further entrench and conceal that heteronormativity. Duncan’s responds to this problem by saying that ‘if they [lesbian and gay public practices] were made more explicit and readable then contests around sexuality would become more visible to the straight population.’\textsuperscript{1108} However readability, or intelligibility, is crucial here, yet it is unclear how we can ever control or influence how behaviour is ‘read’ or what that behaviour means, for as Derrida writes ‘no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation.’\textsuperscript{1109} Therefore ‘reading’ these public expressions of lesbian and gay subjectivity will always be contextual and not definitive: ‘Writing is read; it is not the site, “in the last instance,” of a hermeneutic deciphering, the decoding of meaning or truth’.\textsuperscript{1110} Consequently what is invisible or visible is highly contingent, complex and unstable as the analysis of covert and overt homosexuals under the ban demonstrated in chapter four. Finally, if the reproduction of different gendered subjects is made possible through notions of visibility and invisibility, or distinctions between private and public, it might be more effective to disrupt or deconstruct those binaries, rather than reproducing them.

\textsuperscript{1108} Duncan, ‘Renegotiating’ 138, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{1109} Derrida cited in Culler, \textit{On Deconstruction}, 123
\textsuperscript{1110} Derrida, \textit{Limited Inc.} 21
The mobilisation of a public/private distinction regarding sexuality can be understood as a ‘strategy of containment’ of LGBT personnel, protecting, re-securing and reifying the heteronormative gender order from the threat of LGBT inclusion. However the military cannot control how events such as Pride are interpreted and there are unintended outcomes of policies that try to regulate sexuality. Allowing servicemen and women to march at Pride, in uniform, does undermine the policy that sexuality is ‘private matter’ and this is something which the Army and the RAF readily acknowledged. It is paradoxical to have a public display of private sexuality; it disrupts the boundaries between public and private upon which the gender order of the military is based. However, there is nothing inherently subversive about such events because as this analysis has shown, they are always made legible in such a way that notions of public or private, normal or abnormal are made and re-made. In this section I have identified two responses to the military marching at Pride. The dominant frame of the Pride marches in the media and among LGBT activists within the armed forces is one of progressive ‘equal opportunities’ for minority groups rather than a transgressive challenge to the gender norms of the military. I have argued that this particular reading legitimises claims of equality at the expense of concealing more insidious, and unseen, hierarchies that remain in the production of difference in the first place. For those opposed to LGBT personnel marching at Pride in uniform, the dominant frame was one of inappropriateness, abnormality and deviance. What both of these framings have in common is a reproduction of public and private boundaries made in order to either support, or reject LGBT marching at Pride. The ‘alternative’ framing I have presented in this chapter attempts to draw attention to the way that these distinctions break down and fail, rendering the meaning of LGBT personnel marching at Pride undecidable in a move which re-politicises the reading, or framing, of such events. Whilst this alternative promises the possibility of critique and subversion, this promise can never be realised,
for all attempts to secure meaning inevitably enact their own closures, and suffer their own paradoxes.

**Chapter Conclusions**

This chapter has surveyed the policies and practices that have been put in place by the MoD and the Royal Navy since the ban on homosexuality was lifted in 2000. I have shown how policies and practices concerning gender and sexuality reproduce, and are legitimised by, particular understandings of gendered subjectivity that ultimately continue to privilege male and heterosexual personnel. I have argued that the ‘threat’ of homosexual inclusion to the gender order of the military has been neutralised in two ways, through the re-production and re-inscription of LGBT subjectivity along heteronormative and patriarchal axes, and through designating sexuality as a ‘private matter’ for the individual.

I began by exploring how the ban on homosexuality was challenged by Stonewall and Rank Outsiders. I have shown that the arguments based on ‘equality’ and ‘privacy’ were fraught with difficulty for the challengers, because they failed to engage with the heteronormative assumptions underpinning the military’s reproduction of gendered subjects. I showed that the arguments around privacy and equality simultaneously relied upon and reproduced gendered subjectivity as fixed, stable and essentialised in ways which concealed the operation of the gender order. I have shown that the adoption of such a limited understanding of subjectivity and the ban limited the extent to which gender hierarchy could be challenged, and concealed the operation of gender norms that produce and order gendered subjects in ways which protect masculine privilege.
This chapter has demonstrated that the ‘integration’ of lesbian and gay personnel into the contemporary forces must be understood and located within wider regulation of gendered subjects, and it is only by considering the production of gay personnel alongside the production of ‘women’, ‘transsexual men and women’, and crucially (heterosexual) ‘men’ that the ordering and regulation of gendered bodies becomes visible and subject to scrutiny. I have argued that LGBT personnel have been reproduced and reinscribed within the gender order in ways which do not undermine its foundations and logics. To illustrate this I showed the way that transsexual military subjects, previously shunned and exiled, have now been re-appropriated and re-written back into dominant understandings of gender within the military institution. Through the mobilisation of gendered, sexual and medical knowledges the MoD attempts to regain some ‘control’ over the meaning of ‘transsexualism’, re-securing the gender order by reproducing the transsexual person as a ‘medical’ problem, rather than a ‘problem’ for the gender order. In this light transsexuals, far from being subversive of the gender order, have instead been re-inscribed back into it. This analysis provides insights into how gender is so resilient, showing gender orders to be mobile and transformable.

The designation of sexuality as a ‘private matter’ attempts to de-sexualise the public military space, in a move that conceals the heteronormativity of public space and operates to informally prohibit open expression of gay and lesbian identity. Crucially, the privatising of (homo)sexuality allows the military to assume everyone is heterosexual unless told otherwise. In this way the mobilisation of public/private distinction can be understood as a ‘strategy of containment’ that responds to the threat posed to the gender order by LGBT inclusion. However, this attempt to contain
homosexuality is particularly unstable because of the aporia at the heart of a policy which enables LGBT personnel to ‘come out’ (move from private to public) whilst simultaneously claiming sexuality is private. Consequently this attempt to contain homosexuality is particularly prone to failure, contradiction and paradox.

Through the discussion of military participation in national Pride parades, the chapter then explored the subversive potential in events which can be understood as crises of intelligibility. For some the spectacle of uniformed military personnel at Pride was a victory for equal opportunities and an important milestone for their acceptance into the armed forces. However for others, such as Ian the marches served to reaffirm and reify his attitudes towards what is ‘normal’ and appropriate for military personnel. For Ian far from denaturalizing the heteronormative ideal of military subjectivity, the marches have served to further entrench that ideal against which all other genders deviate. Crucially in his account public and private boundaries that are trespassed by the march are re-drawn, and gendered subjects reproduced, in his reading of the event. Neither of these readings, framings or responses uses the opportunity to critically interrogate the foundations of the gender order, but instead draw on existing frameworks and discourses to re-inscribe subjectivity and meaning onto the event. What this means is that events which do occasion a ‘crisis of intelligibility’ are not inherently subversive. Attempts can be made to harness that subversive potential, to provide alternative readings which undermine the gender order but they too are also provisional, prone to paradox and ultimately break down. In the conclusion of the thesis which follows, I consider the implications of this for feminist praxis in IR more generally, and reflect on what the investigation of the gender order in the British armed forces has shown about how gendered subjects are reproduced, the resilience of sex/gender, and the potential for feminist intervention in this reproduction.
Conclusions

Introduction

I began this research with an ill-defined sense of unease about some of the modes of praxis adopted by feminists working in IR. Considering myself a feminist, and having no doubts that gender is one of the most pervasive and complex forms of hierarchy, power and violence, I found my ambivalence about feminist IR deeply troubling. In many ways this thesis represents my attempt to understand that unease, articulate it and engage with it productively. To do this it would be necessary to assess, and critique feminist IR, a prospect I was also uneasy about. Several leading feminists within IR have noted the lack of critical engagement between feminists. There are perhaps many valid and understandable reasons for this, not least the general hostility feminists perceive comes from others within IR. The collaborative and supportive ethos which underpins much feminist research has enabled a flourishing of feminist work within IR, and a growing body of scholarship which deepens our understanding of the gendered processes of world politics. However, it remains important for feminists to be reflexive and critical about their own knowledge practices, and engaging in more critical dialogue between each other is essential if feminists are to develop analytical strategies which can respond to increasingly complex configurations of gendered power.

In a very general sense the aim of this thesis has been to understand why, and how, gender hierarchy is so resilient in contemporary political life. I chose to engage with this research question by critically analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects because, as I have argued in this thesis, the reproduction of those subjects is essential for the

---

1111 Zalweski notes the tendency to construct coherence in academic practice. See Zalewski et al. ‘Roundtable Discussion’
reproduction of gender orders as such. I wanted to understand how gendered subjects are reproduced, and to consider the implications of this for feminist praxis more generally. This could have been done through a detailed interrogation of the literature in feminist IR alone, but I felt that in order to clearly illustrate what was at stake in this reproduction I would use a case study in the thesis. I set out to do three things with the case study. Firstly, I wanted to carry out an analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects in the military in order to contribute to feminist knowledge about how sex/gender is reproduced and to better understand the apparent resilience of gender. The second aim was to show what is at stake politically in how this reproduction is conceptualised in research agendas and methodologies by explicitly reflecting on my own methodology and its limits. Finally, I wanted to use the findings of the case study in order to reflect more generally on epistemological issues in feminist methodology and praxis.

In this conclusion I aim to bring together the central arguments made in this thesis to show how it addresses the concerns I identified in the Introduction. I begin by summarising the conclusions reached in each of the five chapters, to highlight the key moves I have made in the thesis. I then offer a discussion which considers how my investigation into the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces has implications for feminist praxis more generally, refining my conclusions and addressing the concerns outlined in chapter one. Then I reflect on the extent to which the thesis has achieved what I set out to do, considering its limitations and the need for further work. Finally, I summarise what I believe to be the main contributions of the thesis.
**Interrogating the Reproduction of Gendered Subjects**

In order to begin my investigation it was necessary to examine the literature in feminist IR. I wanted to examine how the gendered subject had been conceptualised, and analyse what the implications of this were for research agendas, methodologies and conclusions reached. I began by looking at how women as a group have been reproduced in feminist IR. I argued that whilst this strategy was very effective at exposing how gendered world politics is there were several limitations of this conceptualisation of subjectivity. The main limitation I identified was the tendency to emphasise how structures (economic, political, and social) act *on* women, constructing an analytical separation between those subjects and social structures. The effect of this is that the reproduction of gender through intersubjective process is rendered invisible. I then examined the challenges posed by multicultural and postcolonial feminists who raise the issue of cultural difference. I argued that both Pettman’s *Worlding Women* (1996) and Sylvester’s *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (1994) had only limited success in their attempts to ‘resolve’ the challenges posed by postmodern and postcolonial critiques. I argued that *Women, Culture, and International Relations* (1999) responded more effectively these challenges because the contributors to this book worked *with and through* women’s heterogeneity. Ultimately the editors called for a move away from the general to specific, local contexts which would enable the production of gender and cultural difference to be made visible and I argued that this was a more productive way for feminists to deal with the challenge of ‘difference’.

I then examined the problematization of men and masculinities. I argued that deconstructing masculinity is an important move which helps to undermine the power of masculinity by revealing its contingency. However analysing men tends to reproduce
masculinity and femininity as oppositional, symmetrical categories, assuming that bodies are unproblematically divided into two sexes, and that gender somehow ‘acts upon’ these bodies. I then investigated how sexuality studies and queer theory had impacted upon debates about gendered subjectivity. I argued that the deconstruction of all sexual and gendered identities radically decentres and destabilises gender norms and identities, including heterosexuality and the male/female binary this presupposes. In the light of this work Carver argues that ‘it is thus the production of man and woman that becomes of interest to feminists.’\footnote{Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 120, my emphasis} He also called for a ‘more effective and genuinely deconstructive critique would promote destabilization through immanent contradictions and instabilities.’\footnote{Ibid., 122, my emphasis} This would require a non-referential theory of language that goes ‘all the way down’ and he suggests that Butler has developed such a theory.\footnote{Ibid., 110} Ultimately he argues that a serious engagement with the implications of this work might resolve the dilemma faced by feminists who want to offer a critique of the masculinized framing of IR without re-invoking the gender binary which always already reproduces the feminine as subordinate. Carver’s intervention suggested that there might be resources in poststructuralism which could be mobilised more effectively in feminist analyses.

I then discussed contemporary poststructural feminism, and it is here that I identified scope for further work. I argued that whilst this work has made an important contribution to understandings of the gendered subject as an effect of power, there is a tendency to offer accounts which are perhaps too coherent. I suggested that this often results in ‘feminist fables’\footnote{Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’} which make a lot of sense, but risk reifying gender by emphasising its power, rather than its vulnerability. Several questions arose as a result

\footnote{Carver, ‘Men in the Feminist Gaze’ 120, my emphasis}
\footnote{Ibid., 122, my emphasis}
\footnote{Ibid., 110}
\footnote{Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’}
of my engagement with this work. Was it possible to exploit the inherent failures, contradictions and *immanent* deconstruction of gendered meanings? How could this be done? Were there aspects of poststructural thought that could be harnessed more effectively? I then explored research methodologies commonly employed by poststructural feminists in IR. I suggested that there was perhaps an over-reliance on policy and media texts. I argued that if we understand gender as ‘actively’ reproduced and negotiated in different contexts, policy agendas and reports can only offer a limited insight to this process. Greater use of interview and ethnographic methods would allow feminists to engage with how gendered subjects reproduce *themselves* and they would generate ‘messier’ accounts of gendered realities, which might present more critical opportunities for feminists to explore the immanent deconstruction and inherent failure of all attempts to order gender.

What the discussion of feminist approaches to subjectivity demonstrated was that the methods and analytical strategies used in feminist research determine what can be seen and not seen, what can be questioned and where and how political intervention is possible. Moreover, feminist work is itself implicated in reproducing gendered subjects. The ‘sex/gender paradox’ identified by Stern and Zalewski, refers to the way that gendered knowledge produced by feminists ‘necessarily unravels and simultaneously re-constitutes itself in its own gendered image.’ However rather than ignoring this, or becoming disillusioned, Stern and Zalewski invite us to ‘recast feminist failure as aporetic and concomitantly implicated in the process of intervening politically.’ The inability to escape sex/gender then becomes an occasion for a re-imagining of what it means to make a feminist intervention. They do not fully explain how this might be done, or what this would entail, but I argued that the engagement with aporia,

---

1116 Ibid., 621
1117 Ibid., 611
impossibility and disruption was potentially a very useful avenue to pursue. If there was no way to escape sex/gender, was there a way to reproduce sex/gender differently? How might feminists engage more effectively with aporia, failure and contradiction? This was a significant moment in the thesis because it provided a point of departure for the investigation which followed.

Having explored the reproduction of gendered subjectivity in feminist IR chapter one then turned to the literature about gender and militaries. This review of the literature identified areas for further research and provided a rationale for the case study used in the thesis, the contemporary British armed forces. As an institution that is organised explicitly in relation to sexuality and gender it provided an excellent opportunity to explore what was at stake in the reproduction of gendered subjects. I argued that homosexuality, in particular, was an important subject for analysis because feminist work has demonstrated convincingly that exclusionary policies which banned homosexuals were a central mechanism for constructing and reproducing military masculinities.\textsuperscript{1118} I argued that in the UK the debate surrounding the ban on homosexuality in the 1990s was particularly intense, and that very little research had been carried out which evaluated the effects of lifting the ban in 2000. As a result of this review of the literature I was able to generate several research sub-questions which would structure my engagement with the case study. These questions included: How had the ‘integration’ of LGBT personnel been achieved? What did this mean for gender relations in the British armed forces? Would an analysis of the reproduction of subjectivity provide any answers? Having identified the case study it was then time to develop a critical methodology which would enable me to address these questions, and explore how it might be possible to engage with the sex/gender paradox differently.

\textsuperscript{1118} For example: Cohn, ‘Gays in the Military’; Herbert, \textit{Camouflage}; Bower, \textit{(Im)Possible Women}; Heggie, \textit{Uniform Identity?}
Chapter two looked for resources in the thought of Foucault, Derrida and Butler. The aim of my engagement with these thinkers was to search for concepts, insights and vocabularies which would enable me to interrogate the reproduction of subjectivity. I began by offering exegeses of their work, providing an overview of their theoretical oeuvres and a summary of how this informed their conceptualisation of the subject. Whilst Foucault, Derrida and Butler do approach the subject differently I was able to generate several key insights from their works. Firstly, subjects are reproduced continuously through different social processes, but that this reproduction is concealed through the discursive mechanisms that create the illusion of ontological stability and essential difference. Secondly, their reproduction is never complete and is always provisional, paradoxical and unstable; indeed this failure is an inherent part of the process of reproduction. Finally, the reproduction of gendered subjects cannot be separated from the context within which that reproduction takes place. What this means is that the analytical distinction between subject and culture is radically collapsed.

Having outlined these general insights I then considered how they might be mobilised as analytical strategies. I began by considering deconstruction and genealogy as ‘revelatory methods’ which could be employed to ‘expose’ the reproduction of subjects. This could be used to show subjects how subjects are reproduced as effects of power and discourse, and to expose the incompleteness and failure of that reproduction. I argued that whilst these interpretations both offered useful methodologies for feminist critique, they were limited because they maintained a distinction between the reader and the text, and consequently promoted an instrumental understanding of feminist praxis. I argued that the potential for exploiting the failure and paradox of all attempts to
reproduce subjects could only be ‘found’ through a more effective understanding of the transformative potential of genealogy and deconstruction. This understanding would respond to the more fundamental epistemological challenge that Foucault, Derrida and Butler are making about what a text, discourse or gendered performance is. Whilst their work offers no way to go beyond or outside the text, I demonstrated that the condition of always being within the text simultaneously opens up possibilities for intervening and disrupting it. I then reconceptualised genealogy and deconstruction as a form of critical praxis which made it possible to think about enacting a disruption from within the text, both in the design and write up of the research, and also during the data gathering process. In this way, whilst not escaping the sex/gender predicament, it offered a different way to work with that paradox which contained the possibility of producing a more effective destabilisation of gender.

Drawing on this exploration of the theoretical work I was then able to develop a critical methodology for investigating the reproduction of gendered subjectivity within the British armed forces. This methodology would involve a systematic interrogation of how the military ‘gender order’ is reproduced, reified and re-secured through the reproduction of gendered subjects. I adopted the term ‘gender order’ as a heuristic device in order to convey a particular understanding of the regulation of gendered life that depends on the reproduction and ordering of gendered subjects. As well as identifying the particular problematization of sexuality and gender which occasioned this reproduction, this methodology required me to actively pursue occasions where the gender order fails or is put into crisis, and to examine how it responds to those failures. I was also able to develop the rationale for focussing on the British armed forces policies and practices towards homosexuality in the light of my engagement with Foucault, Derrida and Butler. As the ‘abject’ subjects of the military gender order,
interrogating the reproduction of homosexuals was a good strategy for revealing the
operation of the gender order, and understanding its underlying logics. Exploring how
that subject had been brought ‘inside’ the military gender order also provided a valuable
opportunity to find out whether the gender order had been changed as a result of
including its ‘outsider’.

Finally, I considered the implications of the theoretical discussion for data gathering
methodologies. What did these critical insights mean for thinking about research
methodologies as such? Was it possible to maintain a distinction between the researcher
and the researched? Was the process of researching gender itself a reproduction of
gendered texts? I argued that in the light of the theoretical work the research process
itself comes to be conceptualised as an active intervention into the text, and
consequently, a site with potential for political intervention. Acknowledging that the
reproduction of subjects was never complete or entirely successful meant that official
policies and interview narratives were reconceptualised as attempts to order and
reproduce gender. Thus both contain paradox, failures and aporias which could be
revealed and exploited to undermine the power of gender. Whilst policy documents are
important texts for understanding the reproduction of subjectivity I suggested that they
were necessarily partial, and that interviews offered several advantages in terms of
generating ‘messier’ accounts and in emphasising the ways that gendered subjects
actively reproduce, negotiate and challenge the gender order. I also suggested that
interviews were a site of the reproduction of subjectivity, where any act of questioning
would necessarily invoke, and have a political position with regard to the gender order
through which gender becomes intelligible – there was no ‘neutral’ position for the
interviewer to adopt. I suggested that with this in mind interventions could be made in
the asking of questions which actively pursued the limits of intelligibility and which
emphasised the instability of terms used to articulate sex, sexuality and gender. In this way instead of uncritically reproducing sex/gender the interview had the potential to enact a disruption and encourage interviewees to have a ‘critical relation’ with the norms through which they are themselves constituted.\textsuperscript{1119}

\textbf{The Reproduction of Gendered Subjects in the British Armed Forces}

The analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces began in chapter three, with a discussion of how ‘women’ and ‘gender’ are reproduced. I began with several questions in mind: How was gender and sexuality conceptualised in military policy and practice? What were the effects of this? Were women subversive of the masculine military? To find answers to these questions I conducted a detailed analysis of the MoD commissioned research which informed the decision to keep the policy which excludes servicewomen from posts that require them to ‘close with and kill the enemy.’ Based on quantitative and qualitative research with serving personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq, the research set out to find out what the effect of women’s involvement in close combat had been. It was through this analysis that I was able to identify the dynamics of the military gender order, which governs the reproduction of men and women. I demonstrated how the gender order both reflects and produces men and women as oppositional, biologically determined genders. Integral to this reproduction is the naturalisation of heterosexuality. As well as being pervasively heterosexual I also showed that the gender order is hierarchical and privileges servicemen. I argued that this was achieved through the ‘hyper visibility’ of women which continually reproduces women as ‘a problem to be solved’ through management.

\textsuperscript{1119} Butler, \textit{Giving An Account}
practices which mitigate the effects of their inclusion. I demonstrated that what this move allowed was the erasure of the reproduction of servicemen, who are reproduced as the unseen norm against whom everyone else is produced in relation. For these reasons I argued that women in the military are not inherently subversive simply by virtue of being ‘not men.’ I showed that what it means to be a woman in the military is governed by a gender order which protects masculine privilege and which continually reproduces women in ways which do not undermine the masculine status of the institution. Far from being disruptive, or subversive, reproducing women’s hyper visibility is inseparable from securing men’s corresponding invisibility, and seen in this way the reproduction of ‘men’ and ‘women’ is a mutually constitutive process that is essential for shoring up the gender order.

The effects of this particular reproduction and ordering of gendered subjects are considerable. I showed how policies regarding the general segregation of men and women and the exclusion of women from ‘frontline combat roles’ simultaneously rely upon and reproduce heterosexuality as the norm in the armed forces. The rationale for excluding servicewomen from those roles rests upon the assumption that a woman may be a ‘distractive’ presence in male units. However, because of the invisibility of servicemen in military policy and practice, male attitudes and behaviours are never subject to scrutiny and are beyond critique. These dynamics were also in evidence in the ways that the gender order is negotiated by several Royal Navy personnel in their ‘everyday’ lives. Claims that the men could not ‘see’ how they occupied a privileged position emphasised the importance of intelligibility for thinking about the resilience of gender and understanding what is at stake in making visible that which is unseen. As a result of the analysis of women I was able to make a general ‘diagnosis’ of the military gender order. I argued that gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive in this
context, and that the gender order relies upon the fundamental segregation between men and women as a result of this presumed heterosexuality to be coherent.

Chapter four analysed the reproduction of homosexuality under the ban. I began by examining the construction of the ‘homosexual threat’ in the 1990s. I argued that the exclusion of homosexuals reflected and reified the logics of the gender order identified in the discussion about women. I showed how homosexuality was produced as an ever present, but ultimately unknowable danger, which required and legitimised strategies of suspicious watchfulness and the surveillance of all personnel. I argued that the rationale for the ban was undermined by the presence of covert homosexuals who demonstrably were compatible with service life and did not induce ill discipline. The military routinely made a distinction between ‘covert’ and ‘known’ homosexuals in order conceal this aporia, but this was not always successful. I was able to show that it was the potential for discovery (something the ban itself produced) that rendered all homosexuals (even ‘non-practicing’ homosexuals) a threat, hence the need for a ban. Seen in this light the ban is inherently paradoxical, and fails in the sense that it continually creates and sustains the problem it promises to resolve. However, I ultimately argued that it was this paradoxical ‘failure’ that actually enabled the ban to act as a self perpetuating mechanism that safeguarded the heteronormative gender order and in this way, it ‘worked’. I argued that the ban functioned as an important mechanism for ensuring the reproduction of servicemen and the military institution as masculine. I argued that the homosexual functioned as the ‘constitutive outside’ of the military gender order.\footnote{Derrida, Limited Inc.} In exposing this, I drew attention to the fragility of gendered subjectivity as it requires constant reinforcement through discursive borders between homosexuality and homosociality which are ultimately always contingent.
I then analysed the threat posed to the gender order, should the ban be lifted. I offered an analysis of the anticipated problems should homosexuals be integrated. I demonstrated that the concerns raised about ‘privacy and decency’ revealed the limits of the gender order because homosexuals could not be accommodated within the military’s understanding of (hetero)sexuality. The segregation of men and women is based on an assumption of heterosexuality, and a lesbian or a gay man prompts a problem for this ordering because they can neither be accommodated with their own gender because they might be attracted to them, or with the ‘opposite’ gender because opposite genders must be segregated. Moreover, allowing ‘known’ homosexuals to serve alongside comrades of the same gender does threaten the ability of the military to be seen to control sexuality, which threatens its ability to secure the masculine status of the institution. Consequently I argued that unlike integrating women, integrating ‘homosexuals’ as conceived by the military, did pose a significant ‘problem’ for, and threat to, the gender order of the military.

Having ‘diagnosed’ the military gender order, the chief aim of chapter five was to establish how the ban was challenged, how LGBT personnel had been integrated since 2000, and whether this had changed the gender order. I began by analysing how Stonewall and Rank Outsiders challenged the ban. The challenge was based on a claim to a right of equal treatment and a right to privacy for gay and lesbian personnel. I showed that in order to make those claims Stonewall and Rank Outsiders ultimately reproduced gendered subjectivity as autonomous, biologically determined and natural. However because the frame of intelligibility which governs the gender order is heteronormative these claims were fraught with difficulty. This was because their claims to equality with heterosexuals could not work, because homosexuals would have

351
be accommodated with personnel of the gender they were sexually attracted to, which was perceived to be unequal treatment. I ultimately argued that the limited engagement with the regulatory nature of the ban, and the gendered subjects produced as an effect of it, severely impeded the ability of those challenging the ban to effectively confront discrimination and unsettle gendered hierarchy within the armed forces.

I then examined how the MoD and the military have integrated LGBT personnel. I argued that the threat to the gender order of the military, posed by their inclusion, has been neutralised by a series of responses that attempt to ‘contain’ and accommodate LGBT personnel without undermining the heteronormative and patriarchal norms that continue to structure engagements with issues of inclusion. One response is the ‘mapping’ of LGBT personnel within equal opportunities and diversity frameworks. LGBT personnel have been recognised a ‘diversity strand’ within the military, and they are defined against, and always in relation to, heteronormative norms. To illustrate how this works and what is at stake in this I offered an analysis of the reproduction of transsexual personnel. I demonstrated that the transsexual subject, as someone who is rejecting the sexual morphology of their body and acquiring the ‘opposite’ gender, actually presents a significant challenge to the coherent ordering of gendered subjects where binary oppositions of biological sex, gender identity, and (hetero)sexuality correlate neatly to produce ‘men’ and ‘women’. However, this problem is resolved and eliminated by policies which redefine transsexuality as a medical problem, which can ‘cured’ by allowing the transsexual to change genders. Through a carefully managed ‘transition program’ the military is able to monitor and know exactly when a person has changed gender. I argued that this move transforms transsexualism from an aberration or deviancy into something which can be diagnosed, treated, and ultimately dealt with in a way that does not challenge or disrupt the heteronormative status quo. I concluded
therefore that the gender order re-secured itself through the reproduction of the transsexual person as a ‘medical’ problem, rather than a ‘problem’ for the gender order and in this light transsexuals, far from being subversive of the gender order, have instead been ‘re-inscribed’ back into it.

Finally I examined the deployment of sexuality as a ‘private matter’ by the MoD. I argued that this response reproduces and mobilises distinctions between public and private in order to shore up and re-secure the gender order after LGBT inclusion. The move to privatise (homo)sexuality erases the ways in which the public is always already heterosexual. This then enables the military to continue to assume that everyone is heterosexual unless told otherwise. For this reason I argued that this could be best understood as a ‘strategy of containment.’ However I also argued that this move was particularly unstable and paradoxical because implicit in the notion of ‘coming out’ is a disclosure of the hidden, private self to the public (and heterosexual) realm. Hence, paradoxically, since 2000 LGBT personnel have been permitted to come out publically, but only if their sexuality remains private. I then considered the subversive potential of events such as London Pride. I suggested that because Pride is a public parade of an ostensibly private sexuality it has the potential to undermine the logics upon which the gender order of the military relies to perpetuate itself. Through a careful examination of some of the responses of serving Royal Navy personnel about the marches, I showed that for some the marches were perceived a sign of progress whilst for others they were seen as inappropriate, deviant, and only served to reify their existing understanding that (homo)sexuality should remain private and consequently invisible. Crucially what is happening when personnel respond in this way is the re-drawing of lines which have been crossed, and a re-imposition of the gender order through the ‘reading’ of the event. Consequently I argued that the event cannot be inherently subversive of the gender
The reading of the Pride marches that I offered, functions as an ‘alternative’ framing as it draws attention to the way that these distinctions between public and private, heterosexuality and homosexuality, perpetually break down and fail. Thus the meaning of LGBT personnel marching at Pride is undecidable. I argued that this move re-politicised the reading, or framing, of such events but it could not provide any guarantees or answers. This conclusion clearly prompts a lot of questions about the implications of this critical methodology for feminist praxis and it is these which the next section considers in more detail.

Implications for Feminist Praxis

Chapters three to five of this thesis deployed the critical methodology developed in chapter two to interrogate the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces. I have summarised the findings of these chapters above, and it is now necessary to reflect on the implications of those findings for feminist praxis more generally. I set out to understand how gendered subjects were reproduced, as a way of understanding why and how gender was so resilient despite efforts to challenge it. The analysis of subjectivity in this thesis has demonstrated how gender hierarchy is reproduced in the military, in and through the reproduction of gendered subjects. In this light subjects and the ordering of those subjects are not separate but instead mutually constituted. Gendered subjectivity is ordered and rendered intelligible through the official policies and practices of the military, though the activities of LGBT activists and in the interaction and personal narratives of individuals within and outside the military institution. Gendered subjects can be understood as both the embodied effects, and the agents, of the gender order. Paying attention to this perpetual ‘layering’ of subjectivity
in different (con)texts, and acknowledging and revealing the constant reproduction of subjectivity in and through policy, practice, social interaction and spatial regulation is the central insight of a performative approach to gender.

Based on the investigation of the British armed forces it is possible to make several observations about the reproduction of gendered subjectivity. Gendered subjects are reproduced, and reproduce themselves, through matrices of intelligibility which are determined by particular configurations of power and hierarchy. One of the most important insights gained from the analysis of the integration of LGBT personnel is the exposure of how these previously abject subjects were re-inscribed into the military gender order. This process of re-inscription is achieved through policy but also through those gendered subjects themselves as they seek recognition. This recognition always takes place within a context which de-limits what is recognizable as such. As Butler writes ‘there is a language which frames the encounter, and embedded in that language is a set of norms concerning what will and will not constitute recognisability.’\textsuperscript{1121} This also means that ‘the “I” is transformed through the act of recognition.’\textsuperscript{1122} Indeed what the analysis of the analysis of military policy towards homosexuality illustrated was that those individuals were transformed, literally overnight when the ban was lifted. However, that recognition was only possible within existing matrices of intelligibility which as I demonstrated are pervasively heteronormative and masculinist. I showed the same was also true of the integration of women in the British armed forces. Despite overwhelming evidence that servicewomen performed well in Afghanistan and Iraq, they were nevertheless reproduced in relation to male sexuality and male behaviour in the research assessing the combat exclusion. The continued exclusion of women rests entirely on this particular framing of their subjectivity.

\textsuperscript{1121} Butler, \textit{Giving An Account},30
\textsuperscript{1122} Ibid.,28
However whilst the analysis of the production of subjectivity exposed how gender is ordered and regulated in ways that protect masculine and heterosexual privilege, it revealed as much about the limits of these attempts to capture gendered life. My arguments about the reproduction, or re-securing, of the gender order in this thesis are not intended to suggest that this ordering of gendered subjects is ever static, complete or entirely successful. They must be understood as ‘attempts’ to secure meaning and boundaries, and to police and discipline a reality that is always unstable and contingent. Gender orders are themselves impossible to capture. Whilst I have made arguments about the gender order of the British armed forces, it is important to emphasise that ‘it’ does not have any essence. It is not a structure with pre-determined logics; rather those logics are reproduced in and through its effects. The reproduction of gendered subjects, as with all attempts to reproduce meaning, always contain the possibility of failure as a condition of their very possibility, something that is exposed when the limits of the order are reached. Throughout the thesis I have shown where these attempts frequently break down on their own terms, or produce paradoxical outcomes. These moments of rupture reveal the impossible and phantasmal nature of gender. By highlighting these moments I have sought to undermine the power of gender in the thesis, rather than over emphasise its efficacy. What I have shown is that gender often fails to guarantee the intelligibility it promises.

Might these moments of instability and crisis be opportune moments for feminist intervention? Are these moments inherently subversive? This formulation would promote an instrumental approach to ‘exploiting’ the failure of gender. However as the discussion in chapter two argued, there is no way to do this. This is because the paradoxes, aporias and excesses that characterise all attempts to reproduce subjects
demand a constant re-drawing and re-inscribing of boundaries to sustain the appearance of coherence. The impossibility of gender then becomes the very condition of its possibility. In this sense the gender order is in perpetual crisis, where events such as Pride, or the inclusion of homosexuals in the military, continually threaten to expose the incompleteness and instability of policies which regulate and order subjects and political and social orders. However, if all attempts to secure meaning are unstable and in crisis, it becomes impossible to even define what transgression or subversion is. Foucault wrote that ‘the limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess… Does transgression not exhaust its nature when its violates the limit, being nothing beyond this point in time?’

For Derrida ‘every transgressive gesture reencloses us’ within metaphysics, such that transgression itself re-constitutes new limits, which are themselves subject to transgression. Consequently the momentary disruption and transgression of order is not in itself subversive, rather it is the responses to such crises that contain the potentiality to subvert the order, by challenging attempts to re-secure and re-inscribe norms upon the events. However, this potential is never fully realised as any alternative framing or reading will enact closures in its attempt to secure boundaries and will also be unstable and prone to crisis. What does this mean for politics as such, particularly feminist politics? Butler offers the following response:

Attending to this foreclosure, as an act of politics that we unwittingly perform, unwittingly perform time and again, offers the possibility for a different conception of politics, one that attends to its own foreclosures as an effect of its own conscious activism. Yet, one must maintain a double-edge in relation to this difficult terrain, for neither the violence of foreclosure that stabilized the field of activism nor the path of critical paralysis that is entrenched at the level of fundamental reflection will suffice … [It is] increasingly important to keep the tension alive between maintaining a critical perspective and making a politically legible claim.

---

1123 Foucault, 'A Preface to Transgression', 73
1124 Derrida, *Positions*, 9-10, emphasis in original
1125 Butler, *Undoing*, 108
This is an uncomfortable conclusion to reach. It leaves feminist politics without guarantees, a clear agenda. The thesis has shown how important the ‘categories through which one sees’ are. I have explored different registers of visibility and invisibility as a result of different framings and ordering of gendered subjects. Thinking about the reproduction of sex/gender ultimately means thinking about different matrices of intelligibility in world politics which includes those used by researchers themselves. This involves a critical reflexivity and an engagement in what Vaughan-Williams has called the ‘politics of framing’.\textsuperscript{1126} A critical engagement with the gender norms that govern the interpretation and reproduction of subjects and social and political orders, entails a \textit{re-politicisation} of the reading and interpretation of events. The implication of this politics of framing is that there is not a gendered reality to ‘expose’ through critique. As Foucault wrote, genealogy will ‘push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of the time where \textit{masks are constantly appearing}.’\textsuperscript{1127} Critique then becomes a relentless call to question, undermine and deconstruct all attempts to secure political orders, with no possibility of resolution or ultimate ‘victory’. This mode of critique requires feminists to carry out their work in a constant state of uncertainty and anxiety. This might be uncomfortable but is this a problem for feminist politics? Stern and Zalewski suggest that feminists might ‘linger’ in anxiety, rather than attempt to escape it.\textsuperscript{1128} In the light of the work carried out in this thesis I would agree with Stern and Zalewski, and perhaps, go so far as to suggest this anxiety is the necessary condition of a properly critical feminist praxis.

In the thesis I have repeatedly called for greater use of interviews and ethnographic data gathering strategies in feminist IR. The primary reason I gave for this was that I felt

\textsuperscript{1126} Vaughan-Williams, N. \textit{Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power} (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), particularly chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{1127} Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy’, 161, my emphasis
\textsuperscript{1128} Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’ 352
interview data might generate messier accounts of the reproduction of subjectivity and would thus provide greater opportunity for the exploitation of failure, paradox and aporia. I offered a reconceptualisation of the research interview as a political intervention in itself, and pursued a strategy of questioning at the limits of intelligibility. I argued that this strategy maintained a more critical relation with the gender order, and used the interview as a site for political intervention. However, there was also another, more personal and emotional reason for my taking this approach towards interviewing: I was actually very uncomfortable about the process of interviewing military personnel because the people I was interviewing did not understand what I was going to do with their words. Of course, to ensure informed consent, I had provided a clear summary of the purposes and aims of the research. But it was not appropriate or possible to really go into the theoretical and deconstructive approach I was adopting. Consequently it would have been relatively easy for me, as the researcher, to ask questions which I knew would probably have prompted responses which I could have manipulated, framed and deconstructed in order to support my arguments in the thesis. However, I did not want to do this, I felt it was almost a form of entrapment. The questioning at the limits of intelligibility was one way I was able to mitigate this problem. I felt that by allowing the personnel I was interviewing the chance to respond to the kinds of questions I would later be asking in my write-up of the research I was including them in a conversation, rather than crudely objectifying their words as mere texts to be deconstructed. I have endeavoured to treat the voices of my interviewees with respect and sensitivity throughout the write-up of this research, but how well I have done this is probably for others to judge.

How effective was my strategy of asking questions at the limits of intelligibility? The answer to this question is that sometimes it worked, and other times it was ineffective.
The discussions with Ian and George about the Pride marches illustrate this well. With Ian, I was able to engage in a detailed conversation about his assumptions and reasoning, such that he ultimately concluded that “it is kind of difficult, isn’t it? Because where do you draw the line in the end?” I found this result satisfying because I had clearly caused Ian to reflect on the contingency of gender, even if only for the duration of the interview. My discussions with George however were a lot less successful in this regard as he would not, or could not, engage with my questions and instead responded by always re-affirming his views and opinions. Sometimes George simply misunderstood, or found my questions confusing. What this highlights is that interviewing is a two-way process which is highly unpredictable and always contingent.

I admit I was probably rather naive about the challenges of conducting research interviews when I began the research for this thesis. They proved to be the cause of much anxiety and there are certainly no guarantees with this form of research praxis. Nevertheless, despite, or even because of these anxieties, I still think it is important, vital in fact, for feminists in IR to talk to people and let their voices animate their research.

Ultimately this thesis has demonstrated that ‘gender orders’ are complex, mobile and resilient. Feminist research needs similarly mobile and responsive modes of critique that can engage with the increasingly complex and subtle regulation of gender. Whilst I have argued that there is nothing inherently subversive about failures or paradoxical dynamics of attempts to order gender, and that there is no way to ‘exploit’ these failures in an instrumental way, this does not mean that a specific focus on failure and paradox is not important for feminist critique. As Butler explains, the theory of performativity calls us to begin the ‘difficult labor of deriving agency from the very power regimes

1129 Interview with Ian, my emphasis. See page 324 of this thesis for the context of this quote.
which constitute us, and which we oppose.¹¹３⁰ What this means is that feminist praxis must engage with, and critically inhabit reproductions of sex/gender. As a mode of active, critical engagement the pursuit of the limits of attempts to order gender is one way to begin doing this. This mode of praxis recognises crises of intelligibility as invitations to question and challenge the discursive and spatial tactics that are employed to produce, regulate and discipline subjects. However these interventions are never definitive because, as I have shown in this thesis, gender orders constantly re-territorialise and re-inscribe different subjects and events which threaten to undermine their logics. This means that feminist critique must be an active, conscious and ongoing endeavour.

The mode of critical praxis I have advanced in this thesis does not, indeed cannot, prescribe feminist agendas, methodologies that will escape sex/gender, or even deliver a transformation of gender as such. For feminist politics, a poststructural approach such as the one I have deployed in this thesis has clear limits and it is vital that feminists acknowledge these. Having said that, I would argue that a genuinely deconstructive feminist politics is vital for interrogating how sex/gender is reproduced, and for maintaining properly critical relations towards ‘feminist’ and ‘poststructural’ politics and praxis more generally.

**Reflections on Limitations, Contributions and Further Work Needed**

The critical methodology developed and mobilised in this thesis represents my attempt to understand the resilience of gender and generate an alternative mode of engagement

¹¹３⁰ Butler, ‘For A Careful Reading’, 137
with the sex/gender predicament identified by Stern and Zalewski. This was always going to be an ambitious and challenging task and as with any research project there are limitations to the thesis and further questions which need to be addressed in order to develop the work. In this section I offer a summary of what I perceive to be the main limitations of the thesis and a comment on how they might be addressed in future work. Finally I outline the strengths of the thesis and highlight the contributions I believe I have made.

As an attempt to think through what a politics of feminist failure might entail and to engage with the sex/gender predicament identified, I developed a critical methodology which emphasised how failure, paradox and aporia might be exploited by feminist research. I hoped it would be possible to undermine the power of gender and reproduce it in a different way. As a result of my engagement with contemporary poststructural feminist work, I decided to look for insights from Foucault, Derrida and Butler because they were the thinkers feminists in IR have more commonly engaged with. However, what can be loosely called poststructural thought contains many more thinkers and approaches than these three. Can the subject be theorised differently? Would a different approach to the reproduction of subjectivity generate alternative modes of feminist praxis? There is certainly further scope for investigating other critical theorists, for example, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Jacques Lacan.\footnote{For an introduction to different critical theorists see: Edkins and Vaughan-Williams, \textit{Critical Theorists}} There is also a rich body of feminist theory and thinkers such as Hélène Cixous might offer alternative perspectives and critical vocabularies for thinking about the reproduction of gendered subjectivity.\footnote{For a summary of Cixous’s thought see Tong, \textit{Feminist Thought,}} An engagement with different thinkers might generate different insights and ways of thinking about the sex/gender paradox and the resilience of gender.
Moreover an engagement with alternative thinkers would also potentially highlight further limitations to the critical methodology I have developed in this thesis. For example there are limits to representational approaches to subjectivity such as those offered by Foucault, Derrida and Butler. Jasbir K. Puar draws attention to ‘the “affective” turn in recent poststructural scholarship’ which she believes ‘indicates that no matter how intersectional our models of subjectivity, no matter how attuned to locational politics of space, place and scale, these formulations may still limit us if they presume the automatic primacy and singularity of the disciplinary subject and its identitarian interpellation.’ If these ‘affective’ approaches do indeed go ‘beyond’ identity and representation they re-open the question ‘Is it possible to escape sex/gender?’ This would then have important implications for feminist praxis. Pursuing alternative framings of subjectivity inspired by different poststructural thinkers is an essential move for developing the work begun in this thesis.

Alternatively the focus on poststructural approaches in the thesis might be considered a limitation. I concluded that my critical approach for analysing the reproduction of gendered subjects does not guarantee any possibility for subversion, and indeed it cannot, if the epistemological claims made by Foucault, Derrida and Butler are taken seriously. This raises some important questions about the current dominance of poststructural approaches in feminist IR. Conversely this limitation might in some way also be a contribution, for in highlighting the limits of poststructural theory it might

---

1134 Of course these kinds of generalisation are very difficult to substantiate. However, for an example of what I perceive to be this dominance see the special issue of British Journal of Politics & International Relations, 9 (2), (2007) which considered gender and international relations scholarship in Britain. At least 4 of the articles in that issue are explicitly informed by poststructural concepts or approaches, see: Colman, L. ‘The Gendered Violence of Development: Imaginative Geographies of Exclusion in the Imposition of Neo-liberal Capitalism’ British Journal of Politics & International Relations, 9 (2), (2007) pp. 204-219; Griffin, P. ‘Sexing the Economy’; Shepherd, ‘Victims, Perpetrators’ and Kantola, ‘The Gendered Reproduction’
re-open discussions about what feminist politics is aiming to do, and whether poststructural theory is the best way to do it. It might also be possible to think about different types of feminist theorising as different ‘frames’ for thinking about gender, rather than arguing about which theory is ‘best’ or in taking sides. This might in some way help to facilitate discussions between so called postmodern feminists and modernist feminists by re-establishing the connections between them, rather than emphasising their differences.  

The analysis of the reproduction of gendered subjects in the British armed forces has revealed that a politics of visibility is at play. Whilst I have endeavoured to highlight what is at stake in this, and what it enabled in that context there is arguably a need for a more sophisticated understanding of how this politics works, and how different frames of intelligibility render different subjects visible. This also prompts the questions of how this politics of visibility might provide openings for different feminist interventions, and whether it is possible to go beyond the politics of visibility. In this respect the ‘affective’ turn in poststructural theory might be able to contribute to rethinking this theme of visibility more fully.

The critical theoretical methodology I have developed in the thesis could be deployed in other contexts. In many ways the focus on the British military is very amenable for this type of analysis because the ordering of different gendered subjects is clearly defined in policy and practice. However, the challenge as I see it is to deploy the critical methodology in other less ‘obvious’ contexts, where the boundaries drawn between different subjects are harder to distinguish. This type of work would arguably rely much more heavily on ethnographic work and interviews, and this might produce ‘messier’,

---

1135 Zalewski makes a similar argument in her book: *Feminism After*
more ambiguous feminist analyses. I would argue that this is to be welcomed in IR, as there is a discipline-wide tendency to focus on the general and ‘high politics’ with the effect of marginalising the everyday experiences and voices of people who live international politics. This is not to suggest that feminist work which interrogates the state or important international policy documents, for example, is not vital for feminist IR. Rather what I am arguing is that more ethnographic research would complement these analyses.

In terms of the case study there are also several limitations and much scope for further work. Perhaps most obviously more interviews could be carried out. I was only able to interview officers in the Royal Navy, and it would be useful to talk to personnel in lower ranks as they compose the majority of personnel in the Royal Navy and research has shown that the lower ranks tend to be more hostile towards women.\textsuperscript{1136} It would then also be advantageous to look at the other branches of the British armed forces, to examine how LGBT personnel have been integrated into those Services. Going even further it would also be useful to explore the gender orders of different state militaries, perhaps the United States being an obvious place given the recent change to their policy on homosexuality.\textsuperscript{1137} It would also be useful to research transgender and transsexual personnel because they ‘cross’ gendered/sexual boundaries. Although I have argued that the military ‘manages’ this process in a way which re-secures the gender order, further work is necessary to explore how effective this management is, how transgender personnel articulate themselves as gendered military subjects and how successful ‘transition’ is in practice. In a methodological sense there is also a limitation concerning the way the thesis has isolated sexuality and gender from other identities such as race,

\textsuperscript{1136} The University of Plymouth conducted research examining the integration of women into the Royal Navy with the final report written in 2000 and found that Junior Rates were less likely to view mixed crowing favourably. Research cited in Ministry of Defence, \textit{Women in the Armed Forces, 8}.

\textsuperscript{1137} ‘Don’t ask, Don’t Tell’, which prevented US servicemen and women from disclosing if they were gay was repealed on 20 September 2011. Malik, S. and agencies, ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ formally ends’
nationality and class. To generate a fuller picture of how the gender order intersects with other hierarchies of identity would require a significant amount of further research into the British armed forces. Basham’s work demonstrated well how important these markers of difference are, and it would be useful to think about how the gender order is sustained by, and supports, other modes of oppression.\textsuperscript{1138}

Finally, as I explained in chapter one, feminist work on militaries has sought to locate them within wider processes of militarisation and war making in a global era. The study in this thesis could clearly be developed by exploring the connections between what goes on inside the British military and those wider processes in world politics. In this way it would be possible to highlight the ‘geopolitics of the everyday’ and link the narratives of individual armed forces personnel to broader understanding of war in IR.\textsuperscript{1139} Indeed this is a serious challenge for feminist IR in general, as it tries to problematise and displace distinctions between the local and the global, the personal and the international. I would argue that this is another reason why interview data is particularly important for feminist IR. Interview data can be a very powerful way to show how ‘the personal is international.’\textsuperscript{1140}

Despite these limitations and the requirement for further work, the thesis has made several contributions. These contributions can be broadly divided into three areas, feminist IR scholarship, critical methodologies in IR and the interdisciplinary literature on militaries. Perhaps the main contribution is the interrogation of the reproduction of sex/gender, or gendered subjects. The mobilisation of the critical theoretical methodology developed in chapter two has generated insights about the process of

\textsuperscript{1138} Basham, \textit{An Analysis}

\textsuperscript{1139} The importance of this was initially brought to my attention by Victoria Basham and I thank her for many interesting discussions about the ethical and political implications of using the personal narratives of individual servicemen and women in feminist analyses of war and militarisation.

\textsuperscript{1140} Enloe, \textit{Bananas}
reproduction and about why gender is so resilient. I have shown that all attempts to capture gendered subjectivity are always provisional and never complete because the gendered subject is a moving target, which ‘appears’ according to different spatial, temporal and cultural locations and crucially, different framings. This has significant implications for thinking about the subversive potential of particular subjects and practices because gender orders mutate and can reproduce ‘outsiders’ in ways which do not undermine the ‘inside’. I have argued that the resilience of gender can be explained by this mobility and the spectral reproduction of gendered subjects and what the thesis has ultimately tried to do is make the case for similarly mobile analytical strategies which can effectively intervene in these processes of reproduction. My alternative approach has engaged with the reproduction of sex/gender in a way which uses the very necessity of its reproduction (its radical incompleteness or failure) as an occasion for political intervention. I have argued that these crises or failures are not exceptional occurrences but instead are an inherent feature of all attempts to secure meaning and discipline a reality that is always unstable and contingent. Consequently gender orders are better characterised as being in constant crisis, requiring constant re-inscription and re-securing as these paradoxes and failures occur. It follows then, that the subversive potential lies not in these events or crises themselves, but in the responses to them. For a feminist politics this means a conscious and active critical reflexivity which can respond to complex configurations of gender and attend to its own foreclosures.

In terms of how the research itself reproduced gendered subjects, I have also made several contributions. I have advanced an alternative analytical methodology which whilst not escaping the sex/gender predicament, does engage with it in a different way. My alternative approach has allowed me to expose where gender fails, and in some sense to undermine the power of gender rather than reproduce it in the research. I have shown how sex/gender breaks down on its own terms and in this way I believe I have
conducted a ‘genuinely deconstructive’ critique which has destabilised gender. However this use of poststructural ideas has its own limitations and by turning the critical methodology upon itself I have shown that this alternative approach has its own limitations because it too is a particular ‘framing’ of sex/gender. However this is not to suggest these framings are all equally valid in the relativistic sense sometimes associated with poststructuralism. On the contrary I would argue that in projecting the politics of framing into the analysis in this thesis I have politicised the process of framing as such.

I have also begun to reflect more critically on the implications of poststructural theory, specifically Foucault, Derrida and Butler, for ‘doing’ empirical research. I have shown that if the epistemological claims made by these authors is taken seriously then the distinction between the ‘researched’ and the ‘process of research’ is fundamentally problematised, and this undermines the very notion of a ‘research methodology’. This is more radical than simply acknowledging that the relationship between researcher and researched is a political one. What this move does is to render data gathering activities, such as interviews, as potential sites for intervention. This is however a very small beginning and further reflection and elaboration on the implications of poststructural thought for data gathering methods would be welcome.

With regards to the wider interdisciplinary literature on militaries this thesis has contributed in a small way to understanding how LGBT personnel have been...
‘integrated’ into the British armed forces since 2000. I argued in chapter one that the feminist literature on militaries had reached something of an impasse because it tended to assume militaries were masculine and that women ‘entered’ that space, thereby subverting it. I argued that this not only emphasised the power of gender, but also generated feminist fables about militaries which tend to be very general and perhaps, overly simplified. I have moved away from talking about ‘integration’ and instead looked at how the military reproduces what it means to be a woman, man, or lesbian. Throughout my investigation of the military gender order I have identified how dominant understandings of gender and sexuality in policy and practice produce and regulate particular gendered subjects. It is because of this move that I have been able to show that both women and LGBT personnel have been ‘integrated’ in ways which do not undermine the gender order of the military. This means that I have questioned the assumption that women and sexual minorities are inherently subversive of the masculine status quo which dominates within military institutions. This is also a different approach to specifically looking at the construction of ‘hegemonic masculinities’ which ultimately looks at how men take on particular roles. Looking at gender orders through the reproduction of different subjects brings the reproduction of sexed identity into question as well as the gendered performances, and ensures gender is understood along a continuum rather than in its constituent parts. I have argued that this is important because it enables a fuller understanding of the resilience of gender hierarchy.

Ultimately the thesis argues that the main limitation, and danger, in showing how gendered power works is that it can serve to reify, rather than effectively deconstruct and destabilise it. Revealing the impossibility of gender both undermines its power and encourages ‘an awareness that life itself is exuberant and always escapes, overflows,
undermines or disregards all attempts to impose categories, to discipline.\textsuperscript{1145} Whilst this does not offer any guarantees for feminist politics, nor a clear agenda or method for subverting gender, what it does do is enable a form of critique that can respond to an increasingly complex regulation and reproduction of gender. I have argued that gender is resilient because of its mobility and capacity to transform and re-territorialise the social. Modes of feminist critique must be similarly mobile and responsive to the constantly shifting discursive terrain. This is a challenging, but surely urgent, task for feminist scholars and practitioners of international relations.

\textsuperscript{1145} Heckert, J. ‘Intimacy with Strangers/Intimacy with Self: Queer Experiences of Social Research’ in Browne, K. and Nash, C. (eds)\textit{Queering Methods and Methodologies: Queer Theory and Social Science Research} (Farnham, Ashgate, 2010) 43, emphasis in original
Bibliography


Banyard, K. *The Equality Illsuion: The truth about men and women today* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010)

Barr D. and Bannerman L. ‘Soldiers can wear their uniforms with pride at gay parade, says MoD’ *The Times*, June 14 2008


Belkin, A. And Evans, R.L. ‘The Effects of Including Gay and Lesbian Soldiers in the British Armed Forces: Appraising the Evidence’ (The Palm Center, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2000)

Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., *Qualitative Report for the Study of Women in Combat* (Reading, 2009)
Available at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/49C587F5-5815-453C-BEB5-B409BD39F464/0/study_woman_combat_quali_data.pdf (accessed 3 September 2011)
Berkshire Consultancy Ltd., *Study of Women in Combat - Investigation of the Quantitative Data* (Reading, 2010)

Available at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/9BFD1F54-2AB5-4CBA-9E82-9B413AAFBADC/0/study_woman_combat_quant_data.pdf (accessed 3 September 2011)


Brickell, C. ‘Heroes and Invaders: gay and lesbian pride parades and the public/private distinction in New Zealand media accounts’ *Gender, Place & Culture*, 7 (2), (2000) pp.163-78


Carreiras, H. *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008)

Carver, T. *Gender is Not a Synonym for Women* (Boulder and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1996)


Available at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7A18C2A3-C25B-4FA1-B8CB-49204A109105/0/women_combat_experiences_literature.pdf (3 September 2011)

Chambers, S. A. And Carver, T. *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008)

Cockburn, C. 'Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War' *International...*


Edkins, J. *Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1999)


Available at:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/beyond_tolerance.pdf

(site accessed 6 October 2010)


‘Sea Change’, *g3*, February 2010

Available at: www.g3mag.co.uk

Hall, E. We Can’t Even March Straight: Homosexuality in the British Armed Forces (London: Vintage, 1995)


House of Commons ‘Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill Session 1990-91’ (London, 1991)

House of Commons ‘Special Report from the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill Session 1995-96’ (London, 1996)


Jones, A. *Gender Inclusive: Essays on violence, men, and feminist international relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)


Lloyd, P. ‘Proud to Serve’ Gay Times, February 2010


Masters C. ‘Cyborg Soldiers and Militarised Masculinities’ in Shepherd, L. J. (ed.)
*Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*


Available at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A9925990-82C2-420F-AB04-7003768CEC02/0/womenaf_fullreport.pdf (accessed 16 October 2010)


Moon, K *Sex Among Allies: Militarized Prostitution in U.S.-South Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)


Reardon, B. Sexism and the War System (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985)


Smith, S. ““Unacceptable Conclusions” and the “Man” Question: Masculinity, Gender, and International Relations’, in M. Zalewski and J. Parpart (eds.), *The “Man” Question in International Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) pp. 54-72


Tatchell, P. We Don’t Want to March Straight: Masculinity, Queers and the Military (London: Cassell, 1995)


Tierney, P. ‘In the Army Now’ in *attitude*, January 2010


Vaughan-Williams, N. *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009)


Yuval-Davis, N. *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997)


Zalewski, M. *Feminism After Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2000)


Internet Sources

Armed Forces Lesbian and Gay Association (AFLAGA) ‘A History’

Basham, V. ‘Women in the navy are not the problem, male attitudes are’ Guardian, 21 March 2007

BBC News ‘UK Army gay ban could be Lifted’ 27 February 1999

BBC News ‘Services gay ban lifted’ Wednesday, 12 January, 2000

BBC News ‘UK Delight and despair at gay ban ruling’ 27 September, 1999
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/458842.stm (accessed 16 September 2010)

BBC News ‘Royal Navy to promote gay rights’ 21 February 2005

BBC News ‘Colourful Parade marks EuroPride’ 1 July 2006
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/5131122.stm (accessed 13 January 2011)
BBC News report ‘Army backs sex-change soldiers’ 2 August 1999
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/409792.stm (site accessed 4 May 2009)

Berkshire Consultancy Ltd. ‘Our Clients’
http://www.berkshire.co.uk/our-clients (accessed 4 September 2011)

Berkshire Consultancy Ltd. ‘Research’
http://www.berkshire.co.uk/leadership-research (accessed 4 September 2011)

Defence Analytical Services and Advice, ‘UK Defence Statistics 2010: Table 2.7
Strength of UK Regular Forces by Service and sex, at 1 April each year’

Hugh Davies and George Jones ‘Sex-change soldiers can stay in Army’ Electronic
Telegraph, 2 August 1999, Issue 1529 on Press For Change website

Dietmann, A. Edwards, J. And Whitfield, M.  Sexual Harassment: Servicewomen &
Available at:http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EA09647E-8994-439B-9231-
818859B3E149/0/views_servicewomen_servicemens_2009.pdf (accessed 27 March
2011)
Evans, M ‘Army chief ‘apoplectic’ over uniforms at Gay Pride march’ *The Times*, June 16 2007
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article1940392.ece (accessed 13 January 2011)

Available at:

Foucault, M. ‘Foucault replies to questions from the audience at Berkeley's History Department in 1983' Transcribed by Arianna Bove from audiofiles available at University of California, Berkeley Media Resources Center: Online Media Collections at the. Transcript available at:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article4276099.ece (accessed 29 May 2009)

Hellen, N. ‘Navy signals for help to recruit gay sailors’ *Times Online*, February 20, 2005
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article516647.ece (accessed 16 February 2010)

HM Government ‘Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls’ (London, 2010)

Hoon, G ‘Ministerial Statement by Rt Hon Geoff Hoon MP to the House of Commons, 12 January 2000,’ available on the Proud2serve website:

Jackson, C. ‘Ten Steps to Monitoring Sexual Orientation in the Workplace’,

The Lesbian and Gay Foundation ‘Military Pride’

*Lustig-Prean and Beckett v UK* (application numbers 31417/96 and 32377/96), ECHR judgement of 27 September 1999. Available at:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/may/26/gender.military/print (accessed 8 June 2011)

Malik, S. and agencies in Washington ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ formally ends’ The Guardian, 20 September 2011


Ministry of Defence, 'LGBT Definitions'
http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/EqualityAndDiversity/LGBT/LgbtDefinitions.htm (accessed 17 August 2011)

Ministry of Defence website ‘LGBT Definitions – Homosexuality’
http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/EqualityAndDiversity/LGBT/LgbtDefinitionsHomosexuality.htm (accessed 6 May 2009)

Ministry of Defence ‘Women in the Armed Forces Factsheet’
MoD News, ‘First LGBT conference held in MOD Main Building’ 2 July 2010

MoD Defence News ‘Pride at the parade’ 7 July 2006
http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/PeopleInDefence/PrideAtTheParade.htm (accessed 17 February 2010)

www.gires.org.uk/assets/Consultations/MOD-policy.doc (accessed 29 January 2011)

Ministry of Defence ‘MoD policy on Homosexuality’ (2001)

http://www.proud2serve.net/military/codeofconduct.htm (accessed 10 October 2010)

Navy News ‘New forum seeks total equality’ February 2009 (official newspaper of the Royal Naval Association and the Sea Cadets, published by the Ministry of Defence)
‘Proud2Serve.net: the british armed forces LGBT e-network ’ website
http://www.proud2serve.net/ (accessed 30 January 2011)

Proud2Serve website, ‘The Difference between Sexuality and Gender’

Proud2Serve, ‘Conference notes for ‘Out and in: Recruiting and Retaining LGBT Personnel in the Armed Services’’ 3-4 December 2009

Proud2Serve.net members’ update 12 May 2008

Proud2Serve.net, ‘RAF participation in London Pride – 30 June 07’ Forum discussion

Rayment, S. ‘Say hello to sailors at gay march’ in The Telegraph, 25 June 2006
Royal Navy, Equal Opportunities Policy


Smith and Grady v UK (application numbers 33985/96 and 33986/96) ECHR judgement of 27 September 1999.

Available at:


Stonewall, UK ‘About Us’

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/about_us/2532.asp (accessed 8 September 2011)

Stonewall, UK ‘Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the Armed Forces’

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_work/2708.asp (date accessed 16 September 2010)
The Independent ‘MoD says sorry over 'persecution' of gay service personnel’

Thursday, 28 June 2007


The Independent ‘MoD pays £850,000 to servicemen and women sacked for being gay’

26 July 2006


The Telegraph.co.uk ‘Royal Navy to allow women on submarines’ 9 March 2010

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/7402575/Royal-Navy-to-allow-women-on-submarines.html (accessed 23 September 2010)

UK Houses of Parliament, 1967 Sexual Offences Act


UN Women ‘Facts and Figures on Women, Poverty and Economics’


UN Women ‘Violence Against Women’